

On behalf of Noreen's family I want to thank all of you for joining us today at this special mass for her. As evidenced by the number of people who are here and the stories many of you have told me about her, she was a very special person.

Over the last several weeks I have found what a wonderful family Noreen had here at the Dominican Convent. So many people went out of their way to be nice to her. To make sure that she was comfortable, to make sure that she was cared for. My family and I want to thank all of the staff at the infirmary and all of her friends here at the convent. I could not name them all so perhaps I could ask the President of the order, Sister Mary Murrery to do that for me. What an incredible group of people you are.

I especially want to thank Dr. Mary Flood the Dominican Sister of Blauvelt who was her physician. Dr. Flood was Noreen's physician and part-time counselor for Ginny and I. Noreen, Ginny and I were always so thankful for what you did for her. You are a kind and compassionate physician in a world filled with clinical practitioners.

Bishop Walsh, Noreen always admired your ministry as the pastor of St. Elizabeth's. She spoke of it often. I am sure she is so happy that you are here to celebrate her mass today.

In 1971, I was sitting in my dorm room at Manhattan College and a friend asked me to join him at a clam bake at another college. We packed the car with friends and we drove up to St. Thomas Aquinas College, just a few hundred yards from here. There on the hill behind the school they had clams and beer and that was all that mattered to a Jasper from Manhattan College.

Woody Allen once joked that half of life is showing up. I often wonder what life would have been like for me if I had not shown up that day.... it was there that I met my soul mate Ginny and later Noreen. Ginny and I dated during Junior and Senior years, fell madly in love and married soon after graduation.

I quickly learned that the Nolan's and the Tierney's , Noreen's mother's side of the family, are an extremely close family. Celebrations are all about laughter. Friends and family are always around. Add many nun's and priest's for a visit and you get the picture. Of all the celebrated holidays I think St. Patrick's Day was the biggest....certainly the one that was the most well attended. The day was always filled with stories of Ireland, lots of music, stories of Ireland, many big pots of corned beef and cabbage cooked by her father Frank and more stories of Ireland. It was an annual event that everyone looked forward to.

Noreen's family was also one of incredible faith. As a simple example on learning Sunday morning of his

daughter's death, Frank's first comment was, "Ginny she just walked into heaven". He knew that she had committed her entire life to God and now she is with him.

The Nolan and Tierney women are a strong lot. One of my favorite stories often told is one of Nora Tierney, Noreen's grandmother, leaving her mother at the age of 16 and traveling to America to start a new life I guess you have to be strong to do such a thing and Nora was certainly that. She gave that inner strength to Noreen. It was one of her finest qualities.

The Nolan and Tierney women have a special bond with each other that you do not see in many families. They share a very special relationship with their faith, they talk often, they share stories of the good old days, but more than that....they are best friends.

"Best friends" is the only way to describe the relationship that Noreen had with her sister Ginny, her mother Theresa, her grandmother Nora and her aunts Ronnie and Eileen. They could complete each other's sentences. It was actually a remarkable thing to watch.

Later on in our life Noreen was able to take many trips with Ginny, Ronnie and Eileen and their days were always filled with stories and laughter. In preparation for one of her trips Noreen had to get her passport renewed. When she went to the passport office she

brought copies of the same school picture she had used ten years before for the old passport. The clerk told her that she needed a recent picture. She tried to convince the clerk to use the old one because she thought looked better in it.

Their favorite trip was to a cooking school in Tuscany. They toured Tuscany, they sampled the wine, and cooked some great meals. When I picked them up at the airport they couldn't stop laughing, talking about their experiences, and were so happy about the time they spent together. Many families grow apart in life but the Nolan and Tierney women only grew closer. I have often felt privileged to have witnessed that kind of love.

It's funny, if you look at Noreen and Ginny you would never think they were sisters. In fact no one ever did. Noreen was all Nolan and Ginny was all Tierney. They were very different people in so many ways and yet the same in so many others. Their faith was strong, they shared an incredibly deep love for each other, and they talked often. There is an old saying that sisters are God's way of giving you a best friend for life. Noreen was that for Ginny. Ginny was that for Noreen.

Noreen was around so much she was much more like my sister than a sister in law and she was just like a second mother to my sons Brendan and Daniel. She was there at every birthday, every graduation, every event in their lives. When our boys were younger Noreen

often babysat for them. They have never forgotten all of the fun things they could do at her schools on the weekends, especially that rooftop playground at the Daycare Center where she lived while she was Principal at Good Council. I cannot imagine life without her around. It will be so hard for all of us.

A simple way to describe Noreen is that she got things done. Her life was one of achievement. She was always working on something, organizing some project at school; class list, fundraising, the Peace garden, redoing the gym, the annual Christmas card, the pre-school program, the new science lab, the computers, the next middle state review, etc, etc, etc. When she was not at St. Elizabeth's, she was always thinking about the school.

If she was not working at the school then it was some event with the Dominican Sisters, or off to some function at the church, or a dinner with her friends. She was always full of energy and she applied it to everything she did.

Noreen was blessed with an incredible group of friends from the convent. Ginny and I often called them the Nuntucketers. Noreen and her friends looked forward every year to a week's vacation on the island. One year Ginny and I ordered them a tee shirts that had "Nuntucket" printed on them. A repairman came in one day and thought they should return the shirts since the

store spelled Nantucket wrong. “Nuntucket” has become one of those special stories.

Her friends from the convent have been with her throughout her adult life and they were all with her during the last days of her illness. When she was with Ginny and I she spoke so fondly of you all. Thank you all for enriching her life the way you did with your love, friendship and faith. You are very special people.

A college professor once said to me that you have to make sure that your life makes a difference. If the world existed without you in it.....would it matter at all? When asked at the end of your days “How have you changed the life of others around you?... what will you say?

We are sitting in this beautiful chapel. For seven years Noreen chaired the committee that helped build this chapel. In part, her efforts help make place of God. It is so fitting that we are here to say good-by.

Noreen had a real mission in life....to make sure that all children had the same opportunity thru education. She believed that every child deserves a quality education no matter where they came from. She dedicated her entire life to this mission from the age of 17 and she served it well. How proud she must be right now looking back at her life. She spent her entire life serving children and their educational needs. Thousands of people can say that their world would be very different

if Noreen had not lived her life the way that she did. All of them are her enduring legacy.

For the last 22 years Noreen and Sister Eileen have worked together serving the children of Washington Heights NY at St. Elizabeth's school. A catholic school in upper Manhattan filled with hard working families ...many from Dominican Republic. Noreen asked me to take the school pictures one year and I left so impressed at what she was doing and the kids that I met there. The energy inside the school reflected her personality, focused, happy, devoted to learning.

Last night at the wake, I met a couple who live in Westchester yet send their children to St. Elizabeth's. They told me that Noreen didn't just teach their children....she helped raise them.

Bishop Walsh, who is celebrating this mass was the pastor at St. Elizabeth's for many years. He often told people that the secret to his schools success was to just stay out of the way and let Sister Noreen and Sister Eileen do their thing.

One of her doctors once asked Noreen if she was concerned about anything.....in her situation there are a lot of things one could say. Her only concern was that she did not feel well enough to continue with her mission. That she could no longer serve the children.

There is a group of Sister Noreen's students with us here today from St. Elizabeth's. Perhaps you can take this one last lesson from her.....make sure that your life, like Sister Noreen's, makes a difference for the good of the world.

Last week my new grandson Nolan came to visit Noreen upstairs in the infirmary. I was watching the two of them in the room and I was so sad that she would never be able to be a part of his life, that he would not get to know her. I now understand that I was terribly wrong.

Like the Nolan and Tierney women and their stories , we will always tell the stories of Noreen and her life. We will always be proud of what she has accomplished and the thousands of children that she helped. We will make sure that the future generations of the Tierney's, the Nolan's and the Ripp's never forget her. And I will always be happy in the knowledge that Nolan will now have his own personal guardian angel to watch over him.

Noreen, I am so happy that I went to that clambake thirty eight years ago and you became a part of my life. Over the last two years, Ginny and I tried so hard to keep you....we never really had a chance. God just wanted you more.

We love you. We are so proud of you. You have enriched our lives. You may rest in peace knowing that your life truly made a difference. The world is a much better place because you were here. God bless you.