

Funeral Homily for Nancy B. Hawley
St. Paul's Church, Louisville, Kentucky
On Nov. 25, 2008

“I am Resurrection!”

by The Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick, Jr., D.D.

The first word spoken in today's liturgy is my text: “I am resurrection.”

Jesus spoke these words to Lazarus's sister and then Jesus called Lazarus back to himself: “Lazarus come forth!”

Resurrection is not a concept over which we speculate as the Pharisees and the Sadducees did – resurrection is a person and his name is Jesus. I am resurrection. Because Jesus unites the Hebrew word for God, “I am,” perhaps we need to think that Jesus brings into infleshed reality an aspect of God's own reality.

God who is resurrection is the God who remembers his only son stone-cold and dead in a tomb and remembers him to life. The power of the Living God to remember into life is personal in the Lord Jesus. Forty-eight hours ago in this very church, I stood at the altar, held bread and wine in my hands, voiced the community's prayer and remembered Jesus in the upper room, and the one we remember became present and fed us because as we remembered so God was remembering with us and what God remembers is remembered into the now. Martha and Mary learned that; the women at Jesus's tomb learned that.

As we remember with the living God our mother, grandmother, sister and dear friend Nan, so God is remembering her into a life beyond any joy we can

imagine! All of this has been a theological introduction to my homily of remembrance. This sermon was given to me 48 hours ago as I had the wonderful joy of baptizing a woman and a little girl and boy. After the water and the oil we prayed, “Give them inquiring and discerning hearts, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you and the gift of joy and wonder in your works.” As soon as I said these words, I knew they would be my template for this homily about this iconic wonderful Christian Nan Hawley.

Give her an inquiring and discerning heart. Nan wanted to know and she also wanted to be in “the know.” Carol Wagoner said she was nose-y! The line between inquiry and nose-y is thin!! She was smart—quick witted and discerning; she read people and situations quite well. She was so discerning as she answered the phone with that energetic “Diocese of Kentucky”; she could discern the urgency or non-urgency of the person speaking. She was gentle with the street folks, the priest in conflict or the college students late with their Woodcock applications. To inquire is to care with a God’s eye view about people and their wellbeing; she did it with a focused mind that was expansive enough to include us all.

The courage to will and to persevere. As cheerful as she was – this cheerfulness itself was the palpable evidence of her trust in Him who is Resurrection, our Nan lost her mother when she was a little girl and she had to persevere pretty quickly. Before her Dad – whom she adored – remarried, she was

the head of the household, cooking and cleaning and learning how to support. She made a life for herself: she was smart, for her generation well educated, and worked for the government in Washington. She survived a parent's worst nightmare – the death of an infant son – and the death of Charlie, who she always described as the man who doted on his daughters and provided for her well being and said it in such a way that every time she mentioned it she seemed amazed. Courage and will to persevere grounded in resurrection hope was the way she met her illness, and thus her cheerfulness and energy was a sacrament of the power of Easter hope and Easter faith!

A spirit to know and to love you. Although Nan was – at least in my experience – an off-the-chart extrovert, she also spent many Saturdays in contemplative adoration, which is what we call altar guild. Polishing the chalice, ironing the linens and tending to the holy table Saturday after Saturday is to contemplate the guest who is to come every Lord's Day. Nan loved Jesus, particularly the Jesus of the Eucharist, and she wanted those nearest and dearest to love him as well. She loved this parish but she was a diocesan Episcopalian, so if Margaret was involved at St. Thomas she could worship there and if Jan was chasing the Christmas music at Calvary or the cathedral she was there and if the Ben's were being ordained priests – young clergymen whom she call "Sweetie" –

she was there. She came with joy to meet her Lord, but my hunch is the joy was grounded in her Saturday contemplation as she polished, and ironed, and vested the altar with the focused devotion of women with spices at a tomb!

The gift of joy and wonder in all God's works. And the last sentence of the post Baptismal prayer – “The gift of joy and wonder in all God's works” – did she have that! She loved this world – the beauty of the ocean and the beauty of the good-looking guy fixing the copy machine! She loved the beauty of the exquisite and precise harmonies of the Sweet Adelines and the beauty of Handel's Messiah sung by the Bach Society. She loved the beauty of the big fat diamond that Charlie had given her and the beauty of the smile on a Lost Boy of Sudan's face as she handed him a Woodcock Foundation check.

Most of all she saw the beauty – the joy and wonder in that which crowns creation – humankind. She loved opening camp registration forms because she believed in the transformative power of All Saints'; she loved the kindergarten here because she believed that good starts resulted in well formed people. She joyed in all God made, and it was an invigorating – joy that spilled over and encouraged all of us to be more joy-filled, more hope-filled.

It is a joy to remember her, and as we remember we trust that God is remembering her into an even greater joy than we can dare dream. We trust her into the arms of the one she trusted and so we pray:

We thank you, O God, for all the goodness and courage which have passed from the life of this your servant Nan into the lives of others and have left this world richer for her presence. For a life's task of faithfully and honorably discharged, for good humor and gracious affection, and kindly generosity, for sadness met without surrender, and weakness endured without defeat, through Jesus Christ our Lord...Amen.