

Elizabeth Mary Clare Schickel



Eulogy for Elizabeth Mary Clare Schickel

Born May 2, 1998

Died February 12, 2014

By Abraham J. Schickel, her father

Mass of Christian Burial

Saint Patrick's Church

Natick, MA

February 18, 2014

Sweet Elizabeth, we were lucky to have you! I remember coming home very late from work one night and she said to me, *"Daddy, thanks for working so hard for our family!"* What love and grace she lived with. She is known in our family for the ease of her generosity. She would offer compliments so often and her love poured out so freely. She truly started a movement within our family of pure affection and simple goodness, often asking as I sat in my chair in the evening, *"how about a little snuggle time?"* or *"just a little TLC?"* before climbing onto my lap. And this was even at the age of fifteen. If things in the house became difficult and chaotic and we weren't getting done what had to get done, Elizabeth would give a stiff military salute and say *"Anything for you Dad, anything for you!"* and then rally her sisters to the cause. The moment would be transformed and the spirit of our family would get back on track.

So much changed for Elizabeth when she was diagnosed with brain cancer, and my beautiful daughter's virtues were called into special service. Over this last year her magnificent soul was opened in a special way and we saw a girl reveal what it means to be made in the image and likeness of Jesus. This last year with Elizabeth was strangely beautiful.

In June, Elizabeth wrote this prayer: *"Jesus, you suffered on the cross. Help me to accept my cross with joy."* Through sickness and suffering, living with the same simple joy and gratitude as before was no easy task, but she did live that way, by a continuous act of her will. Kathy and I will never forget seeing Elizabeth for the first time in intensive care and being greeted with, *"I missed you. I missed you."* Then she added, *"I want to thank the nurses."*

How can I forget Elizabeth, lying in her hospital bed two days after her brain tumor was removed, unable to even lift her head off the pillow because of a pounding headache, ice packs on her head, asking for paper and markers so she could make a get-well-card for her hospital roommate who she saw stiffly and painfully walking past her bed? Or, one week after her surgery, when she insisted on hand-making over 50 Valentine's Day cards to give to classmates and teachers. Another day, after coming home from radiation, Elizabeth felt terrible, nauseous and weak, so Kathy gave her some tea and crackers and she began to feel better. A little later she whispered to me, *"Mommy takes such good care of me."*

In early October, Elizabeth wrote a school paper examining Benjamin Franklin's idea of the virtuous life. She wrote:

"My goal is to reach Paradise. To do so, I will fall and then get back up. Throughout our lives, we will learn what is good and what is bad, but we will never become perfect. Unlike Franklin, I do not believe that our lives are perfectible until the end when we have reached heaven. We are descendants of Adam and Eve, and like them we will continue to commit sin until the end of time. These statements are part of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and I refuse to change my views."

Elizabeth's knowledge of the Catholic Faith was mature, and the strength of her faith was unflinching. But her love of Christ and his Church had a child-like confidence, calling to mind Matthew 18:2-4 *"And Jesus called a little child to him, set him in their midst, and said, "Amen I say to you, unless you turn and become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever, therefore, humbles himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

One evening Elizabeth asked if we could talk so we went into the living room and sat on the couch. She asked me: *"When you go to heaven do all your questions get answered?"* I told her that I thought they would be. Elizabeth smiled a big smile and said, "I can't wait." When God called, Elizabeth went with peace.

Palm Sunday, of last year, we talked with Elizabeth about how we were trying to cure her cancer but also about the terrible, deadly reality of her tumor. Early the next morning, she began to cry and said, *"I need someone to give me hope."* I told her that we were doing all we could to cure her, but that if she died I was sure she would go straight to heaven. Two days later, on our drive home from radiation, I reminded her of our conversation. She stopped me and said, *"But now I have hope."* I asked, *"What is your hope?"* Elizabeth answered, *"That Jesus will take care of me."* Then she paused and added, *"Not that he will cure me. That he will take care of me."* Elizabeth trusted and hoped in her dear Jesus with such a pure and clean heart. About six weeks ago while praying in the Adoration Chapel she said simply, *"I am perfectly happy."*

Several months before Elizabeth's tumor was discovered, she asked me to get her a copy of a book that I own called Handbook of Prayers. I finally got a copy to her a week before her terrible headaches began. During that week, she marked several different chapters with vinyl markers out the top of the book, but very neatly out the side of the book she marked a specific prayer, "Self Dedication to Jesus Christ." Hannah and I found these markings the night of Elizabeth's surgery.

Elizabeth was clearly drawn, in a special and seemingly appropriate way, to this prayer. When she returned home from the hospital she committed it to memory and said it nearly every morning over the last year. When she was no longer able to say it, we often said it for her. It seems appropriate to end with that prayer:

Lord, take all my freedom.

Accept my memory, my understanding, and my will.

You have given me all that I have or hold dear.

*I return it to you, that it may be governed
by your will.*

*Give me only your grace and the gift of loving you,
and I will be rich enough;*

I will ask for nothing more. Amen