**A Homily in Celebration of the Life of Patricia Snowden**

**Isaiah 25:6-9, Romans 8:14-19, 34-35, 37-30, John 5:24-27, 6:37-40**

**Church of the Redeemer, Bethesda, MD April 1, 2023 David Schlafer**

1. **Artisan Flower Arranger, Church History Teacher, Avid Choral Singer,**

**Lavish Provider of Reception Feasts, Lay Worship Leader**

 **(the first woman, in fact, to be formally licensed as such in the Episcopal Church)—**

**It’s little short of mind-blowing how a woman so slight in stature**

 **could have so wide a reach, so large an impact.**

**Patricia Snowden has been an ever-animated, up-to-her-elbows investor**

 **in relentless pursuit of what is beautiful, true, musical,**

 **in quest of what both honors and fosters fresh insights and deep connections.**

**Her time, her money, her energy, her creativity—all these have been interwoven elements**

 **in a life lived in love—for God, for her family, her friends, her students, her church.**

**For many if not most of us our energy ebbs and flows, depending on how well we’re feeling,**

 **how successful our efforts, at how tired we AREN’T at any given point.**

**For the eighty years of her time among us, Patricia has defined the meaning of TIRELESS.**

 **(I can think of many occasions when I could barely keep track of, let alone keep up with**

 **all her energetic convictions, actions, her whole-hearted dedication.)**

**These passions and activities have sometimes been expressed quietly**

 **(as when she’s listened to the flowers she is arranging**

 **so that they can whisper to her how best to place them in relation to each other).**

**Sometimes her commitments have come forth vigorously.**

 **(as when she has kept on pressing her point**

 **in the setting of a spirited theological conversation).**

**The common thread? Meticulous attention to detail.**

**Whatever she has been about, Patricia has been a woman of small frame and large heart.**

1. **It occurs to me that Patricia may have come across as “larger than life”**

 **because her living has been rooted in and oriented toward Larger Life—that is, Eternal Life.**

**Often people who profess a deep faith in God are discounted or dismissed**

 **as “so heavenly minded that they’re no earthly good.”**

**That has clearly not been the case for Patricia.**

**Instead, her ever so many earth-honoring endeavors**

 **have been articulate embodied expressions of the Divine Life that has infused her.**

**As the recent long-unfolding series of physical setbacks and limitations has beset her;**

 **Patricia has gracefully engaged them, resourcefully accommodated them,**

 **and cheerfully acclimated to them, with calm, unwavering good heart.**

**In the long trajectory of her declining health, there has been no place for the fear of death.**

**That is because, based on years of regular, faithful public worship and private prayer,**

 **Patricia has experienced and evidenced IN her life that Eternal Life—**

 **that deeper reality into which she now has fully entered.**

**Facing the prospect of his own mortality, Saint Paul penned these elegant words:**

 ***I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come,***

 ***nor anything in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

**Those words Patricia has resolutely claimed as her own.**

**Her love for God has been a mirror image of God’s love for her.**

1. **Patricia has deeply trusted in the words of Jesus recorded in John’s Gospel:**

 ***Very truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word***

 ***and believes him who sent me HAS eternal life.***

 ***Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.***

 ***This is, indeed, the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him***

 ***may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.***

**Patricia has tried her best to live out among us the love God has lived in her;**

 **The Eternal Life Love into which she has now been fully raised.**

1. **All that flower arranging, choral singing, theology exploring, worship service leading—**

 **these all have been a preliminary participation in, and a practice in preparation for**

 **that feast on the mountain of the Lord envisioned by the prophet Isaiah:**

 **the finest of food and drink, of elegant table flowers and spirited table conversations;**

 **a feast where everyone is warmly welcomed,**

 **a feast where all are set free at last from dark shrouds and streaming tears.**

**It is this feast that, while still on the horizon of the future,**

 **we celebrate in quiet, confident expectation for and with Patricia here and now—**

 “with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven”

 **a company forever singing SANCTUS, SANCTUS to the glory of God’s name.**

**On this day, even as we mark and grieve her passing, we celebrate Patricia’s transposition**

 **into the fullness of the Larger Life that, among us,**

 **small woman that she has been, she has lived so largely.**

**To you, Patricia, we give our thanks. And for you, to God, we render gratitude as well.**