

Memorial Homily
Betty Schendel
May 19, 2018
St. George's Episcopal Church, Bolton
Fr. Chris

“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God... Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.”

I was reminded when reading this text, which the family picked out for this morning, of another passage you probably know from scripture—one that you probably heard as children. It appears almost identically in three of the four Gospels:

“But Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” [Luke 18:16]

Let the Little Children come to me, Jesus said. This passage reminds me of Betty and what I knew of her. She was a nurse and a midwife by trade, and brought these skills with her when she came here to America. She welcomed many children into the world. I also remember her in her latter days, loving to sit in the rear of the church, where she was also close to some of our youngest members on Sunday morning. There was great joy in her face as she observed the children in church. She smiled on them, and made them feel welcome. There was a bit of child in her, and you could notice it in the twinkle of her eye as she looked around the church or parish hall and then back at you, ending up with a big grin on her face.

And there are her own children, Pauline and Beth, whom knowing is to know the fine parents they have, and the wonderful mother

that Betty is to them, and will always be.

Children remind us of our better selves. Their innocence and wonder is something we yearn for, because we find those qualities diluted, sometimes dissolved or depleted in adulthood. We lose our innocence all too early with the saturation of the rapid media system in our world today. We are exposed to things we never imagined in the past. And our wonder is taken from us as our world seeks to explain away every mystery, miracle or awe inspiring experience we may come across. But innocence is a great quality to strive for throughout our lives, and

wonder will lead us not only to hope for better lives, but to see the potential in the world around us and in ourselves and our loved ones. Despite its seeming absence, there is that spark of childhood in all of us, driving us to be better and more faithful people. And wonder, awe and innocence are the stuff of which faith and hope and love are made up. Betty's eyes reflected that glimmer of wonder, and her life is the suggestion of the hope which faith brings to us for more than is apparent at first glance.

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God... Wonder leads us to take joy in many things. We pursue life and the world as full of opportunities which bring joy upon exploring them. Such was the diversity of Betty's life. She loved to garden, sew, knit, bake and took joy in caring not only for her family, but also her pet cat Lucy. Betty enjoyed the simple pleasures of life, and shared her pleasure in them with others. This reflected the wonder of God in her life, quietly, without drawing attention to herself, but faithfully, day in and day out.

Finally, faithfully is a word which also describes the application of innocence, joy and wonder in her life. Betty was a faithful member of this congregation. She participated on Sundays and she worked behind the scenes in fairs and suppers and other activities. She made every effort to be here and to be a part of this community. In the last years of her earthly life, this was a challenge that others might not have been up for, that is, the physical challenge to be here. But her church and her church family meant so much to her that she risked it and was duly rewarded for her ministry of presence, not only in church during worship, but following church during the social hour. Betty will always be a part of St. George's, and her spirit will be with us as long as we remain here.

Innocence is a quality of holiness. To be without stain or spot, to keep clean from these in your life, and insofar as you fail to do so, to regularly clean your spiritual house. So this is reflected in the words of the Burial Office say during the commendation at the end of the service, behold, O God, "a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming." ...Beloved, we are God's children now... we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. Betty is experiencing this now, with God in heaven.

Betty is a presence here at St. George's, hard to forget. We were blessed to know and have this special woman in our lives. Presence is such a special gift and Betty's gift to us and her family and friends was very special. Wisdom 3:9 said: "Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him

in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.” Betty abides with Him in love.

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. Betty revealed what we will be in her life, and her life stands before us as a reminder that we are God’s children and that God is calling each and every one of us in wonder, awe, and innocence to live. AMEN