

A Requiem for Jean Snyder  
The Ven. Richard I Cluett  
February 5, 2007  
St. John's Church, Ashland, Pa

*A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.* Jeremiah 31:15

Jean Snyder has died, only three days ago. I am not ready to say good-bye to this good woman. I don't know if it is possible, at least for me, to move this soon, this immediately to making my song at the grave, alleluia.

I know that the resurrection of Jesus precedes us and will lead each of us into heaven, and I do rejoice for Jean that she has attained that stature and is more fully, most fully, in God's presence and the presence of all those she has loved who have gone before her. I know that. You, too, I hope, know that in the very core of your being.

But the marriage partner of 54 years is no longer here. The ministry partner of almost 50 years is no longer here. The mother and grandmother of these children is no longer here. The beloved friend of so many of us is no longer here.

Scripture says *Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead"... and he wept.* John 11

Lazarus was no longer there. And Jesus wept. The death of Jean Snyder has left a big hole in the hearts and lives of many. And there is, and should be, lamentation and weeping, so great is the loss, experienced by so many.

Joan Didion wrote about her own grief, "*Grief turns out to be a place none of us know until we reach it.*"\* It is a place where we must live for a time. It won't be rushed, it won't be bound by our sense of time, it won't conform to cultural norms, it cannot be managed, it must be borne, and it certainly won't be done in three days.

As deep is the gratitude for her life, so deep is the grief in the passing of Jean Snyder from us. *Dominos flavit.* The Lord wept. And so do we. There is no other way.

No other way. Even though we know that her suffering is ended. Thank God. Even though we know that she is in that place prepared especially for her as one of the Saints of God. Even though we know that she is in the greater light of God's presence. Even though we know she will wait and with Jesus welcome us when it is our time to come.

Her dear friend, and ours, Father Scott Allen wrote the other day, "*The sadness I feel is only assuaged by the knowledge that she is with the Lord she loved and served and will be waiting for the rest of us with a wonderful smile, arms outstretched for one of her big hugs.*"

No matter the time or circumstance or place, when Jean laid her big blue eyes on one of us, her face would break into this wonderful, warm, welcoming, embracing smile. You got a big hug

and a kiss, and an un-deter-able (perhaps a new word coined especially for Jean) desire to know how everything is going for you and your loved ones. No matter the time or circumstance or place; parish hall, living room, or hospital room.

To me she would say, “Oh, I’m fine. Tell me about Puddy. How she doing?” Eagerly wanting the latest news. To rejoice with you if it is good news and to hold you in prayer if it wasn’t.

So, how do we get to that place where in the midst of our grief we can sing, we say, we can even be able to cry or utter in an inarticulate groan and make the song of alleluia at the grave of one we have loved so dear, so dear.

I think there is nothing other to do at this time but to come here, to gather here, to share together in the loss of Jean as each of us has shared in her life. Beloved Eric, children, grandchildren, loved ones gathered along the way; family, friends, diocesan family, and more.

Each of us in one way or other recipient of Jean’s love, her care, her wisdom, her hospitality, her fierce devotion to, and passion for, God’s justice and the poor in this world, her deep searching and encompassing spirituality, her life of nurturing, serving, helping, guiding, supporting, mothering and befriending.

We come together as family, and we lean on one another, and we embrace one another, and we care for one another. Together we remember this wonderful woman.

We remember what we have learned from, by, and through Jesus as we hear the scriptures read.

We remember that from the cross, before his death, Jesus commended his beloved mother into the care and love of his beloved disciple so neither she or he would be alone and bereft in their grief, or in their new life.

Jesus gives us one another for the same reason. And he promises that he and Jean, and all whom we have loved and have died, await us, prepare for us, and will welcome us when it is our time.

Wendell Berry has written in a new book of poetry:

*Whatever happens,  
those who have learned  
to love one another  
have made their way  
to the lasting world  
and will not leave,  
whatever happens.\*\**

We give thanks to God for the countless ways our life and the life of the world was blessed by her being.

And we receive the strengthening solace and encouragement in the bread and wine of Eucharist.

All of these together make it possible to live, to go on, make it possible to hope that meaning will return to one's life.

When one we love dies, we are called to live; to live through the loss and grief and into the life ahead that God opens for us, strengthened and enriched, immeasurably and miraculously by the love and life we have shared.

And, in time, life will come. We can be sure of that. The sun will rise, a new day will dawn, and life will go on, there will be work to be done, good work, even if it doesn't feel like it now, even if it is unimaginable now. It will come. Jesus has promised.

So even here at the edge of the grave, we can find the way, the strength and the hope to sing, or to cry through our tears, and make our song for Jean and for ourselves,

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Amen

\*Joan Didion, The Year of Magical Thinking, p. 188

\*\*Wendell Berry, Given: Poems, p. 55