

Terry – on behalf of myself – and Abbot Gregory of Conception, and Father Michael, a family friend from the Archdiocese of Washington, and on behalf of the parish community of Holy Family and all your friends and family who have gathered here with you today --

I extend to you our deepest and sincerest sympathies on the loss of your precious wife, Marie. For 28 years, you have been partners in living life as fully as you possibly could. And we are thankful for your witness of loving fidelity in sickness and in health.

To Marie's parent's, Joseph and Marian – this is not the way things are supposed to be. Children are supposed to bury their parents – parents are not supposed to bury their children.

And so our sympathies to you as well as to Marie's brothers and sisters, many nieces and nephews, friends, co-workers, and fellow members of the Body of Christ here at Holy Family.

I think back on this last year and the deaths of Jim Kinkaid, Danny Rieger, Dana Whelchel and now Marie -- all who died much too young -- and realize that I have had to say this far too many times to this faith community: that if any of us still need a wake-up call as to how precious life is and what a great gift every day of life is, then let Marie's short life and the grace and dignity she has shown us in the last two years be that wake-up call for us.

So kiss your spouse – hug your kids – tell the people that you love – that you do love them – **everyday**.

Settle your differences, make your peace, speak words of kindness to each other – **everyday**.

For today may be the only chance you will have. And no one wants to live with regrets. . .

The words of a once popular song – go something like this:

*“It’s the heart afraid of breaking – that never learns to dance.*

*It’s the dream, afraid of waking – that never takes the chance. . .”*

Terry – I don’t know about dancing – but I do know that Marie was one who wasn’t afraid of taking a chance.

I’m sure that was somehow bred into her by being the oldest – as well as the shortest – of seven brothers and sisters. I’m sure it was wrapped up in the notion that she had to prove something to everyone else.

This made Marie the trail-blazer of the family--the first to be in such things as band, spelling bees, and theater productions. And then somehow -- if it was good enough for Marie – then it was good enough for everyone else – and they were willing to take the plunge.

She was an early female presence in a male-dominated culture of computers and information technology and loved just to get things done.

But one could argue that the greatest chance she wasn't afraid to take – was taken on April 25, 1981 – when her dream of marrying you, Terry, was fulfilled.

It's a chance she was not afraid of taking again – as you looked lovingly into each other's eyes this past December 27 – and renewed your marriage vows.

Terry had asked Marie several months ago what she really wanted for Christmas – and she simply stated, “YOU,” which lead Terry to devise the plan of renewing their vows at one of the Christmas Masses and we all thought Marie was the only one who liked to plan. . . .

Marie was too weak to make it to any of the Christmas Masses – to say nothing about our uncooperative weather – so we made sure that renewal of vows did happen – at the house – on that snowy Sunday afternoon. . . .

*“And the soul - afraid of dying that never learns to live.”*

Marie was not afraid of dying and so she really learned to live – and loved life – and she learned to make other people's lives full and rich. She was always willing to put other people ahead of herself. And was very generous – even in death as is represented in the three memorials she asked us to do in her memory: Habitat for Humanity, Harvesters food bank – and the Holy Family building fund.

And by the way -- take a whiff of your program – the pleasant smell coming from some nice perfume – tucked away somewhere neatly of course – in a drawer.

An Asian proverb states that a rose does not need to preach – it simply spreads its fragrance. And we thank Marie – for spreading her fragrance. . .]

Part of Marie’s enjoyment in life was traveling – no doubt also a product of her childhood when moving from one place to the next was just part of being an Air Force family. Marie would plan meticulously any trip that was to be taken – and would always throw in a surprise destination that took her and Terry off the beaten path to some wonderful, educational or historic site. Just another sign of the great love and devotion she had for you, Terry.

*“When the night has been too lonely – and the road – has been too long. And you think that love is only for the lucky – and the strong. . . .”*

Marie had a long road of treatments, and therapies, and nausea -- since her diagnosis with cancer – but she remained strong.

And so when the days or nights get hard for us in the future – when we are tired and worn out by our work, by our relationships, or by life in general; when we have aches and pains and we feel tired and run down **and we start to feel sorry for ourselves**—then let’s think of Marie – and the amazing inspiration she was in these last two years of her life.

She did not want to feel sorry for herself – and she did not want us to feel sorry for her either. She did not want anyone to treat her like a cancer VICTIM – but as someone who was still doing their best to live life to the fullest – in spite of this thing called cancer.

But Marie was never alone through this journey of pain and suffering. She had a great network of family and friends who surrounded her with love and support. A network of support that continues with so many people opening their homes and providing lodging for those who have traveled from out of town to be with us today.

And finally, and most appropriately:

*“Just remember in the winter – far beneath the bitter snow, lies the seed – that with the sun’s love – in the spring –becomes the rose.*

Good gardeners – like good Christians – spend a lot of time on their knees. And certainly the many hours Marie spent in the garden – helped to forge her unshakeable faith and confidence – that what we see – is not what we get. She knew there was something else awaiting us all—that those who have fallen will rise again—that all of us will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord – and that we shall always be with Him.

For God *has* prepared a place for all of us – a dwelling place – where if we profess that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and life—we will be for all eternity.

So picture it – Marie in her personal, eternal space where everything is neat, and orderly, and alphabetized. Where just maybe there is a splash of purple in the décor and the smell of fresh roses.

No doubt she will soon be hosting a group of eight – serving meticulously prepared food – and rich, choice wines. --- And she will be patient in her waiting until we are all together, again.

Staci Warren wrote a poem – that with the slightest tweaking – becomes very appropriate for us today:

Marie kept a garden,  
a garden of the heart.  
She planted all the good things  
that gave us all a good start.

She turned us to the sunshine  
and encouraged us to dream,  
fostering and nurturing  
the seeds of self-esteem.

And when the winds and rains came,  
she protected us enough –  
but not too much – because she knew  
we'd need to stand up strong and tough.

Her constant good example  
always taught us right from wrong –  
a marker for our pathway  
that will last a lifetime long.

We are Marie's garden.  
We are her legacy,  
and we hope today she feels the love  
reflected back from all of us.

