

March 13, 2010

## **Catherine P. Wall**

In 1931 when Catherine was born, the world was a much different place. Seventy-nine years ago today, she was born in a great city that had just been hit by the worst depression America had ever seen, but she was in America and that alone was the fulfillment of a dream, as it must have been for her parents Michael and Margaret. She was born into a city where it was okay to be Irish, sure hadn't we built the half of it ourselves anyway?

Catherine must have seen some great sights growing up. She belonged to a generation, who had real stars to admire, when big bands played real music and young Frank Sinatra ruled the airways.

Whatever values and faith she had, she passed on to you her children. We gather today on this sad occasion to say our "goodbyes". At the same time, you gather to celebrate her life.

Chief among that is the love that she had for each one of you. The love she had for her family, friends and relatives.

Today her grandchildren are so important. For it is in them that all her hopes, dreams and promises for the future rested. Everything she worked for somehow comes down to them. She probably had a good idea how the rest of you had turned out and knew the course your life would now take. Like many an Irish mother, she had probably given much advice as you could take, now she settled for just praying for you.

There are two kinds of people for whom nationality and faith are the same thing, the Jews and the Irish. If you are Irish, you have faith. And that counts whether you go to church or not. "All Irish go to heaven!" Everybody knows it. That is why we sing so well and come from a land that has a bit of heaven in it. Besides, they will not let us into hell. We have too many cops and firefighters and we put out fires.

As we celebrate Catherine's life today in this holy place, we thank God for her faith that sustained her in good times and bad.

As the weeks and months pass, I am sure that you will find a way to remember her with affection and love. You can't really explain to people these days, the adventure of being brought up in a large family, let alone a large Irish family. Thinking back on Catherine's life you may best remember her "sayings" and stories.

That is something we all shared in common, remembering my fathers words: "What time da ya think this is to be getting home?, Sit up at the table like a Christian, Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about! My house, my rules, Will ya eat me out of house and home, Do you think money grows on trees, When I was your age I had to walk to school, Do you have to come down the stairs like a herd of elephants?"

We all know a thousand things our parents said to us, and most of them we did not mind. We didn't resent a smack on the back of the head, or an invitation to mind our manners. All these years later, we find it scary when we find ourselves saying the exact same thing to our own kids. "I'm turning into me Dad." We hear ourselves say or "That just sounds like my Mom."

Well, here we are today doing the one thing neither Mom nor Dad could do for themselves, bringing them to a place of rest.

With pride and love, we ask almighty God to take the soul of Catherine into his loving care. As the first reading told us, she is a child of God gifted with a Spirit that will live forever.

Paul tells us about love in his letter to the Corinthians:

“Love never gives up. Never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance. Love is eternal.”

That is surely Catherine’s lasting legacy to you. “Love one another, support and stay close as a family and pass that love on to the children.”

Her work is done. You are her legacy, her pride and joy. May Christ her Savior, who now calls her to Resurrection bring her to a heavenly peace.

Amen+