

HOMILY: Rose Mary Dougherty, SSND
Fr. Joe Muth
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Rose Mary was born Irene Margaret. I looked up the name Irene and it said, “Funny, smart, beautiful and gets along well with others. She is the type of person you go to for advice. Irene is the motherly type. But don’t mess with her, she is a tough cookie.” Irene is also the name of a Greek Goddess who personifies “peace.”

You might also hear some words today that you are unfamiliar with, so I will try to explain as I go along...

The Persian poet Rumi, born in Afghanistan, lived from September 30, 1207 to December 17, 1273. He is well-loved and well-read. One of his sayings is: “Good-byes are only for those who love with their eyes. Because for those who love with heart and soul there is no separation.”

John O’Donohue is an Irish poet, priest and philosopher born in the West of Ireland in County Clare who lived from January 1, 1956 to January 4, 2008. He, too, is well-loved and well-read. He said, “In the Celtic tradition, there is a great sense that the dead do not live far away. In Ireland there are always places, fields, and old ruins where the ghosts of people were seen. That kind of folk memory recognizes that people who have lived in a place, even when they move to invisible form, somehow still remain attached to that place.” I added that if that place is your heart, then you cannot be detached even in death.

John O’Donohue and Rumi lived 750 years apart from each other; and Ireland and Afghanistan are 3,834 miles apart; and they are both from very different cultures...

Yet their comments on death and separation are just about the same. This is part of the life and quest of Rose Mary Dougherty—her Irish spiritual and cultural heritage, into which she was born, reached way beyond these roots to the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Buddhist traditions.

What we read today from “You Are Sent” ended with, “As the desire for Jesus that all be one becomes more fully our own, our striving for unity embraces all humanity and the whole of creation.”

Rose Mary was following this lead. From her early days when I met her as a seventh grader in math class at St. Mary’s Govans, to these final days of her suffering with Parkinson’s disease, she used all that was available to her to become her best self.

You know that Rose Mary was a Zen teacher and leader and one of her inspirations was the Honorable Taizan Maezumi Roshi, and he said, “Have good trust in yourself—not in the one that you think you should be, but in the ONE that you are.”

So as Rose Mary was becoming her best self, all of the obstacles she faced in life were opportunities to go deeper and figure it out. She did this with grace, humor, writing, determination, exploration, learning reflexology, reaching out to others like people with AIDS, and eventually companioning the dying.

Rose Mary became a dharma heir which is a designated successor to a Buddhist master— which means she had a spiritual blood line that theoretically could be traced back to Buddha; then she became a dharma holder which is a Bishop-elect not yet consecrated. So the picture on the program with Rose Mary wearing a stole takes on a whole new meaning. Her name was Myoan, which in the Japanese Buddhist language is translated: *Amazing Grace*.

So when I think of Rose Mary dying and giving her body to science, it makes perfect sense. She had grown to the place where her broken body could not contain her yearning spirit. So she gave herself to the universe “our striving for unity embraces all humanity and all of creation.” To me it is as if her being exploded into the next cosmic dimension of life. She is now a part of that universe; her body and spirit are both free. Her body is free to help others in a myriad of ways that even she could not fathom, and her spirit is free to live with the God of her life, the God who gave her life, the God who called her to life, and the God who now shares life with her eternally.

Amazing Grace!!