

In Memoriam
✠ Rebecca “Becky” Williams 1945-2024 ✠
February 15 Anno ✠ Domini 2024
Text: St. John 5:24-27

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Dear Phil, Corey, family and friends of Becky, and beloved members of Our Savior,

The Becky we remember today was not what one might call a quiet and gentle woman. She had her opinions and was not shy about sharing them. But, she was also fun. Armed with a great sense of humor, Becky was always ready to take as much of a ribbing as she dished out. She had a kind and generous heart that was always ready to help those in need. She loved serving her church and community through our soup kitchen, which she managed for us, and was broken hearted when we were forced to shut it down. She often felt guilty because she knew that she frequently frustrated her sons, but she loved her “boys” and spoke of them and their families with pride and love.

This is the Becky I knew and grew to love. She *is* my sister in CHRIST and I was her pastor, but she was also my dear friend. My life is all the better for having known her, and the world is somehow diminished now that she has finished her race and has been called home to our LORD.

Yet, as much as I loved her, as much as you loved her, as much as she was loved by her brothers and sisters here at Our Savior, this is not why I am here, nor is this why we are gathered together in this place. To us, Becky was something special, a unique and lovely woman—a mother, a grandmother, a friend, and each of us has our own precious and personal memories we will always cherish when we think of her. But again, this is not why we are gathered together today.

You see, we are not the only ones who mark the occasion of the falling asleep of this wonderful woman. So, too, do the angels. I do not mean the modern mythical nonsense of rosy-cheeked infants fluttering around on stunted wings, or who exist as lovely points of light, or superheroes wandering the earth helping people. I mean the angels of Holy Scripture, the cherubim and seraphim, those mighty, powerful beings who are the host of heaven that guard and protect God’s children, who announced the birth of His Son to shepherds in their fields, who rolled away the stone that was meant to seal Him in His tomb, and whom, as Holy Scripture tell us, rejoice over one sinner who repents.

Those angels, the angels who serve God day and night, those angels that carried Becky to her LORD, those angels rejoice for Becky. They rejoice because God’s will has been completed in, and for her. They rejoice because CHRIST has honored her above the angels. For when He stepped down from His throne in heaven, He did not become an angel; He took upon Himself human flesh and became man—the Man, JESUS—the same human flesh as that of you, and me, and Becky.

In JESUS, God became a Man precisely in order to take up Becky's sins, to die her death, and to rise again for her justification. Through JESUS' sacrificial death, the price for her ransom is paid, her guilt due to sin is forever removed, and as a member of His holy Church, He declares her His holy, perfect, chaste, and immaculate bride, having claimed her as His very own in the waters of Holy Baptism. All this she received by humble faith delivered to her in those holy waters.

Still, not only you and the angels note the calling of Becky to paradise. So also, does our FATHER in Heaven. For He loved Becky in such a way that He sacrificed His only-begotten SON for her that He would have her with Him forever. You see, God loved her even more than you and I do, and He still does.

JESUS, the only-begotten SON of God, is the SAVIOR of all men and He died and rose again for all men. This means that those who believe in Him, those who submit to His Word trusting in His mercy, are saved, spared from the ravages of Hell, and delivered into the perfect bliss of heaven. Thus, says the LORD, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."*

So, it is, that while we mourn, we do not mourn as the world mourns. We do not weep for Becky, nor do we pray for her. She needs neither our tears nor our prayers. JESUS has paid the full price for her freedom and forgiveness. He has redeemed her, not with gold or silver but with His own precious Blood. Therefore, she has no remaining debt; JESUS paid the price for heaven and Becky has already come into His reward.

Thus, our sorrow this day, is for ourselves. Our time is not yet ended. We are still asked to endure this cruel world with its many hardships, and now, we must go on without the benefit of Becky's company.

That being said, we still have hope. Not some sickly, weak, half-hearted and half-believed wish that maybe there is something good, maybe there is something lasting after death, something beyond the grave. NO! We have been given the Hope of the Word of God which cannot lie.

For you see, the good that the most HOLY TRINITY has done and continues to do, even now, for Becky, is received by all who believe in Him. This means that if you also look to the death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST for your atonement, if you also hope in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come by the grace and mercy of God Most High, if JESUS is your LORD, then Becky has not been taken from you forever. There will be a reunion. You will see her again. Your coming days with her will be without tears or sorrow, without aging or sickness, and without end; Becky will never be taken from you again.

Such is the hope and faith of a Christian, such that St. Paul can scarcely imagine even trying to compare the incomprehensible glory of Heaven, with all its wonder and delight, to the

sufferings we currently, and fleetingly, endure.

So why are we here? We are here to celebrate not a life that has now ended and passed away; we are here to celebrate a life that now knows no end because in this life God gave Becky the faith to believe His promises.

JESUS said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”* This day and every day, let us with Becky and all the saints of heaven, hear the voice of the SON of God, and pass *“from death into life.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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2/15/24 A✠D