**Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teachings: 2- Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

The Catholic Church proclaims the Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, the second of which is call to family, community and participation. This theme states that the person is not only sacred but also social, which directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. (United States Conferences of Catholic Bishops). As Catholics we believe that marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened. People have the right and duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. **The following witness statements speak to some issues raised by this theme:**

As my family and I prepared to celebrate my Nephew’s Eagle Scout ceremony, my thoughts kept going to my Mom who died before her grandsons were born. I wrote this note to her to express my feelings.  
*“I told him you will be there too. Over the years that brought us to this event, every time he received yet another Merit badge and asked me when I could come over to sew it on, I told him you were there. You were there when your persistent daughter begged you to teach her (ME) how to sew. You were there when you let me practice by sewing on my own small collection of Girl Scout badges. You were there so I could be there for him and his brother, to sew on their badges. You are there when they both tell me with great pride that people notice their uniforms are always in top condition. And his younger brother is already busily filling up a sash of badges and keeping my fingers sewing. Thinking about this today reminds me in a very strong way that life is built on experiences that we may not pay much attention to right at that moment. Thanks for the sewing lessons Mom. Maybe you knew what they would mean in the future.”*- Reflection by Eileen Conte STA Social Concerns Ministry member

It has been four years since my grandmother, May Jo, passed away; I was raised by my grandparents so I was particularly close to her and the grieving process has been particularly difficult. She passed away on Friday night April 24th, 2020. 2020 was a deeply challenging year and as an educator the first few weeks of the Pandemic were marked with disorienting confusion, loss and uncertainty. It was in the midst of this environment that I lost my most important human anchor, my loudest cheerleader and the greatest source of comfort my world has ever known.  
My Uncle called me on a Monday night to tell me that my grandmother had been rushed to the hospital after she collapsed at home. No one was sure what was happening or what was wrong and that fact remained the same for the next several days. She was declining quickly and by Thursday the hospital decided to place her on hospice care and I was devastated. Sometimes you don’t realize how resilient and resourceful you and your family can be until you are suddenly called to respond to an unforeseen challenge. We gathered on a zoom call Thursday evening with one of the screens including the hospital room my grandmother was staying in so we could visually see her. We prayed together, we sang together, we spent my grandmother’s final moments together over video screens in our respective homes. My  
grandmother came from a large family and today her siblings, children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews are spread out across the country. My family gathered on the zoom call and the call did not end for another twenty-seven hours, until shortly after she passed late Friday night. Over the next twenty-seven hours family members came and out on the zoom call. People including myself had to leave for a few hours to work and then return; family members took turns sleeping but at every hour of the day and night of the next twenty-seven hours someone from our family was on the zoom call. We connected with cousins that we have not seen in years, family members that live in states like California, Texas, Missouri and  
Massachusetts. We prayed together, sang hymns together, told endless stories together, laughed together and cried together.  
The experience of losing my grandmother and the time that has elapsed since has been heartbreaking. I will also never forget the bonds that were shaped in my family over the course of that zoom call. Due to Covid restrictions I was not able to be physically in the room with my grandmother during her final hours, they allowed two people to be in the hospital room at that time. In a way the Pandemic made the grief and loss unbearable, we could not physically gather even as a family to grieve together in the immediate days and weeks. In another way the Pandemic allowed for a twenty-seven hour zoom call with family in multiple states to connect and grieve together in a way that would not have been possible otherwise. People came onto the zoom call saying things like, “I heard what’s happening with Aunt Jo Jo and I needed to get  
on the call right away.” Those twenty-seven hours stood as an expression of love for a family member that always loved us in kind. At one moment we counted seventeen boxes on our zoom call and I cannot help but stand in awe at that; the love my grandmother cultivated over time with each family member that was demonstrated even in a virtual space. My grandmother was a walking symbol of love, in life and in death and in my grief I try to focus on that aspect of what was such a dark and painful time.

-Reflection by Joe Turner STA Social Concerns Ministry member