

## Eulogy for Diane Guerra

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By Jan D. Dixon

As the plane landed on the tarmac on my flight from Colorado yesterday afternoon, I received a call from Fr. Marty Solma asking if I would share some thoughts about Diane at the service today.

I told him I would be honored to do so – but that I felt so inadequate to the task. I have known Diane for 31 years. I worked with her, first at Southwestern Bell, and later for the Marianists. But I know that many of you here today knew Diane for a much longer period of time and could have easily shared your thoughts on her life.

Maybe it's good that I'm doing this because whenever I tried to pay Diane a compliment, tell her how much she meant to me, she often would say something like, "Oh Jan, I'm really not that nice!"

So, Diane, I know if you are listening now, feel free to roll your eyes whenever you feel like it throughout this eulogy!

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The poet, David Whyte, once said that the best way to honor a person after he or she has died is to talk about the things they loved.

Those things that animated them.

Inspired them.

Brought them to life.

When I think of Diane Guerra, there were so many things she was passionate about. But I would like to zero in on four areas of her life, things that not only enlivened her, but brought out the best in her.

## **Passion No. 1: Communications**

The first is that she was passionate about communications.

Diane loved movies, great books and was a consummate reader of the daily newspaper. She loved being in the know, on top of what was happening in the world.

She was curious, demanding, thoughtful.

She was also funny, and could deliver a line with just the right hint of sarcasm to make me laugh every time.

She was always up for a good story. In fact, I remember that sometime in the 1990s, she wanted to start her own radio program, calling it “What Do You Do All Day?” I remember asking her what she was going to interview people about and she said, “about what they do ALL DAY!”

In short, she believed everyone has a story to tell. Everyone deserves to be listened to.

She was passionate about giving voice – a space – a platform – for stories to be heard and ideas to be understood.

That’s why she loved writing, editing and coaching others about their messaging.

She loved putting it all together in a newsletter, a magazine, a feature story, a radio broadcast, an ad campaign.

She loved great photography (she was an excellent photographer herself). She loved design, layout and production. (Here’s a shout out to you, Jean Lopez, I know you are sitting out there).

Diane held herself to the highest standards and by setting the bar high, she encouraged the rest of us to rise to the occasion.

Many of you have told me that working with Diane made you a better writer, editor, designer. She helped us infuse our work with greater elegance and clarity.

When I was working for the Marianists at the office in St. Louis, many of the Marianist priests and brothers affectionately called Diane the “Mother Superior of the Marianists.” (We all knew who was in charge.)

As Mother Superior, she made us try a little hard, be a little better, and in the process find joy in doing great work together.

### **Passion No. 2: People**

A second thing Diane was passionate about was people. She loved people – connecting with others and helping others connect – was one of her special gifts.

Before the advent of Facebook and social media, Diane had already developed a rich web of relationships, partnerships, friendships she could count on.

I have a funny story to illustrate that. I remember a time in my life when I was trying to find more freelance work. Diane had been in a similar situation, and she knew how hard that was.

So she offered to give me her rolodex so I could go through it and find new people to contact. So I said, “sure,” and the next day I went to her house to pick it up. She brought out the biggest rolodex I had EVER seen. It was the “mother of all rolodexes!” I could barely carry it to the car!!

I loved her for that. It was as if she were saying: “I would do anything to help you right now, so I’m going to open up my whole world to you – Diane’s World.”

She was enormously generous in that way. As a friend, I knew Diane always had my back. She was fiercely loyal. If you made it into her rolodex – you were in her Rolodex for Life.

Eric, I think of the Marine motto: *Semper Fidelis* – always faithful, when I think of your mom. She was that kind of friend.

### **Passion No. 3: Faith**

A third area of Diane’s life where I noticed her passion, something that deeply grounded her, was her faith.

She was born and raised Catholic, and I watched her come back to the Church when she was in her early 30s and in a moment of great need.

From there, she discovered a circle of friends – her centering prayer allies. I know many of you are here today. She found in contemplative prayer a way to sit still, to be present to that still small voice nudging her to “let go, and let God.”

I always found it ironic that for a woman who loved to talk and talk ... and talk ... that God would use silence as a way to enter into a relationship with her. God’s spirit drew her into place of quiet, a place where she could let go of her ego and put down her burdens to find healing and grace.

### **Passion No. 4: Family**

The fourth area of Diane’s life – and certainly the most important – where you could easily see the most joy – was the love of her family – her children.

Alexis and Eric – she couldn't have been more proud of you. And her grandchildren – Alina and Logan – and of course, Natalia – you all meant the world to her.

An example of how special you were was evident in her office at the Marianists. It was a big office, and I remember that last time I was there, I noticed all of the photographs of you – beautiful portraits – that covered nearly every inch of space. I doubt there was room for one more photograph! You were the center of her world. The love of her life.

The last time I spoke with Diane was three or four weeks ago. Although she was starting to be a bit confused, she was clear about one thing. She told me, "I couldn't have faced all of these health challenges. I couldn't have done this without my children. They have been with me every step of the way. And I know it's been hard on them. I can't thank them enough."

I know that your mom was eternally grateful for everything you did for her. Don't ever forget that you did everything you could.

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I'd like to close with one of Diane's favorite quotes – one that became her mantra during these last couple of years as she faced an onslaught of illnesses.

It's a quote from the great Catholic mystic and theologian, Julian of Norwich who wrote:

"All shall be well,  
and all shall be well,  
and all manner of things shall be well."

May Diane finally be well. May she find rest. May she be at peace.

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