

Requiem Eucharist for Dixie Carol Allen  
Saint Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Houston, TX  
18 December 2020

Good morning and welcome to this celebration of life for Dixie. I am Fr. Roman Roldan, the rector here at Saint Dunstan's, but around these parts they just know me as Dixie's boss and pastor. And this is just ok with me. I must confess that this funeral is special to me because this is the very first funeral service I conduct for a member of my staff. Including the time in the Catholic Church, I have been in Christian ministry most of my life, and yet, I have never experienced the death of a member of my staff. Beyond this, there are several points of contact between Dixie and I. We both had prior careers before coming to Saint Dunstan's, I as a Social Worker and Rector in Louisiana, and Dixie as a successful teacher. Both married the love of our lives. Both have children we adore. And both became convinced at some point in our lives that only a life lived in complete faith and trust in Jesus of Nazareth made sense for us. Lastly, we both loved our jobs and tried very hard to serve our congregation with distinction.

It is my honor to be here today, celebrating the life of a faithful servant who was always gracious, welcoming, and very supportive of me and my family. The one resource most pastors and Christians leaders, like Dixie, have in abundance is hope. We know that there is more to life than what we see. We know that beyond the pain, struggles, conflicts, and even beyond the joys of this life, there is a reality too wonderful to put into words. All of us, who are specks of life, living in an incredible small planet, in a very small galaxy, in a minuscule small corner of the universe, are loved by our God. This God who created everything, in whose hands rests the entire future of the universe, loves us and cares for us in ways that we cannot understand. Lamentations tells us that "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning."

Pastors and Christian leaders know that God accepts our imperfect offerings of service and uses them for his glory and for the advancement of his kingdom on this earth. Our failures of courage, our doubts, our resentments, our exhaustion, and our anxiety at carrying the burdens of so many people on our shoulders are all transformed into fertile seeds that in some mysterious way increases the harvest of the kingdom. Our small sacrifices matter to God, even if at times we do not believe they matter to the church. Our faithfulness in showing up day after day, even when we do not feel well physically or emotionally, matters to God. Pastors and

Christian leaders know that their self-worth is not dependent on their own wit, intelligence, work ethic, or powerful relationships. Their self-worth comes from the one who called them, equipped them, and sent them out into the world to live the Gospel of his Son. Their self-worth comes from knowing that at a time when many shied away from ministry, they stepped forward and said, “Here I am, send me!” At a time when the world was more preoccupied with self-aggrandizement and the satisfaction of all their needs, they chose to put some of their needs in abeyance, to venture in the Lord’s vineyards, whatever they happened to be. At a time when so many of us spend so much time and effort trying to find ourselves, carve out an identity with which we can survive in this highly competitive world, constantly re-inventing and rebranding who we are, they accepted the identity of a simple laborer in a vineyard, a listener, befriender, and guide.

Christian leaders like Dixie know that there is truth and meaning in this world because they know that truth and meaning can only be found in Jesus of Nazareth, God’s suffering servant who died for us and who left us his Spirit to guide us into all truth. When confronted with relativism, the leader holds on to the truth of Scripture that Jesus is the truth, the way, and the life. When confronted with existential anxiety, the leader looks at the cross of Christ and finds meaning and purpose, a sense of vocation, and an imperative to love as the one hanging from that tree loved the world. When confronted with pain and doubt the leader endures prayerfully because he knows that all things will work out at the end for those who love Jesus of Nazareth and seek to be obedient to his will.

Leaders are not perfect people and Dixie Allen was by no means perfect. But it is not because leaders are perfect that they are effective in showing the world the love Christ has for them. It is not their perfection, but their faithfulness amid imperfection that builds God’s kingdom. The leader’s most admirable quality is that he or she keeps showing up even when at times they feel like quitting, they keep on loving others even when at times they feel misunderstood and unappreciated, they keep a life of prayer and devotion even when at times they feel alone and distant from God and others. We are not saying goodbye today to a perfect woman, a perfect wife, a perfect daughter, a perfect mother, a perfect sister, aunt, or cousin. But we are saying goodbye to a faithful woman who did her best, even while dealing with her own deep pain.

Do not look at Dixie’s death as a failure or a tragedy. You will insult her memory if you do so. Her life is full of victories she won along the way, and those

victories have made a difference. There are people out here whose life was drastically changed because of Dixie Allen. There are people out here who still remember a word of comfort, a telephone call when they needed it the most, a visit when they were in need, a prayer uttered for them even when she had high fever and was dealing with intense pain. I will always remember her trips to the office when she was ill. She knew the team depended on her and she wanted to be here for us. We join those who will always think of Dixie with gratitude and love. We are not here to remember a tragedy; we are here to give thanks for faithfulness amid pain. We are here to say thanks for sacrifice and love given when no one else seemed willing to give them.

We often place those who have died on pedestals and by doing so we rob them of their humanity. I invite you to resist this temptation. There is only one perfect human and he is Jesus Christ himself. The rest of us are broken pots trying very hard to hold it all together for the sake of the one who sent us and the people he loves. I am here to remind you of the human Dixie and not the pedestal Dixie. And I give thanks for her life, for her beloved husband, Bob, for her children, for all the people she touched, and for her faithful and sweet disposition. I give thanks that God saw it fit to place Dixie in our lives and saw it fit to take her into his eternal heavenly rest. I know that Dixie is with God this very day in a place where there is no pain, no addiction, no anguish, no hurt, no anger, and no resentments. I know she is with God and I know we will see her again someday. Perhaps I will have a chance to get to know her better after all.

My friends we know where Dixie is, so in many ways this service is not so much for her as it is for us who mourn. Dixie's life reminds us that life is short. We are here one second and gone the next. It is for this reason that I must remind you that today is the day to make amends, today is the day to ask for forgiveness, today is the day to say your "I love yous" and your "I forgive yous." And you must do these today because you may not be around tomorrow. The reality is that life is too short to live whatever time you have left in anger and resentment. Today is the day to mend what is broken and reach out in love to those people God has placed in your lives. A life without God and without others is a life filled with misery. If you feel isolated from God and your families or friends, I pray that today will be the day you decide to return to God and to mend those bridges. You need God in your life. You need others in your life. God loves you and seeks to have a relationship with you. May he continue to bless you, Amen!