

Witness of Faith

Delivered at the Graveside Service of Susan Colón

9:00 a.m., June 27, 2012

By Lynne Hinojosa

Like many of you here today, I had the great pleasure of sharing life together with Susan Colón. For me, this happened in many different contexts. We were colleagues together in the Honors Program at Baylor University. We both were literature professors, whose scholarly interests overlapped. This made for wonderful conversations in which Susan often provided mentorship for me. Together, Susan and I were Christians working in an academic field that on the national level is largely dominated by skepticism and hostility. Together, Susan and I were women in the academy, managing being mothers, wives, and professionals, all at the same time, but also needing and desiring to have all these roles, all at the same time. While Susan cared very much about being an excellent scholar, and she **was** an excellent scholar, I always immensely appreciated that for Susan, her top priorities were to be a good Mommy to Monica and Elise, a good wife to Carlos, a good daughter to Larry and Becky, and a good church member. Susan and I attended church together at Dayspring; we went to Sunday school together. And more intimately, we, along with 10 other women, participated in what Dayspring calls a “Life Together” group. But most importantly, what binds together my friendship with Susan in all of these contexts is that Susan was, and still is, my sister in Christ.

What has always struck me about Susan is how unified she was, how she was the same person in all of these contexts that I have mentioned. Her life was whole, bound together by the practices of faith, hope, and love, and by her continual willingness to keep learning how to live out faith, hope,

and love. Indeed, these virtues were plainly evident, as many of you have talked about in the last few days, throughout her illness and the intense suffering she endured, even into her last days.

Susan's love of God established her identity. You always knew where Susan stood: on solid ground, on a foundation of love, on what matters most. Susan was always seeking what is true and good and beautiful. I will miss most Susan's ability and attempts to love me, expressions she gave in the same manner, no matter where we were. Susan would let me cry with her over a life struggle right in the middle of a Baylor cafeteria just as much as she would ask me about my work right in the middle of the church narthex. She would always offer words of both compassion and encouragement, along with promises to pray. Those promises were ones you always knew Susan would actually keep, because she would follow up with you and not let it go from her heart. I know many of you here have had experiences similar to this with Susan. I don't think this or any other reflection could ever capture the essence and totality of a human being, including the beautiful person God created in Susan Colón, but I do think we can safely say that Susan abided in God's love. I also think that we **all** would agree that Susan always strove to live out a similar love.

Now, Susan's love could at times come in the form of exacting honesty. (To give an example, she would always with sincerity and grace agree to review my writing, but then, she would proceed to mark it up. She would return the manuscript full of pencil markings and comments. I chose to ignore some of these markings, but others I could not. It was hard, for example, to ignore: "Really? I don't buy it." Or at a line that turned out particularly purple but was too hard to resist, I would find penciled lightly in the margin the word "Yuck.") Susan's love for God, vocation, students, friends, and colleagues was always enacted with rigor, a formidable ability to practice self-control, and a

scrutinizing intellect. She didn't let you get away with stuff. She could practice "tough love."

Susan had a great command of language. She wrote beautifully because she thought and felt beautifully. She read with depth and passion, and she had a probing sense of inquiry. This was true when she read literary criticism in her office just as much as when she read the Bible in our small group. She liked to challenge our thinking – but she did this with gentleness and love, not to win an argument, but to further us all, including herself, in our walk with God, in our seeking of truth, and in our practicing of the faith. Like all of us, Susan had her insecurities, I am sure, but in my experience, these never manifested themselves in vice, but always led Susan down the path of humility and grace. Those two words—humility and grace—are key ones to describe Susan. Susan and I used to laugh together quite a bit, and this, too, is important. I certainly have missed and will continue to miss my life together with my friend.

In the past six months, I think we have seen the church be the church for Susan and her family. Astoundingly, Susan herself helped us and showed us how to be the church for her, just as Carlos also did. In the midst of a brutal struggle and illness, for which there is no explanation that is understandable right now, Susan and Carlos wanted and needed the church to be the church. What an example. I know some of you here today, like me, wanted to do more, to help more, but what an amazing thing it is that Susan and Carlos have so many people who love them, so many good communities and contexts in which they shared life together with others. Carlos and Susan with the greatest of love chose Dayspring Baptist Church and other contexts in which to raise Monica and Elise. And Monica, Elise, Carlos, Larry, and Becky: we want to continue to be your larger family and the church of Jesus Christ for you. We are here for you, and we need you to be the church for us as well.

The church is not just here and now, though. Our friend Susan is now part of the church eternal. She is still in fellowship with us. I remember what Susan told our “Life Together” group soon after her diagnosis in December: “Jesus is still the Savior.” And later, in the midst of chemo and when she was still able to attend church periodically, Susan told me: “It all seems more real now than ever before.” We are forever thankful to God for Susan’s earthly life and for her witness to His love. Susan: Lift your eyes and see His face, know His grace forever. Amen.