

**“Relief at the Finish Line”**

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:6-8

The Christian Funeral of Rose M. Pauliscak

19 June 2010

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, especially you, John and Anne, Rose and Ross; grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text for this morning sermon is taken from 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy chapter 4 verses 6-8, especially these words: ***‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.’***

A few years back, when my wife Jenny and I were still dating, she convinced me to participate in the “Ride for Roswell.” If you’re not familiar, The Ride for Roswell is an annual fundraising celebration in our community to support Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Before registering for the event however our team had to pick the course we wished to ride... the routes range from 100 hundred miles to three. We opted for the thirty mile ride. Now, I have to confess, I am not much of a rider, but I remember starting out full of energy, and eager that I could conquer anything, but, as the race progressed, my demeanor changed. I still kept fighting insisting that nothing was going to knock me down, but I was tired and nothing sounded better than the finish line.

Life is somewhat like a race isn’t it? It’s no wonder St. Paul used such an image to describe his past and what was to come of his future. ***“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith,”*** said St. Paul to young Timothy. And over the last few days, nothing became more evidently clear to me, than the fact that dear Rose was a fighter in the race that was laid before her. Now, Looking at Rose’s physical make up one might not be quick to conclude that she was a fighter, but this past week, I am convinced that “her true colors” if you will, burst forth. Rose fought, she fought hard, and on Wednesday evening, she finished the race.

As we consider Rose’s life, she had a good run; a good run filled with many years of wonderful blessings, joys and happiness. How she loved her family... nothing made her happier, well except maybe bananas. Surely, Rose was one of kind; a creative and talented woman in the kitchen, who loved to make those heavenly-Italian cookies with Ross and who carefully crafted meatballs the size of softballs. Moreover, Rose was a rather comical woman who yelled at the T.V. during sporting events who was an expert judge for American idol... A good run indeed, but above all, Rose cherished her faith; a faith begun at Baptism and a faith, as Rose would say: “that no one could take from her.”

Rose knew the presence of Jesus with her and she knew that Jesus would sustain her through every trouble. That’s what enabled her to keep running so confidently. If she had to run the race by herself, without doubt, she would have crumbled a long time ago, especially as she fought the cancer that plagued her for so many years. In faith, Rose knew that what made it possible for her to keep going- to fight so long was not some inner strength, but the love of Christ flowing through her and empowering her for whatever obstacles came her way. And thank be to God for that; especially, this past week as she reached the finish line. Like running a race, Rose fought to the very end as evidently clear this week, but as expected, Rose was tired and didn’t want

anymore. Surely, Rose **“fought the good fight, she has finished the race and she kept the faith.”** Her journey ended. Her struggle was over.

However, the race here appeared to have ended, but it doesn't end at that does it? We come her together on this day, not to reflect on the struggles of Rose's life or to fix our eyes on the end, but we come here as a people who have hope and a people who can by faith, the same faith that carried Rose, celebrate the victory Rose claimed on Wednesday; a victory accomplished through God's amazing grace in the sending of Jesus. You see, while we describe Rose as one of a kind, the same reality is, that she, just like us had her moments; those times when perhaps she wasn't as good as she could have been, those times when she doubted, those times when she became frustrated and wanted to throw in the towel. And because of that, Rose knew all the more her need for Jesus who fought on our behalf, suffered for her sin, died on the cross of Calvary, and Rose from the grave sealing victory and opening the kingdom of heaven to her. My friends, not only did Rose run a race, but Jesus ran a race for Rose (you and me) and because he went before for those he loves; Rose know that nothing is impossible with him, she knew that her sins were forgiven, and she knew what awaited her at the finish line. Rose trusted in faith; and although difficult at times I am sure, she clung to her faith, a kind of faith that no one or no situation could take from her.

And so it is, the faith that God gave to Rose led her Wednesday night, once and for all, to the “finish line.” All the pain, the frustrations, the treatments, the questions... they are all gone now. Rose received the relief she longed for at the finish line on Wednesday when she closed her eyes in the Lord. Surely, because she knew God's promises and believed, God took her home to join him and all the saints in heaven. Without doubt, Rose saw Jesus running alongside as she ran the race throughout her life, and today, we can be sure, that as she approached the finish line on Wednesday, there standing before her was Jesus waiting to embrace her, ready to place the crown of righteousness on her head, and ready to celebrate with her. A celebration indeed, after such a run!

Friends, in the midst of grief, we can at the same time, boldly proclaim, Thanks be to God who kept Rose in the faith and who gives Rose the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. May we, who still must run the race, learn from Rose and keep our eyes on Jesus who ran for us and who runs alongside us, especially in these days. And my dear friends, may each of you look forward to and trust in the relief that awaits you at the Finish line- where you too will see Christ, Rose, and all your loved ones when you finish the race.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

