

So we are here today to honor and celebrate the life of Sophie Elizabeth: the second child of Jim Edwards' first wife, Theresa and the sister of Todd and Caitlin.

Unfortunately Jim and Theresa – this is not the first time you have had to bury a child. And I'm relatively confident in saying that in this case, practice does not make perfect.

Thank you for being such a good example of taking each other, and all in your family -- for better for worse, in sickness and in health. Thank you for being such loving parents.

Todd and Caitlin, whether you liked it or not, taking care of Sophie also became your responsibility and this could not have been an easy thing for you, but somehow, you made it look easy and never seemed resentful of all the time and energy Sophie took from you and your family.

Thank you for your example of putting the words of Christ into action: “For whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me.”

To Thelma, our sympathies are also with you as well as the rest of the family.

To the many friends and parishioners who have gathered here today, for Sophie’s classmates, their parents and all the caregivers that Sophie had, thank you for being here today and supporting Theresa, Jim, Todd and Caitlin in their loss.

In the new Cathedral of the Holy Angels in Los Angeles, hangs the largest collection of tapestries in a place of worship in the United States. On either side of the nave of the church – is a series of tapestries depicting the Communion of saints. Pictured, in fabric are 135 saints

from around the world. All the saints have their eyes directed to the cross above the altar.

Where there was no pictorial or historical accounts of how a saint looked – the artist, John Nova – used the faces of ordinary men, women and children to depict the saints, so that people could come to know that a saint could look just like them.

One of those who posed for the artist was a young man in a wheelchair. He thought he was chosen so that people of all diversities, including those with physical disabilities, would be depicted in this long line of saints.

He was disappointed when it was only his face, on an upright body that was in the tapestry as a saint and not him, in his wheelchair.

When he confronted the artist for this supposed slight John Nova simply told him: “I want no part of a heaven, and I’m sure you don’t either, where people would still have need of a wheelchair as they gaze upon the face of God.”

As we prayed in our opening prayer, we have confidence that Sophie is now in the kingdom of God where there is no more suffering, no more tears, no more sadness and certainly, no more wheel chairs.

Imagine what this life is now like for Sophie. She soars as with eagles’ wings; she runs and does not grow weary, she walks and does not grow faint. Someone even suggested that she roller blades and doesn’t fall down!

Sophie did not have much of an earthly tent to begin with, so it did not take long for it to wear out, although she lived way beyond what anyone ever thought – only, I think,

because of the love and strength and support that you, her family, freely gave to her over the years.

Much like when Jesus said he was the vine and we are the branches and apart from him we can do nothing – Sophie could do nothing without the circle of her family. She had love, strength and support only in so far as she drew it from you.

And we were all lucky enough that you shared Sophie with us whenever you could and allowed us to see that circle of care in action every time you were with us.

When it would have been so much easier just to leave Sophie at home, you brought her into our midst. Saint Paul once said that “We groan within ourselves as we await the redemption of our bodies.”

We know that Sophie often groaned out loud, and at least I can speak for myself, I never minded that because I

appreciated your dedication to having Sophie here, with you – and with us – and not hidden away somewhere.

Thelma told me at the hospital last week that she was always proud of you, Todd and Catlin because whenever you had friends over to the house, the first thing you always did was to take them into Sophie's room and introduce your guests to your sister. I think that speaks volumes of the love you had for her.

The name Sophie, comes from the Greek word Sophia, which means wisdom. And I think this is the greatest wisdom that Sophie had without even knowing it, that she so easily drew others into her love.

She had no boundaries, because she knew no boundaries. She had no defenses, because she knew no defenses. She wore no masks, played no games, built no walls around herself, all of which we adults are so good at

in order to close people out of our hearts – either intentionally or unintentionally.

Sophie was trusting enough not to shut anyone out.

And what we saw is what we got. And sometimes what we got was a great big smile like that one on the front of the worship aid and that smile could make the hardest of hearts melt.

Perhaps this is the child-likeness that Jesus talks about in the Gospel today—the ability to be open, honest and accepting in ways which is so often hidden from the wise and the learned.

Sophie has now gone to the Lord who now gives her rest. And the Lord now also gives you rest from the heavy burdens of care-giving you have had.

God is now enjoying *his* brown-eyed girl that you were privileged to have and to hold and to love and to care

for these last 17 years. And on behalf of this faith
community of Holy Family and dare I say on behalf of
almighty God, thank you for taking such good care of her.