

Celebrating and Remembering Marianne Loughrey

Transfiguration Lutheran Church
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Gracious God, you are our creator. You are the One who gives us life and You are the One to whom we return. We give you thanks for the time we shared with Marianne and those who have gone before us and ask that you would comfort our hearts with your peace and give us courage to surrender to your never-failing love and care. Amen.

Brian, Louise, Peri, and family: peace be with you. As we remember and celebrate the woman you knew and loved as mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, great-great-grandmother and friend, I hope you take comfort in the promises God gives us—that death is not the last word and we can trust that Jesus has prepared a place for Marianne with him in heaven.

Beautiful. Intelligent. Generous. Talented. Giving. Wanted others to be happy. Words that describe Marianne. It's always a challenge to tell the story of a person's life in just a few words. It's impossible really. Especially with such a long and full life of over 90 years on this earth! But we try to say something that captures the essence of who a person was. We need to take the time to remember Marianne and to give thanks to God for her life.

Marianne was one of four children born to David and Louise Roden on March 29, 1921. As a child, she experienced the deaths of both her father and her older brother, which took a great toll on their family. But they made do with what they had—and they had each other to lean on. Marianne loved to sing, many thanks to her mother who encouraged Marianne and siblings to form a vocal trio that was even featured on the radio. Music continued to be a lifelong passion for Marianne, who enjoyed classical music, American jazz, a little bit of opera and even some rock and roll!

As a teenager, Marianne met Kenneth Loughrey at an ice skating rink; and the Catholic and Lutheran pair married in 1940. They shared over 50 years of marriage before Kenneth died in 1997, and their union created a legacy of family through their three

children, seven grandchildren, twenty-two great grandchildren, and seven great great grandchildren! In visiting with Brian and Peri last week, I learned she was a wonderful mom who loved going to the movies, planning picnics at Lilac Lane, visiting the Art Institute, leading Campfire Girls, and taking trips together as a family.

Though she didn't have as many opportunities to pursue higher education, Marianne was a very well-read and learned person. She read voraciously and kept up with current events and the impact they had on the world around her. She was progressive in her politics, concerned about the welfare of others, the environment, and population. She held a variety of jobs in her life, including work at 1st National Bank, Butler Brothers in Minneapolis, and as a recorder in the admissions office at Macalester College, which was a highlight in her career.

These last years have not been easy for Marianne. Her declining health prevented her from living independently. She wasn't as mobile and able to care for herself. Age does that to us; it makes us more aware of our fragile bodies and how we cannot rely on them as we once did.

It's in moments like these, when death comes knocking at our loved one's door, that we all realize just how fragile we really are, and it makes us wonder, is this all there is? (Which is a very natural human response.) Do we live some 80 or 90 years if we are lucky, and then it all comes to an end in a blink of an eye? For those of us here on earth, when someone we love dies, we have questions. It is hard to let go, no matter how long they lived on earth, no matter how many things were going wrong or right. We have questions. Questions like: will I see my mom, my sister, my grandma, my friend again? What is heaven like? And is she there? How can I know? And is there more than this life? I am here to proclaim that there is.

I didn't have the privilege to know Marianne, but God did. Even before Marianne was born, God knew her. God knew Marianne intimately—the person she would become, the gifts she would bring to the world, the imperfections too. God knew her pain, the

burdens she carried, and the desires of her heart. Whether she was aware of it or not, God was working in her and through her life until the end. As a devoted parent, God never gives up and always remembers his children, even when we think we have been forgotten or that we don't deserve that unconditional love. God was there in the beginning, is with us now, and goes ahead of us to show us the way when we are called home. It's comforting to know that in the midst of our human suffering, God weeps too. God does not stand by on the sidelines. God is with us in our suffering and promises to redeem us and bring us hope in the midst of despair.

Part of being human means that people come and go in our lives, but the good news is that God's Word endures forever. And in God's Word, we find a God who provides trustworthy promises about life after death. The Scripture passages we heard today paint a picture of what it looks like to be in the presence of God. Psalm 23 reveals a peaceful scene, where God leads us in green pastures near still waters. Even in the darkest valley of life, God is there at our side to bring comfort and peace. Revelation 21 gives us an idea of heaven by reassuring us there will be no more death, mourning, tears, or pain because we will be in the very presence of God. Matthew 5 reminds us that even when we mourn the loss of a loved one in this life, we are blessed, we will be comforted, and one day, we will experience the great reward of heaven. The most direct assurance we receive, however, comes from the mouth of Jesus in John 14. As Jesus is preparing his disciples for the time when he will die, he makes sure they know they will not be alone. He asks them not to worry and to trust that he is preparing a place for them too, so that where he is, they can be also. More than any promise you have been given in your life, I urge you to believe and place your trust in Jesus' words, especially in a time such as this, because these promises are trustworthy and true.

God has prepared a place for Marianne. No longer will she struggle with her health, or with anything, because she has found her home with God—the One who gave her life and the One who has received her into his arms now. May you trust in God's promise. Amen.