A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
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On the Occasion of the Funeral for Alexandra Sewall Mackey
14 November, 2026

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Hey mom, would you mind if I brought my friend Al home for a visit? Sure! I will make up a bed for him in your room. From what I gather, your father did not correct your grandmother's error in believing that Al was an Allen or another Albert. Making up a second bed in Bill's room would have been no issue, except for the fact that Al, in this case, was a cute girl met on a ski slope. After hearing so much about your mother's sense of humor, I find it easy to imagine her and your father cooking this up together, the play on names, which lasted through the decades, until the end when Billy, her hottie Rottie entered the scene, and completed the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Dog. Humor and grace defined the long long life of Al Mackey, and I imagine that there are more people than you will ever know who remember her with a smile and a laugh.

I enjoyed meeting with you all yesterday, and I offer the condolences of everyone here at Christ Church on your mother's passing. After we posted a death announcement to the congregation many people reached out to tell us how much they loved her. Even people we did not know knew her. She left her mark on our community and will be missed. For many, it is as if the 6-year gap created by her move to Florida never happened.

When we talked about Al's values and passions what came up again and again was determination and good cheer in equal measures. Not all people are blessed with that. Some people, we have all known them in our lives, have plenty of determination but not a lot of cheer, and some people are the opposite. For Al, these qualities carried her to the end, as well as through the long middle of life, when she encountered her fair share of difficulties. The image of her swerving into the passing lane with her walker in her senior living facility says it all: The good life is a life of resurrection stories. A life where, in a way, we are born again and again, as we are faced with choices about how to respond to the situations that we face on a daily basis. Al responded with Grace because she knew the love and Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Potholes that no one will fix? Form a group of women, Mom's Against Potholes, buy 200 pounds of asphalt, borrow some orange cones and fill 'em yourself. Did you know that on the internet Mom's Against Potholes is referred to from time to time by grassroots groups gathering to make their roads safe for the whole community? Amazing, right?

When Al saw a challenge, she remade herself to meet it. Don't know how to cook? Buy a cookbook, read it, and learn. But don't stop there, learn also to host the most inviting of parties, the kind where people know they can relax and laugh, and love love love.

Need to throw birthday parties? Relax, Al has it covered. Goldfish in the swimming pool!

She was not just all about the fun, she was also all about service to others. Her work here on the Alter Guild, her encouragement of her children to serve at the Altar. Her work at Crossroads, where I am guessing she must have been among the original crew, serving Thanksgiving year after year to hundreds of hungry people. Modelling and including her children in her life of service so that they to would learn the importance of generosity and welcome.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus and Martha have a conversation on what it means to be resurrected. Jesus assures Martha that Lazarus will be resurrected. Her assumption is that Jesus speaks of the resurrection to come on the last day. They have a very honest conversation, with Martha reproving Jesus that if he had come sooner Lazarus would not have needed to die. Jesus assures her that all who believe in him will not die but live. Martha's faith in Jesus as the Messiah allows her to accept that which seems impossible, eternal life.

When we live with that sure and uncertain hope, as Al did, our lives are transformed. We live as people who have already entered eternal life, and we can live with joy even when things are hard because we know that all shall be made well. When we read through the Bible narrative on Martha, we see a woman who begins in her journey with Christ a little put out that she is the one who does all the work, but Martha grows in understanding. I am sure that there were times for Al when she needed to grow in understanding too. Thankfully, we all are offered the choice to either grow in understanding or get stuck when things get hard. May we all choose the life of hope and grace, as Al did, so that we too may know the hope and joy that infused her life from top to bottom.