

This is a sacred space and today it's a place filled with memories, history, thanks and prayer for (and with) a woman who for sooooo long has been a part of the fabric, spirit, prayer, life and dreams of this gathered community.

We offer thanks for Elizabeth Mary Gildea at birth and baptism ... Sister Elizabeth Mary in our Congregation of Sisters of Saint Joseph and in ministry... Mary and Aunt Mary to her family, friends, and peers... and I dare say, TREASURED ONE to her God.

Mary and I came from the same Brooklyn neighborhood, we attended Holy Name Church and School (Mary and John were a year older ...Pat and I were classmates) Mary and I with several others here today attended St Brendan's High School. To be from Holy Name of Jesus Parish is its own claim to fame ... BUT for me to have been and still be a Sister of Saint Joseph with Mary is a lifelong privilege.

Today is the vigil of the Feast of the Transfiguration ... In the Gospel of this Feast we see Jesus revealing His Godliness to His disciples and friends ...

I believe that Mary – was a CONTEMPLATIVE IN ACTION- who trusted, relished and witnessed her Godly relationship with Jesus in our world and in herself for much, if not all, of her life.

Our own CSJ Charism of love of God and every dear neighbor found in her a faith-filled response and because of her many years of ministry in a Passionist Parish that call was often viewed through the lens of the Cross. Her own passion and suffering these last years has always been with a care, prayer and concern for others.

STORY – In the late '70s -early '80s – Mary and I worked on week-long retreats for our Congregation --- planning and providing the prayer and music contexts for the Conferences. This was BEFORE “instant music”,

flash drives, CD players or tapes and players, before 45 rpms records ...

We carried portable phonograph players and records 33 1/3 rpms ... they were heavy. Mary had a large selection ... CAREY LANDRY was her favorite. She would have worn out the records playing his music if she could have her choice. One early day in the retreat as we prepared the priest with whom we worked who was a musician and amazing singer finally said: "ONE a DAY, Mary, ONE Carey Landry A DAY".

She loved all of his music but she had a favorite which she would play at every chance she could ... I think it became the theme song of her life.

ONLY A SHADOW ... MY LOVE ... BELIEF...DREAM... TRUST... the LOVE I HAVE is only a shadow of YOUR LOVE FOR ME.

MY LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS ... She played it every chance she could get ... and she lived it ... even through her pain.

AND... I believe it sustained her courage, her faith, her smile, her ponderings and wonderings, her laughter and her tears, her love and her every effort for so many years including those where she bravely kept choosing life. It's as though her life was singing to her God: She sang in her life "I KNOW MY LIFE... MY LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS YOUR LOVE IN ME WILL GROW! ... YOUR LIGHT in ME WILL SHINE!

As we gather at this Mass and this Family Table we celebrate that there are NO shadows ... NO dark clouds ... NO dimness anymore... and we pray that Sister Elizabeth, Mary, God's TREASURED ONE be enveloped in that bright and perpetual light of God's LOVE

(and to use her own words and poetry...)

"... that she know the UNFATHOMABLE, WONDROUS MIRACLE of God's coming, care and clemency in her risen and free