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Diocese of Ontario

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Remembering Frances Joan Ford

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It was Julian of Norwich who said, "All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well", as she reflected in her writings; 'Revelations of Divine Love'

Joan was a vessel of God's divine love as she sought to be a real image of Christ's likeness in her long journey of faith. When I think on her, several words, descriptors, come to mind.

Gratitude, wisdom, kindness, thoughtfulness, faith, service, humour, motherhood, love.

I can only speak of her in terms of these things, because they are the attributes I saw in her every day, in every encounter, when she was well, and towards her end, she remained consistent and true to the depth of the qualities of these things which showed her authenticity, a signal of hope and joy to all who were present to her.....

....made us thankful for the encounter and desirous for us to be with her again.

For her, this sacred place, was partly her living room, where she celebrated her faith and friendships, carefully ministered as a long time president of the Altar Guild, a reader, a member of Parish Council and Nomination committee, the famed 'Contact Club', and until just 12 months ago, coordinator of meals on wheels and a worker in our soup kitchen actively helping to feed the many homeless people of our community.

But her deeper qualities were relational.

Joan knew us. She knew you, not judgmentally, but as a friend and companion on our way. Quick to lend an ear, to listen and sometimes reflect, to gently offer advice or to sit in silence as we worked it out for ourselves, she had a keen sense of justice and an open heart, informed by the great journey of her life and past, but more importantly her faith for the things still yet to come.

Her silence at times was just as powerful as her words.

She took us seriously but wasn't shy of laughter and moments of joy and there were moments in her joining in and her responses when you knew she had seen all this before and that there was little new under the sun.

Proud of her indigenous heritage, informed her bias to a vision of equity and inclusiveness for all, and she could welcome the stranger as well as those well met and familiar. In and through life, she rediscovered and engaged in her roots through All Saint's and Tyendinaga.

There was a purity in Joan that acknowledged the truth of the presence of God in all things, from the very simple to the most complex, and that the whole creation as diverse as it is, was to be adored and appreciated, and that we are all one, in all things.

She was A peace maker, that her ideal and dream was that we all got on, and that joy, and from time to time hardship was necessary, and was worth the effort in the journey together.

The liturgical life of the church concerned her as did language employed, the hearing and study of scripture informed her senses and helped engage her in seeking meaning in our complex world so that in turn she could be a better citizen. Her love of the sacraments – the Eucharistic meal, we share today, was a nonnegotiable.

Her beatitudes...her blessings grew out of her journey in faith and has made her a true member of God's kingdom, by her example and presence, her gentle leadership and her loving nature. These were her gifts. We can only be left in this moment, like her, grateful for a life so graciously and honestly lived and shared and today we know in faith that she is home with the Jesus she loved, with Herb and her parents and all who walked with her on her earthly pilgrimage.

An Australian poet, **A.D.Hope**, mused on the mystery of that wonderful and expectant transition from life to death and our entering into that divine joy.

'The Gateway'

Now the heart sings with all it's thousand voices
To hear this city of cells, my body, sing.
The tree through the stiff clay at long last forces
It's thin strong roots and taps the secret spring.

And the sweet waters without intermission
Climb to the tips of its green tenement;
The breasts have borne the grace of their possession
The lips have felt the pressure of content.

Here I come home: in this expected country
They know my name and speak it with delight.
I am the dream and you my gates of entry
The means by which I waken into light.

Thank you Joan.
Amen