

Faces, Footprints, and Trust

Hello, my name is Sue Grady, and I'm the across the street Sue Grady, not the teacher at the school Sue Grady. My husband Patrick has been a life-long member of the parish and I joined the parish when we married 31 years ago. Our three sons—Michael, Joseph, and Robert—all went to Blessed Sacrament School. In addition, our boys were baptized here and all received first communion and were confirmed here in the parish. And in the spirit of full disclosure, I was born and raised in the Lutheran tradition of the Christian faith.

Through the grace of God, I have lived a blessed life—wonderful parents, great husband, tremendous children, a strong religious background, with a sense that God is with me. In 2005, I came to realize the extent to which God was making Himself known, visible, and a presence in my life.

On October 3, 2005, our family heard the numbing news—my dad, the one who we all thought would live at least to 103, was diagnosed with terminal leukemia. The prognosis: one month, maybe up to five months, if he was very, very lucky.

And so, in accordance with my dad's wishes, we brought him home from the hospital, to spend time with family and friends. Because my mother had physical limitations, my two sisters and I made plans for one of us to be at my parents' home around the clock to cook, clean, run errands, go to appointments, take care of them, and just be there. No small feat in that it meant all three of us needed to reorganize work schedules, family schedules, our personal lives. We all took a deep breath and found a way.

And then, the aftershock—On November 3, I found out that I had breast cancer. And uncontrollable panic set in. First, I hate to lose control. Second, that clock was ticking and one month had lapsed. Lastly, it brought a whole new set of questions into play regarding surgery, treatments, doctor's visits, my dad's health care, parent care, my dad's doctor appointments, work and family responsibilities, coordinating sister schedules. So many questions, so many unknowns, so many what ifs?? It was overwhelming. And as I lay in bed with my head spinning, heart aching, gut churning, my thoughts drifted to the Footprints story.

For those who aren't familiar with the story, the narrator is walking on a beach with God, leaving two sets of footprints in the sand behind them. At points the two trails are one, which coincide with the lowest moments of the narrator's life. The narrator asks God why He left during that time and God explains that He didn't, He was carrying the narrator.

With the Footprints story in mind, I began my talk with God. I told him that this was the most difficult time in my life and I knew He was carrying me but I desperately needed assurance that somehow all would work out, that somehow all would be well. As I finished that simple prayer, a tremendous peace came over me—my body relaxed, head cleared, stomach quieted, weight lifted, and the Bible passage that was given to me as part of the Lutheran rite of confirmation came tumbling back to me: Proverbs 3, verses 3-6—“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and

lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

And with that, I understood that the coming months were going to be a walk of faith, a walk of trust. That I was going to have to let go; hand it over to the Lord, trusting and knowing that all would be well, and that the paths would be made clear. And that is just what I did.

Miraculously, whatever need arose in the following months, it was taken care of. Whatever challenge arose, a solution was immediate. Whatever obstacle popped up, there was a way around. Our family saw the face of Christ in the medical staff, clergy, friends, neighbors who surrounded us. We felt the hand of God preparing and showing the path for all of us.

On January 31, 2006, I completed my treatments and remain cancer-free. Thank God. On February 21, 2006 my dad passed—11 days shy of five months. We were very blessed to have every minute with him.

And as what happens when one passes, the family is left to deal with the personal effects. When we emptied my dad’s wallet, we found the usual stuff—driver’s license, credit card, pictures-- and a little card tucked into the billfold section on which was written the Footprints story. I now carry that card in my wallet.

Thank you and may you have a blessed Advent season.