

The Best is Yet To Be
A Prayer in Celebration
Of the Life of Louise Zevalkink

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Prepared text of prayer

Let us be in the spirit of prayer
in the presence of the Creative Source of all being,
in whom we live and move and have our being –
the Sacred Mystery hidden in a cloud of unknowing.

Eternal God, Source, Guide and Goal of all that is,
from You we receive life as a gift
and to You our life returns.
In the Psalmist's poetic expression,
*You send forth your breath, your Spirit,
and they are created.
You take away their breath,
they die.*

We find our comfort in life and in death
that we are not our own
but belong to You,
a faithful God whose steadfast love embraces us
on this fascinating and fragile human pilgrimage.
And thus we find it most natural
at such a time as this, in such a place as this,
to lift up our hearts in worship,
to bow in Your presence before the mystery of life
and the reality of death.

We worship
for we are aware
of the wonder of creation,
its beauty and its terror,
its loveliness and its pain.
We turn to You, O God;
we rest in You;
we trust where we do not know.
In You we hope,
and to You we commend

those we've loved and lost awhile.

Good and Gracious God,
we have gathered in worship
to remember and to give thanks –
to remember our mother, grandmother, great grandmother and friend.

We remember the way she was –
indeed an extraordinary person
for whom there are not superlatives enough
to describe her and to give expression
to all she meant to us
and the ways she made our lives come to life.

Her physical beauty was the outward embodiment
of the beauty of her soul,
the instrument of a human spirit that transformed
every situation into which she entered,
creating joy, good humor, well being.
She had an unaffected presence about her
that made us confident that all would be well –
not through what she did, but simply because
her presence was a sweet aroma of grace and goodness
that changed everything for the better.

Our model, our inspiration –
dear God, how we miss her and will miss her
as weeks and months and years pass.
But filling the cavern of our grief will be memories –
so many memories of times and places,
and through tears we will laugh
as we remember her.

Over these last years physical ailments
took their toll and finally, slowly, her life ebbed away.
The body gave way but not her mind, not her spirit,
not her trust in You,
good and gracious God.
Her faith burned brightly.
Scripture – favorite passages, old favorite hymns –
these saturated her soul as life ebbed away.
Enwrapped in a mantle of love from family and care givers,
she breathed her last, awaiting
“just one more surprise,”
which for her was not a surprise at all
for she has experienced that which in trust she anticipated.
Face to face she has beheld him –

the blessed assurance with which she lived
is now fully realized, even beyond her fondest dreams.

O God, there is no denying our loss.
Where love looms large, loss is large a well.
Where bonds of love are tight,
when broken, grief and loss are painful.
All of that we own, we acknowledge, without denial.

Yet we are overwhelmed
by the beauty, the wonder of this life
that has touched us so deeply –
the amazing grace with which she lived
and the deep trust with which she breathed her last.

And in such a time as this,
in such a place as this,
Gracious God,
we are grateful above all
that the end is not broken health and dreams unfulfilled,
swallowed up in death,
but rather the confidence that
to live is to live unto the Lord,
and to die is to die unto the Lord,
so then whether we live or die,
we are the Lord's.

Receive our thanksgiving, O God.
Grant the comfort of Your Spirit,
renew our hope and lead us on
in the confidence that nothing can ever separate us
from Your love in Christ Jesus our Lord,
who taught us to pray, saying,

*"Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.*