

March 26 – April 1, 2017

Whoever hears my word, and believes in the One who sent me has passed from death to life.

John 5:24

"End stage melanoma," the doctor pronounced, after Mary requested complete honesty. It seemed unfair to those who knew her: an ebony spot, unnoticed on her back, soon would bleed its ink across her death certificate. For Mary, though, the irony lay not in her diagnosis, but in the thought that so few people really knew her or would care.

An unmarried, retired teacher, Mary was an only child. With only distant cousins, she had made the parish her family. She was a daily communicant, a diligent contributor and respected neighbor. Mary knew this, but for decades, she had still gone home each night to a lonely house and a solitary life.

How surprised Mary was when, during her final weeks in hospice, visitors came in waves to comfort her. Students spoke of her steady influence; neighbors of her charity. Colleagues remembered her patience. When one visitor lamented Mary's situation, she stopped him, mid-sentence. "I have never been happier," she said. "I had no idea so many people loved me."

Life's circumstances can conspire to convince us that we are unimportant, unloved, even useless. Sometimes, these perceptions are self-imposed. At other times, they are pressed on us by hostile forces, as they were on Jesus at the end of his life. But Jesus assures us in this week's readings: "The one who believes in me will never die." He touches the blind man with light and the royal official's son with resurrection. Jesus calls us to trust that we are infinitely loved. Believing it, we have the strength—even the joy—to go with him to Calvary.