

**ELAINE BANE, OSF - April 5, 1924 - December 10, 2023**

**Eulogy: Reflections on God's Relationship with Elaine**

**Written and shared by Maureen Hunt, December 16, 2023**

**Good morning, as I reflected on Elaine's life, the words of Francis of Assisi spoken at the time of his death kept coming to me. "I have done what was mine to do, may Christ now teach you what you are to do."**

**As many of us know Elaine was uncomfortable with the focus being on her. If I followed her instructions that she carefully gave to me, I would invite us to share a few moments of silence and we would conclude with Amen.**

**Out of respect for my dear friend and in response to her directive to "Keep it brief" and "do not focus on me," I'd like to share my reflections with you on God's relationship with Elaine.**

**Tuesday evening a week ago, Elaine was staring at the TV at the foot of her bed with the screen saver of our beautiful Chapel. She began repeating the word "altar, altar, altar" ...and then she began pointing to the altar...and as she did, she spoke the names of her cherished family... "the Banes, the Leonards, the Curtis" ...connected, connected, yes connected...the Banes, the Leonards, the Curtis', so connected." Very softly I said to her, "connected, one with God."**

**Elaine spoke, "oh yes, one with God, one with God, connected, connected." And I spoke again, "Elaine your family and loved ones are one with God and they are preparing a place for you to be with them...to be one with God." Silence reigned for a few moments and she spoke..."Get on with it."**

**“Get on with it” captures Elaine’s style...let’s not get weighed down with empty words, let’s not belabor the point, let’s not have a meeting to discuss a meeting...let’s put action behind our words and promises and “get on with it!”**

**What a precious gift your Aunt Helen has given to you as her beloved family...to know that your loved ones who have gone before you are gathered together at this altar now joined with Aunt Helen. As we gather around this altar at every Eucharist, the communion of saints are with us praising and thanking God. We do not see them but they are present with us.**

**And I believe your Aunt Helen’s message to you is... “Let Christ teach you how to stay connected with one another and the fruit of that connection is oneness with God.”**

**Some of us know, not all of us know, that I had a text from Clare yesterday afternoon, and she said, “you won’t believe this but we just met our cousins coming from another part of Massachusetts on their way to Allegany. We ended up at the same rest stop, not having seen each other for several years. A lot of screaming, laughing, disbelief was going on...Aunt Helen’s vibes were in the air.” Connected, connected! Not only did it happen once, it happened twice on the highway. Unplanned...these two groups of cousins representing the Banes and the Leonards ended up stopping at the same rest stop twice. I think it’s time for a family reunion. And maybe move it up a notch from meeting at a rest stop.**

**The same message holds true for Elaine’s Franciscan community. Elaine was a visionary person, unwilling to settle for what is. God graced Elaine throughout her life to always see the bigger picture. Her response to God’s call to establish the Ritiro within our community**

and to discern and engage with Thomas Merton in the changes that were needed for the monastic life back in the early 60's.

Elaine and Regina Catherine were trail blazers in our community following Vatican II. Their leadership challenged us to not only embrace change but to be present to the unknown and listen deeply into the silence...to seize the moment of Truth and "get on with it." May Christ now teach you what you are to do.

Another moment I'd like to share with you and I'd ask you to close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so. I'd like to imitate Elaine's tone of voice as best I can in the words she shared.

A week ago Wednesday afternoon, Elaine was very peaceful and in a deep sleep when unexpectedly she opened her eyes and looked up at me briefly...her face was beaming, it was radiant, it was full of light and she began to speak, "Oh so good, so very good...oh thank you, thank you...so good, wonderful. Mary, thank you, thank you, thank you...Oh yes, yes so good."

Very softly I said, "Elaine, beyond anything you ever imagined?" Her response was, "Oh Yes, so good, so good...Mary, pray for me at the hour of my death...Thank you...Thank you...Into your hands oh God, I commend my spirit...Thank you, Thank you. And she began to recite parts of the Magnificat (for the Lord has done great things for me)... thank you, Mary, thank you. Pray for me at the hour of my death... Mary, pray for me at the hour of my death. Oh, so so good. Come, Lord Jesus Come. Come, Lord Jesus Come."

I was beginning to laugh out loud because there was such a deep joy welling up in me as I looked at Elaine's radiant face. I began to pray her mantras with her. "Into your hands, O God I commend my spirit..."

**Come, come Lord Jesus, Come...Pray for me now and at the hour of my death...Thank you...Thank you...Thank you.”**

**I believe Elaine had a glimpse of God and Mary, the Mother of God. And like Mary Magdalene, she encountered the Risen Christ and was filled with such joy. Like Mary who ran to the disciples and said “I have seen the Lord, he is risen!”**

**I believe Elaine returned to us to share the depth of joy that she was experiencing as she glimpsed the face of God, to give us hope. “No one has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” (1 Cor.2-9)**

**Once again, Elaine in her final days, on this side of the veil gives witness to God’s love. The depth of joy she experienced as she came into the presence of the Holy One, the God she longed to know, the God that she yearned to love more deeply and to serve selflessly.**

**She encountered the Mystery that transcends all theological arguments, that transcends the constraints of the human intellect. Her deepest desire to know God and to love deeply was fulfilled. As we know Elaine chose the readings in today’s liturgy. In the gospel the words speak of her final days with us. “Abide in my love so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.” (Jn.15:11) Elaine’s joy was complete!**

**What a gift Elaine has given us by inviting us into those sacred moments of God’s intimacy with her...May it be a source of hope as we continue our journey on this side of the veil. May Christ now teach us what we are to do and may we have the courage to get on with it. Amen.**