

Margaret Matthews

Margaret J. Matthews 1926-2011 NILES - Margaret J. Matthews, 84, of Niles died at 6:05 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2011, at Trumbull Memorial Hospital in Warren, following a five-year illness. She was born July 22, 1926, in Niles the daughter of Joseph and Margaret Coates Soda. Margaret attended Niles City Schools as well as The Paramount Cosmetology School of Youngstown and was employed as a secretary for The former Niles Medical Clinic. Her husband William Matthews, whom she married July 5, 1947, died July 14, 1982. Margaret was a member of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church in Niles, enjoyed playing bingo, but found great joy in cooking and baking chocolate chip cookies and Easter Bread, especially for her grandchildren and family. Margaret, who was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, will be deeply missed by her daughter Rhonda Flanigan and her husband Kenneth, with whom she made her home; a grandson Kenny Flanigan and his wife Stephanie of Niles; a granddaughter Julie McConnell and her husband Jason of Cortland; two great-grandchildren, Kenny and Emma Kate Flanigan; a brother, Joseph Soda of Niles; and three sisters, Marie Melillo, Lena Nemes and Della Williams, all of Niles; as well as many nieces and nephews. She is preceded in death by her parents; her husband; three brothers, James Soda, Jess Soda and John Soda; and three sisters, Catherine Marino, Celia Shilling and Rosemarie DeFabio. Friends may call 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday at The Joseph Rossi and Sons Funeral Home in Niles. Mass of Christian Burial will be 1:30 p.m. Thursday at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in Niles, with Fr. Larry Frient officiating, preceded by a 1 p.m. prayer service at the funeral home. Friends and family can view this obituary, sign the guestbook, and send e-mail condolences at www.josephrossifuneralhome.com

Gospel: John 6:1-15

Homily:

Thinking about that Gospel story concerning the multiplication of the loaves and fish leads us to think about the need to place things in God's hands. The boy who had five barley loaves and two fish enabled Jesus to answer the question, "But what good is that for so many?" He fed five thousand men, according to the story.

Today, many who have been fed by Margaret's love and generosity have come together to place Margaret's life in the hands of God. We gather knowing that the entire parish prays for Margaret and extends sympathy to everyone closest to her.

Margaret was baptized in this church on November 25, 1934 by Father Joseph Saraceno.

This is where she shared the Eucharist for the first time on April 25, 1937. One week later, Bishop James McFadden visited this parish and celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation with Margaret and her classmates on May 2, 1937.

She and William Matthews exchanged marriage vows in the presence of Father Oresete Cerbara here in this sanctuary on July 5, 1947.

As we place Margaret's life in the hands of God, we think about the many ways she shared so willingly. The Gospel told us about how a boy was willing to share the little he had, the five loaves and two fish. All of you closest to Margaret know that she was so very good-hearted. She sent care packages to her then future son-in-law Kenneth when he served in Viet Nam in the late 1960's.

Year after year, she made sure she gave little ones dollar bills every time they'd visit her home, and tell them the importance of putting the money in the bank.

She stretched her social security earnings so much just to be able to reach out to those she loved, always giving gifts and putting their needs ahead of her own needs. Even when she played BINGO, she'd give dollars to other players.

And if you liked the chocolate chip cookies, Easter Bread, or anything else she'd bake, you were sure to get plenty of it and you'd receive it from her often.

Rhonda will forever remember baking cookies one last time with her mother after Margaret could no longer do it on her own. What a special day it was for Margaret!

Kenny and Julie will always be glad when they think of stories about how Grandma would play rummy and serve plenty of Oreos, coffee, and ice cream. They'll also remember that she had the cleanest windows within a four-mile stretch in her Cherry Street home.

Stephanie and Jason will remember how she welcomed them to the family, and had unique ways of spelling their names.

Her great-grandchildren Kenny and Emma Kate will be blessed by stories about a Great-grandmother who loved and loved and loved.

Her nieces and nephews will remember how Aunt Margie liked to play cards, play BINGO, and simply spend time with family members.

Joe, Marie, Lena, and Della will remember many phone conversations. They will fondly recall the memories of growing up with Margaret, James, Jess, John, Catherine, Celia, and Rosemarie years ago, and cherish the years when growing up in a family of eleven children, proud of their Albanese heritage.

We know that recent years have been very difficult for Margie and for all who were close to her. Many were the times I saw her at the hospital. Many were the times we wondered if she would be with us much longer. As it is, we are grateful that God gave Margaret more than eighty-four years of living and now we ask for the strength to face the challenge of trusting that He welcomes her to His everlasting care.

May the Lord bless our memories of Margaret and console us not only during this time of sorrow, but also at all times when we remember her love.

May Christ the Good Shepherd lead her to a place of refreshment, light, and peace. May He nourish us with the Bread of Life we share at this Sacred Meal, and enable our lives to be lives that share generously and love constantly.