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Nancy Reagan Funeral, It Was All About Love!

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The personal invitation from Nancy Reagan to witness her blessed reunion with her beau Ronnie at her dignified funeral service was just as she had planned. Her guest list of who she desired attend was as politically and spiritually diverse as our nation. The all-encompassing array of people present illustrated the mutual respect and admiration held for the graceful First Lady, Mrs. Ronald Reagan. The humorous and emotional sentiments shared amongst guests exhibited how Nancy would be missed as a dear friend and mother. Her family and close friends gathered at the magnificent setting of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in the rolling California hills of Simi Valley on Friday March 11, 2016. Dignitaries, members of the Armed Forces, clergy, media, loyal staff, care-givers, and even some real California cowboys on horseback joined to pay final loving respects. Farewell to Nancy Davis Reagan, who graced this world from July 6, 1921 to March 6, 2016, began with all rising to the proclamation:

*“I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord;
he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,
and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die...
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit,
for they rest from their labors.”*

President Reagan’s favorite song, Battle Hymn of the Republic, was led by the choir and sung by all: *“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord...Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!...His truth is marching on.”* This was the dramatic beginning of the formal Liturgy of Christian Burial for First Lady, Nancy Reagan.

“E Pluribus Unum”

Honourable George W. Bush, 43rd President, looked a bit overwhelmed surrounded by a plethora of powerful first ladies including his wife Laura, First Lady Michelle Obama, former Secretary of State, Mrs. Hillary Clinton and Mrs. Rosalynn Carter. The children of former Presidents Ford, Nixon and Johnson attended along with Ambassador Caroline Kennedy. A notable Americana show of unity. Seated also in the front rows were California Governor Jerry Brown and former Governor Pete Wilson with his wife Gayle. It was a pleasant surprise when former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger arrived with his beautiful former First Lady Maria Shriver on his arm. United States Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, former Speaker Nancy Pelosi, former Speaker Newt Gingrich with his wife Callista, and Members of Congress including Dana Rohrabacher and former Representative David Drier attended. Friends from the diplomatic corps, business community and Hollywood were there. Former (Reagan)Secretary of State George Schultz, Frederick Ryan, Peggy Noonan, Ambassador and Mrs. Glen Holden, Marcia Hobbs, Lod Cook, Gerry Parsky, Betsy Bloomingdale, Lynn Wyatt, George Will, Tom Selleck, Bo Derek, Wayne Newton, Mr. T and comedian friend, Yakov Smirnoff, all gathered for Nancy’s memorable and touching “happily ever after” occasion. Family including Michael Reagan and his wife and other friends unable to be present were there in spirit.

Agape Love

The gentlemen present became squeamish in their seats bending heads and lamenting “How do we show as much love and affection to our wives as Ronnie did with Nancy? Ronald Reagan has really raised the bar for guys!” Former Prime Minister of Canada, The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney read a Christmas Love Letter from Ronnie to Nancy letting her know that every day was like Christmas for him in their marriage. We learned that Nancy reciprocated his love letters with socks she knitted for him filled with his favorite jelly beans. Pure romance. Their dear Canadian friend shared a personal encounter and dilemma with us. He said that on a state visit while waiting with President Reagan at Ottawa Airport for their wives to arrive, the jovial American President exclaimed how fortunate the two Irish Lads were to have married up!

Further reflecting on when he complained to President Reagan that he made him look bad to his wife Mila by his being so thoughtful to Nancy. Her leading man quickly retorted with a smile, "That's your problem Brian!" Every detail of this "Eternal Union" romantic gathering had Nancy's personal imprint on it. From commencing exactly on time at eleven o'clock in the morning, to the selection of poignant biblical readings and readers, the exquisite blend of classical, spiritual and patriotic music and eulogies by those she personally desired present them. Following Brian Mulroney remarks, Former Secretary of State James Baker and Tom Brokaw shared loving memories. Diane Sawyer spoke of her affectionate relationship with Nancy and then all stood as she beautifully proclaimed the Gospel Reading, John 14:1-6:

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.
In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you,
I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said to him,
'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'
Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.'
Diane concluded, "The Word of The Lord, for Nancy."
We all replied, "Thanks be to God."
Holding hands, the congregation of guests said The Lord's Prayer:*

*"Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come,
Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."*



With Ambassador and Mrs. Holden at The Reagan Library honoring Nancy

It was interesting to see so many journalists as part of Nancy's inner circle. It was enjoyable to be seated with them in row eight, center stage, wearing Nancy's favorite color red as a loving tribute. Katie Couric with her husband John Molner, Judy Woodruff, Sam Donaldson, Larry King and Wendy Walker formerly with CNN, and current CNN historian Douglas Brinkley were all part of Nancy's closely knit quilt of guests. The thought came to mind, "Conservative Nancy must have held these reportedly liberal members of the media closely in her heart and vice versa." Again, Nancy's funeral gathering revealed the reality of friendly, peaceful unity of Americans, especially during bonding times of sorrow and empathy. The atmosphere was all about love. The sad moment was hearing their two children express their feelings. Her daughter Patty spoke of the "Island of Two" her parents metaphorically and devotedly lived on and her desire to remember the healing and non-judgmental love she always received when she needed her Mother most. Ron brought levity in his remarks but evoked tears declaring he and his sister now suddenly find themselves "orphaned." He inspired prayerful hope in the hearts of many believers present when he informed that while he does not have faith in the supernatural, he comforted his Mother by responding positively to her when she needed re-assurance that she would be with their Father again. Hopefully, Ron and Patty know they are loved by the people who love their parents and they are forever a part of these extended Reagan families.

Amazing Grace

The Reverend Stuart A. Kenworthy, Vicar from the Washington National Cathedral, in his moving words focused on eternal love and life. He expressed this Divine gift of grace is offered to all who desire it, as promised by The Resurrection of Christ. We had the opportunity for friendly ecumenical exchange after the service. Complimenting him on his inspirational homily and blessing, the Reverend said that he was here to deliver that hopeful message for souls to be introduced to Jesus and then touched by the heart and mercy of God. He happily received the gift of Jesus' Mother, a "miraculous medal" exclaiming, "do you know what 'Theotokos' means?" I replied, "Yes, Reverend, it means Mother of God." He smiled affirming, "That's right" tapping me softly on the shoulder. I then said, "Behold thy Mother." Nancy's choice of "Ave Maria" and "Pie Jesu-Requiem," sung by soloist Ana Maria Martinez as hymns for reflection during the tender service, indicates Nancy's loving connection to Holy Mother Mary and Precious Jesus. The closing hymn chosen by Nancy and led by the 1st Marine Division Band, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, and Santa Susana High School Advanced Women's Choir, sung by all:

*God bless America, Land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above.
From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam,
God bless America, My home sweet home
God bless America, My home sweet home!*

The skies were unusually overcast the morning of Mrs. Reagan's funeral and the weather report was for rain. But during the service, rays of California sunshine brightly shone upon her white rose covered casket. At the moment America's dearly loved First Lady was carried out by her Honorary Pallbearers and Military Honor Guard to be interred next to her beloved husband and President, the heavens opened up with a torrent of rain as though she was pouring down kisses to us all. Nancy is now in the arms of her Ronnie riding into the blissful sunset for The Beatific Vision, experiencing eternal life and love.

Brothers and Sisters, Alleluia. Amen.