**March 31, 2015 – Ardes Spaulding’s Burial Service**

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“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.”

This Gospel passage is a perfect choice to celebrate Ardes, because this is what she did. Often times when we think of laying down one’s life for one’s friends, we think of it in terms of dying to save someone. Certainly that was in Jesus’ mind as he was speaking to his disciples, since this passage is part of the Farewell Discourses in the Gospel of John. So Jesus was foreshadowing his own death, but also trying to be clear with his disciples that they, too, might have to face such a self-sacrifice.

But there are other ways of laying down one’s life for one’s friends, and one’s family. One way is to place one’s self in the loving service of others, and this is where Ardes shone. I have to confess, I didn’t know Ardes as well as I would have liked. At least at church, she was quiet and reserved, and didn’t put herself in the way of others, so I didn’t know a lot of the details of her life.

But I knew her well enough to find her company delightful, and I think this is because I could tell that she Loved. She was a loving person. Certainly she loved her family very much – anyone could see that. But I think she spread her loving net even wider to include everyone around her.

You know how some people are crabby and unpleasant to be around, and you know they don’t think too much of their fellow man? Ardes was just the opposite of that, although her Midwestern Lutheran upbringing precluded any overt demonstrations of gushiness. Oh, I’m sure she had her cranky days, just like anyone does, but they didn’t seem to be the default in her case.

Our Gospel reading today started at verse 12, but I’d like to back up a bit to verse 9, where Jesus says to his disciples, “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.” The word abide – *meno* in Greek – is one of the most important words in the Gospel of John. It does mean "to abide" but it also carries meanings of, continuing and enduring, and especially of resting. It's a word of permanence. It’s a word that means “home.”

Ardes was at home in God’s love. This was reflected in her sense of hospitality and the warmth with which she treated everyone around her. And it was especially reflect in how important her family was to her.

That’s what makes saying goodbye so hard. She will be so very much missed. But beneath the sadness is hope. Hope and the assurance that that same love is where she will be truly at home for all time.

Even though we are in the most solemn time of our liturgical year, heading into Holy Week, today we use white vestments and light the Paschal Candle because this is an Easter service. Of course we are celebrating the life of Ardes, dear mother, grandmother, great grandma, and friend, and we are mourning her passing much too soon; but even more than that, we are celebrating her resurrection.

When someone passes away from this earthly existence, we often say, “Rest in peace.” That’s a lovely sentiment, and very meaningful. But there’s more to it. While we hope our loved one is resting in the peace of God’s eternal love, we also hope for the renewal of the body at Christ’s second coming and we also say, “Rise in glory,” to reflect that hope.

So in that sentiment and in that hope, “Rest in God’s loving peace, Ardes, and rise in glory with our Lord, Jesus Christ, at his coming again.” We’ll see you once more, when we’re all at home together!

Amen.