

## GIVEN THE BEGINNINGS OF ETERNAL GOOD

Our homily for this Pentecost Wednesday, the day the Church in this place remembers the Faith that God gave His servant Ann Lippitt, is taken from today's readings. Hear again Jesus declare:

*I, I AM the Door; if anyone may have come in through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and will go out, and pasture he will find.<sup>1</sup>*

Donna, Eva and Sophia, family and friends of our sainted sister, Ann:

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Today's readings are most fitting to help us remember God's grace in the the years He gave to Ann. Throughout them, even before she confessed Him as Lord and Savior, God had been sustaining her. He did so in order to grant her His Faith. You heard God promise to do that for Ann and all who would hear and believe His Word just a few minutes ago when He said,

*For we know that, for the ones (who) continue sacrificially loving the God, all things work together for good, (that is) for the ones (who) continue being called according to His purpose.<sup>2</sup>*

As we reflect on God's grace in Ann's life, we behold how He continued to bring all things to work together for her good. Through His work for and in her, God brought to her one of the greatest goods available in this mortal life - His washing of regeneration and renewal. Through the water and the Word of Holy Baptism she who had already taken a new last name from her husband had been given the eternal Name that is above all names. Yes, God actually called to be His daughter through attaching His Name to hers. Through His naming her His child, God continued working good, having placed her in communion with Him.

Therefore, we may date Ann's passing out of death into life not to May 11, 2016, but to December 30, 1951. God's human means to bring her to that were in part, her husband's words and example. Through his holding onto the treasures of the Faith, God had used him to show her the Door to verdant pastures and celestial food. Through that Door, Saint Ann entered into God's

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<sup>1</sup> John 10:9.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:28.

kingdom through the only Way, that is Jesus the Christ. She was saved and given the beginnings of eternal good.

Such blessings continued to come to her through her reception of the food of life. In receiving that she rejoiced in her communion with fellow believers in partaking of the Body and Blood of her Savior. He used the Sacrament of the Altar to regularly bring to her His blood-bought forgiveness. That was true for her, even to her last few days of mortal life. Through earthly means of grace God continued to strengthen her to life everlasting. On account of God's faithfulness to her, she even now receives in Christ the promises of blessed eternal life.

Such are the wonders about which we sang in today's first hymn. Here, before you this day, is God's Table spread out and set with the finest of food and drink. Here, soon, with the Word of God, those who pass through the water of life recalled in the still waters of the Baptismal Font will recline at the Lord's Table. We will be fed by Jesus and united with those who now no longer sin or suffer from its effects, as does our dear sister in Christ. In Him, she and they held onto the good confession of the Faith until their Last Days.

This is an earthly and heavenly truth: where Jesus is, there is the company of heaven. With the forgiven ones, we recline to receive forgiveness. They dine without sin, for in Christ, it has all been removed from them. We partake to have sins removed. Jesus still says:

*I came that life they may continue to have, and abundantly they may continue to have (it).<sup>3</sup>*

God, through His Word, through the love of Ann's husband for the Faith and Church, saved her from those evil forces who continue to come into this sinful world. They are here only to steal, and to slaughter, and to terrorize. God, in working all things for her good, rescued her from all that would have pulled her away from receiving His eternal green pastures.

God worked the Faith in Ann Lippitt throughout her adult life. As she matured in the Faith of Jesus, she would take the wonderful biblical images of today's readings and hymns and communicate them to children of tender years. We thank the Lord for the good He did through her. Even so, please hear and understand that all the good she did in this life, for others, for loved ones, was due to God's working good in and through her. She believed and lived in promises such as we heard today, as God through the prophet Isaiah declared:

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<sup>3</sup> John 10:b.

*Then will dwell, My people, in habitations of peace, and in dwellings secure, and in resting places quiet.<sup>4</sup>*

Saint Ann Lippitt, while still in this body of flesh, found true peace, security, and rest in Christ our Lord. Even as her mortal life waned, she continued to desire, and tried to participate in reciting God's Word – the Lord's Prayer --- and confessing the Faith once delivered – through the Apostle's Creed. She opened her mouth to receive the medicine of immortality.

In Word and Sacraments, Jesus came to her and brought her His peace. He reminded her of those who were residing with Him in heaven. She heard of loved ones whose departures from this veil of tears to the eternal joys of heaven were then, as now, reclining on the other side of the Lord's Table.

Now, she dwells with them in her Father's eternal house. There, peace – shalom – prevails. In Christ, her eternal dwelling is secure. In Him she rests in quietude. She is forever free from all the struggles, worries, fears, sorrows, trials, and pressures of this life.

Earlier in her life, as she continued receiving God's gifts, He carried Ann through the many trials and tribulations that came as one lives in this fallen world for more than ninety years. Through the strength God continues to give through the regular hearing of His Word and reception of His Sacraments, she received the good of God's love, and much grace. God gave her His peace and His power to forgive even the sins and ills that had occurred to her and her family during her long-past childhood. Then, in married life, as she held to God's Word. She received His forgiveness and Real Presence, His loving touch. God gave her strength to endure even when illness and death forced themselves into her home.

As her years progressed, she kept her spirited, feisty nature. It was not long ago we had a conversation about her needing to stop climbing on countertops to reach housewares in the upper cabinets. She was led to remember that she had a thirty-nine-year-old mind in an eighty-nine-year-old body. Her God-given reason prevailed. She learned to let others get anything for her that was out of her reach.

That being said, throughout her married and widowed life, God was never out of her grasp. In fact, He held on to her through His Word. He was faithful in keeping her regular in receiving His gifts. In the weeks leading up to her passing from this life to blessed eternal life, God remained present with her, for her. Through the witness of her faith others were and are touched by God's grace. Through the care and concern of loving family members and other

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<sup>4</sup> *Isaiah* 32: 18.

caregivers, when others might have become resigned to sadness and loneliness, God lifted her up in love.

God also gave her much joy in this mortal life. Such times were foretastes of that which is now hers completely as she lives forever in Christ Jesus. This is because Ann Lippitt heard and believes Jesus' Word:

*Truly, truly I continue to say to all of you, "I I Am the Door of the sheep."<sup>5</sup>*

Jesus is the Door to blessed eternal life. We who follow Him are sheep – those for whom He opens heaven's portals to blessed eternal life. He stands to protect us from the evil one. He is here today, in His Word, with His forgiveness.

Those of us who believe those eternal realities pray that you will hear and believe with us. We desire that you may enter through Jesus, the Door to blessed life -- even now in this time of loss. Jesus truly brings the blessings of eternal life now to you who hear and believe in His promises.

He has gone ahead. He has crossed through the gate of death. He has returned to life. He has done that to lead you to life in Him. That is Ann's present possession, may it be so for you when your last hour comes.

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Pentecost Wednesday

Funeral Divine Service for Ann (Zajec) Lippitt

Psalm 85; Isaiah 32:14-20; Romans 8:28-36; John 10:1-10

May 18, 2016

*Pastor Michael A. Morehouse*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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<sup>5</sup> John 10:7.b