

S. Irvin Marie Kreimer's Funeral Reflections

September 11, 2018

S. Barbara Leonhard

Reflections for S. Irvin Marie's funeral

Irvin Marie chose the readings for her funeral very intentionally. Each of the readings reflects some precious truth that she had struggled to believe; had once thought might be true of others, but not of her. When she was able to let these words speak directly to her own heart, she treasured them all the more. This is especially true of the Exodus reading. Years ago Irv was making a directed retreat and was offered this passage for her reflection. She said had never remembered a place in Scripture where God called someone an intimate friend, and that it was a bit startling for her to think about God this way.

In its context, this passage represents a key life struggle for Irv and for many of us. We cannot understand love all at once. We sometimes expect that genuine love will always look or feel a certain way. Moses had already been assured by God that he was God's intimate friend. But the setting here is one of those bargaining kinds of moments. He tells God, "I know, you have already told me that we are intimate friends, but now I need you to tell me how that will play out. Who is going with us in the next step?" There are so many "next steps," aren't there, in which we think we have to have the map or the concrete assurance of just how this next part of life will be? When Irvin Marie was choosing readings for her funeral, she chose this one about the need to continue to trust God's intimate presence in the next step — because it continued to both encourage and challenge her right to the end.

The 2nd reading from *Vision and Journey* begins with the line, "Our intimate union with the Creator shows itself in our delight with all creation, in reverence for persons, and in freely sharing the gifts entrusted to us with those in need." Irv loved creation. In years when she was able to dig in the soil, she greatly enjoyed her flowers. Even in these last years, there was always something rooting or growing on her windowsill. This reading also describes our Community life as "reaching out in service, prayer, and suffering." Irv served in numerous roles: as a teacher, as a principal, as Motherhouse minister, as a driver for Clare Hall, to name just a few, and in each one she learned something more about loving presence.

In the last year or so, as life slowed down considerably for Irv, she had a tangible way of including many others in her prayer. On the wall directly across from her chair was a row of pictures. She said that several times a day she would look at each one and pray for those each picture represented — her family, both living and deceased, our Community, young people, priests. Prayer had become her primary form of service, and she took that seriously. So in July she was delighted when I brought one more

picture to add to her row: one of the new Council. And she indeed promised to pray for us.

Many of us were here with Irv for her 80th Jubilee celebration just a few weeks ago. She had eagerly anticipated that day, and she very much enjoyed being with her Community, family and friends. I had asked her shortly before Jubilee if there were certain times in her Community life, or certain ministries, that surprised her or turned out to be especially enjoyable. She said they were all good, but that perhaps it was some of the things she did in her last active years that really graced her in a new way. Driving for Clare Hall was one of those ministries, and I wondered later if that was when she developed the compassion that drew her to S. Susan Eifert when her health issues made it so difficult for her to communicate or to still enjoy a card game. Irv was a very faithful friend to Susan, and something deepened in her in that process of self-giving.

Our gospel today about the call to be light to the world reminded me not only of the ways Irvin Marie shared her gifts and was graced by the gifts of others. It called to mind an art project Irv took up several years ago. Someone had mentioned the story about Mother Theresa and our 1st Sisters here at Oldenburg having so little that they burned candles in hollowed turnips in the chapel. Irv asked me to find a turnip for her, and over a number of weeks, she hollowed it out, dried it, and then used it for some time with a little battery operated candle in it. It was obvious that it wasn't just about the story for Irv. It was the hollowing out process that spoke to her – what it was like to participate in it; what it was like to pray that she would be open to whatever forms of hollowing out would be a part of her last years. And it was about discovering the ways that would remain open for her to share the light of her faith and her prayer.

Irvin Marie had a few favorite readings, and one of them was about waking up to the Holy Presence of God. It speaks of her life journey.

Coming home to God is another way of speaking of awakening.... It is an invitation to practice mindfulness, to dwell here and now fully and consciously in the presence of God, our eyes wide open to God's surprising intimacy. God's steadfast love is available right now. We need only to live with our eyes open to this gift, which manifests itself in the little unexpected gifts of daily life: the smile on the face of a child, an embrace from a co-worker, a letter from a friend. ... God is Holy Presence.... Emmanuel, 'God with us.' ... God's very name denotes being home in the Holy Presence, being in intimate communion with the great Mystery we call God....

Today we celebrate Irvin Marie's intimate communion with God, and ask that she help us in our own awakening to God's Holy Presence.