

April 25, 2021

Remembering Marion

Dear Friends,

On Thursday April 22nd the members of The New Life Support Group (who were the founding board of Stephy's Place) attended the funeral for our matriarch and co-founder, Marion Fitzgerald. I had written about Marion in my January reflection as she was battling cancer, and I thank all of you for remembering her in prayer and thought. Marion's battle ended in a most beautiful way surrounded by her six children and a multitude of in-laws and grandchildren. Her legacy of a warm, close, loving, remarkable family in itself is amazing, but Marion's legacy stretches far beyond her family as she created a beautiful and loving community with all of us who were fortunate enough to have been touched by her.

After the funeral, I was so moved that I sat down and wrote Marion's family a letter, some of which I would like to share with you as I dedicate this week's reflection to our beloved Marion Fitzgerald:

Dear Beautiful Family of Marion,

I have attended countless funerals (really) and Marion's was the most beautiful, appropriate, spiritually uplifting, and inspiring I have ever attended. It is difficult to put into writing what your Mom meant to me, but I needed to let you all know how she touched my life, and in doing so has touched countless more.

First, I want to thank you for sharing her with all of us. As they say, hindsight is 20/20, and as I look back on my life, I have come to realize distinctively how much my own personal spirituality and ability to walk with and comfort the bereaved has been touched deeply and formed by her in a most significant way. She helped me to understand and envision God differently, she helped me to understand and appreciate women differently, she infused hope and purpose when I was floundering with both. What I do now is a direct result of your mother's friendship, support, and determination (which she had in abundance). Her determination often

got me to move toward the most significant experiences of my life- such as our response to 9-11 and the beginning of Stephy's Place.

Your mother's legacy is securely and most positively cemented in all of you- her incredible family, which was so very evident at the funeral, but her legacy stretches far beyond your huge family into the wider world. She saved lives. She walked people from darkness into light, from hopelessness into happiness. We both loved the *Prayer of Saint Francis*, and Marion lived that prayer every day as I strive to do it as well. She was God's instrument of peace because where she saw hatred, she sowed love, when she saw injury, she encouraged pardon, when she saw doubt, she inspired faith, when she saw despair, she infused hope, she brought bright light into deep darkness and she turned sadness into joy. She did not so much seek to be consoled as to console others, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. She knew that it was in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned, and she always, always knew that in dying we are born to eternal life as she is now.

I am happy that she is with her beloved Fitzy who she mourned every day. That pain, and all her pain, is finally over and she is where she pointed us all toward from the day we met her. She is in Glory. She is enwrapped in Love. She has gone Home where we will all one day be together again. Until then, I will continue to appreciate all the signs she will send and live in the legacy she created. I pray that her strength continues to give you all strength, and that her love will always guide you toward happiness and peace.

May our loving God bless your family as you grieve this most precious soul who touched and changed our world.

Sincerely Yours,

Kevin Keelen