

# Give Thanks and Remember

When my mom and dad celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary we surprised them with a scrapbook of memories and photos shared by their friends and relatives. What we were expecting was a flood of smiling faces and happy memories. To our surprise we discovered that what often marked the remembrances were stories of hard times—financial struggles, a serious illness, the death of a child—and how mom and dad supported them in very trying circumstances. We learned that our parents were not only people who were there for their friends for bridge games and picnics, but also walked with them when times were anything but fun.

That got me thinking that maybe we should give thanks for and remember those painful times that we'd usually like to forget. Maybe those are real gifts to us. Let me share a few personal examples.

My sister Karen was two years younger than me. We shared the usual sibling rivalries growing up, but even though we lived in different states as adults we were growing closer as we each had sons born only two weeks apart. It felt good to be connected. We were looking forward to many years of deepening sisterly friendship. But cancer intervened and though she struggled mightily she lost her battle shortly before Easter. She was 32 years old. I mourned the loss of getting to know my sister at even deeper levels. Grace turned this around when I received an unexpected bundle of mail from my brother-in-law sharing part of her inner journey during her last months. I discovered that we were much more alike than I ever knew. And I was grateful for this intimate peek into her soul.

My middle child Jeremy has Asperger's and though he is very intelligent he is on disability and has not had the kind of life I would have wished for him. But what a gift he is to the family, being present and caring for relatives who have been sick and aging as

well as my daughter's premie twins. He told me once that "in the old days I would have been a priest, but I'm not sure I could be a pastor. So I think of myself as a "deacon" helping others." Not the life either of us would have chosen, but what a blessing he is.

My plan for my life had me in a long marriage like my parents who were married 67 years. I never expected to be a widow in my 50's—and yet I was. If I were still married, I doubt that I would be where I am today—in ministry at St. Leo's. Not the path I would have taken, but I know that I am in exactly in the right place. And I'm grateful for it.

Even though the Israelites often grumbled in the desert, they learned that God always took care of them. I can imagine them telling their children about the trials they went through and how God carried them. We continue to tell that story today. In fact it's one of the lessons chosen to be read at the Easter vigil. We're still remembering and giving thanks.

And we who are Christians give thanks and remember the bloody crucifixion. What looked like the end was the beginning and millions of people have been graced by Jesus' life, death and resurrection for more than 2000 years.

Maybe, just maybe, our perception that we give thanks only for what at the time appears to be good things is a bit skewed. Maybe we have more things to be grateful for than we realize.

So when you're feeling down and everything seems to be spinning out of control, take heart. Like spring always follows the barren darkness of winter and resurrection comes only after death, this painful time will pass and we just might find ourselves not only remembering, but also giving thanks.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate

