

## Brandt L. Montgomery

December 20, 2017 (Wednesday after the Third Sunday of Advent: Gaudete)  
Memorial Service for Christine Rice Wagner (September 6, 1971-December 15, 2017)  
Ascension Episcopal School—Downtown Campus, Lafayette, Louisiana  
Romans 8.18-19, 34-35, 37-39; Psalm 23; John 5.24-27

### Walk in the Light

*“Not death...[nor] anything else in the whole world will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Romans 8.39<sup>1</sup>*

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

*“We have sufferings now,”* Paul says in our New Testament lesson from Romans and, given the circumstances of today’s service, he could not be any further from the truth. Death dealt an unexpected and cruel blow when it took Christine Rice Wagner away from us during the late morning of December 15. It was only a mere 129 days ago that she and her son, Michael, joined the Ascension community, yet, in that short time, Christine became greatly loved by all of us, her positive energy and joyful spirit being her most admirable qualities. For death to have taken her away from us so soon seems unfair. It has caused two parents to grieve the loss of their child, a son to grieve the loss of his mother, and all of us to grieve the loss of an Ascension community member. It’s just so unfair.

But Paul also assures us that *“the sufferings we have now are nothing compared to the great glory that will be given to us.”* That is because, for Paul, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, *“death...[nor] anything else in the whole world will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Jesus Himself assures us that *“whoever hears what I say and believes in the One who sent me...has already left death and has entered into life”* (John 5.24). For Christine, life has only changed, not ended. She believed the Word of God with all her heart, soul, mind, and strength, certain that by Jesus’ resurrection, she, too, and all of us have been raised to newness of life with Him. Now, in the fullest sense, in death, Christine now experiences the joys of eternal life with Jesus Christ.

The Paschal Candle, which you see to my right, represents how, through Jesus Christ our Passover, *“we were buried with [Christ] so that we could live a new life, just as Christ was raised from death by the wonderful power of the Father”* (Romans 6.4). It further represents the light that dwells within us and our mission to walk as children of the Light in all the world. Christine worked and walked as a child of the Light among us. She loved and felt the Holy Spirit’s presence at Ascension. Her love for God and our love for her fueled her eagerness to give back to Ascension both above and beyond the limits of her classroom. The light that burned within Christine was constantly aflame with the oil of gladness. And when it came time for the end, she went to the God of her joy and gladness, with the Lord she loved and knew saying, *“Come and share My happiness with Me”* (Matthew 25.21). *“The Light shines in the darkness. And the darkness has not overpowered the Light”* (John 1.5).

Many of you have been asking, “What do we do now?” Jesus says, “Live!” *“Live so that they will see the good things you do...that they will praise your Father in Heaven”* (Matthew 5.16). This is what Christine sought to do

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, New Century Version*, Copyright © 1987, 1988 by Word Publishing, a division of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

in her own life. It is what she would want us to do amongst ourselves and towards others. She would want us to live as children of God, being gentle, generous, truth, kind, and brave, experiencing the goodness and joy of Christ in this life, not just in the next. The light is our witness: *"Those who [do] good will rise and have life forever"* (John 5.29). The life and work of Christine Rice Wagner confirms this.

Let us then follow Christine's example. Let us honor her memory, paying forward to others what she gave in love and service to us; let us follow Jesus and do the work of ministry together. *"And if God's Spirit is living in you, then He will also give life to your bodies that die"* (Romans 8.11). Christine will soon go down to the dust; yet even at the grave, she will make her song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! When the end comes for us, may we sing that same song.

For giving Christine to us to know and love as a companion on our earthly pilgrimage, we give You thanks, good Lord.

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

For more information & to view Ms. Wagner's obituary, please click [HERE](#).