

## Second Sunday in Lent - March 13

*How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end I am still with you.*

*Psalm 139:17-18 (NRSV)*

On Wednesday, October 6, I woke up with a God nudge. It involved driving to Maryland to visit my grandmother. She had just turned 89 but her health had taken a turn after battling pancreatic cancer for the last 4 years. My wedding day was a few weeks later on October 21. I talked to my fiancé and we both agreed I should act on the feeling, so off I went.

About an hour into my drive I received the dreaded call that Willie Schnetzler had passed away. Precious Willie, who captured our hearts with her joyous smile and Jesus loving energy. Her battle with cancer as a 10-year-old little girl had now ended. I made my calls, stopped on the side of the road to calm my tears. So many emotions were hitting- sadness, frustration, peace with an end of suffering, and anticipation for what I was about to experience seeing my grandmother. I was completely alone, but in a sense, not at all. God was in the mountains.

My entire family ended up coming to visit my grandmother that weekend. It was a holy experience for each of us; to sing old hymns together and be still in her presence as we guided her on her passing. I drove home on October 8 and she passed peacefully the next day after each of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren had seen her.

When you read this whole story it really does sound sad, doesn't it? Two losses, one at the beginning of life, one nearing the end; two incredible, influential and faithful women. But despite the utter sadness that week brought and thereafter, I never felt alone. That is Emmanuel: God with us. God reminds us of Willie with "Willie winks" of rainbows in the sky and beautiful clouds in motion. And I knew my grandmother was with me on our wedding day as I wore her veil and soaked in the perfection of marrying my husband in the Maryland mountains. God with us shown through God's heavenly saints with us.

Rev. Hannah VanMeter

**Prayer:** Holy God, continue to teach us to be still in Your presence. We know that our worries can cloud this but we ask that You continue to instill in us the importance of being still, for it is there and then that we hear and experience You. And through that, we feel the presence of those whom we miss so dearly. Thank you for loving us so well, and always being with us, no matter how alone we may feel. Amen.