

Sr. Judith O'Connell
Funeral Reflection

All of us at Sacred Heart Church, Msgr. Farland, Fr. Shea, Fr. Reilly, staff and parishioners, join with Sr. Betsy and the Leadership Team in welcoming you here today as we commend to God's goodness and mercy Sr. Judith O'Connell. I know all of us offer heartfelt condolences to the Flaherty and Fitzgerald family, mindful that the first anniversary of the death of Sr. Judy's cousin, Mary Lynch Flaherty, was just two days ago. In addition to Sr. Judy's cousins, we gratefully acknowledge the presence of special friends through the years, Carolyn Jacobs, her colleague at Smith College, the College of Our Lady of the Elms, and friends at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Springfield and the Cathedral.

It was one week ago today on May 6 that Sr. Judy was called to newness of life. The month of May is a significant month in our nation and in our church. In May, we celebrate Mothers' Day and Memorial Day; in the Church, May 1 is the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, and the entire month is devoted to Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Church, Mother of us all and providentially today, May 13, is the Feast Day of Our Lady of Fatima. We entrust Sr. Judy to her loved ones, the parents and all of the angels and saints in this good month.

The readings shared moments ago testify to the gift of the Catholic faith that sustained and motivated every aspect of the life and ministry of Sr. Judy. The Old Testament, Isaiah reminds us we are all God's children. Proudly a Sister of St. Joseph since 1961, proudly Catholic from day one, Sr. Judy was an only child who recognized the presence of God in every brother and sister she met.

Naturally optimistic and good natured, Sr. Judy appreciated that everyone was deserving of dignity, everyone a child of God. She received a degree in the art of people, pastoral counseling. It's interesting that her ministry began with high school students, both at Cathedral High School and St. Mary's, Millford; moved onto College students, 15 years at Smith and 3 years at the Elms; then for over 20 years for service to religious communities as the Vicar for Religious. Today we note the presence of the religious she served, also mindful of her visits and kindness to those who cannot be here, cloistered Dominican nuns and the Visitation sisters in Tyringham. Sr. Judy was very present to those communities and was instrumental in their leadership elections.

At the Pastoral Center on Elliot St., Sr. Judy's office was on the second floor but she was like a goodwill ambassador, a joyful presence throughout the building. Fiercely loyal to her West Springfield roots, she read every word of that local newspaper the West Springfield Record and would always share clippings when anything in that paper mentioned the Church, the Sisters, the fire Department or local Irish happenings.

These recent years have been difficult with health concerns but she received good care and the continued support of her loyal religious community. On this Feast Day, I'm reminded of

the words attributed to Our Lady of Fatima: “Even when you have much to suffer, the grace of God will be your comfort.” Judith, may all of us entrust you to the comfort of the grace of God, the welcoming embrace of the angels and saints and especially to Christ the Good Shepherd.

In the Old Testament there is a scripture passage from the Book of Judith with these words: “Let us call upon God to help us, and He will hear our voice.” Judy carried the cross of illness with God. Now God carries her.

Msgr. Christopher Connelly
May 13, 2026