

And even now, even now that she is gone from us, she will never leave us, for *love never dies*, and the lessons of her life shine brightly in each of us. Jesus taught us to pray for the *kingdom to come, on earth, as it is in heaven*. This day, we can give thanks for Mary's life, for in it, we caught so many glimpses of just that:

The Psalmist said: *Taste and see that the Lord is good...* and we did, at Mary's dining room table, so many times.

For a man will leave his father and mother and cling to his wife...
We saw a hint of God's heaven, in the 52 years of their faithful marriage.

God commanded: *Be fruitful and multiply...* and could there be a better expression of heaven on earth than in the beauty of family? Especially those families, whose *children... rise up and call their mother blessed...*? They have risen up. They always will be blessed by her.

On the faith of a stubborn and outspoken follower, Jesus built his church. *On this rock, I will build my church...* And on the rock of the faith and faithfulness of Mack and Mary McGowan and a handful of others, Jesus planted a seed in the pasture of a dairy farm on Park Road just outside the city limits of Charlotte, NC. Today, this church stands to

bear witness to the strength of their faith, the persistence of their faithfulness.

We celebrate her faith, her hope, her love, that was expressed in such tangible ways to her family, her friends, her church and her pastors: food and faithfulness, laughter and love, so we will say with the great Apostle, Mary McGowan: *I thank my God every time I remember you...*

For God's kingdom come, on earth, in the life and faith of Mary McGowan, thanks be to God.