

With Thanksgiving for the Life of
Carol Marie Hinrichs
September 24, 1927 + January 28, 2021
Ps23; Prov31:20-31; 1Cor13; Jn14:1-6,27



It's always a little strange and difficult at this part of a service for somebody I never got to meet, as if I could report and tell you things about somebody you knew and loved so well, who meant so much to you as a mother, a grandmother, a family member, a friend, a sibling in Christ.

And yet, I feel quite confident as I stand here today in speaking of Carol's strong character, having some sense of who she was.

I could find little glimpses of who she was in an autobiography she wrote way back in high school. A favorite part of mine portraying her was a page listing likes and dislikes. It's so great that I'll read the whole list.

Likes: Pumpkin pie. Apple pie. Neat people. Loyal friends. Spinach. Tall people. Friendly people. Reading comics. Beautiful scenery. Canary birds. Going to church. (Not something many high schoolers I know would add to a short list of favorite likes!) Opera singers. Music. Kittens. Flowers. Candy.

Then the dislikes: Mince-meat pie. Snakes. "Sassy" children. Having a cold. Gaudy colors.

Drunkards. Careless people. Careless drivers. Dirty streets. Filthy houses. Police dogs. Fixing my hair. Proud people. Storms. Unpainted houses. Cranberries.

I don't know; maybe that could be a standard list for a teenager in the early 1940's, but I still suspect it says something about Carol and gives me an impression of her, even on through the rest of her long life.

Again, though I didn't know her, another way I could draw some inferences is from her growing up as a pastor's daughter, that that meant something about what sort of life was modeled and shaped who she was in relation to others. Again, it doesn't always result this way, but it really seems that Carol lived into that lifestyle of care and hospitality, and especially in attending to others. I'm told that her presence was always welcoming and that she was dedicated to listening, hearing deeply what others had to say, receiving not only from them but receiving the person.

And that could radiate out, especially when it was amplified by her work ethic. Coming to mind is the Care Ministry she started at Mount Olive, connecting across generations and bringing people together with the sort of care she herself offered. And then, also celebrated in her obituary, there were the fruit cakes that she made to support her alma mater Valparaiso, and organizing others to do even more, and keeping it running for decades, beloved enough to gobble up the whole supply.

Hearing some of those stories also helps me develop a picture of Carol's character.

Yet another way is because I do know her daughter Sarah. Around this same memorial garden just over two weeks ago, Sarah and other mentors were gathered with our Confirmation class. They were discussing and reflecting on what was important about Confirmation, and, as I recall, Sarah's answer was that for her own children Confirmation was a time to think about morality and develop their ethics in a shared environment.

So when Sarah also reflects on learning from her mother and her influence and expectations, some of the many terms and values that have come up are words like honesty, faithfulness, kindness,

generosity, organization, hard-working, inclusion, thoughtfulness, authenticity, dependability, sincerity.

As I witness the importance of those things in the life of Sarah, it gives me some reflection, a way to see Carol without having seen her life, knowing in part.

And for the sake of this being a sermon, I really should get on to the most central part of what we may know of Carol, and that's that her life was a reflection of God.

Our reading from 1st Corinthians had the line that "now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face." In this passage on abiding love, dedicated love, never-failing love, it should be clear that you saw in Carol such a loving person, because she has such a loving God. In her own kindness, was a glimpse that we have a kind God and are kin with God, beloved in God's own family. Of course I may know that Carol was who she was, because I trust that this is who our God is. Of course we should expect that Carol would be there with her welcoming, caring presence, because, in those favorite images of Carol's own Confirmation passage, the Lord is our shepherd, walking with us beside still waters and through deadly valleys, leading us to lush pastures and finally and forever on to home.

This God in Jesus gives peace, leading you on the way of life. And as we have the opportunity today and this weekend to remember Carol and celebrate the reflections of God you witnessed in her, we also reassure our troubled hearts in anticipating the day when we see face to face, not simply in reflecting back, but gathered by eternal and unending love, with the caring hospitality of God into God's own house, dwelling again with Carol and seeing this all fully, face to face.