Mass of Resurrection-Sister Amy Campbell, OSB (1920-2020)
March 4, 2020
Reflection by Sister Judith Murphy, OSB
Is 6a, 7-9; 1 Cor. 15: 20-23; John 14: 1-6

Selecting the readings for this celebration of our Sister Amy’s life was rather straightforward as we thought about celebrating her life and death, and what she valued: relationships, gratitude for natural wonders, and her attitude toward her approaching death.

And so, we have heard Isaiah proclaiming that in the time of fulfillment—death itself will be destroyed. In the gospel of John, we hear Jesus’ assuring his followers at his Last supper that he is going to prepare a place for them; and in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, we heard that the last enemy to be destroyed is death itself, so that God may be all in all.

Amy knew that God’s desire is that we share in God’s life to the full. Indeed, Sr. Amy seems to have very thoroughly taken in this message of hope to herself and she did not fear death. Her very final days were difficult ones: several people then commented on the reality that just as it takes a lot to be born, so too, it takes a lot to die. And isn’t death a birth to something new?

Earlier, in mid-January, Sister Amy began to talk quite joyously about the fact that she thought she was dying. She was energized and talking about what she hoped to be able to do and to care for from a new vantage point in heaven: who she would joyfully re-unite with there; how she would support both our community and the generations in her family; she kept such close track of; and NETWORK and the many causes and concerns in our day. She summoned a number of people to undaunted say that she was dying, even when her vital signs indicated otherwise. She told stories from throughout her lifetime; she told of relations and relationships, and events in vivid detail, and she herself enjoyed the sharing and the re-telling.

In those enthusiastic narrations, I think she knew we couldn’t really keep track of all the facts of what her words were saying; but, it was very clear in all the stories that relationships were key and were valued by her. She loved her family; she loved her community; she loved those she ministered with and to. She didn’t give lectures on the subject of relationships, but her interactions and the way she let you know of her heartfelt interest in people was a message clear enough about the importance of friendships and caring that spread across her lifetime.

In whatever role she engaged with people—aunt, sister, teacher, fellow community member, principal, friend, mentor, recipient of health care from our caregivers in St. Joseph Court—people experienced her as gracious, encouraging and kind.

She gave clear witness to St. Benedict’s VERY FIRST injunction in the Rule, to “listen with the ear of your heart.” The heart: the seat of understanding, courage, and wisdom.
She took in and shared this attitude of openness to be foundational for both family life and community life—for human life—and showed that in whatever human endeavor we set ourselves to do—it helps to listen with the ear of your heart. She also took in with graciousness and gratitude the wonders of God’s creation: mountains, brilliant blue skies, Lake Michigan, even ice cream…as blessings to be appreciated and enjoyed, and shared.

Death and the limits of health and time are there and real for all of us to contend with. Let us honor Sister Amy’s life by gracialously savoring the time we have with gratitude to our loving God for this gift of life.