

Revelation 7:16-17

I notice French names. And I notice names that begin with a “V.” Not surprisingly, because my maiden name begins with a V – Venable, pronounced “VenAbles” in France, which is a small village near Giverny.

And, when I first looked at Lee’s last name in our St. Christopher’s Church Directory, I presumed it would be pronounced “Vuille-mot” (*with the ll’s pronounced as “y” and the “t” silent*). But, just before I made my first visit to Lee, about eight years ago, I heard one of her fellow altar guild members at St. Christopher’s tell me: it’s Vuillemot (*Vil-e-mot*).

This was when Lee was in the first cottage down the hill here at Pohai Nani, with the Rev Hollis Maxson and his wife, Ethel, as her neighbors, who sometimes brought her to St. Christopher’s for services on Sundays and holidays.

Lee and I’ve talked about having French surnames, about being from the south – her from Georgia, then Tennessee - me from North Carolina. We also talked about bridge, and eventually, during one of my December visits, we even talked about Spode Christmas China.

Though she’d downsized when she moved to her cottage, Lee kept at least two table settings of that special Spode Christmas China, and she entertained me, using that Christmas China, at least twice in my first two years here.

I never expected, nor wanted, Lee to entertain me when I visited, but she insisted on preparing a meal for me every single time I visited her in her cottage. Then, she moved to Room 1301 – I think that’s the best room in Pohai Nani, by the way. Fabulous view of Kaneohe Bay. She and another of our church members, Barbara Edwards –in Room 801 – another darned good room – well, they kept insisting on hosting me, and other of their favorite St Christopher’s folks - at the lunch hour at Pohai Nani. We didn’t protest. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that “wherever two or three are gathered, there I am in their midst.” Well, Barbara and Lee both were the hostesses with the mostess. Wherever they were gathered, well, others were anxious to be there. And, we came, because they both were so much fun.

I could chat with you for a long time about the good times the southern and French Lee Vuillemot and Giovan Venable – moi = shared with one another – our blessings and painful times. Lee suffered inexplicable pain when she lost two of her beloved children, Lori and Rob.

But, my vocare – my calling – as the preacher at this service, is to preach the Gospel. I am called to share with you the affirmation of life everlasting with God. I don't exactly know what that looks like. Lee didn't know what that looked like, either, except, perhaps on our last day alone together.

I'm forever grateful to Elizabeth Lewen, a hospice chaplain, who alerted me to see Lee a week earlier than planned, two days before Lee passed. I am forever grateful for that nudge from God to Elizabeth to me.

Lee enthusiastically asked for communion, and I was able also to anoint her in healing prayer. Sometimes folks wonder about us priests and ministers who offer healing prayer when someone is at the threshold of death. It is partly because death is the ultimate healing – healing from anything that ails us. Lee wanted communion and healing prayer. She seemed completely at peace that Friday before she passed, as we shared communion.

Scott and Lynn were with her when she passed. And a few hours later, the three of us shared communion at Lee's bedside where she passed and where her body remained when I arrived. She was dressed in pink, with pink rose petals surrounding her. (By the way, I almost never wear a pink clergy shirt. Liturgically I wear it on the third Sunday of Advent and fourth Sunday of Lent. But, I wear it today in Lee's honor.)

And, I proclaim to you the truth of the Bible passage I just shared with you: the Lamb of God, our Lord, completely took on his role as Lee's shepherd that weekend, and guided Lee to the springs of the water of life.

Lee had tears in her eyes the last time I saw her alive. But, they were tears of joy and peace. I'm firmly convinced of that. While I suspect Lee still loves to be the life of a party, she hungers no more. Nor does anyone hunger who celebrates with her at the heavenly feast with God. And, God wipes away every tear from every eye. As God will wipe every tear from **our** eyes, when our times come.

Lee has returned home. She is home with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is my calling to say that to you. It is my privilege to say that to you. And, with Lee, it is also a privilege because I look forward so much to seeing her again on that other side, where, of course, she already has settled in as a life of an everlasting party.

