

Mabel Moy – A Celebration of her Life - September 13, 2015

Homily by the Rev. Dr. Kim H. McNamara

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, Psalm 42:1-5, John 14:23-27

Mabel Moy's family and friends selected beautiful readings for today's celebration of Mabel's life. In this time of mourning, these readings provide us with an opportunity to reflect upon our own lives, as well as Mabel's. The reading from Ecclesiastes reminds us that "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die." We know that we are born and that we must also die, but we cannot know the answer to the biggest question of life. "What gain have the workers from their toil?" We cannot know why we are here on Earth and what our purpose is. As the reading from Ecclesiastes explains, "I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end."

We cannot know what God's plans are for us and we cannot know when we have completed our business here on Earth. No one was ready for Mabel Moy to die, least of all Mabel. She had so much more business to be busy with; so much more to learn, so many more vegetables to harvest, pottery to make, tennis games to play, car rides to take, grandchildren to hug.

In the days since Mabel passed, as I have learned more about Mabel's life, her work and her loves, my thoughts have been filled with images of water. I began to see in the water a metaphor for Mabel and her life. Water is fluid, changeable, flexible, willingly seeking out new pathways as it runs its course, cool, refreshing, and life-giving. Mabel was like

that. Yet, water is also strong. Waves crashing on the beach, strong currents beneath the smooth surface, and drops of water gradually eroding tall mountains over time. Mabel was like that, as well. When you were first introduced to Mabel, it was easy to see her as soft and gentle; like a summer rain or morning dew. It was easy to see the calm surface of Mabel rippling in the sunlight of her smile. However, the more time you spent with Mabel and the better you got to know her, the more you began to understand that Mabel was as deep and powerful as an ocean and as far reaching as a river. Mabel Moy was a truly amazing woman, yet she was so humble and private about her life, if you stayed on the surface of first impressions, you might not have been aware of just how amazing she really was; how strong and how deep.

Our Psalm reading begins with an image of a deer longing for flowing streams, a soul thirsting for God; for the living God. Mabel and I shared two intersections in our lives; one was here at St. Hugh, the other was at Olympic College. We took several bible study and faith inquiry classes together through St. Hugh. This is how I learned that throughout her life, Mabel thirsted for God; she longed for wisdom, for understanding, and for a connection to the living God. While she enjoyed these classes, she also lived out her commitment to God through the discipline and daily practice of faith. In one of our classes, she mentioned that she had studied Eastern religions and was especially interested in Taoism. In fact, Mabel was an active leader for the Healing Tao Institute USA and traveled to China to study meditation and Chinese medical practices and was certified as an instructor.

I often saw Mabel at Olympic College and looked forward to hearing about the classes she was taking. She always seemed to be having such great fun while learning about a delightful variety of subjects ranging from pottery and sculpture to American Sign Language and history.

Mabel loved to learn and throughout her entire life, she never stopped learning. . While I knew that Mabel had graduated from college some years ago, I did not know until a few days ago that Mabel had also earned a Master's degree in Curriculum Development at the Teachers College of Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in Statistics & Educational Psychology at Ohio University. Mabel had told me once that she had been a teacher, as I learned later, she actually worked as an evaluator in the Office for Research for Medical Education (ORME) at the University of Washington for many years. Mabel had chosen a topic many of us dread, statistics, and then used her unique skills and knowledge to improve medical education.

While Mabel found deep happiness in the pursuit of knowledge and the realm of intellect, she also loved living on this wonderfully physical and sensational Earth, God's friendly creation. Mabel was thoroughly grounded in her life on our Earth, so grounded that she completed a program in mountain climbing through the Mountaineers by reaching the Summit of Mt. Baker. She traveled, hiked and studied in Peru, Scotland, Spain, France, Italy, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Thailand and China. Yes, Mabel had many dimensions to her life and showed us that life is so much more than toil. Mabel's life was complete with seasons of laughter, times to embrace, times to dance. It seems to me that Mabel danced in a centered balance of conceptual and physical, discipline and delight.

When she decided to grow a vegetable garden in our St Hugh community garden beds, she dove into the dirt with equal parts of joy and dedication. She planted, she weeded, she watered, and she harvested. Tomatoes, squash, kale, lettuce, carrots, onions, zucchini and much more; her garden grew abundantly and richly rewarded her experiments and her efforts. Just two weeks ago, in one of our classes, she talked about her deep satisfaction with her garden and told us

about the most precious gift that had grown from it. Mabel, the daughter who had never grown a garden, had a mother who had always grown gardens. In her own garden, Mabel had found the seed, the root, and finally the vine that connected her to her mother. As she explained that day in class, by being able to experience her mother's perspective through her garden, Mabel felt she had come full circle in her life; she had come back to her mother. We do not know when we shall behold the face of God, but we can know that God's plan, God's timing, is perfect.

It was obvious to anyone who knew Mabel how much she loved her family. Her delightful husband, James Moy, was never far away; dropping her off for church, classes, and gardening, and picking her up with his charming smile and joyful greeting. For nearly 60 years, James and Mabel established a true partnership and, looking to the future of possibilities, created a life centered on family, a life's work built on education, and a life's purpose founded on faith in God. While James and I sat by Mabel's side in the hospital room, he told me about their thoughtful, strategic, and, often, miraculous career moves. First one would head off for a new career opportunity, then, once the groundwork was established, the other would follow with their two sons. From one end of the country to the other, then back, again, until they finally found their home here in Mason County.

Mabel and Jim could not have known what plan God had for them from the beginning to the end. But, looking back on their lives together, we can clearly see the many seasons and cycles of God's plan working in the two of them. While I always knew Mabel was very proud of her two sons, it was not until I finally met Jim and Tom a few days ago, that I fully understood how truly kind, thoughtful, smart, talented, and handsome they really are. Mabel and James raised two amazing sons; the best gifts -- the best legacies -- two parents could ever hope for,

other than loving daughters-in-law, and wonderful grandchildren, of course.

In the Gospel reading from John, Jesus assures us that those who keep his commandments and love Christ will be loved by God. When we remember Mabel's smiling face, when we look back upon her life, we can know that Mabel loved God and that she lived her life according to God's word. We can know that God found a home in Mabel.

On Thursday, August 27, at about 3:00 am, I heard a call from within my dream. The call woke me from a deep sleep, and bid me to get up and look out the window. There, I watched the full moon, a lovely shade of pink through the smoke of the forest fires, setting with swift and certain grace behind the dark blue clouds over the waters of Case Inlet. As the moon slipped behind the horizon, I was filled with the knowledge that Mabel's life had set with the moon. I was not the only one to witness that moonset. Others were called out from their sleep to watch the beautiful moon come to the end of her journey on Earth. Across the miles, we were connected by shared thoughts of Mabel.

Following her passing, the Earth seemed to weep with all of us. For many days, a heavy and most unusual rain poured down from August skies like tears falling all around us. The much-needed rain revived parched gardens, trees, rivers, and lakes and quenched the many forest fires in our region. Yes, there was sorrow, loss, and mourning, but in those healing and restorative tears, there was also an acknowledgement of a very blessed life and a calm, grace-filled sense of faith and peace. In Mabel's passing, we acknowledge and celebrate God's gift to us in Mabel, Mabel's life, Mabel's loves. We also acknowledge and celebrate Mabel's gift to God. In the tears that fell upon the Earth, we could almost hear Mabel's gentle, whispered

assurance. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid. The universe is good and God is there.

Amen.