

HOMILY OF BISHOP HOWARD J. HUBBARD

AT THE CHRISTIAN BURIAL OF

SISTER MAUREEN JOYCE

Monday, May 24, 2010

Blessed Sacrament Church, Albany, New York

I'd like to express to Sister Maureen's brothers Larry and Harold, to her sister-in-law Rosemarie, to her niece Maureen and Mark, to her nephew Dan and Mary Beth, to her niece Mary Beth and David, to her grand niece Emily and grandnephews: Danny, Miles, Sean, Owen, Jonathan and Samuel and to the members of her religious community the Sisters of Mercy, to all her relatives, colleagues, and friends my deep sympathy on the occasion of Maureen's death after her valiant battle with a rare form of cancer.

I want to thank Doctors Garbo, Timmons, Drislane and their staffs, in particular, Mary Sokolski, for the excellent care she received and the home care team from St. Peter's Hospital, especially Kathy Lind and Debbie McHugh who were extraordinary in their attentiveness to Maureen. Indeed, extraordinary is an understatement to characterize Debbie's care – she came in the middle of the night, on days off and even during her vacation to be present to Maureen in such a professional, but personable way. Debbie we will always be indebted to you for your magnificent service.

I am grateful to John Murray, the President of the Board of Catholic Charities, Michele Kelly, Mary Pat Hickey, Mary Olsen, Ben Patten, Kate Amello, Betsy O'Haire, Jack Simeone, Linda Bonsteele, Phyllis Tolbert, Grit Bernhardt, Shannon Kelly and the members of the administrative staff of Catholic Charities, to the staff of CMS, and to all the agency directors and board members who stepped up to the plate and kept everything

working smoothly during Sister Maureen's illness. This cohesiveness was truly a sign of your love and affection for Maureen and of the sense of teamwork and solidarity she fostered.

I thank too, Sisters Jean McGinty and Kay Graber who coordinated her care so diligently, Sisters Jane Somerville, Barbara Dudley, Phyllis Herbert, Marge Halpin, Charla Cummins, Raymonda Duval, Patricia Lynch, Fathers Mike Farano and John Bradley and Debbie O'Brien, Arlene McNamee for their many visits. I am grateful to Bill Pryslucki, Tom Mayer, B.J. Costello and her school chums for their lunches, to Theresa Gizzi and Fran Teeter for their pasta, the O'Brien's, Clark's, Raymond's, Snyder's and Murrays for their special treats and to all the dog walkers from team Tyrone for their faithful service. Of course, her family was a constant and unfailing source of support. I thank, too, Jill, Lois, Ann, Missy, Midge, Nancy and Hatti who tended to Maureen so lovingly her in her final days.

I am grateful for the outpouring of cards, notes, flowers and prayers Maureen received over the past 10 months. It was a source of great hope and consolation for her to receive these expressions of support and the beautiful accolades of how she touched peoples' lives so profoundly.

I thank, too, Father John Bradley and the Blessed Sacrament community for hosting this liturgy in this Church which has been so much a part of the Joyce family history and Father Pape, Rector of the

Cathedral, where Maureen often worshiped previously, for the vestments of today's liturgy.

I thank Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester and Bishop Joe Estabrook of the Archdiocese for Military Services, and a classmate of Sister Maureen's (and whom I learned last night was her kindergarten sweetheart) and all the priests, deacons religious and elected officials who honor Maureen by your presence today.

Finally, words are simply inadequate to capture the gratitude we owe to Sister Mary Ann LoGiudice for the incredible love and devotion Mary Ann lavished upon Maureen from the day of her diagnosis to the moment of her death. At great sacrifice, Mary Ann was present to Maureen 24 hours a day since July 23rd, providing round the clock care and sterling physical, emotional, and spiritual support. Mary Ann enabled Maureen to remain in her apartment where she was most comfortable till the very end. Mary Ann, Maureen's family, colleagues, friends and your religious community will never forget your angelic care of your beloved friend and soul mate.

One day when I was going to visit Maureen, Brie, a CMS social worker on the 2nd floor of Branson Parenting Center where Sister Maureen resided asked how Maureen was doing. After I gave an update, Brie then said, "I wish every person in the world could experience the wonderful bond of friendship Sister Maureen and Sister Mary Ann enjoy and the type

of love Sister MaryAnn has poured forth on Maureen. How true! No one has ever left this world with more hugs, kisses and caressing strokes than Mary Ann showered on Maureen. Mary Ann, you truly loved Maureen to God; you served as a mid-wife, birthing her to eternity by giving Maureen the same tender care and unconditional love that you extended to your own daughter Barbara during her battle with HIV and AIDS disease.

Throughout her life Maureen was known by a variety of names: -- Maureen by her parents, brothers and friends – Aunt Maureen by her nieces and nephews – Mo by her St. Theresa classmates and kindergarten reunion group – a Vintone by her fellow students at Vincentian Institute – Sister Bridget Mary by the first graders at Christ the King School in Westmere and her colleagues in the social service department of St. Peter's Hospital – “mom” by many of the residents at Community Maternity Services – Ms. Joyce by the veterinarians for her feline and canine companions – “toots” by her nightly caller and friend, Pat Thomas – Sister CEO by her colleagues from the School of Social Welfare at the University at Albany, –that nun with the radiant smile by Archbishop Harry Flynn, Joyce or capodose by Fr. Mike Farano when he was annoyed with her – “flathead” by Sr. Bridget Kane, her co-worker at St. Peter's – “that crazy woman” or that pain in the a.. by Rich Farrell and Noel Olsen, and “babe” by Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings.

But the name in which she most gloried was Christian.

She came to understand well the words of Paul to the Romans which we heard in our second reading: Are you not aware that we who are baptized in Christ were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. (Romans 6).

And Maureen embraced this new life and lived it to the full in her family of origin, in her religious family, the Sisters of Mercy, and in the Catholic Charities family. Let me say a word about each.

It was in her family of origin that Maureen learned the basics of the Christian life – from her parents, Harold and Mary, her grandmother Bridget, and her extended Herry and Joyce families. They witnessed by word and example to the fundamental truth that we heard proclaimed in today's responsorial psalm "the Lord is my light and my salvation of whom should I be afraid".

Maureen was proud of being "an army brat" born at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and of her father's military service in World War II where he emerged as a deservedly decorated Colonel. Throughout her life and ministry Maureen had a special place in her heart for those in military service and for veterans, always insisting that November 11, Armistice Day, be a holiday for all Catholic Charity agencies.

Her maternal grandmother Bridget Gleason Heery, her namesake early in religious life, was her heroine. Bridget came from Ireland to the United States where she worked as a domestic. She then sponsored countless family members to these shores and helped them get settled with housing and employment. She sowed the seeds of Sister Maureen's love for the poor, the disadvantaged, the oppressed, and especially on behalf of immigrants and refugees, which was manifested in the initiative Sr. Maureen undertook more recently in caring for the displaced persons coming from Myanmar and Iraq.

Sister Maureen also inherited the political genes of the Joyce clan – of her Uncle Ray, her cousins Ray Jr. and Harold and now Harold, Jr. But Maureen employed these political instincts not in a partisan political way but in forming coalitions with a wide network of individuals and organizations in order to promote the common good throughout our region.

She served on the boards of The LaSalle School for Boys, St. Catherine Center for Children and Families, St. Anne's Institute, The Teresian House, the Diocesan Health Care Alliance and St. Peter's Health Care Services – in addition to overseeing the growth and development of our 14 county Catholic Charities network which serves over 95,000 people annually in 30 different sites. Sister Maureen worked closely with the Jewish Community in the Neighborhood Naturally (retirement community), served on the boards of The Parsons Center for Children, The Albany

County Mental Health Board, the Community Loan Fund, Assisi of Albany, Episcopal Charities, The Senior Issues Forum, the Regional Food Bank, the Father Peter Young programs, and was the first woman ever to serve on the board of the Troy Savings Bank.

Her collegial and visionary abilities were recognized at the national and state levels as well as she was asked to serve with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, the Round Table Social Action Board, the Social Policy Committee of Catholic Charities USA, as a member of the Public Policy Committee of the New York State Catholic Conference, and as Chair of the New York State Council of Catholic Charities Directors.

Her contributions to these and so many other organizations was acknowledged by honorary degrees from her alma mater the College of St. Rose, by Siena College and the McCauley Medal given by Maria College, as well as being the second recipient of the prestigious Centennial Medal given by Catholic Charities USA given by its director Father Larry Snyder who is present today.

Within the past few months Mayor Jennings renamed the Neighborhood Center at 340 First Street, the Sister Maureen Joyce Community Center and she was the recipient of the J. Alan Davitt Award bestowed by the Bishops of New York State for her outstanding ecclesial service, the Bishop Francis Muguvero Leadership Award given by her peers, the Catholic Charity Directors of New York State, the 2010

Distinguished Public Service Award presented by the School of Social Welfare of the University at Albany and the Bishop Edwin B. Broderick Award conferred by our Diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis and Family Life. Sister Maureen will also receive posthumously the 2010 Teresian House Humanitarian Award.

Sister Maureen's identity was deepened further by being a spiritual daughter of Mother Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the religious Sisters of Mercy. In her 49 years of religious life, Maureen found among the Sisters of Mercy such wonderful role models, mentors and colleagues: her Aunt Sister Mary Veronica Joyce, her cousin Sister Joyce Niles, her grammar school principal, Sister Mary Berchmans, Sister Janet and Sister Ellen Lawlor, her mentors at St. Peter's Hospital, her associates at CMS: Sisters MaryAnn Logiudice, Mary Ann Walsh, Patricia Lynch, Mary Margaret Hickey, Helen Hayes, and Phyllis Cox along with so many of her lay colleagues especially Mary DeCotis and Mary Lou Tredeau, as well as her many Sister of Mercy collaborators in diocesan administration: Srs. Kathleen Turley, Karen Marcil, Ellen Boyle, Marilyn Murray, Gail Rieth, Marge Halpin, Peg Sullivan and Betty Dividio.

Keeping strong ties to the religious sisters of Mercy was a priority for Sister Maureen. For example, she served a term on the leadership team of the Albany Sisters of Mercy and on the governance committee of the newly formed Northeast Community of Religious Sisters of Mercy of the

Americas and was always an active participant at local community meetings, gatherings, workshops and liturgies.

Sister Maureen was influenced greatly by the Second Vatican Council, especially its decree *Gaudium et Spes* (on the Church in the Modern World) and this led to the relationship she formed with her third family, if you will, Catholic Charities.

In 1971, Sister Maureen was asked by the then director of Catholic Charities Father Richard Downs, to become the foundress of Community Maternity Services, in order to fill the need created by the closing of the Brady Maternity Center and to render assistance to unwed mothers which had been offered previously by St. Catherine Center for Children. With a wing and a prayer Sister Maureen built this service of loving care and support to pregnant teens and parenting mothers from a residence housing 10 women to a comprehensive 14 county program for women and children which became a model for the late Eunice Kennedy Shriver's Community of Caring Initiative. She launched the Farano Center for HIV/AIDS boarder babies and opened the Heery residence for Women and Children. During her near 20 years at Community Maternity Services, under the tutelage of the legendary Sister Serena Branson, Maureen was inspired by Sr. Serena's vision, collaborative leadership style and political acumen. For the past 20 years Sister Maureen built upon the superb legacy she inherited from that icon of Charity, Sr. Serena.

The key to Maureen's success at Catholic Charities was her embrace of the Second Vatican's Council's vision of collegiality and shared responsibility. These concepts were the foundation of her relationship with board members, agency directors, staff and volunteers. In a system which easily could have degenerated into a Darwinian "dog-eat-dog" environment of regional rivalries and interagency competition, Sister Maureen believed firmly in and promoted the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity which resulted in cooperation, collaboration and cross agency fertilization.

Sister Maureen sought to delegate, encourage and support local decision-making, while recognizing the responsibility of diocesan administration to allocate resources to the most vulnerable agencies and people.

At the diocesan level Maureen was a team player willing to do her fair share and more, in terms of cutting back and downsizing during times of fiscal constraint. She had an uncanny ability to envision the larger picture and to enable those with whom she served to make individual sacrifices for the well-being of the whole. And Maureen's trust and empowerment of her staff was matched by their loyalty, respect, affection and love for her.

Also, Sister Maureen was always willing to help out beyond diocesan borders, recruiting teams of volunteers from Albany to assist Catholic Charities of New York and Brooklyn to cope with the fallout from 9-11, to

support the Catholic Charities staff in Baton Rouge, LA and Biloxi, Mississippi in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and more recently to coordinate aid to the victims of the Haitian earthquake. And in the early 90's she was part of a U.S. delegation to Romania to train child care workers how to serve with those with HIV and Aids disease.

While Sister Maureen's vision of personalized human service, recognizing the dignity and worth of each person, and her advocacy for justice, were truly inspiring, it was through her inclusive personal interactions that Maureen's incandescent gifts truly shown.

She had a positive, upbeat, eternally optimistic spirit and a tender, compassionate heart that radiated such genuine love for each person she encountered. She had an amazing ability to be present to people in the moment and in a way that helped them to feel good about themselves, to sense that they were special and cherished; to see hope in the midst of gloom, and to realize that where there is a will, there is a way.

She was inspired by and put into practice the words of the late Robert Kennedy: "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... I dream of things that never were and ask why not?"

Only God knows the countless number of people for whom she made rent payments, covered utility bills, subsidized school tuitions, or to whom she provided emergency assistance or created a job in order to carry them through a difficult time. And by these illustrations, I am referring to

assistance she rendered from her own meager religious stipend, not from agency resources.

Even when she was so sick last summer at St. Peter's Hospital, recovering from her surgery, Maureen was garnering funds from her hospital's visitors to allow a nurse's aide, whom she just met, to travel to a relative's funeral down South. And she designated the beautiful floral bouquets she received to other sisters from her religious community who were hospitalized or convalescing.

One night, while I was visiting Maureen in the hospital, a nurse asked me for a blessing. As the nurse was leaving the room, Maureen asked for the box of Kleenex by her bed. I went to hand Maureen the Kleenex but she responded, "No, not for me, for the nurse. I think she's crying – bring the Kleenex to the nursing station." That is the type of empathy for others she radiated constantly.

Maureen would have been so pleased with the headline in Saturday's Times Union: "Driving Force for Justice Mourned." For Maureen had an insatiable thirst for justice, evidenced, for example, by the Poverty Profile she commissioned for the Diocese of Albany. It became a template, statewide and nationally, in seeking to address this social cancer in our midst. She was a staunch advocate against the death penalty, and for prison reform offering space at our Pastoral Center to David Kaczinski and his organization New Yorkers for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and to

Allison Coleman for her program Prisoner Families of New York State. Although not an avowed feminist, Sister Maureen recognized the special challenges faced by women, and forged pathways to help them overcome obstacles and to obtain that equality that has been denied women for so long.

And no one was a greater advocate for the humane treatment of animals than Maureen. In addition to her own personal menagerie of cats and dogs she rescued over the years, and her beloved golden doodle, Tyrone the wonder dog, there wasn't an appeal for an animal cause she could ever refuse. With her passing, the Humane Society is probably going to experience the type of decline in their finances that most of the world did recently with the stock market crash.

Throughout her debilitating illness Maureen maintained an upbeat spirit and her lively sense of humor. For example, when informed by the doctors that the source of her cancer was a rare pouch formed in the embryonic stages of development and found in only two percent of the population, Maureen quipped, "It must be a vestige from those rotten potatoes the Irish had to survive on during the great famine." During the past winter Olympics, while watching TV, she would occasionally doze, as a result of the heavy medication she was taking. One night Mary Ann touched her and asked, "Are you all right?" To which Maureen responded, "Oh I'm fine; I'm just recovering from my luge run."

Even in her great suffering, over the past several weeks, fortunately she never lost her sense of humor. Toward the end she was told by her nurse, Debbie, not to get out of bed without the assistance of a caregiver and a walker. One day, when I was there, Maureen tried to get up by herself. Sister Mary Ann chided, Maureen, you can't do that! With a twinkle in her eye Maureen turned to me and said, If I'm not here the next time you come by – check the basement where Mary Ann will probably have me chained to the floor.” And just before she died, she overheard Sister Mary Ann telling one of the caregivers what Maureen's needs were, to which Maureen piped in and said to Mary Ann, “Nurse Ratchet, “you're just tooting your own horn.”

It was Maureen's warmth, graciousness and keen sense of humor which made her equally at home in the living room of her family, the sitting room of the Mercy Motherhouse, the delivery room of St. Peter's hospital, the dining rooms of Mercy House, the DePaul Residence, Camp Scully, and The Fort Orange Club, the Red Room of the Capitol, the hearing room of the Legislative Office Building, the board room of the Troy Music Hall, the back room of the Orchard, the living room of Camp Rejoice, the playroom of the Heery Center, the waiting rooms of Concerns-U, the United Tenants or Catholic Charities Aids, the meeting rooms of the County Department of Social Services and HUD, the single room of her attic apartment, and most especially, the upper room of the Eucharistic supper.

Indeed, at the core of Maureen's life and ministry was her relationship with God. Every evening before retiring she knelt in prayer on her arthritic knees. She reflected daily on the Scriptures and undertook special regimens of prayer and penance during the Advent and Lenten seasons. This relationship with God was the source of her unswerving commitment to serve others in accord with the charism of Mother Catherine McAuley: the charism to bring mercy unto thousands, which Maureen did literally; in accord with the call of Micah which we heard in our first reading: the call to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with God; and in accord with the evangelical exhortation of Jesus proclaimed in today's Gospel calling us to be meek, humble, merciful, poor in spirit, clean of heart, peacemakers and sufferers for the sake of righteousness. All of these things the world considers to be utter foolishness but which Jesus reveals to be the way, the truth and the life.

Yes, Maureen was a dreamer, a visionary, a woman with the heart of a lion, the gentleness of a lamb, the soaring spirit of an eagle, the loving compassion of a mother hen nurturing her brood and the faith of those noble women of whom the Scriptures speak so glowingly.

She had her faults, to be sure. She was an incorrigible procrastinator, an unreformed workaholic, stubborn as a mule and her culinary skills ranged from peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to hot dogs and hamburgers with BLT's in between.

On a personal note, from the days I served as chaplain at CMS in the mid 70's, Maureen has been a close, cherished and beloved friend and an unfailing source of wisdom, courage, inspiration and strength.

Since Maureen was diagnosed with terminal cancer last July, many have been praying for a miracle – and I would contend we got it. Because in so many respects these past 10 months were such a great gift for Maureen and for those whose lives she enriched through the years. This period gave people the opportunity to convey to her personally or by phone, letter or e-mail, the profound way she had impacted their lives. Colleagues and friends traveled from New England, Florida, California, the Gulf Coast and the Midwest to bid their adieus. Refugees from Bosnia, residents from the Maternity Center, and staff from the Farano Center, ecumenical and interfaith leaders, catholic charity staff, and board members, past and present, offered her such moving feedback about how she had transformed their lives and how she gave them opportunity and hope when they were vulnerable and despairing.

To paraphrase Shakespeare: Nothing in her life became her like the leaving of it.”.

It was amazing to witness the grace and dignity with which she accepted the reality of her terminal illness, inevitably buoying up and consoling those who sought to comfort her. As throughout her whole life, in dying she maintained the same selfless and other-centered disposition

and a deep and abiding trust in God's providence which made her such a revered and beloved figure.

Shortly before her death Barbara DiTommaso, Maureen's colleague from the Office of Peace and Justice, wrote the following note, and I quote, "Maureen, yesterday at Mass we sang the Servant's Song. I was reminded of the Jews in exile in Babylon, with no priests, prophets, king, temple, sacrifice or ritual.... nothing but the interior life which developed when everything else was taken away. Maureen, you have always been, but are now even more so, God's song." (and you always will be)

So, Maureen, we give thanks for the song of your life and as envisioned by that haunting 1930's ballad, which captured your imagination, enlivened your spirit, and was playing by your bedside at the moment of your death, we pray that you will pass over that rainbow, to that fullness of divine life which our loving God, whom you served with integrity, faith and love, has prepared for you from all eternity.

Eternal rest be with you, Maureen, and may your soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.