

VALERIE CAPPELAERE DELANEY

MEMORIAL SERVICE – MAY 18, 2013

A LIFE AND A REMEMBRANCE OF TRUE HOPE

I want first of all to say thank you with the deepest gratitude to Valerie. She chose to serve her country and her faith with excellence, commitment and with deep compassion. The brevity of her military career in no way diminishes the thank you that a grateful nation, church and community of friends need to afford what she did and did for us. Thank you, Valerie you have given us so much in your striving to excel as a navy officer and to be so faithful and loving as daughter, sister, wife, granddaughter and friend. We all owe you the deepest thanks.

*During our hard times we sometimes ask, “Jesus where are you?” Do we doubt that God is actually in control? He is still seated on the highest throne, He hasn’t moved! We all face challenges; our nation faces challenges. We must remember that God knows us best. It is our job to listen to what it is He is telling us to do; he wants to walk with us.” (From a sermon by Valerie Cappelaere on 4 July 2010)*

These words are Valerie’s words preached on July 4, 2010 at St. Mark’s Church in Corpus Christi, Texas. The great theologian Alfred North Whitehead spoke of three stages of faith; God as void, God as enemy (we believe but do not want to get too close out of fear) and God as companion and this is the most mature stage. Valerie knew God to be her constant companion in life and to desire to walk with and be related to all people and creation. She asked the question that gets asked so often; “Jesus where are you?” Recall Mary and Martha meeting Jesus as he came to the grave of Lazarus and they said not only where are you but “If you had been here!” In times of great sorrow and grief and in times of conflict and fear we will ask where Jesus is. Valerie knew the answer and not just the answer of her faith but the answer that is revealed to us over and over again, that God in Christ is always with us. And God in Christ is with her now. Jesus where are you? You are here with us, with you her family, you her friends and you her colleagues and fellow officers.

Sadly I did not know Valerie personally, and discovered that it was my colleague bishop who confirmed her. But Doreen and Pat kindly let me read what is really a beautiful and most moving spiritual biography she wrote as part of a sermon. She openly acknowledges the struggles she faced from being “a middle child,” her rebelliousness and even her suspension and then the disappointment of not getting into the Naval Academy the first time. She notes her mother’s illness and various times when she was under stress. But her life was anchored in hope, true hope. Optimism is easy and it so often “pie in the sky.” But hope is anchored in a deep faith of knowing that God walks with us. Valerie both knew and experienced this which gave her the depth to excel and in her own words “...have been given special gifts that are meant to be

*shared. I try to remind myself often that it's not about me! And when I do, I feel my life becoming larger, that the possibilities are endless. God made us all differently to fulfill our own purpose in life."* These words summarize up how she understood leadership that while it is both learned and developed it is a true gift from God.

Today's gospel was intentionally chosen by her parents and when Jesus says; "I am the bread of life," he is saying to us all when Valerie exemplified in her faith and in her life, that Jesus provides for us with His constant loving presence. God has chosen to be among us and to walk with us and this is what truly feeds us. Because Jesus is the "bread of life," we can and must turn to Him for comfort, hope and support.

Valerie is with God, and in God's eternal life, love and embrace. In her understanding of Jesus as "the bread of life," would not see our tears, our grief or our questions as out of line. Rather it is because of the love of God that passes all understanding that we can turn to God with all we are and all we have. Faithful people can and must not be afraid to cry and to question.

Hope is anchored in a deep faith, and Valerie has given us a beautiful example. We are here in hope because we know that Christ is Risen, we know that Valerie is with God and we know that God in Christ is fully with us. Thank you, Valerie for your beautiful life of faith and service. We are so, so grateful. And as you have shown us let us now turn to the great hope, Jesus who as the "bread of life," will ever feed and sustain us. This is true hope. Amen