



# IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

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## CATHOLIC CHURCH

A MESSAGE FROM DEBBIE GARTNER

Dear Parishioners of Immaculate Heart of Mary,

Do you ever feel like life is becoming unpredictable? I sure have. Last September, when my very dear friend Ann received the diagnosis of not one, but five cancers, I found it hard to comprehend. We had been together at Immaculate Heart of Mary for over twenty-three years. "It couldn't be! Not Ann! We have plans for retirement! We are like sisters! We love and support each other. We have weathered through six pastors, five of them being first time pastors! We didn't "work together" we loved and served our parish family together. We were a real team! That same week, my Mom was rushed to the hospital. She almost died from sepsis. She was there for over a week. I stayed day and night not leaving her side. When she went to rehab, I was at the rectory by day and spent the nights at the rehab facility for a month. During that time, our beloved Msgr. Billing went to the hospital, not once but twice for his heart. Talk about frightening, unpredictable?! I had many conversations with Jesus. The strength and guidance granted me from the Holy Spirit along with the remarkable Holly Keisker and Deacon Jim, who were a tremendous support, actually life savers for nine months, is what carried me through. It was like the Footprints in the Sand story. The Spirit was carrying me and sending numerous people along the way! When I had my stroke/aneurysm in December, life as I knew it once again became unpredictable and frightening. I am grateful for the fast actions and incredible medical staff and doctors who saved my life. After a two week stay in the hospital, I was able to return home. Life was certainly slower, but good. After a few weeks, I began having anxiety at bedtime. Many questions captured my thoughts; Why did I survive and not others? What if this happens while I am sleeping? What if Tim doesn't hear me? What if this happens again?! I asked Msgr. Billing to come to my home so we could talk. God bless him for his kind and pleasant personality. After visiting for a while, we came back to my reason for his visit; all of the "Why's" that were keeping me up at night. Msgr. Billing, in his very gentle manner said, 'Maybe you need to stop asking questions. You may have very good questions and possibly very good answers, but sometimes, we can ask but will never know for sure what the answer will be or the worry will not change the situation. Putting trust in God can bring you peace.' At first, these words were not what I wanted to hear. I wanted concrete answers. But that is the point, we cannot always have concrete answers. That is where the grace of our faith provides peace where nothing else can. That very night and ever since, I have been able to sleep without anxiety. I am grateful for Msgr. Billing's wisdom and for my faith, that no matter what unpredictability life brings me, I am not alone and God will carry me through. "Lord, thank you for the many blessings in my life. Amen."

God Bless,

*Debbie Gartner*