

Thank you for your prayers, kindness

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Thank you very much for your prayerful support of my mother during her final illness, and for the kindnesses you have shown to me and my family all through those months and since her death last Wednesday.

As I sit at her kitchen table on this quiet, beautiful summer morning, I am very much aware of how much the support of my family and of friends like you has helped me to begin the process of absorbing and adjusting to the reality of Mom's death.

I am quite certain that process will take some time for all of us. But even at this early stage, I am aware of aspects of this experience that have been and will continue to be, very important to me for years to come.

I think, for example, of the beauty of my family. I cannot begin to tell you how deeply impressed — even inspired — I have been by my sister, Helen; her husband, Jim Early; and their family, Grace, Jane, Scott and Julie Neff, Mary Ellen, Margaret and Kathleen. They have been tender and warm, generous, witty, supportive, encouraging and understanding with my mother, with one another and with anyone who has shared this experience with us. Their laughter, tears, quiet kindnesses and warm hospitality were a gift to all and a



A LONG THE WAY

high tribute to Mom.

I suppose that their great spirit was never more beautifully expressed than it was when we were gathered around Mom's bed during the last moments of her life. As Mom's breathing became more labored, Cathy, the Home Hospice nurse who was with us, told us that Mom was not experiencing a lot of pain. She also encouraged us to continue telling Mom that we were with her and that we loved her.

We did that, not in words but in song. As we stood around her bed, arms around one another, we began to sing songs that linked us to my mother. We sang "Playmate, Come Out and Play With Me," which Mom had sung to all of us when we were children.

We sang three verses of "Amazing Grace" — for obvious reasons! We sang Mom's favorite Christmas carol, "O Holy Night." (I wonder what passers-by thought when they heard us singing that song on a night when the temperature neared 90 degrees).

The last song we sang to Mom was "You Are My Sunshine," a great favorite at family reunions. During the second chorus of that warm, affectionate song, my mother breathed her last and went home to God.

At that moment the music gave way to tears and other expressions of grief. But I have a deep sense that as time passes and the tears subside, the music will swell again, bright and strong, and remain a great consolation and bond to all who were present that night for as long as we live.

Mom now joins my Dad, who died Aug. 29, 1977; her own mother and father, Nelson and Helen Bills; and her 12 siblings: John, Thomas, Arthur, Helen, Nelson, Edward, Mary, Alfred, Frances, Joseph, Margaret and James.

I have no doubt that they enjoy fullness of peace together, and I am certain that they are close in affection and support to all of us whom they have left behind.

And although I certainly cannot prove it, I expect that occasionally when they gather to remember us and root for us, a part of their program will be a chorus or two of "You Are My Sunshine."

Peace to all.

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“
We find rest in those we love, and we provide a resting place in ourselves for those we love.
”
St. Bernard of Clairvaux

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