

# Good Friday 2015

**“Father, into your hands  
I commend my spirit.”**

*Psalm 31*

On Wednesday of Holy Week a year ago, I arrived at the hospital to stay with my youngest sister, who was battling cancer and the devastating side-effects of chemotherapy. Marie was beginning her final journey home to God, though all of us still had hopes she would be able to make it through just one more hospital stay. I knew she was walking with Christ during this Holy Week in the most intimate of ways. Marie had received the Sacrament of the Sick that morning and told me that she felt a heavy hand on her right shoulder. At first I thought her body was hurting, but then she said quietly and confidently, “I know it’s God’s hand and it feels good.” As the days passed, it became clearer this “heavy hand” was the hand of God’s loving Providence leading her through the most important journey she would ever make in this life.

On Holy Thursday, I decided that I would stay with her in the evening instead of going to the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. As I sat with her quietly, the words

and music of the Taize hymn kept playing in my mind, “Stay with me, remain here with me. Watch and pray. Watch and pray.” I felt Marie’s hospital room was the modern Gethsemane that evening.

On Good Friday, she and I agreed that I would go to the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion at a nearby parish. She wanted me to bring her presence to the service. I made it to the church just as the service was beginning. There were at least 5000 people there, many spilling out the main doors. I managed to make my way into the back of the church and as the youth group carried a massive cross down the center aisle, I suddenly felt as if I ought to be with Marie in her hospital room – she was going through her suffering and agony of Good Friday and Christ was with her – but Christ was also here in the Assembly. There was a moment of indecision, and then I felt God’s hand on my shoulder saying, “I am taking care of her. Don’t be afraid.”

As I listened to the reading of the Passion, I imagined that God had a heavy hand on Jesus’ shoulder too, as God guided Jesus to his passion and death. My heart was heavy with grief about Marie, and the only consolation was knowing that Jesus had suffered and died for her first, and was now strengthening her in her moment of suffering and death. She was not alone – the same hand that had guided Jesus was on Marie’s shoulder guiding her to new life. I left the service that Friday afternoon grateful that my faith had been strengthened as I heard 5000 strong singing with full voice, “And I will raise you up, and I will raise you up, and I will raise you up on the last day.”

Marie died on Easter Tuesday, still feeling our Provident God’s comforting and steadying hand on her shoulder, as she entered into the new life of Christ’s Resurrection. I have come to believe that her experience of God’s hand on her shoulder is our assurance that God is with us in the sufferings and deaths that we and all people in our world experience. We are not alone – the hand of our Provident God is on our shoulders guiding us and bringing us through death to new life in the Risen Christ.

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*Good Friday 2015  
Women of Providence  
in Collaboration*