

OUR GOD WHO NEVER FORGETS
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Tribute to the late Erlinda “Lynda” Abuda-McPherson

Born to this life: 16 December 1950

Born to eternal life: 15 July 2025

I just came back from a relaxing holiday in Queensland, catching up with my daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter when the next day I arrived back in Melbourne, an alarm call was received about a mutual friend.

She had not been replying to any of our calls, texts or messages for days and we needed to activate a welfare check after a desperate discernment.

The police found her passed away several days in her home, where she lived alone. Some of you may know our friend and sister-in-Christ, Erlinda “Lynda” Abuda- McPherson.

She is our parishioner and member of our prayer group for a few years now, since the time she experienced a transforming faith renewal. I have known her for 30 years in different capacities, from a real estate agent to a volunteer to many Australian - Filipino organisations which she served with fervour; but there were times of sad misunderstandings by acquaintances due to her “intense” personality.

The circumstances of her death are sad, and at time of writing I needed to reach out to as many friends to assist in giving her a dignified farewell as her relatives are far-away and have not been in touch for a time. We had no funds to pay for her funeral, as her property and will was under lock and key by the police.

As we had no legal right to access her home, we had no documents or names to go by, but the good Lord helped us by sending people miraculously on our path, and soon we were able to piece the puzzle slowly, essential information that we needed to navigate the process. How can something “simple” turn into a complex closure?

At time of writing, we are preparing for her funeral Mass, which has not been straightforward, but again the Lord sustained and helped us every step of the day.

There were moments when we asked the Lord, *how come Lord, and why like this?*

Those of us who know the Bible, are led to Genesis 1, when we have a picture of a world created good, without suffering or pain, but due to the Fall, we are now subject to disease, decay, suffering and death.

In the book of St Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4 & 5, he talks about our bodies as fragile, like clay jars and earthly tents. But we are called by our Christian faith to raise our sights on Jesus, to the lasting hope before us and not lose heart for the vision must be kept in our hearts – the vision of a heavenly home, where there is no mourning, crying, sorrow or death. In God's eternal presence there is only love, peace, joy and celebration. But how difficult to comprehend this during our grief.

Our only true example is Jesus. Such unfathomable human suffering on the Cross, but the power of His glorious Resurrection remains our only hope.

Ram Dass, a poet says that when someone we love dies, we get so busy mourning what died that we ignore what didn't.

This is what we intend to give our sister Erlinda, at her farewell- to let her know about the good she did. There are those of us who really care for her, those who understood her weakness, her vulnerabilities, those who know the pain of living alone, unwell, unsure of the future. – with only the Bible, the Cross and the Rosary, and of course her guitar and songs, as her constant companions in the dark nights of her soul, the angst of uniting family and loved ones, in the hard work of nourishing a sick body.

On the night that her remains were released to us, 23 July, I had to get some fresh air, as my head was spinning; I was left with the major responsibility of making sure she gets a decent funeral.

I looked at the sky – it was darkened by thick heavy black clouds. I said a prayer that the Lord sends me a manifestation of comfort, that she was with Him and helping us unravel the tasks she left us; too many knots to untie. Then one little star appeared in the dark sky. Then it faded. And the sky was dark again. I became deeply emotional by this supernatural validation.

Sis Lynda, as I call her fondly, is a prayer warrior to many of us – we benefited from her hours of interceding on her knees.

How do we deal with her tragic death now? We walk gently, for grief is different for everyone. In your quiet moments of prayer, see her praying for you in heaven, inspiring you to run the race, and although it seemed she gave up

fighting, due to the sad circumstances of her death, she got the prize, as St Paul says – the eternal reward awaiting her in heaven.

This beautiful Scripture verse from Acts 20:24, which could very well be her anthem. ***“But I consider my life of no value to me, if only I may finish my course and complete the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus – the ministry of testifying to the Good News of God’s grace.”***

What are we learning from her life and death? That she is a living testimony of the goodness of God, that salvation is not too late, that we serve a God who is faithful, loving and that in life and in death we belong to Him. That the legacy of her love, compassion, faith and trust in God is all what truly matters.

Everyone who responded with immeasurable kindness in various ways of assistance - this is her testimony – we serve a God of magnificent grace.

When I was struggling to find the means to raise her funeral, I was reminded of my daughter’s anthem: ***Mom, always ask God for the Impossible. This is his forte.*** I did. I reached out to good people and the impossible was fulfilled.

For Sis Lynda who was very thoughtful all her life, the generosity of friends and community to assist her get a dignified funeral is a sure testament to how God rewards us at the end.

Initially, I viewed her sudden death at home - sad, lonesome, shocking, tragic, devastating, but she gave me a spiritual revelation. She was not alone.

She had Jesus and Mother Mary during her last breath, when she handed it to them and she was taken in complete peace – no pain, no suffering, just opening her eyes to the awesome splendour of Heaven. She must have opened her eyes and saw the glory of God and chose not to come back to an imperfect, hurting world.

Jason,

If you want to use this as an aside:



I'm Free

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
I'm following the path God laid for me,
I took His hand when I heard him call
I turned my back and left it all.

I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work or play.
Tasks left undone must stay that way.
I found that place at the close of day.

If my parting has left a void
Then fill it with remembered joy.
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss.
Ah yes, these things I too will miss.

Be not burdened with times of sorrow.
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.
My life's been full, I savored much.
Good friends, good times,
a loved one's touch.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your heart and share with me
God wanted me now, *He set me free!*