

Wake Reflection for Sr. Margaret Jungers, OSF

December 21, 2011

By Sr. Mary Lechtenberg, OSF

We are on a journey: good grief, good death, and a good funeral. In the past weeks we have been nudged into the next phases in Marg's journey of death. The events move us along in our grief, in our letting go. Tonight we pause for awhile, and as a community of faith, we clear some space and gather for prayer and reflection.

We have just listened to three sacred texts. The readings come together in the life journey of Margaret Johanna Jungers. Many of us were a part of the first reading: her life's story. No doubt, you could picture yourself with Marg in one or more parts of her life. Some of you have known her from the beginning of her life, teaching her to walk and talk – and she never stopped. Many of us met her through our Franciscan Congregation. Others may have met her only recently during a chemo session, or in her three weeks at Clare House.

Marg selected the reading from Philippians where Paul expresses his affection and gratitude so well and tonight she wants to express the same to you. We walk down that path with the apostles who eventually recognize and welcome the stranger in their midst: Jesus. You helped Marg recognize the presence of Christ in her life experiences. As Paula D'Arcy says: "God comes to you disguised as your life." Marg said not long ago: "I've had such a good life; people have been so good to me. My eyes have been opened to others' needs, to the needs of people who are poor; people have led me to places and experiences which I could not have had alone. They have brought good things to life within me. Others have truly been the Presence of Christ to me. I am so grateful."

Marg wants you to know she is full of thanksgiving...

- for walking with her,
- for your expressed kindness,
- for the ways in which you were partners with her in living the Gospel
- for being a part of her life.

You all are a STORY in a chapter in the book of her life, and she is grateful. Our story with her will live on in our hearts. As ink becomes imbedded on pages of a book, her life is imbedded in our lives. In many books, there is a page called: *Acknowledgements*. Authors want to express their gratitude to those who assisted them in the process of writing. In Marg's book of life, THIS EVENING is her page of *ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*....her expression of gratitude to YOU.

Music was important to Marg. She played the trumpet in school, loved to sing, learned to play the guitar, taking classical lessons when the rest of us were just strumming away with our basic three chords. She took piano lessons and even gave a short recital. Who could forget the many times she danced her prayer in this chapel? She found a song which expresses her gratitude to everyone. Tonight Karla Kloft will sing "Thank You" by Jan Phillip accompanied by Kay Forkenbrock.

How fitting that we honor Marg's life in this chapel, where she learned about Franciscan community prayer, worship and celebration, where she was received as a member of the Franciscans, where she pronounced her Final Vows. Who would have known then, that years later, she would receive the final vows of new members into the congregation. The chapel was renovated in the mid-nineties as a result of her research and her leadership. It is a living memorial of her efforts. As her life in Christ began in Baptism, she rests tonight near our Baptismal font...this font made of the original marble altar of Mount St Francis; it has eight sides, symbolizing rebirth and eternal life.

Marg, God's good work in you has come to completion. THIS is your day of Christ Jesus! You are beginning a NEW chapter in the book of your life. Our task NOW, is to make it a good funeral. We anticipate the celebration of Eucharist tomorrow, the great act of THANKSGIVING.

As hard as it is to let go of your life, to give you permission to leave us, we walk with you

- at this time of departure,
- in the last steps of your journey on this earth,

and our task NOW is to return you to God.

**Your good deeds go with you as you are raised to NEW life,
we give you over to the wide open arms of our loving God.**

***S' Panem Bohem: the Czech people say this upon departure:
S' Panem Bohem, meaning go with God***

**And so now, Marg, we return you to God, and it is WE who are FULL of Thanksgiving.
*S' Panem Bohem: go with God***