

Dear Associates and Friends,  
The Lord be with you—

Advent had a special meaning for all of us this year. Nancy Melton had been admirable in her spirit and struggle against cancer for some years. She cooperated with her doctors in trying new medicines, which were being tested. She found that a yoga form of prayer helped to keep up her inner peace and strength. Nancy's husband, Mike, encouraged her to do whatever she would like to do. This included a trip to California with her sister to visit family and our Trappist monastery at Vina, California. She came and shared in prayer time and celebration time with our monks and with our Franciscan friars next door at Our Lady of the Angels. Mike dubbed her a "Frappist" because of her dual spirituality.

As this year went on, it was clear that Nancy was declining, and that one experimental treatment after another would help for only a short time. Early in December, her doctor took her off all drugs and told her and Mike that she had probably only a few weeks to live. Her family and friends stayed close to Nancy during her final painful days. Loretta, Debbie and Nancy had been The Three Musketeers traveling together on her medical trips to St. Louis, on her retreat trips and fun trips elsewhere.

Nancy hoped to live until Christmas. The last seven days before Christmas are called O Antiphon days, when Holy Mother Church prays "Come O Come Emmanuel" with a different Messianic title on each day. Our Lord Jesus came to Nancy on December 17, the first of the O Antiphon days, when we sing, "Come, O Wisdom from on high, reaching from end to end mightily, and ordering all things graciously. Come and teach us Your way of Wisdom." The Advent Coming of the Lord was fulfilled a week early this year for Nancy, so that she could celebrate her own birthday into heaven as part of the mystery of Christ's own birthday. The happiest Christmas ever for Nancy, and the bitter-sweet reunion of family, Associates and friends celebrating her final victory over illness and death and her entry into eternal life.

Of course, her welcoming party included those from our own circle, who went on ahead a little earlier—Bro. Dominic, Jerry (our former Fr. Matthew) Reidy, Pauline Pearson's and Debbie Hillyer's husbands, Marilyn Schwartz's mother, Dorothy Nash and Bill Dore.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all us Cratchets.

In Our Savior and His Mother,  
Your Monks of Ava