

“Hard times come again no more”

For me this song speaks of the fragility of life and humanity. “Let us pause in Life’s Pleasures and count its many tears”.... We can not have one without the other.

Every human being experiences hard times. God calls us to serve during these difficult times. To comfort a friend and sometimes even a stranger in need. We have the power within us to make a positive difference even during the darkest of times. For it is when we give of ourselves that we truly give and when we give it will change us and the world for good.

I consider myself an optimist, I hold onto HOPE and believe in “silver linings”.

But this year my Faith was tested.

My sister Sue and friend Joyce fought their cancer with amazing courage. Both hopeful for a cure.

When my sister decided in January to stop treatment and begin hospice care and Joyce became increasingly fragile as chemo treatments weakened her body, it became clear that time on this earth was short for these two kind and beautiful women. Even then...I held onto hope, praying for a miracle.

Rosy Probasco and I teamed up and took turns walking “Faith”, Joyce’s dog. That sweet dog and the cat “Callie” were always by Joyces side. I have to say that animals are the best at serving others, offering companionship, comfort and unconditional love. Joyce like Faith had a kind heart and a quiet strength, Joyce was a good person who cared for animals and children. She taught me patience, forgiveness and the importance of giving to others...just as she gave so much of her time and love to the children in Sunday school here at Amicable for many years. I am so grateful that I knew Joyce and was blessed by her kindness and friendship.

The time shared with my sister Sue was truly a gift filled with love and inspiration. From January until her death in April, Sue prepared and said her goodbyes. She knew her family and close friends loved her and wanted to be there for her as much as possible. With kindness and grace she opened her heart and her home and gave us the gift of time, to serve and to be together as family.

I wrote a poem that I read at my sisters celebration of life in June. In this poem I try to capture the moments of love and joy shared by both my sister and those around her.

I would like to read it.....

### Our Sue

the bluebird visited her window  
in early spring  
while pussy willows and snowdrops emerged  
from winter snow  
these simple gifts from nature  
made her smile

the treasures she collected  
placed in memory boxes  
her thoughts  
written beautifully on paper  
photographs, stories, a garden map  
these things  
shared with love  
to remind us

grateful for the time together  
a household spirit  
the sound of music  
children's sweet voices  
family, friends, hospice care

the rhythm of each day  
gave us purpose

Sue's greatest gift  
her love and concern  
not for herself  
but for her loved ones  
hands held, reassuring words, a smile  
to comfort us  
always remember and share  
her kindness, generosity and love  
the simple things matter most  
our Sue  
a guiding light  
a guardian angel  
to all of us

This past year my Faith was tested. These experiences have changed me.  
Some days the ache in my heart is too much to bare. But I know that the  
ache in my heart is the "silver lining", for it is made of LOVE !