

Funerals are a time for people to get in touch with their own divine natures and relationships with God, which is exactly what my mother Sophie Kaltsas did in the weeks before she died, and we watched her do it day by day.

She did not want us to take heroic medical efforts to save her life, because she was not afraid of death and wanted to die with dignity, not in a hospital. She was fully at peace with her life and wanted simply to go home, to her husband, and to God.

In her dying as in her living my mother was an inspiration to me. What was the source of her peace as she approached death? From my earliest childhood, I remembered her as a woman of uncompromisingly high standards who inspired, in fact demanded, her husband, children, and grandchildren to live up to those standards.

As she often said, “Even in the smallest village of Greece, you go there and they know how to do things the right way: *Axio Prepe*.”

Doing things the right way was of paramount importance to my mother, whether it was preparing a proper meal, dressing her husband or children, keeping our home immaculate, or throwing a party. She knew how to do things the right way and would settle for nothing less, from herself or her family.

I cannot recall my mother ever telling a lie. She was scrupulously honest, and her family tried to follow that example.

She felt that if you lived right and played by the rules, you would be ok with God and have peace. She felt that there was a place for everything, that there was a Divine order in the universe. If you kept your home clean and your life in proper moral order, worked hard and were of service to others, then you honored the spiritual principles set down by our Church and thus gave glory to God, Who in turn would bless us with His own rewards.

My mother was an extremely talented lady, one of the first Greek American women to graduate from college. She was a gifted musician, businesswoman, cook, homemaker, wife, mother, and grandmother with an incisive intellect and wonderful sense of humor, capable of laughing at herself and always unafraid to speak her truth as she saw it to others.

She was all about character and following simple precepts: cleanliness is next to Godliness; honesty is the best policy; work is the best therapy; and trust in God. She trusted in God and felt that by doing the right thing she would be ok.

In closing, I am reminded of an ancient Chinese poem which reads:

When I behold the bowed and bent blades of the sacred *liao wo*
(a species of grass representing parenthood)
my thoughts return to those who begot me,
raised me, and now are tired.
I would repay the bounty they have given me,
but it is as the sky.
It can never be approached.

My mother died as she lived, with grace and dignity, and in peace, immediately after her loving daughter Christine recited to her the Lord's Prayer.

Dr. Harvey Kaltsas