

**A Sermon for the Burial of Elizabeth “Betty” Yurik**  
**Wednesday of the Second Week in Lent, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011**  
**Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Riverside, Illinois**  
**Luke 1:78-79; 24:1-5; Matthew 6:26-29; 11:25-30; I Peter 1:3-9; Romans 6:1-10**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Let us pray in the words of the old hymn: “My faith looks up to Thee, / Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine! / Now hear me while I pray, / Take all my guilt away, / Oh, let me from this day / Be wholly Thine! . . . While life’s dark maze I tread / And griefs around me spread, / Be thou my guide; / Bid darkness turn to day, / Wipe sorrow’s tears away, / Nor let me ever stray / From thee aside.”

A little more than a year ago, Betty and I sat across from each other at the dining room table in Betty Ann and Ben’s warm and beautiful home on a bright, late-winter afternoon. The sunlight seemed to fill every corner of the room then surrounded by the receding snows of winter and decorated with the gleam of icicles dripping their liquid diamonds.

As mother, daughter and I enjoyed our conversation, coffee and *kolačky* that afternoon I thought of the first time that I had met Betty at a Dorcas Society meeting years ago just weeks after my arrival at Sts. Peter and Paul. As I remember, it was near the beginning of Lent, a Shrove Tuesday evening, I believe, when the Dorcas women were holding their February meeting. Just down the table from me I noticed this darling little woman, whom I was certain I had not met, peering around the side of another Dorcas sister trying to get a look at me. Betty was wearing a smile as big and bright as that winter sun, as if to suggest, “Why, Pastor, I think I’ve known you all my life! Don’t you remember me, I’m Betty.”

And that sunny smile just melted my heart, as would happen time and again for years to come, even as it did a few weeks ago when Betty and I shared the Lord’s Supper together. It was the sort of feeling I remember having with Betty’s dear friend and relative, Kay Hodul, and what I sensed whenever I sat for coffee and goodies at the kitchen table of Mary and John Sipla, or spoke on the phone with brother Bill Sipla, or heard in the yarns of all the others in this great clan of faithful, loving, affectionate women and men—a clan whose season on earth likely has now drawn to a close with the passing of our sister Betty.

Here was such a warm, delightful, charming woman who knew in the depth of her heart the grace, mercy and love of her Lord. “Pastor, I pray every night, and tell Him how grateful I am for my life. And I always pray for my family. . . Pastor, I’ve got the greatest kids, my Betty Ann and my Don.” Betty often spoke of how grateful she was for everything, even that last time we were together, and always how thankful she was for her family. And, Betty Ann and Don, your spouses and families, I know your mother would want me to say how very grateful she was for your loving presence and service throughout all these years and how very much she loved you all.

“I’m so thankful for everything,” Betty would say again and again. This from a woman who endured so many trials throughout her life, trials that would cause others to say, not that “I’ve had a good life,” but that “I’ve had a rough time of it.” Much of Betty’s “good life” was that extended family, and that closely knit neighborhood, and that devotion to the Lord and His church. Gifts that we in our age no longer enjoy very much. Gifts upon which Betty and her family depended to get them through the many “hard times” in their lives.

So, as I thought of your mother and grandmother and great-grandmother this past weekend, my thoughts landed on a passage from Daniel: “. . . those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” I will remember Betty’s eyes like “the brightness of the sky. . . like the stars forever and ever.” Twinkling stars of hope and joy.

Today, we stand for a moment to gaze with thankful eyes upon a little life whose course on earth is finished after 94 years. Betty was a loving, faithful and devout companion with us in our pilgrimage on

earth; and these are the gifts of the Spirit that I shall remember about her: Her love for her family. Her hope in the midst of hardship. Her faithfulness to the Lord even in distress. Her devotion in prayer when it seemed she didn't have a prayer. Her kindness and gentleness toward others.

"My faith looks up to Thee, / Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine! / Now hear me while I pray, / Take all my guilt away, / Oh, let me from this day / Be wholly Thine!"

I wonder if you ever noticed how Betty liked to look up with her bright eyes filled with the joyous light of heavenly glory.

"Look at the birds of the air," Jesus told us, "they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. . . Therefore I tell you, don't be anxious about your life . . ."

Betty looked up in prayer to offer the anxieties that weigh upon the human heart and the worries that pierce the human soul. Lord knows, Betty had more than her share.

"While life's dark maze I tread / And griefs around me spread, / Be thou my guide; / Bid darkness turn to day, / Wipe sorrow's tears away, / Nor let me ever stray / From thee aside."

Of these persons, the prophet Jeremiah says, "They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit."

Betty looked up from below and took delight in the Lord's handiwork; she looked up from herself and received joy in the presence of others; she looked up in faith and was given life in Jesus her Lord. And one day, Betty looked up and saw a grand family of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Aged Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit when he spoke this prophecy, "By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The days of this holy season of Lent remind us that life is a journey from darkness to light, from light to darkness, and from darkness to light eternal: "Rest eternal, grant her, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon her."

We are reminded today that life is a path from death to birth, from birth to death, and from death to life eternal: "By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" Paul asks, "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

Betty looked up in faith and was given life in her Lord Jesus. Amid affliction, tribulation and angst, Betty looked up, and she was given faith, hope and love: "Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

"Come to me, all you who labor and are carrying heavy burdens," Jesus invites us, "and I will give you rest."

Betty Ann and Don, the risen Jesus promised his grieving friends, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live . . ."

"By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

". . . And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

*Dennis J. Lauritsen, March 16, 2011  
Sts. Peter and Paul Lutheran Church, Riverside, Illinois*