

...continued from inside

to the social, political, and scientific information of our age. After spending time with Godelieve, I often found myself pondering the amazing mind of this little woman living in the midst of this wild land of Redwoods Monastery. She thought and felt deeply.

Her theme was the presence of God in all life. God as all in all.

Gretchen Anne - Caretaker

I stand here in the afterglow of a life lived in the fullness of faith. A heart and soul filled with the Love of God. Dearest Sr. Godelieve, Beloved of God. She has left the physical form. What remains is an imprint upon my heart, a legacy of God's Truth, Love and Peace to guide and inspire my life. I am honored and humbled to have received the precious gift of her love, trust and friendship in the last months and days of her life. Her courage, dignity and grace in surrendering into the heart of Jesus, accepting the will of God that it was her time to come home to heaven, has broken my heart wide open. I am forever enriched thereby and eternally grateful to have known her and served her.

One of my fondest memories is the Peace song she would sing...
My Peace I give to you,
Alleluia. Peace I leave with you, Alleluia.

Christopher Larson - Hospice Care

We offer the light of this candle with love and gratitude for the light within us all, and particularly for the light that emanated from Sr. Godelieve and the life she chose to lead. Light does overcome darkness, and our actions of kindness, faithfulness and perseverance absolutely contribute and generate that light.

Fear, despair and doubt cause that light to appear dim; but it is never extinguished, more like a blindfold that covers our senses. By embracing the contemplative life, we choose to constantly affirm and fuel, to encourage that light that is the love and compassion that allow the existence of all that we know.

Sister Godelieve made that choice and steadfastly brought mind and body to a lifelong commitment of fulfilling God's purpose.

Therese Mughannam - longtime friend of the community, helped Godelieve in the editing of the book:

"Redwoods Abbey: A Foundation of Faith, Courage, & Adventure, 1961-1965"

I'm grateful for this rare privilege to speak about our dear Godelieve. But what to say? I've been reading a book written by Sr. Gertrude, which I picked up in the gift shop here, about

Cardinal Basil Hume, who died 20 years ago, but who throughout all his life, to becoming a cardinal, never forgot that he was a monk. At a solemn profession ceremony for one of his monks he said:

"You have come here to seek God, and that is all you have come here for: everything else is incidental ... everything is a means towards that... and that search will go on, day

after day, month after month, year after year... Our constant search for God is only our way of expressing our response to His search for us."

To me this is SO Godelieve. Over the last several visits I've had with her she would speak about her search for God, mentioning the clues she would find along the way in that search -- her goal being that God be All in All.



Redwoods Abbey

18104 Briceland-Thorn Road • Whitethorn, CA 95589 • 707-986-7419 • www.redwoodsabbey.org



REDWOODS MONASTERY NEWSLETTER Summer/Fall 2019

Dear Friends of Redwoods Monastery:

This newsletter is an effort on our part to stay connected with you and to share with you the spirit of Redwoods, even when you are not physically present here. I hope you enjoy these thoughts and pictures and I invite you to let us know what you think of the newsletter. With prayerful wishes for peace, Sister Kathy DeVico.



Dear Friends,

This end of the summer newsletter is dedicated to our beloved sister Godelieve who died on June 16th, Trinity Sunday. Sr. Godelieve's health had been declining since the Fall of 2018. To all of our surprise

she was still with us for her 96th birthday on June 4th. She was not feeling well but managed to enjoy the celebration of this important day of her birth. She went to the hospital in Garberville two days later.

With the tolling of the bell we received her body before Vespers on Friday, June 28th. With her presence in the middle of the choir of our church, following our Cistercian tradition, we began a vigil, praying the psalms one by one, throughout the night. Each sister and guests had the opportunity to take a turn praying before the body of our sister. It was a very moving experience for all of us.

The funeral Mass the following day, June 29th, continued the celebration of her life. The principal celebrant was Abbot Paul Mark Schwan of New Clairvaux Abbey. Four Jesuits who had just finished their retreat concelebrated at the Mass. There were over 100 guests in attendance.

We are grateful for all the cards and remembrances that so many of you shared with us. It was striking how many commented on Sr. Godelieve's smile. That perhaps more than anything revealed her love of life and hopeful demeanor. What more witness is this to the work of God in a life well-lived...and to the end.

Gratefully,

Sr. Kathy



Sister Godelieve Maria Theys 1923-2019

Ecerpt from Sr. Kathy's Eulogy at the Funeral Mass of Sr. Godelieve Theys, OCSO ~ June 29, 2019

Birth is a miracle. Death is mystery. Our lives move between these two realities, realities that are immersed in God, that point to our spiritual journey through, with and in the Divine Life and Mystery.

Dear Godelieve, I dare say that your focus was more on birth, the life birthing forth in a variety of ways...death was more elusive. You delighted in the flowers in your room, the deer you saw outside your window, the landscape that you soaked in on your walks or when one of your sisters wheeled you outside or wheeled you to the garden! The expression from 1 Corinthians that 'God is all in all' became your sacred phrase/metaphor that you walked with

...continued page 2

...continued from front

for most of your monastic life...For you, this moving expression was around LIFE, God's incarnate life known in this present moment; death being more a shadow, the dying process ever so silent, intimating new life, however, still remaining a mystery, the mystery you knew that was connected to life, the life that we name 'eternal life.' 'Eternal life,' elusive yes, but present daily on our pilgrimage: sensing it, knowing it without knowing it...experiencing, not fully experiencing because the fullness of 'eternal life' embraces us only after our final passage, our physical death.

Yes, you loved life...dying with Christ we rise with him...in your faith, you accepted these words...but still what these words concretely mean when we love the life that we can see, the life we smell, feel, see, touch....Experiencing what we know and what delights us is more comforting than breathing our last into the 'great unknown'. Fr. Thomas Merton, who visited you in several dreams, reminds us that we don't leave the unknown for the secure, that it is, as he said, the other way around... 'we leave the secure for the unknown'...this is one way perhaps to describe death...it is the last great leap of faith that we all take....and our faith tells us that this final leap into the unknown is into the resurrected life.

'God is all in all': you now have realized this in your final passage: yes, even in death 'God is all in all.' Our beloved, dear sister, you abide now in the mystery of the Resurrection...and this means we are here today celebrating your life, knowing that you are bathing in God's love....for love always has the last word...love transforms all and continues to bestow on us the so called 'living' this knowing and remembrance....As we remember you now and in the days ahead, we won't forget the Love you sought, the Love you radiated through your searching mind, your delight in knowing, your child-like wonder, music that sang inside your heart and in your dreams. We have lost a pillar, a foundress, and in this mystery of your passing, we have gained a voice on our behalf, a voice singing, a voice praying for us from God's immense heart, where you now dwell.



Opening Procession of Funeral Mass

From the Homily for the Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Godelieve of Redwoods by Abbot Paul Mark Schwan of New Clairvaux Abbey

We monks live a quirky life, "The monastic life is a quirky life, a bit odd, but if God calls one to live it, it's a privileged life." NRVC book review, Summer issue 2019. But the hour has come for this quirky monk Godelieve to be glorified. Wherever Jesus is found so is Godelieve. She followed and served to death. As the Father glorifies his very own name



Sisters Veronique and Karen at Vigil

so the Father glorifies Godelieve. Without this glorification of Godelieve God cannot be all in all. God needs Godelieve within the history of salvation. This is the glory of the Father. The fulfillment of All in All, i.e. complete integration, harmony, unity of spirit and of cosmos. This is glorification, divinization, deification, apotheosis!

This is Godelieve in the Divine scheme of salvation! This divinization was already happening at the time of my last visit with Godelieve earlier last month. The Divine energy powerfully radiating healing and peace from her was palpable. Yes, the grain of wheat has died the book is buried but the new shoot has already sprung forth.

Expect a hundredfold of fruit from Godelieve's now glorified existence.

The following are selections from some of the memorials given at the Funeral Mass by Sisters of the Community, friends and two of the hospice attendants who served Sister Godelieve so carefully in her last days.

Sr. Claire of Redwoods Monastery

Like each one of us, our Godelieve is, was a mystery. Today I would like to highlight her musical gift.

Since she has been a child, music has been for her a language of freedom, of love, and of beauty.

It has shaped her life, her soul, by its rigor – the rhythm, not too much, not too little – by its harmony – but above all by its openness to reach something greater, to reach the infinite God who made us for beauty, for His beauty.

Sr. Suzanne of Redwoods Monastery

What can I offer by way of eulogy that your name does not already say? Godelieve – beloved of God. Fr. Greg said to me when he arrived here last week... Now Godelieve can be her name.

God's Beloved / held by God - this is at once a state and an energy field that powers all existence.

True to her name Godelieve was a 'totalizer,' bringing together – holding tensions and ideas - including the radical other – she reached out to the marginalized, the vulnerable, the forgotten, the imprisoned. No one and no thing were

excluded. All had to be one. All had to be part of a loving, ever-creating God. She was indefatigable in this rallying cry. She felt it deeply as if It was engraved on her heart. When she was in this mode, it was difficult to budge her. We all know this well.

But most of all Godelieve, I remember your eyes. Your beautiful baby blues that were pools of compassion. Windows to the soul. A passageway to the heart of God.

Sr. Veronique of Redwoods Monastery

Since Godelieve's childhood the blessing of a little cross on her forehead has been of great significance. Taught by the Sister in Kindergarden to ask her Vader een Kruisje each evening before going to bed, was not easy the first time, but she did. Godelieve still remembered it till her death.

I do not remember when it began, though for the last couple of years, in the evening I have been to Godelieve's room to bless her with a little cross and the words, "God zegene U, God beware U" and a kiss on her forehead. It was precious to her and to me. That I was able when she died in the hospital to give her a last blessing -- it was Holy.

Madeline McMurray - A long-time friend of the community

Today, as I think back on all the conversations I have had



Abbot Paul Mark Schwan, Fr. Greg Bonfiglio, SJ, Fr. Michael Kennedy, SJ

with Godelieve over the years, I focus on the quality of mind. Godelieve had the intellectual capacity of a revived scholar of Christianity. She read and understood the great thinkers of both ancient and modern traditions as well as paid attention

...continued on back