

# Celebration of Life – Ann Marie Whicker

By Dan Whicker

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Today, we gather to celebrate the life of my incredible wife, Ann Marie Whicker. As her best friend and husband for over 28 years, I've known her the best. Yet how I can ever describe such a beautiful person in a few words...on a short page...in a handful of minutes? With all my writing and public speaking skills, I find myself at a loss for words...for the grief of losing her has really only just begun, and right now memories tend to bring tears more than smiles.

Rather than bring up touching remembrances or funny anecdotes, I'll let others do that while I focus on the specialness of this day.

I say "special" because Ann Marie's passing is even more victorious than her past life. When I sent the message that she had gone, I said that she **won** her battle with breast cancer, though not in the way that we would have preferred. We prayed earnestly for a miracle that would extend her life with us, and to the very end we all had faith that God would perform a miraculous healing.

It may seem like God let us down...but He didn't. Ann has been healed. Her cancer is gone. She is no longer in pain. And we can't even imagine the awesomeness of her present experience. If you believe like I do, you know that she really **is** in a better place, for she is now in the intimate presence of the Creator of the Universe, surrounded by those who have gone ahead of her—ancestors, saints, mother, father, good friends. She was victorious over her disease, and now she is enjoying rest. The battle **has been** won. We who are left just have to wait until later to celebrate with her in person again.

Would I have preferred for her to win and to stick around? Yes, obviously. That was always my prayer and hope. Yet as I sit here today, I will not question my God's decision to take her home instead, or doubt His goodness. Who is the clay to question the Potter? Who is the child to question the Father?

If you know the account of Job in the Bible, you'll remember that he lost much more than I have. And still his trust in God was so strong that he was able to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him." And for his faith, Job was blessed with twice as much as he had before his losses. What was his lesson? What is my lesson? Simply that God requires faith. "Will you trust me no matter what happens?" he asks. Ann Marie, and our family, replied "Yes." For us, that's a victory. Parting is only temporary. Paradise awaits those who respond to their Father with faith. How can I want any less for my beloved, faithful wife.

Today, then, is both a sad and happy occasion. We mourn our present loss, but we celebrate a future reunion. We honor a life well-lived, a battle courageously and victoriously fought, and a legacy of faith and love that surpasses time. Ann had the attitude of a soldier—a warrior (And an Italian warrior is not one to mess with! Trust me.). She would want us to be happy for her today. She would expect music, some wine, laughing, and would forgive a few tears. She would be humbled by your presence, honored by your comments, and filled with joy at seeing you embrace her family during such an emotional time.

In her place, I thank you. On behalf of myself and my two sons Dax and Vance, I thank you all so very much for your support, words of encouragement, prayers, and love. Through any tears, please remember this day in the tone of a victory celebration.

And may God richly bless you all.

-- Dan Whicker