

The Church Lady: A time for remembrance

By Kathleen Tuttle

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It was a time to remember. It was a time to honor. Marco Lutheran Church, in conjunction with Avow Hospice, hosted a Remembering Service Monday evening on Nov. 9. It was a time to honor the memories of loved ones and reflect upon the gift of life through music, song, readings and candle lighting. Two days later, St. Finbarr's Knights of Columbus hosted a Salute to Veterans pasta dinner. Each branch of the military was honored and prayers were given for those currently serving.

Avow Hospice holds four ecumenical remembering services a year, one in Marco, one in Immokalee and two in Naples. "We are here to add a measure of grace, celebrate their lives and affirm the gift they were in our lives – may you find peace in this program," said Mary Brodeur, R.N., bereavement counselor for Avow Hospice, in her opening remarks.

Everyone was given a candle. Small boxes of tissues were thoughtfully left on the seats in the sanctuary. The poems that were read and music that was sung evoked memories of loved ones gone—lover, spouse, life partner, parent, sibling or friend. Brodeur read "Remembering You." The last line of the poem, "I'm thankful for the times we shared and the priceless memories too; for those memories are a comfort now when I lovingly—remember you," set the tone for the evening.

Craig Greusel, Marco Lutheran Church's music director, soothingly sang "Love Me Tender." The music came from the back of the church, so as not to take away from the sanctity of the service. At the reception that followed, Marcia Orsolini said of Greusel's rich baritone voice, "His singing is phenomenal. It touches you down to your toes."

The Rev. Kevin Koenig, senior pastor of Marco Lutheran Church, gave the meditatio, using a sand dollar to illustrate the message of loss and hope. He wondered why, when he looked for sand dollars, he only found broken pieces. "God accepts us as we are in our brokenness," said Koenig. "Yet we continue to look for something whole and complete, something beyond our grasp. People offer us a touch, an encouragement. They help us in our journey towards wholeness. In the broken pieces, there are five little doves inside, but they can't emerge until the sand dollar is broken." He held up tiny pieces of the sand dollar that were in the shape of doves.

Each of the doves represents an aspect of bereavement—grief, helplessness,

validation, disorganization and a return to wholeness. The five doves put together became a star. "So, out of the broken sand dollar there are five doves that have meaning that become a star – to get the star of hope, we have to open the sand dollar," said Koenig.

A poem by Nancy Moeller, "We Light These Candles," was read as the candles were lit. The poem began with: "We light these candles for our sadness," and ended with, "We want you to know we will always love you."

Everyone exited in silence, blew out their candle and picked up a sand dollar. Greusel softly strummed his guitar as he led the way to the canal. The path was dimly lit with luminaria and attendees threw their sand dollars into the canal as a way of letting go. As the participants cast their sand dollar into the canal, "Prayer of the Sea" was read. The last line was, "At the end of life's uncertain course, we hope to rest in thee."

They next proceeded into the great room, where the Marco Lutheran Board of Human Care hosted a reception and Avow bereavement counselors and chaplains were available. "The service helps people deal with their grief and to have the remembering, without the pain," said Louis Stickles, who was there with his father Al to honor the passing of their mother and wife. "The people in the service are candles who keep the love alive beyond the portal of death."

At the conclusion of the evening, Avow Hospice honored Marco Lutheran Church with a Community Partner award. The award is given to institutions that fulfill the mission of acknowledging and caring for families and caregivers who have experienced a loss. A 13-week grief support class, presented by the Marco Lutheran's grief support team, will begin at 10 a.m., Jan. 7. Please contact Joyce Waidelich for at 793-4601 for information. For information on Avow Hospice visit their Web site at avowhospice.org or call 261-4404.

The Salute to Veterans pasta dinner, hosted by St. Finbarr's Knights of Columbus, was quite a contrast to the solemn and sacred Remembering Service. Tables were decorated in red, white and blue and patriotic music played in the background. It was the first shared meal of the season and friends were happy to get reacquainted. The dinner was sold out, with 350 people attending.

St. Finbarr Knights of Columbus was chartered in 2007. They sponsor charitable and social events throughout the season and meet once per month from September through May on the first Wednesday. Each year they have raised more than \$13,000 for charities. One of their primary goals is to raise funds to support St. Finbarr's Catholic Faith Appeal. The Appeal supports Catholic Charities, Catholic Family Services and seminarians. Top among the 10 charities they support are the National Wheelchair Foundation, Eden of Florida Autism Services and Collier County Foundation for the Disabled. The Knights are most visible in the community when it is time for their annual Tootsie Roll Drive, during which they collect donations for those

with developmental disabilities.

Another aspect of the Knights of Columbus is the KofC Dignity of Life. "We promote womb to tomb sanctity of life," said Grand Knight Tom Mulvey, a third generation Knight who follows in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. The Knights most recently participated in the Collier County Sheriff's Office's Adopt-a-Soldier program. They stuffed food, toiletries, books and other goods collected by the Sheriff's Office into packages mailed to soldiers currently serving overseas.

"In addition to charitable and spiritual work, the Knights of Columbus are actively involved in patriotic endeavors," said Mulvey. "It has a long history of helping soldiers. It was the first organization of its kind to provide aid and comfort camps for servicemen in France during WW I. It also was responsible for getting Congress to add 'under God' to the Pledge of Allegiance in the 1950s."

"The Knights of Columbus exemplify dedication, service, leadership and commitment," said St. Finbarr's Administrator, Fr. Fritz Ligonde. "But most importantly, they are men of prayer. The president is such a humble, dedicated man of prayer. He is also president of the Pastoral Council at St. Finbarr's."

The Salute to Veterans began with the Pledge of Allegiance. Ligonde gave the blessing and Mulvey read a "Tribute to Veterans." "We honor and revere these veterans today: those who rest in honored glory, those who still suffer from the wounds of war, and those who, with us, enjoy the blessing of living in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Dear God, we can never thank You enough for the privilege of living in America, where we still enjoy the gifts of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Each branch of the military was then recognized, as well as veterans who had received medals. Deputy Grand Knight and former Marine John Borgese, organized the dinner and served as master of ceremonies. He has been a Knight for more than 40 years.

Joseph Kalinowski, charter grand knight of the St. Finbarr Council, was in charge of the music. He also may have been the oldest veteran there, serving in the WW II Navy Aviation Training program, but he never got his wings, as the bomb was dropped on Japan and they didn't need any more pilots. After his service in the Navy, he joined the New York National Guard. He was called to Germany for the fall of the Berlin Wall, where he served as a radar maintenance non-commissioned officer in charge at the Berlin Tempelhof Airport.

The Carrabba's Italian Grill on U.S. 41 East near Collier Boulevard catered the event. Managing partner Yvonne Lux and her crew served ziti, meatballs, Caesar salad and bread. Lux recently returned from Afghanistan and Turkey, where a team from OSI Restaurant Partners (the company that owns Carrabba's, Outback, Bonafish Grill, Roy's and several other restaurant chains) served a little bit of home to the troops. The Knights honored her with a bouquet of red, white and blue flowers at the conclusion of

the event. All left over food was taken to St. Matthew's House.

Join the community of faith. Worship at one of the greater Marco area houses of worship.

Kathleen Tuttle, a Marco Island resident since 1987, has written articles for various nonprofits for more than 25 years. She is a community volunteer, former science teacher and microbiologist.



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