

A Eulogy for Mary
Dec 25, 1957 - Dec 17, 2005

by John C. Mannone delivered Saturday February 25, 2006

First, I want to thank David for allowing me these moments to share, to reflect, to smile, to cry, to grieve, and to rejoice with you.

Many things can be said about Mary Watson, but a few really stand out and can be said to be constant traits. The first is her inquisitive, but quiet nature. The second is that all her expressions were punctuated with smiles. Together, these render a legacy of *quiet inspiration* for many of us and in particular, I'm sure, for our friend David. She has always been there for him, for us, for TAO almost as if a lubricant on meshing gears, keeping TAO turning smoothly. She was conspicuously present in an invisible way. These are some of the things I remember when I think about Mary. These are the things I choose to think about, too.

It's easy to talk about her genuine qualities, but it's hard to see her gone. It hurts to think about that. However, I still find a way to rejoice because her spirit is still here, here at TAO. Whenever I go to the eight inch, I see her on the steps helping the newcomers; when I sit in the classroom; I see her at the computer helping with an experiment or in the back of the room putting out the food for the visitors; or in the backroom pouring David a cup of coffee. Perhaps I notice her more now than before as she quietly helped everyone. But even more than all those glimpses of her being here and there, she is in our hearts. And her presence is echoed with each beat when I think of her. In a way I can't easily explain, it helps to override the hurt.

This hurt sometimes comes from monsters, monsters that lurk in the shadows of death. Monsters like the tiny viruses that replicate fear in every strand and choke the life out of innocent defenseless children and the frail elderly. Monsters like giant storms that churn and bash or awakened by convulsing Earth at ocean bottoms that spit the vile of boisterous destruction on whole towns at a time. And insidious monsters like cancer that eat away at the very fabric of life, indiscriminately and relentlessly attack our loved ones.

It seems so often that these monsters win. But do they, really? Where does our hope lie? I wrote this poem in the face of despair left in the wake of Katrina but it is universal-

Hope

Hope is not a loose thread dangling in the wind. Rather a strand strengthened with the bands of faith and the strings of the heart.

Someone once said, *Hope Floats*. But so does the shattered aftermath of storms. No, Hope is an anchor with these tides of change.

Hope is a cry that is heard, a tear that is seen, a pain that is felt. There is always Hope because He is always there. The one who has cried for you, shed tears of blood, felt the pain of your cross.

John C. Mannone
September 2005

[Collage of Hope from the Holy Scriptures

And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love..... and a threefold cord is not quickly broken... Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father... But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation... the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast...

(References: 1 Corinthians 13:13; Ecclesiastes 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 5:8; Hebrews 6:18/19)]

That's where my hope lies.

It's hard to be here at TAO and not think about astronomy, but astronomy was very much a part of Mary's life and so it is fitting that we gather here to honor her memory.

Perhaps this legacy is suggested in eulogies so often used in memorials like this one,

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we commend this body back to the earth from which it came.

Of course, this is taken from the Holy Scriptures,

Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. (Genesis 3:19)

*and the dust returns to the earth as it once was,
and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:7)*

On that note, I want to share another poetical, which says it another way. In reading it, I had come to extract a great sense of peace. I hope it will give you peace too. But first, I

have a prefatory remark. Though popularized by Carl Sagan I believe it was Joni Mitchell who was first to say it in a song, which Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young sang at Woodstock- *We are stardust, we are golden*

Out of the Dust

of space
as if alive
specks spawn
in womb of heaven
colliding swirls in chaos accrete
forming nucleus of life

storms of rocks shatter some,
others grow smoothed
by weight of gravity
stretching time

and when the wind has blown, the veil of clouds
no longer shroud the radiance
then there they are, the planets,
like a family
gathered around its sun
in the effortless suspension of momentum
balancing its gentle tug

we are as this host of heaven
His, from before beginning
formed and shaped by His essence

now, let your burden be easy
gravitate to your Sun
orbit Him
feel His wind in your face
feel the warmth of His consuming fire
know that He is there
always there

John C. Mannone
June 2005

This is my prayer today for you, for me, and for Mary. Amen.