

Amanda Schuster RIP  
The homily preached at her funeral  
by the Rector, Father Simon Foster on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011

..The other women with them told this to the (men) apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale Luke 24: 10/11

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immoveable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain I Corinthians 15: 58

How often have women been dismissed by the church and society? How long did getting the vote take, having women priests and bishops, let alone women Canons to the ordinary like dear Canon Porter? Those men (heh! Men!) apostles implying that those women who found the stone rolled away at the first Easter were kind of crazy! Men! I was taking a confirmation class recently and we noted how few women there were in the stained glass here as well as a lack of variety of skin color. It made us think!

Today we all gather in this beautiful Parish Church which Amanda Schuster gave her life for to show women, giants of faith and faithfulness are not dismissed but given the honor due them in this community. Amanda was a woman that my second text is so relevant too as well– steadfast, immoveable, excelling always in God’s work. Our stained glass here is based on the faces of real people who lived in Sheffield UK. If one blew out in a storm I would recommend we have Amanda in one. Can you imagine? Her love of color and style and that immaculate hair and the jewelry. Wow! Can you imagine? With pride I would take our students and tell them about Amanda. We could all share in her love of these things often as she would love us too.

But she would have as much right, more right to be in stained glass window. Of course she would cringe at the thought but it’s our turn to honor her and she was a saint among us. Not perfect, she had her imperfections and who doesn’t but saints are always a bit of both. They are saints because they recognize they haven’t arrived but are on the way of perfection and are open to God’s grace as they journey. This was so true of her.

When we celebrated our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary we had a DVD made and as part of my preparations for today I remembered Amanda said some words on it at a Parish Nurture Group meeting and I watched that part of the DVD again. She looked like a million dollars of course and said these words “I looked at you all and at so many people and we are friends”. We were doing some reflecting on Jesus saying “I have called you friends”. It revealed how people belonged to Amanda, were part of her and how important that was and that she belonged to us. You see Amanda was yours dear family and always will be, she is ours, her extended family and friends and always will be and all the time and for ever she is God’s. Of course Amanda was very much Amanda’s too. She was her own person, a unique and very distinctive person. There is one thing sure only Amanda and

God knew when it was time to go to be with the Lord. I have never given anyone the last rites three times in the way I did Amanda!

For her dear family what do you remember and reflect on today. Many, many things but including the love of her life Charles/Charlie (her dashing pilot hero) and didn't they love to dance, her care and caring about her children, all the family, friends and Stogie the dog. You remember today how Amanda acted as mom to her sister as they lost their mother when Amanda was 13. It has been said that she was religious about exercising daily and eating healthy. In my time here she swam in the Sound daily- not the warmest venue as some of us know! What about that flowery swimming cap too?! What about her Mercury Cougar that she could hardly see over the hood. You and we all remember her being incredibly dignified and being the matriarch of your family and how she had such sincere interest in all of your lives. I learned too from you that she closed her eyes when she played tennis or volleyball. I knew she was clever but wow that's genius!

Of course many will remember her working for La Shack – a popular ladies clothing store in the Plaza in Locust Valley as manager for years. After that closed she opened her own store called 'Amanda's'. She closed that in 1990 at aged a youthful 80!!!! She was a volunteer in so many different contexts Red Cross, Boys Club, the Hospital Volunteers and so many others having positions of significant responsibility in them too. How many lives she touched to make them better.

She loved nature, animals, dogs, cats, and gardening. She loved her seagulls and the beach. She loved her popcorn too right family! She loved hosting BBQ's too and I and my family are so grateful for her hospitality to me and them over the last nine or so years. She loved to travel the world and fitted in learning Italian as part of the process. She was such an adventurer and explorer of many things not just travel. I understand though sports didn't do much for her but ice skating she was OK. Can you imagine ice skating. I can!

Dear family and friends you each have your own memories today we know you will cherish them as we cherish you and those memories and cherish our own memories. Olive will cherish her memories too, Olive who exercised along with others such faithful home care. I know the family is so grateful for your care. Your loving ministrations, deep caring, expertise and custom made nourishment kept Amanda with us for as long as was possible. By the way you were the only person who was allowed to boss Amanda about!

Now to our Amanda at this church. She had had every job and not least her Altar Guild work. She was a first female vestry person. She attended any program she could right until latter years – Bible Class, social events, you name it, she was there. Her attendance at worship was impeccable. She gave of her time and talents to this Church community and all the other organizations she was a part of. She was such a person of dedication and faithfulness. As her friends passed she continued faithful at all things Church. She received Home Communion right until the end. She would chain herself to the railings like the suffragettes if she felt something was wrong or others were wrong. There are examples we can think of when she did just that type of thing too! Canon Porter knows

that. I know at one time the hotline between Amanda's and the Diocese was permanently engaged!

To so many of us here she was an incredible supporter and encourager. She was very much that to me and the clergy who preceded me. When she asked you how you were she meant it. She cared so much for us all. We really were her friends, her extended family. She would call her clergy Darling sometimes and it always bemused me that towards the end she would call Michael, Simon and Simon, Michael. We decided that was kind of nice and didn't matter. Michael had no grey hair so it made me feel very good! I wasn't going to remind her I was not Michael!

Now I hear that Amanda was referred to sometime as Comanda. Can't think why can you?????????!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! How many AG persons have forgotten to put the cover cloth back after a Eucharist or who didn't set up the altar in the 'Amanda's Book of AG ways'. O boy! You sure knew if you got it wrong right?! You see Amanda was steadfast and immovable in so many ways and some may have seen her as inflexible at times and a bit fierce. She was of course just being so dedicated and faithful to her Church and to God and she articulated it in those ways.

We had a history night at St John's one night and Amanda and Ruth sat by a log fire and told their story and about their thoughts and memories about St John's over the years. They were brilliant. Superb. I think most of us there had tears in our eyes listening.

But faithfulness isn't always something many see. How many times would Amanda struggle in a cold winter to attend a service irrespective of whom else would be there? How much stepping up to do church work when others were not available and occasionally forgot? How many people would know Amanda took her bible reading notes and faithfully read her bible? Her steadfastness and immovability was rooted in the deepest spirituality. She weathered loss and suffering and illness because she was a Christian believer who lived her faith and faithfulness. We live in an age often where faithfulness and loyalty is so temporary but the Church of Lattingtown has been graced by people like Amanda, Frank Polk, Danny Davison, Paul Pennoyer and so many others who were humble believers in God and the Church and they lived their faith.

You're Amanda, our Amanda, God's Amanda. I wonder what the heavenly altar will look like? I hope the frontal is all purpose like today. Amanda would virtually bribe me to put that on frequently. The kind of bribery that those eyes and look encouraged! Whoever are the captains of that heavenly AG...I hope they remember to put the cover cloth back and make sure the silver and burse and veil are in the middle of the altar.

Comanda Amanda, saint of God, you were and are a very special person to us. We love you and always will, thank you for being a part of all of our lives. Thank you for living Christianity and your love for the Episcopal Church and this Diocese in our midst. Bishop Larry our Diocesan Bishop sends his condolences and his appreciation for Amanda's life and witness.

Thank you for being someone who put spirituality first and that is why you lived through all your life, its joys and challenges with a dignity that inspired and will always inspire your clergy and all of us. The challenge for each person of faith here is will we with Amanda's life and witness before us as we journey on, try to mirror her good qualities, qualities of this grand dame.

Dear Amanda, rest in peace, you deserve it after all your brave and long illness. Comanda, Grand dame, rest, till we meet again...march on....one of Lattingtown's saints...go marching on....you draw us on to be faithful to love our Parish Church and others and care about them...march on...we are right behind.....Amen