

In Remembrance of Susan Colón

There is an old belief,
That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief
Dear friends shall meet once more.

Beyond the sphere of Time
And Sin and Fate's control,
Serene in changeless prime
Of body and of soul.

That creed I fain would keep
That hope I'll ne'er forgo,
Eternal be the sleep,
If not to waken so.

John Gibson Lockhart, 1841

We who have come together to look back and to remember
Susan Colón also look forward to a time when dear friends
shall meet once more.

On behalf of Baylor and the Honors College I would like to
thank Susan's parents, Larry and Becky Burrow, and the rest
of her family for raising such a remarkable daughter. From
even the short conversations I have had the honor to have
with her parents, it is easy to see where she got her agile
intellect, her love of conversation, and her humble spirit.
As Susan herself wrote in the opening of her most recent
book, "Victorian Parables," which she dedicated to her
parents, they gave and taught her "tender love and profound
wisdom."

From the way her daughters Monica and Elise have conducted
themselves throughout this very difficult time, it is easy
to see that Susan passed on to her children what she
received from her parents.

Monica and Elise, all of us at Baylor are looking forward
to welcoming you to Baylor as students in a few years.

Your mother, our friend, had a wide impact, especially of
course at Baylor, but also beyond Baylor. I wanted to
share two brief notes that I received in the last couple
days.

One is from Dr. Jane Roddeheffer, who holds a chair in Great Books at Pepperdine and how knew Susan from conferences and from the Lilly Graduate Fellows Program, to which Susan spoke a couple years ago. She wrote:

"Susan was a tremendous role model and inspiration to the women in our cohort of grad fellows- and a delight to engage in conversation with, as I did several times in London last summer."

The other comment is from Joel Allison, President and CEO of the Baylor Health Care System in Dallas, who visited Susan a number of times when she was in the hospital. He wrote:

"I was blessed to meet Susan and see and hear her remarkable spirit and peace during those most difficult circumstances. I know she was an inspiration to many. Please let Carlos know he and his family are in my prayers during this difficult time."

And you will hear in a moment from some of the folks on whom she had the most impact, students and faculty colleagues. Of course, I knew Susan first as her dean, her boss. That was before I had the great pleasure of team teaching a class with her and David Jeffery and working on recruitment and numerous other Honors College events with her.

Now, I have a friend at another university, an administrator, who likes to say that the problem with faculty is that they are all delicate geniuses who have to be coddled and treated with great care. I always tell him that I have no idea what he's talking about because we don't have any delicate geniuses at Baylor. But if we did, Susan would never have been one of them.

I can't recall her ever complaining or much less being the occasion of complaint from anyone else, colleagues, students, staff, or parents.

For me the indelible memory of Susan is of her at her desk in her office in Morrison. Her door was always open and most of the time one or more students were there. You could hear them talking as you passed, talking about how revise a paper, interpret a difficult passage in a book,

or, with the student editors of the Pulse, discussing the next edition of what under Susan's leadership became a very fine undergraduate scholarly journal.

She did profound things with great simplicity and she invested simple things with great significance. This was especially true of her teaching. Susan was a great teacher. She had the best evaluations of any faculty member in the Honors College and that was not because she was an easy grader or that the students found her wildly entertaining. She was a masterful seminar leader, awakening young minds, first, to the fact that they have minds—a great surprise to many of them, and then to the fact that they ought to enjoy employing those minds, and that they ought especially to enjoy using their minds to engage the most important questions and the best books. From Susan, they learned that they could love God with their minds as well their hearts, souls, and strength.

There was a wholeness, a unity, an integrity to her life that is increasingly rare in our time. Her research, writing, and teaching, were all deeply interconnected. In that same introduction to her latest book from which I quoted above, she thanked her students for giving her "the gift of attention and trust" and for participating with her "in the age-old conversation with the great texts."

And so this morning, we recognize a shared loss. In great sorrow and in this valley of tears, we cling that old belief that on some solemn shore we will meet again. But we know that mere poetry or wishful human thinking cannot bring that about, that to reach that shore we must, by the grace of Christ, die and be reborn.

Never for me has the sacramental sign that is baptism, the plunging into water signifying our immersion into Christ's death so that we may rise, been more profoundly driven home than it was last Saturday, here at DaySpring this past Saturday at Elise Colón's baptism.

May we all meet again on that solemn shore.

Thomas Hibbs
Honors College Dean