

Luke 12: 22-32

[Jesus] said to his disciples, 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.'

'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

Over the past week, in conversations with Patricia's family and friends, one word has been used to capture who she was and how she lived: the word *elegant*.

This word has an antique feel to it, as if gesturing to a different era, the Edwardian England of Downton Abbey or the comely grace of Audrey Hepburn, an era or a time of order and ease and decorum.

But there is rather something more to it when the word *elegance* is used to describe Patricia; it has less to do with manners and rules of behavior than to a way of being in the world, a way of moving through the world and how it felt to be with her.

Perhaps you have been to the ocean as the tide comes in, the water rising over the tidal pools and the waves crashing in, or you have gone swimming in a clear, clean lake and opened your eyes to see the sun shining on the lake bottom: the waves flow in and out with tremendous force, the lake is still and calm, in both the plant life moves with the force of the water, swaying with the waves, or still and calm and waiting, this is elegance: to move with the flow of life, to move with people in relationships, in such a way that the force and energy or the quiet stillness transmits a way of being, a way of moving.

To be in the world, to love a husband and raise a family, to share life with friends and to contribute time and love to the church and to do so in such a way that her being transmitted ease and grace and gentleness, nothing disturbed, nothing disrupted.

Elegance is not about force or rigidity but order and ease.

Patricia taught her children how to set a table, napkin on the left; fork on napkin; knife and spoon on the right; knives turned inward toward the plate; glass of water above knife and spoon.

But in teaching to set an elegant table, there was no feeling of manners as an imposition, but rather the purpose as always was to set people at ease, to create a sense of generosity and order.

God's love is reflected in the love we experience from faithful people like Patricia, and while there are people who imagine God's love to be a blunt, corrective force demanding certain rules be followed, there are other souls who help us to see the reflection of divine love.

As the divinely human love of God we see in Christ shines in this gentle teaching: "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these."

Worry accomplishes nothing and reduces elegant love that moves gracefully with the tides of life into losing struggle against brute forces.

We need to see, and we need to pay attention, when we are blessed with elegant souls such as Patricia's who show us a way of being in the world that is faithful in gentleness, flexibility, order, and dignifying formality.

As I talked with the family, I heard stories of Patricia going along with the passions of her children, bringing order to a menagerie of pets and cooking game so long as it was a two-legged beast. Helping in the barn and encouraging horsemanship.

But when the conversation turned to what Patricia loved to do, what hobbies or passions defined her, and after the family had talked through the various and sundry ways she supported them, they said that what she always really loved was gardening, growing flowers.

Of course. How very elegant? Quiet. Organic. The seasons shaping the work, tender roots gently tended, lovingly watered, faithfully weeded, expertly transplanted.

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin.

I like to think of Patricia's elegance as most especially reflected in the process of transplanting, not of uprooting as death often feels to us, but of a spade gently going into friable soil, the roots carefully observed, microbes undisturbed, the plant moved to a location prepared in advance, and replanted in better light with more room to grow and blossom and flower.

Patricia was an elegant reflection of the elegant love of God, and we worry not for we trust this love, for it gently transplants us as we travel this journey together, we can trust that Patricia has been gently transplanted to now thrive and grow to be fully one with God, and if we will but see, if we have paid attention, then we can also trust that God's elegant love will move us through this time, and when our time on earth is ended, then we ourselves can trust the gentle love of God awaits us. Amen