

Reflections on the Life of Enid Dennis
Offered at Immaculate Conception Church
Clarion, Pennsylvania

Good morning Friends.

On behalf of the family of Enid Dennis I would like to thank you all for your sympathy and concern at this time of our grief.

From meeting so many of you at the wake service, I can appreciate that there are different academic disciplines represented here, and I daresay different schools of thought and even different communions of religious faith. Yet there is also a very wonderful sense of community here. Those of us who have journeyed from afar at this sad time have found this community spirit to be a very great comfort. We are grateful to Father Frank and to Father Monty, and to President Reinhart of Clarion University, and to each of you who have extended a helping hand to us. I know that there are very few families in this church who have not also suffered some terrible loss. You know, as we do, that each kind act and generous gesture leaves a healing mark. And so, on behalf of my parents, Enid's mother and father, Andrew and Dorothy Seeger, and on behalf of my brother Larry and my sister Betty, we extend to you our sincere thanks.

Those of you in this community who know Enid's children, Jeanne-Marie and Michael, and Jeanne-Marie's wonderful husband John Yetter, and Michael's wonderful wife Emily Sullivan Dennis, can well imagine the enthusiasm and love we older folks feel for this newest generation of adults in our family! But in these days they have not only elicited our deep love, but also our admiration and respect. Their courage and faith in the face of a terrible loss, their clearminded sense responsibility, their fortitude in making all fitting and necessary arrangements, are all a most wonderful tribute to their mother. And they are a credit as well to their father, Larry Dennis. We know that Larry Dennis shares our grief; his sensitivity and practical help in this time of crisis have been much appreciated.

I would like to say just a few words about my sister Enid. The Enid we knew as a member of our family -- as a daughter, mother, sister, and wife -- is the same Enid you knew as a teacher, an administrator, a community activist, a mediator, and a faithful member of Immaculate Conception parish. There was no difference between the public Enid and the private Enid; her life was all one consistent web. Enid was gifted with a clear and powerful intelligence, which she cultivated through careful study and disciplined practice. She placed her gift of intelligence always at the service of the principles of love and compassion. For to know Enid even for a short time was to

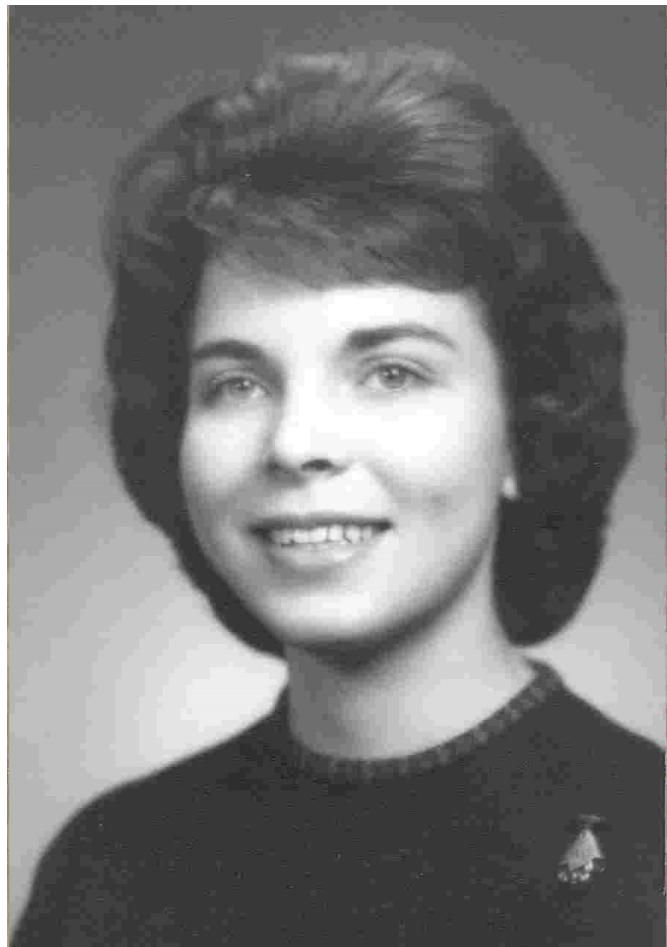
realize that the clarity of mind which was a conspicuous trait was not really the essential trait. She cared about people and about communities of people. That was what was essential. At family gatherings she could always be counted upon to bring the light of truth to any issue under discussion. But it was not an imperial sort of truth-telling. It always brought calm and reconciliation; it always reflected a spirit of caring and reasonableness and helpfulness. Enid always stood for what coheres and endures; she always stood against what disintegrates and destroys.

Enid had a light touch about her. There was always a glint of low keyed humor to her way. She was mercifully spared the occupational hazard common to academics and do-gooders -- the hazard of taking herself too seriously. There was a slight air of self-deprecation to her manner and, as has been mentioned, she often brought giggles to the company of people she was with, frequently relieving tension by doing so.

Enid was loyal and conscientious. She worked hard and took her responsibilities very seriously. No matter what she did it seemed to be weighed with utmost care, and to be the most balanced and appropriate response to the needs of the situation. She was a natural-born organizer, and when in charge of ambitious family gatherings she brought to them the same coherent and smooth operation I know you experienced when she was serving as an academic administrator. Not only did she work hard, but she traveled far whenever duty required it.

Just as she traveled to State College and to Harrisburg and to Philadelphia and beyond to serve Clarion University, she traveled to Medford, New Jersey, to Philadelphia, to New York City and to Washington D.C. to be with her family. She always snapped our photographs at key stages in our life's journey. Except for the fateful trip of last Friday, she was one who always showed up. She could be counted on.

It is indeed painful to think of such a life cut off so suddenly in its prime. Enid had a lot of living yet to do, it would seem. Certainly, on the mundane level, there are a lot of loose ends -- courses uncompleted, grades not entered, research projects cut off in



mid-stream. Yet, as I was pondering this it occurred to me that on a spiritual level one might take a different view. Through her thoughtfulness, clarity of mind and organizational skill Enid's actions gave expression to the poise, balance, harmony and peace which is the natural destiny of the Creation; through her labors for justice and unity and reconciliation her life gave expression to the love which has raised all things up from the dust, the love which binds all things together in an atmosphere of active sympathy. Just as every true and beautiful gesture expresses in some way all truth and all beauty, Enid's way of living, to the extent that human limitations and capacities allowed, participated in the Divine life. For such a life there are no loose ends, for such a life there is no need for follow-up. And so, while the mundane and human side of us mourns and grieves, as is natural and appropriate, we can, on a spiritual level, get a glimmering in Enid's life of something which is pure, perfect and complete.

One dares not try to summarize a person. Even those things which are obvious defy the power of our words adequately to describe. But in addition there is also an element of mystery to every life. Is it not true that this is so even with respect to those who are most close to us? Some magic and some miracle eludes our comprehension and our grasp. In Enid's case I know that this mystery is something very beautiful. But there is a mystery, nevertheless, and it must be acknowledged and respected. However, I can say this with certainty and conviction: although it has not been given to Enid to meet her grandchildren in this life, she has, nevertheless, in all that she has done, helped to make of this world a better place -- a place where future generations can find a home.

Daniel A. Seeger