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Saint John's Episcopal Church  
Sandwich, Massachusetts 02563

February 12, 2011

**Margaret "Jackie" Stanley**  
Memorial Service

*Now, dear God, we give Jackie back to you who gave her to us. Yet, as you didn't lose Jackie in giving, so we have not lost Jackie forever by her return. For what is thine is always ours if we are thine, and life is eternal, and love is immortal, and death is only an horizon, and an horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. Lift us up, God, that we may see more clearly; draw us closer to you, God, that we may know ourselves nearer to Jackie who is with thee; that where Jackie is and thou art, we too one day may be. Amen*

I don't want to get you too upset, but I'm going to begin by putting on my University of Connecticut 1999 NCAA Men's Basketball Championship hat on, and I'll have more to say about that as we go on. I think it'll all come out in the wash, as they say.

I want to begin because at a time like this we are all here, and it's wonderful to see all of you gathered here at this memorial service for Jackie Stanley. It says a lot about her, it says a lot about her family, and we're so glad that you are here today.

I want to begin by talking about my own life and why I do what I do. I've been an Episcopal priest for almost thirty-one years. As you can well realize, I've done a number of funerals, and I find that funerals are extremely difficult for me, and I know they are for families and friends of loved ones. But one of the things I think that is so important is a funeral, a memorial service, is where the rubber hit's the road because it is where our faith takes us to a place where we can experience God's healing, and we can experience the strength that only God can give.

When my son Ted was seven years old, his grandfather who was named Weyant Garrison, but Ted called him Peepa. Weyant died of colon cancer having suffered greatly for about a year and a half. He was a young man, and his grandson loved him dearly. He particularly loved his yellow Volkswagen

that had on the license plate “Peepa.” After he died, Ted said to me, “Dad, where has Peepa gone?” and “Will I ever see him again?” Those two questions have been a part of my faith and my ministry ever since. As I try to explain to you and to others what I believe about those two questions.

This morning I want to say, first of all, as I said to my son Ted, Peepa has gone to be with God; and secondly, we **will** see him again. Those two tenets I believe with all my heart. They are the two beams that I stand on. And that’s what I want to say to you this morning about Jackie Stanley -- that she is with God beyond any shadow of doubt that we **will** see her again.

In the midst of all that as we come together, this is a happy time in a sense that we are celebrating her life. We know Jackie has been through an awful lot in the last few years, but I have to honestly say to you that I have never seen a person who could turn something as difficult as she was going through, and make a visit to see her such a joy. She just had a wonderful spirit, a wonderful courage, a wonderful sense of generosity; she knew a lot about a lot of things. Or maybe should I say, she knew a lot about some of the same things that I know about, so we were able to talk about sports, about politics, about - you name it - about children, all kinds of things going on. She was a wonderful, wonderful person in the midst of being confined to a bed with a disease that made her... (the first time I went in, I gasped)...but yet you never looked at that afterwards because her beauty and her love shined through all of that. It was wonderful to visit with her.

But today we are here to grieve as well. I think that’s so important. I want to say to you I don’t know how you’re grieving, but I know we all grieve in different ways, but that is important. She was a wonderful mother, a wonderful grandmother, a friend. For Tricia and George and Jim and Debbie and for her grandchildren, Jenna, Kayla and Shea and all of her family and friends, we miss her a great deal, and we will continue to miss her. When we lose someone we love, it hurts, just as my son could not understand losing his grandfather, we all do not understand how we will deal with losing someone we love very much.

I also want to say to you that Jesus, in the New Testament, very clearly shows his humanity when he is called to the home of Mary and Martha and his best friend Lazarus. As he walking up the walk, Mary and Martha are crying uncontrollably. They can’t stop. When Jesus arrives in front of them, they said, “Jesus, if you had only been here your friend Lazarus would have lived.”

And it says there that “Jesus wept.” I think at a time like this when we come together to be with each other when we lose someone we love, we are grieving, we are hurting.

The second thing that I want to say is that death cannot take away the wonderful memories and stories that all of us have about Jackie Stanley, and gosh, we’ve got a lot of them. And they are wonderful stories; some are good, some are difficult and some are downright hilarious, but we have stories and memories that can never be taken away.

So I get to the hat. Jackie loved the NCAA tournament which was sixty-four teams; this year will be sixty-eight teams. She was always there routing on and in the obituary Bud wrote “Go Duke.” University of Connecticut beat Duke in 1999 (laughter) to win the NCAA championship for their first time in their history. What a game that was, and it was fun to talk to Jackie about basketball and what call the “big dance,” and the big dance was that last game. I was talking with Debbie the other day, and she wanted me to express to you that the big dance, that last party is today at the British Beer Company following the service. I hope that many of you will come there because that’s one that Jackie planned as well. She really loved sports and she loved the NCAA tournament final or, I don’t know what they call the eight, but the sweet sixteen, and you can go on and on, but the big dance being that final game in which the two top teams play each other.

I want to share a story with you about Jackie which, I think, summed up my relationship with her. The last time I saw her I was being a devoted priest, and I took my Communion kit, and I took my prayer book, and I went to visit Jackie in Falmouth, and I arrived there. She was glad to see me, and we began talking about all kinds of things. I finally said to her - and that’s another thing - I used to go there probably with the idea that I won’t wear out my welcome - I’ll probably stay there half an hour and be there two hours talking about everything, and then at the end of this, I said, “Would you like to have Communion?” And she said, “I would,” and I knew that she would because she always enjoyed having Communion. I opened my Communion kit and noticed that I had forgotten to bring Communion - kind of a problem while you’re standing there. I said to Jackie, “I hope you don’t mind.” She said, “No, I’ve got some crackers over there.” (hearty laughter)

So I took the crackers and blessed them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and they became our Communion together. I laid my hands on her head - as you know, she was scarred by her disease - and I laid my

hands on her head, and could just feel the power of God within her, knowing that in spite of all that, she loved her family, and she loved life. She was full of life, and she had much to impart. And that will always be my memory; having those Communion crackers together. But more than that, as I looked around her room and saw visages of the Red Sox and the Patriots, and pictures of grandchildren and children and all the important things in her life, and knowing exactly what President Obama was up to and local politicians, what they were up to and just being aware of all kinds of things. Those memories I know I will have. And she always - Debbie was telling me - she always found a way to be involved in having parties for her children, whether it was a wedding party or a party to celebrating the conquering a frightening disease, or just a reason to get together on Thanksgiving or Christmas - there she was, but she was the life of the party and she was in charge of the party.

So we invite you to come and share your memories with each other at the BBC after the service here in Sandwich here on Kings' Highway, so please come to the British Beer Company afterwards and remember her.

The last thing I want to say this morning is that we're here to celebrate the fact and that answer to my son's question - that Jackie is with God, and she's also with her husband George. Debbie and I were kidding about that, that George has had it pretty easy the last few years, but Jackie's going to get him back in shape and let him know who's in charge. (laughter) But I'm sure they are together with all of their loved ones who have gone before and know that they are with God, and they are at peace, and that God will be with us and will give us the strength and courage we need to live our life to the fullest.

Jackie, you were a good and faithful servant. We thank you for your life, for your generosity, your love, your forgiveness, your courage and service. We love you more than words can express. We miss you, and we **will** see you again.

I'd like to close with one of my favorite poems that is written by Mary Oliver. Mary Oliver lives in Provincetown; she's a retired English professor and is considered to be one of the most read English poets in the world today.

*When death comes  
like the hungry bear in autumn;*

*when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse*

*To buy me, and snaps the purse shut;  
when death comes  
like the measles-pox*

*When death comes  
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,*

*I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:  
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?*

*And therefore I look upon everything  
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,  
and I look upon time as no more than an idea  
and I consider eternity as another possibility,*

*and I think of each life as a flower, as common  
as a field daisy, and as singular,*

*and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,  
tending, as all music does, toward silence,*

*and each body a lion of courage, and something  
precious to the earth.*

*When it's over, I want to say all my life  
I was a bride married to amazement.  
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.*

*When it's over, I don't want to wonder  
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.*

*I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,  
or full of argument.*

*I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.*

*Amen*