**A Good Word for Rachel Gerald
January 25, 2011**

 *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.* This phrase comes towards the end of perhaps one of the most well-known passages in all of Scripture. Most often it is read at weddings, though it was not meant for such an occasion. You know how it goes. It begins – *If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* In the middle the words flow - *love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.* And it ends with – *And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.* No, it was never meant for weddings nor was it meant for funerals. It was meant for the Church to know how to care for one another. But right towards the end of this passage comes one phrase that made me think of Rachel Gerald - *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.* I think that has been Rachel’s story for some time now. She has been seeing in a mirror dimly.

 In her clearer days, Rachel worked for the telephone company. As a matter of fact that’s how she met Jerry. He too worked for the telephone company and they met on the picket line during a strike. They went out that night – a night in May of 1947 and October of that same year they married. Must have been something like love at first sight, I’d say. Someone in the family noted two words to describe Rachel: “principled” and “decisive.” Doesn’t that describe the scene well – on strike and picketing (that’s the principled part) and went out with Jerry the first day she met him and then married him 5 months later – that’s the decisive part.

 In her clearer days, she was a woman ahead of her time. She was one of those working mothers – working for 38 years for the phone company while managing the roles of wife and mother at the same time. And she was one of those Greatest Generation wife and mother who did this while Jerry served his country. She did retire 3 years before Jerry so that she could have some time at home without him. But I loved the way Jerry described the success of their 63 year marriage. Of course he first said, “Listen to her and do everything she says!” But when he got serious he said their marriage worked because they had a 50/50 relationship – down to everything from she washed the dishes and he dried them. Again – a relationship that was perhaps ahead of its time.

 In her clearer days, Rachel loved to cook. Every single Sunday a home-cooked Sunday lunch for the whole family after church. And even after Ricky was grown and working, she fed him lunch everyday. Golden Children are usually doted on that way! And she cooked for Tableau after she put away her angel wings.

 In her clearer days she enjoyed that beloved Canasta group. The Wilsons, the Starnes, the Sigmons, the Edwards, the McGowans, the Privettes, the Austins, and the Geralds for 36 years every other Friday night plus New Years Day – they gathered and played Canasta. And then they travelled together – the beach and even to Hawaii.

 And in her clearer days, Jerry drug her along on lots of travel trips – across the country in an RV with Ricky and Kim in tow and then later a cruise with Lisa for her 13th birthday. Traveling and adventure may not have been her first love, but because of her real first love – Jerry – she went along with it – telling Jerry “put the camera up” and other quiet nudging as a way of managing Jerry. And we all know that Jerry needed those quiet nudgings!

 In her clearer days she was a mother and grandmother and in the very best sense of the word a Great Grandmother. Lisa took her first step at Rachel and Jerry’s house. And they helped all three get their first car and helped with college. And for the first 9 months of Nicholas’s life, Rachel and Jerry were his caretakers – Raising him Right just like they had done for Dickie. I learned that Golden Children must be an inherited title because Rachel was always the first to shush Ricky if he ever even reprimanded Nicholas. At the graveside yesterday Russ noted that Rachel gave birth to one son and with that built the sense of a big family. And in her clearer days she stood quietly and faithfully as matriarch.

 In her clearer days, Rachel was frugal beyond measure. A real product of her generation, I would say. She would drive out of the way to use a coupon or catch a sale. She took her purse full of snacks to the movies – no bought popcorn and drinks. She wrote down every single penny she spent in her little black book down to a pack of chewing gum, and she was constantly asking Jerry – how much was that/how much did you spend?

 In her clearer days, she was a worker of the church. From keeping the nursery to helping Sue Helt cook Wednesday night suppers to chaperoning and cooking for the youth trips – from 1952 until recent years, you could always find Rachel quietly at work in and for and around the church. I remember well that Rachel and Jerry were always in charge of the pictorial directory and I will tell you what’s the truth – there hasn’t been a good one since they stopped being in charge. She called every single person in the church – no automated stranger to make the contacts on her watch. She took the time to call each person and make appointments – following up with them and making confirmations. That was Rachel’s way. Her faith was strong – from the time she walked to church through the woods as a girl every Sunday and then baptized in a pond, she has loved and served God, and she has wanted that for her family as well.

 But in the last few years, Rachel’s days were not as clear. She was definitely seeing in a mirror dimly. But she still knew on whom she could depend. Cathy, you have been daughter-in-law extraordinaire – going beyond the call of duty to give care with dignity. I love that when you not too long ago tricked her into going to the doctor and the doctor asked Rachel who you were she simply said, “My best friend.” Maybe she couldn’t call your name – the mirror was growing too dim – but she knew exactly who you were by how you treated her and cared for her and loved her. *Well done, good and faithful servant.* And even while her days were dimming even more, her last words to you Jerry were “I love you.” She knew. Deep down in the places that really matter – she knew who she was and who all of you were.

 In her clearer days, Rachel knew that one day . . . one day, there would be an experience of *face to face* that we have been promised. I believe today is that day. No more dimness. No more confusion. No more wanting to go home. Today we celebrate a Blessed Hope that Rachel Gerald enjoys the face to face company of the God she has served her whole life long. *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.* May it be so.