

Florence Seymour Funeral ~ February 12, 2010 ~ A homily preached by The Rev'd Erl G. Purnell at Old St. Andrew's Church, Bloomfield, CT

1st Corinthians 13.1-13; John 14.1-6; Prayer of St. Francis

Time goes by quickly. It seems like only a few months ago that I met Florence when George's health was waning. And yet, it's been 13 years. I had just arrived here at Old St. Andrew's in September 1997 and soon came to know them in East Granby.

At the celebration of George's life I spoke about his Easter Day and that he had finished the race, as Paul said in his letter to Timothy. So again this morning, we come together to celebrate the full and rich life of Florence who has also finished the race.

Florence will be remembered for many things. Around this church she is most notably known for her passion about flowers and her years of service on the Altar Guild. Funny, sweet, always smiling, clever and kind, she brought to her life and those who knew her a spirit of true goodness. In other words, Florence was a blessing.

It's no surprise that Florence asked that we share the prayer attributed to St. Francis today. The prayer begins with a clear statement of intent and purpose. "*Make us instruments of your peace.*" It ends as a summary: "*in giving, we receive; in pardoning, we are pardoned; in dying, we are born to eternal life.*" The power and beauty of these words cannot be overstated.

Then there's the body of the prayer, filled with those word-dances between the bad and good, dark and light, ugly and beautiful. So too, the reversals—about consoling, understanding and loving. These all point to the other, not the *Self*. St. Francis says it is to console the other, to understand the other, to love the other and not just focus on me, me, me. Florence got it! She fit so nicely, so comfortably with the notion of caring for the other ... you, her children, family and friends.

Florence lived a long life. On this her Easter Day, we say our good byes and wish her blessings and Godspeed.

Amen.