

Funeral— Sister Maura Anne Dunn 12/30/19

The readings chosen for today's liturgy
offer a remarkable resemblance
to Maura Anne's long time relationship
to our Provident God,
who is the God of surprises,
the God of possibilities
and impossibilities.

Self-described as sentimental,
extroverted,
and having a quirky sense of humor,
Maura was a beloved member of this community,
a very good friend,
a dedicated coworker
in our sponsored ministries
and a loving sister to her brother Ted.

As the letter to the Ephesians, we just heard
proclaims so beautifully,
God blessed Maura Anne,
with every spiritual blessing in the heavens.
God chose her before the foundation of the world
to lavish graces upon her—
and God poured an abundance of those graces upon her for 9 decades!

Like Sarah in our first reading from Genesis
like Elizabeth in today's Gospel
Maura's life gives ample evidence that she too, was frequently
surprised by grace.
And her characteristic response to God's intervention
was grateful exuberance.

Maura was like Sarah.
They both laughed
as God made good
on the promise of unexpected
and seemingly impossible new life.

Maura was like Elizabeth.
They both burst forth in loud songs of praise
full of the Spirit.

In the midst of her faith journey
after a life-saving, emergency surgery
and a three-month period of recuperation
Maura (who was then Shirley Victoria) was surprised by grace.
At the ripe old age of 38,
quite unexpectedly, she said,
“an overwhelming call to religious life manifested itself.”

From her first days in the community,
Sisters Genevieve and Maura Anne shared a special bond.
Much later reflecting on her 9 decades of life, Gen said,
“My life can be reduced to a simple phrase: ‘All is Grace’.”
Maura echoed that sentiment
and knew with certainty that God’s grace is enough.

For 19 years,
Sister Maura Anne ministered
under the careful mentorship
of Sister Donna Marie Dorfner
as a medical social worker at Divine Providence Hospital.
Maura declared that “being with patients
as they breathed their last breath...
was the most powerful experience of her life.
Like the Hebrews of old,
like Sarah and Elizabeth
Maura knew God as the sacred breath we breathe
which is sheer grace,
unmerited, unearned—
a gift freely given.

Sister Maura Anne later ministered at La Roche for 18 years
initially at the Welcome Center
and later in Freshman Admissions.
She noted that ,
“The world came through that lobby.
I was energized by everyone, particularly the students!...

I never saw it as a job—it was always a joy!"

Maura never expected a vibrant community life with dozens of intercultural, intergenerational women friends

—she was surprised by grace.

Maura never expected decades of fruitful ministry at both Divine Providence Hospital and La Roche University

—she was surprised by grace.

Maura never expected to be named her Alma Mater's Woman of Providence

—she was surprised by grace.

Maura never expected to celebrate a golden jubilee as a Sister of Divine Providence

--she was surprised by grace.

After so many life-threatening episodes,

Maura never expected to live such a long life

—she was surprised by grace.

And when we're surprised by grace—as we will be

may we,

like Maura,

like Sarah,

like Elizabeth

be gratefully exuberant

in our response

to the Provident God of possibilities and impossibilities.