Telling Judy's Story
Remarks at the Memorial Mass for Judy
Chapel at the Catholic Information Center
Washington, D.C.
December 13, 2014

Before anything else I'd like to express my deep thanks to Fr. Arne for shaping this Mass in memory of Judy, and our beloved Dr. Michael Fragoso, now Fr. Fragoso, for concelebrating. Judy loved Fr. Arne and Fr. Jim Schall, and she loved this chapel, where I came into the Church in April 2010, enveloped by friends, as we are today. She was deeply moved by the experience, and by our friends coming up to take communion. Anyone who saw her face that day will not forget it. She was so moved by the whole thing, and I could never have done it without her loving approval every step of the way. And it was a long journey, for we were two Jewish kids from Chicago. But the young priests, in their 20's and 30's were somehow drawn to her, and she had a kind of maternal affection for them, which they seemed instantly to sense. And she came to have a deep affection and respect for Francis George, Francis Cardinal George, who sprang up quite implausibly from that working class Scandawegian neighborhood where Judy and I went to high school in Chicago. The Cardinal wrote to tell me that he said a Mass for her, and without any solicitation or suggestion from me, Masses have been said for her all over the country and abroad.

She was also pro-life before I was. I was fascinated by the principled reasoning woven with the evidence from embryology. But Judy had thought

it through long before I did, and the ground of it all was that she knew Peter and Jeremy in the womb.

As all of our friends know, Judy was utterly averse to drawing attention to herself. She would be the last one to stand up and tell her story, but if this is not the moment—as we can see the arc of a life lovingly and bravely led—when would that story be told? I'd like to tell just a part of Judy's story now.

I want to take you back then to a scene at George Washington University, not long ago. Judy was visiting an office, with a young woman, a recent graduate, acting as secretary or receptionist. Judy noticed a picture of Winston Churchill on a shelf near her head and remarked on what a nice picture that was. The young woman said that she didn't know who that was. Judy told her, and she went on to remark that she [Judy] had been in the Battle of Britain "in utero." Her parents, Leopold and Theresa Sonn had been a young urban couple, well off in Vienna, living dashing lives for six years unencumbered by the presence of children. But they were able to leave Vienna under Eichmann. They were interned in England, and separated for a while. But Theresa was afraid that she wouldn't see him again, and so for the first time she wanted a child. As she said, she wanted "something to remember him by." Could anything be simpler or more natural?: that Judy was of course meant to incarnate the one flesh union of the marriage.

And as Judy told that young woman at GWU, she was there in the Battle of Britain in utero. Her parents made their way across the North

Atlantic in a perilous voyage and Judy was born in New York in March 1941. The young woman asked, What was the 'Battle of Britain'? Judy told her, "That's when Germany was bombing England." And the gal said, "Oh, why were they doing that?"

Well, Judy was born in the Bronx when people knew why they were doing that, and what she called her first "speech impressions" came from her maternal grandmother, who had learned her English with an English tutor. Judy's speech, her slight accent, was always a bit different then; she didn't sound like the other girls in Humboldt Park in Chicago where we both were youngsters. And yet she was loyal to her sense of herself as a Midwesterner. She thought I was in a state of treason when I pronounced the words r-o-o-f as roof [rewf], and when I took matters to the root [rewt[instead of the root.

The recognition broke in on me several months ago and I remarked on it to her that everything we were doing now, everything we had accomplished, in the writing and editing, in our professional careers as well as the begetting and nurturing of the children—that everything had sprung from the marriage. We were married young, in our senior year of college, and we had a lovely first year, leaving in our own, cozy garret apartment in Urbana, Illinois. (We had actually met 60 years ago this fall at a bus stop in Logan Square on our way to Carl Schurz high school in our first year there.) We had before us the finishing of college and then launching out on the adventures of life together, as a team, our lives wound around each other. It struck me, as I said, that everything we had accomplished sprang from that point. And when things are measured in that way, we come to realize that the marriage itself was *the point of it all*—not the books, not the edited

volumes though they form a record. They were things we could replay for each other, celebrate with each other, because we had sustained each other in the work.

After we finished our BA's, we returned to Chicago and the great University of Chicago for me, doing graduate work, while Judy was working for Scott Foresman Publishers. (She had been an English major—she had been a constant reader as a child, and in college she had studied, across the board, Dryden and Shakespeare, the circle around Samuel Johnson, the great 18th and 19th century novels. Her deepest interest was in the 19th century novels, especially the Brontes, George Eliot and Mrs. Gaskell. She had cultivated also a serious interest in the Jews in Vienna and Eastern Europe after the cities were opened to Jews.) At Scott Foresman she was concentrating on some appealing textbooks done for youngsters in grammar school and high school. That sparked her interest in actually teaching, mainly teaching children how to read. She gained a scholarship at the University of Chicago to do a Master's Degree in Teaching (MAT). But she was willing to give it up when I was offered a highly coveted fellowship at Brookings, which became a stepping stone to a job at Amherst. In visiting Washington, looking for a place to live, Judy made an inquiry with George Washington University, and amazement of amazement: A panel was quickly called together to interview her--and to give her on the spot the scholarship to pursue that MAT, but now at George Washington U. At the end of that academic year, a Judy now pregnant with our first child was happily teaching at the Woodside School in Silver Spring… and all of her children in first grade could read well at the end of that year.

But Judy gave up teaching as we moved to Amherst to launch a new life there—and a family. Peter was born two months into that first fall in Amherst, and Jeremy came along a year and a half later. She wanted boys: she loved the spiritedness of boys—she was the most intensively devoted mother, especially with boys having allergies and requiring even closer care. But she also liked to give them room to roam in those fields. Some of the best pictures I had of her found her laughing deeply over the antics of the boys. They were natural athletes, they were smart, but they were also loving and loyal—and they were good writers. I pointed out to her often that it made a noticeable difference that their speech and sensibilities had been shaped by the hours and days with her, listening to her voice. And when she was happy, there was a song in her voice. I said, on the day she left us, that I couldn't believe I wouldn't hear that lovely voice again. And so I cling to snippets of recorded messages, even on prosaic things, for the song is still there.

I used to keep a family journal, recording the sayings and doings of the boys. If I had the time I'd draw upon them here—some of the most fetching showed a young Peter with the most natural sense of grasping at once the obligations that fell, he thought, distinctly to him. And that was also a reflection of Judy: she saw instantly where the obligations came, whether in raising small children or anything else, and she just tended to what had to be done, with no complaints even when there were hard things to be borne, and more pleasant things to be foregone.

In another one of those stories in the journal, we were going out to dinner, the boys about 5 and 6 years old, and Judy didn't want them

negotiating with the baby sitter over bedtime and pajamas. She wanted them to get into their pajamas now. Jeremy made it clear that he was not the least tired, without the least interest in pajamas. Judy said "Pretend it's later than it is, pretend that you're tired." And according to my notes, Jeremy said to her, "Mom, why don't *you* just pretend that I'm in my pajamas."

Peter has a small construction company in Sebastopol, California and Jeremy teaches Economics at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey

But after the boys were in school and not needing her every day, she felt the need to get back to work—something in editing, perhaps something academic. The break came when I received a fellowship for the Woodrow Wilson Center of the Smithsonian for 1976-77, and we had the chance to be in Washington again. Once more she was walking the grounds of GWU and, of all things, saw a notice on a board about a position as "Academic Editor." Once again, she was quickly given an interview with a vice president, and the very next day, when we were staying with Rick Swartz in town, we were astonished to get the call. I can still see Judy's face as she came down the stairs after receiving the call. She was lofted with disbelief and unexpected delight.

When we moved to DC in the fall, to take up the new projects, Judy was transformed. She had been depressed by the market for jobs in Amherst, but now that mild depression had been swept away, the vibrancy restored, with a new lift. And what was so amazing to me here was that somehow, on Day One, she knew what had to be done, taking over this office with a staff of three or four. To take that line from Henry James, she

"grasped her warrant." Or the other line was "She evidently had a baton in her knapsack." She had been home with the children for nearly 10 years and yet she was ready to take command. For as it turned out, nothing in her experience had been wasted, including her life in an academic community with a husband working for tenure. Her judgments on writing and clarity were sound, her reflexes on administration were direct and decisive. People listened to her and they were persuaded.

She was the Academic Editor, meaning that everything published under the imprint of the University had to come under her hand, whether courses, doctoral abstracts, or anything else. Some people learned for the first time what the point of their doctoral theses were after Judy led them in rewriting their abstracts. We saw yesterday, at George Washington University, with an overflow crowd, an outpouring of affection for Judy, a sense of the many lives she had touched. But what came through also was the sense of how formidable she was as force for coherence—and yes, integrity—in seeking to "give an account" of what that University professed to teach. Her concern was for the loss of that coherence, the loss of academic substance, and with it the loss of what had made the life of the university so beckoning to us, in the late 50's, early 60's, as a vocation and a way of life. One former dean wrote to me and said that Judy gave her the courage to stand up to her faculty. All she had to say was, "Judy will never approve this." According to legend, she was one of three women who really ran that place—with a winning smile and steely hand.

Back in 1986 as some people know, she had the onset of breast cancer. She had a mastectomy but refused the chemotherapy, because she is

sensitive to drugs and she thought that the chemo could do her in. That scared me—I collected the figures, went over them with the oncologist, but we couldn't show she was wrong in her sense of the situation, and she seemed to be proven right. Her surgeon, Joe Guttierez, thought Judy had a good sense of her own body, that her judgment ought to be respected. But what came through also was her bravery in facing life—and death. And the thorough absence of self-pity. If this had happened to me I would have been furious, raged at God, and asked, Why me? Why not Dan Rather, or Don Trump? But none of that. Just a year and a half later, she had a recurrence on the same site, a second mastectomy, and this time radiation. But again the moral energy seemed to bring her through.

With the first cancer I thought: all right enough of this commuting between Washington and Amherst. Twenty years is enough; her stamina is diminished; time to do other things that she'll enjoy. But I was wrong: The job, her post, furnished a mission; it allowed her to be deeply absorbed in something apart from herself.

Her earlier surgeries very likely contributed to her failing energy and her vulnerability as her immune system had been compromised. She had arrhythmia. She would not have a stent put in, for she had as many surgeries as she was willing to undergo. I told her that if the situation were reversed, she would be at me night and day until I did these tests. But Carol Horn, her doctor, said that Judy was one of those patients who induce the doctor to see things from an entirely different angle. And what came through, she thought, was Judy's firm integrity, being utterly clear on how she wished to live, and

what she would not brook in any more medical procedures, knocking her out and reducing her.

We discovered years ago that our lives were so entwined around each other that I remembered parts of her life that she had forgotten—the names of people she had worked with at Scott Foresman and their stories—and she in turn remembered parts of my life that had slipped away in the fog of memory. We realized that we had become the custodians of each other's biography. And so when one of us dies, the other is left in a somewhat truncated state. (There is a line in Housman –of losing the loved one, "And then went with half my life about my ways.")

It's odd that we should meet now on the 13th, exactly a month since the shock of her death. And it seems that the calendar is getting recalibrated for me –with everything measured in days and weeks, from November 13.

Against the shock of her sudden loss I suppose we can be grateful for those 28 years we had past her breast cancer when we might have been, as we used to say, on borrowed time. One evening, we found ourselves reading together and savoring passages in "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—things like: we sat on Neptune's yellow sand, watching the traders embarked upon the flood, and we "laugh'd to see the sails conceive/And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind"-- It was rollicking good fun. And we thought, Isn't this nice, that we could just do this one night. Judy said we could do it *any* night; but I said, we don't really know how many nights we will have, and yet we do have this one now.

And with that sense of things—that sense of being so grateful for what we had--I would close by recalling something she quite enjoyed. I was doing a talk here in town with the title "Gifts Without Warranties: The Children We Didn't Exactly Order—and the Parents They Produced." (The boys had reshaped us in turn.) I recalled the way in which we had become the custodians of each other's biography, and in a certain prophecy I said that I couldn't imagine what life would be like without her. And so for that reason I just recorded my gratitude for the time we had together *day by day*. I recalled then some passages from Randall Jarrell in a composition called

"A Man Meets a Woman in the Street." In this work, a man finds himself walking behind a woman on Fifth Avenue in New York. As he follows her, she evokes a chain of romantic associations. In his thoughts, he urges her to turn around and be his. But then it becomes clear that he is playing a kind of game. He approaches the woman, he touches the back of her neck--and it turns out that she is in fact his wife. They kiss, and they walk off, arm in arm, as Jarrell says, "through the sunlight that's much too good for New York." He concludes in this way, and with his words, so would I, for Judy and for me:

> After so many changes made and joys repeated,
> Our first bewildered, transcending recognition
> Is pure acceptance. We can't tell our life
> From our wish. Really I began that day
> Not with a man's wish: "May this day be different,"
> But with the birds' wish: "May this day
> Be the same day, the day of [our] life"

Hadley Arkes
December 11, 2014