

With Thanksgiving for the Life of  
Jean Marie Loichinger  
December 2 1932 + December 25 2020  
Is42:5-10; Ps23; 1Cor13:8-13; Jn1:1-5,14



Mostly I want to let the family do the talking and sharing. For my part, I'll offer a few words of the Bible readings in connection to Jean.

To start with the final one, the reading from the Gospel of John is typical for Christmas Day. I'll probably always remember, when talking to the family and hearing the news of Jean's death, that Fred said

“Jean died on the day our Lord was born.”

I'm sure that timing is sad and hard. But it's also beautiful. In Jesus is life, the reading says, life and light the darkness cannot overcome. Isaiah also celebrates that God created the heavens and earth and gives us our breath. With all creatures and coastlands and seas, Isaiah further proclaims there's still more, new things that will come to pass.

But that already hints beyond death to resurrection. I was trying to start with this life, with Jesus and that Christmas moment of birth and new life. He comes to make his blessings flow, to give life abundantly and make that goodness known and present in our lives. His birth was to show God's presence with us through all of our life.

There are plenty of those moments we celebrate for and with Jean, most especially in 67 years with Fred, and as a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, stand-in mother, and more. She shared so much delight and so quickly made friends and explored much of this world. I liked Isaiah's phrase about being “a light to the nations,” thinking the reach of God's promise and presence was both witnessed and embodied by Jean across the world. Right up to the end, her presence radiated with care and with life, with delight for all she shared with us.

So if the birth of Jesus and Christmas is how God goes about showing God cares for our life and our celebrations, then we certainly give thanks and remember the good things.

But I think we'd also say that thankfulness remained true for Jean even when having to overcome adversity. For one, I wondered but never had a conversation with her about how her faith interacted with the loss of her vision. It's a pretty inescapable topic, it seems. In these few readings today, it comes up more than once. Isaiah identifies the Lord as one who “opens the eyes that are blind,” and each of the readings references those in darkness brought into the light. Whenever this theme came up in Bible passages, (though I was too chicken to ask) I wondered how Jean felt, whether it frustrated or encouraged her to hear a passage about being able to see.

Scripture itself often seems content with this as a metaphor, as Jesus even says that those who are physically blind can see more than those who claim to have vision (John 10:39-41). That might have been Jean, too. Maybe she saw something more. I was always interested that a standard phrase was “it's so good to see you!” Maybe her faith was a resource as she faced the difficulty, not just of eyesight but of much in life.

But that also points to more now. In Paul's language of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, none of us see very well for the present time. We see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face-to-face. We know only in part.

Not knowing can be difficult. It would be great to have a clearer image of what happens after death, of how we'll be restored in these relationships, of what the grand eternal future looks like. It would be helpful to know what to expect, in our worries and our longings, in pondering healing and restoration of Jean's vision, in our waiting to be reunited with Jean, and with her son Bob, and all those who have gone before us.

But instead we're left with hope. Will we be brought together again? In the Bible, Paul believes so (1Thes5:14-17). And if the greatest is love, then God must cherish our relationships. After all, this is a God who was born and needed care from

parents and who had relationships with siblings and friends and worked to heal and include the outsiders and faced death with compassion, all to offer more to come. This is a God of love, and so love mustn't be only for this life. It must mean broader restoration. We might anticipate healing and wholeness.

Or maybe we can just know that it will be good, goodness that follows after you forevermore, in the words of the Psalm, to dwell in the house of the Lord as Jesus softly and tenderly calls us with Jean to our eternal home.