

IN LOVING MEMORY OF ELLEN WOOD

If we are really wise, we will recognize the coming of the death of those we love, and it is also wisdom to recognize as well the fact that it will come to us. Neither age nor any other thing shall actually reconcile us soon to it, and the more we have loved the more difficult it will be to say good-bye. It is part of the discipline of life that when it comes, we neither repress our grief nor allow it to master us. It is right that we should be sad, probably even cry, because it is a testimony to the worth and affection of those for whom we grieve.

Life does go on, a little more austere, with some part of it that has been joyful now changed into sorrow that must be lived with. By remembering, by missing the one who has died, we learn to understand others and we can become vessels of compassion in their grief. So we come to honor her to whom this day we render our tribute of love.

Something which was unique has departed from us. A candle of the spirit has gone out, and though we may believe that life goes on elsewhere, we here are still poorer by the loss of a life whose place among us was significant. A person who has reached the very late years of life has carried the responsibilities of life, has mellowed and gained wisdom, has seen life in its deeper dimensions, has known the sensitivity of the human spirit and the creativity of life itself--the loss of such a life, even in the evening years, is a tragedy. Ellen Wood's death was this kind of loss.

Ellen Wood was a person whose elegance graced both impersonal objects and personal relationships. She could take a frame holding a picture of one of her children or grandchildren and, through the affection in her voice as she talked about them, you would sense that they were almost right there in the room with you. But this elegance that she gave to mere things was just the outward manifestation of the inner elegance of her spirit. She graced her personal relationships with humor, imagination, and industry. She enjoyed laughter and banter, and she had strong ideas to express, and she knew when both were appropriate. Her active mind produced imaginative ideas that went somewhere and meant something. In spite of her recent physical weakness, she was still industrious and she still did what she could put her hands to and finish around her house. In all her relationships, she was an open person, with a knack that most of the rest of us can only one day hope to attain--the ability to listen and to hear what other people are saying. Without a doubt the greatest joy that Ellen had was watching and experiencing life through her children and grandchildren. It would not be overstating to say that life still was alive for Ellen Wood because she was able to share so much of it with those whom she loved. And, you know, it is interesting that for so many of us religious faith has come to be associated with regular performance of the rites, like steady church attendance, which are traditionally associated with a close fellowship with God. Some of us are going to have to think about that one a little more in light of Ellen Wood's life. For a long time, she had not been able to be a part of

any kind of regular worship. Yet those who knew her well can attest to the fact that in her daily life she exhibited a Christian love and concern for her neighbors which is the "Good News" of the Gospel message. Literally, the promise of the writer of the Book of Revelation is hers: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." This was Ellen Wood--our mother, grandmother, sister, friend.

But those of us who live must go on, those who have known sorrow and those who have not, strong in the faith that God and life are good, even though sometimes we do not understand either. And God helping us, we do not falter when death crosses our path. We go on, living the life we are given to live, knowing it is a good life, however difficult it may seem at times to be. And in so living it, we find that our faith is not false and that God is the Lord of all life and the conqueror over death itself.

Friends, remember Ellen and her life; remember Ellen and her God.

Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though he die he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.

Paul said: We want you to be quite certain, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him.

Again Jesus said: Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last. I am the living one; for I was dead and now I am alive for evermore.

Almighty God: we commend to you our neighbor, Ellen Wood, trusting your love and mercy; and believing in the promise of a resurrection to eternal life; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

All thanks to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!