

TEXT: John 14:19

THEME: BECAUSE HE LIVES

“Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19).

Dear Family and Friends of Our Dear Departed Sister, Mary Jedele:

The death of our loved ones who know and love the Lord Jesus is a bitter-sweet experience. It is bitter because we lose for a time the close and warm experience of sharing life and love with them. It is sweet because beyond our sorrow there is the knowledge that life is far better for them in the house of our heavenly Father.

Mary Jedele was a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, friend, member of Trinity for 60 years, and fellow servant of Jesus Christ. She lived a long and useful life, raising a family of three children as a “Betty Crocker” mom. There were always three meals a day and you ate it all, whether you were hungry or not. But the reward was that there was always dessert. She imparted a strong work ethic to her children, insisting that they do their chores. She herself worked outside her home for 15 years in the billing department of Consumers’ Power. Most importantly she made sure her children knew Jesus Christ as their one and only Savior from sin. Now she has laid her burdens down. We gather in love to mourn our loss, but also to celebrate her gain. We come in the face of death’s mystery, but also, and especially in this Easter season, we come in the assurance of the resurrection and life eternal. **“Because I live,”** Jesus says to each of us who trust in him as our Savior, **“you also will live.”**

Mary loved life. She was a voracious reader and loved to learn about the world around her. She was an avid swimmer at the YWCA, where she made wonderful friends for life, who continued to meet for breakfast long after they had to give up swimming. Mary, and her late husband, Bill, loved to travel and took lots of road trips together from New York to the National Parks out west. A favorite spot that merited return trips was Copper Harbor right here in Michigan. Mary loved nature, especially trillium—the three-petaled flower of the Trinity—that is blooming right now. She loved her family and in a labor of love, she crocheted afghans for her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. What a treasured keep-sake those afghans have now become. Mary also loved to worship our Lord right here in church and helped her friends, June List and Elsie Oeder, to get here for worship. They couldn’t drive so Mary picked them up in her car. It was always a heart-warming sight

to see the three of them making the extra effort to be here, using their canes and walker.

But Mary had lived with pain and deteriorating physical health for some time. She realized that the Lord gave her strength for her daily struggle, but she was also ready for that pain and struggle to end, whenever the Lord would will it for her. She was ready for the rest and refreshment that only heaven can give. With St. Paul, Mary could say with a firm confidence and trust, **“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Php 1:21).**

Death for Christians is gain. In the early church, Christians were thrown to the lions and killed by gladiators in the Roman coliseum for entertainment. Emperor Nero once watched with wicked fascination as the Christians knelt in prayer before their death. They looked toward heaven and were at peace. Nero cried out, “What are they looking at? What do they see?” One of Nero’s advisors who had sympathy for the Christians and their courage in the face of death said reverently, “They see the resurrection of Jesus.”

Jesus died to pay for all our sins with his holy life and precious blood, but he rose again, as every one of us Christians can testify because the Holy Spirit has convinced of that truth. And Jesus promises to all who trust in him, including Mary, you, and me: **“Because I live, you also will live.”**

We Christians are people of the resurrection. Each Sunday celebrates that great truth. An early Christian wrote, “Christ has turned our sunsets into sunrises.” Mary is now experiencing heaven’s sunrise. Death has been the doorway for her to enter that blessed experience.

So, even as we mourn her death, we can rejoice for Mary. She is in the eternal presence of Jesus Christ. She loved her church. She was so pleased when her children made the extra effort to get her here in her wheelchair. Now she has gone to a far-better church, the church of the just-made perfect who continually worship in the presence of the Lord himself.

We who are left can go forward courageously and victoriously because of his promise: **“Because I live, you also will live.”** Amen.