

Eulogy for Marie Colantoni Pechet
By Julie Laukkanen

We're here today to celebrate the life of Marie and the genuine gift she was to each and every one of us. I have been blessed to call Marie my best friend for 34 years. As well as I knew her, I have been struggling to find appropriate words to convey her incredible spirit. In fact, I met with Father Thom, and he pointed out that we have a tendency to canonize loved ones at a time like this. But we agreed Marie was a rare person, deserving of our praise. These words are from my heart and they are the true.

Marie was intimately connected to a lot of people. Just look around you--at how many lives Marie touched. And there are so many more who couldn't be here today. Marie would be truly humbled to see such an outpouring of love and support for her family.

So many of you know Marie from recent years, but I want to share with you a little about Marie in her healthier days. Marie and I met when she was studying computer science at Carnegie-Mellon. She went on to work at Digital Equipment Corporation in Nashua. Then she went back to Carnegie-Mellon to earn her Master's at what is now called the Tepper School of Business. She graduated in 1991 and became a successful management consultant and much to my delight, she made Boston her home.

Marie was special for a lot of reasons. She was impeccably gracious, thoughtful, generous and selfless. Cancer didn't change that about her. In fact, somehow, cancer gave her a platform to be even more gracious, especially in her writing.

In person, Marie was a vivacious extrovert who energized any room she was in. She had incredible charisma that attracted people from all backgrounds. When she walked into a room, literally a line would form of people who wanted to talk with her. That's because when you were with Marie, it felt like the sun shined down on you. She genuinely cared about what you had to say and listened intently. She never judged you and always made you feel better. Even in the doldrums of chemotherapy, she could still shine that light on you and make you feel better.

She exuded pure love...joy...and light.

Marie saw possibility and hope in any situation. Her positive attitude spread comfort and joy everywhere she went. And nothing brought Marie greater joy than being a mom. Julian and Aidan were her pride and joy and she loved them so much. They gave her strength each and every day. Marie was so proud of both of them. She wondered where Aidan's incredible imagination would take him next and she marveled at Julian's athletic prowess.

In addition to her family, Marie left a great legacy--her writing, a blog called "Adventures in Spiritual Living." This can serve as a guide for all of us about how to live in the present moment. She also set the bar on how to overcome adversity and she did so with incredible grace.

She bared her soul to us and wrote about gratitude. She taught us how to open our hearts, to let in the light, to look for the goodness in our lives, and to appreciate the love that surrounds us each day.

Marie spoke from the heart and had a profound and deep faith in God that gave her the energy to fight so courageously for the past nine years. She found a way to transcend pain and trust in God. She is now safely returned to Him and we hold her in our hearts.

Raised in the Catholic church, Marie enjoyed the rituals of the religion. She regularly came here to Saint Joseph Parish for services in which she had the honor of serving as a lector, reading from the scriptures. She

also taught Catechism here until her energy waned and it was no longer possible. She sought comfort in God and in prayer. She welcomed our prayers and could feel them carry her in times of need. So many prayers were answered over the years.

Marie was extremely perceptive and had a unique gift. A kind of knowing. She could see the truth in everyone. She saw the spiritual essence of us all and that is how she connected with us. She didn't notice if you gained ten pounds or lost all your hair. Those were physical world realities that weren't important to her. She operated on a different plane, in a spiritual way. She saw good in everything. She saw our light.

Marie spoke often of light, of giving light, of sharing light, and of sending light. This is not the light you can see. It is the light you can feel in your heart and lets you know you are loved.

I am holding dear a recent memory of Marie, Tiron, Aidan and Julian visiting my new home in Maine. We strolled on the beach, Marie wearing a large, floppy hat to avoid the sun and looking every bit the movie star. We watched the boys explore the dunes and play in the water and got to enjoy a quiet conversation between the crashing sounds of the waves. She told me that she'd join me again to walk on this beach when she was free of her body and the pain.

We also talked a lot about angels. Marie said that her grandpa and many other angels helped her through the darkest of times... I know that Marie's spirit lives on. Last Saturday, I returned to the beach for some solace. Without a doubt, she joined me on that beach and filled my heart with light, as only she can.

Marie is now one of the angels, ready to help all of us when we need her, still sharing her light.

I'd like to share one more story with you. In the past few weeks, none of us expected things to move so quickly. I know she was caught by surprise and wanted to keep fighting. But she also wanted to be prepared. After Thanksgiving, she asked me to join her to meet with the musicians—Mickey and Anna, who are here today-- to discuss the details of this service, which she had long ago planned. She intended it to be a celebration of her life.

She chose the prayers and the music. Of course, Marie wanted us to end on a positive note and hoped that as we file out of this church today—listening to a song that she wrote with Anna--that our healing will begin.

Now I will close with Marie's own words—a prayer for us, from one of her blog entries in *Adventures in Spiritual Living*.

“Many of us have been handed enormous burdens.
I hope that you can feel tangible ways
in which, you are being cared for and carried.
That serendipitous events make your burden more bearable
and that you feel the love
all around and through you.”

Amen.