**Columbarium Reception for the Feast of All Souls**
**Debra Roberts Reflection**
**11.1.2026**

Good afternoon!

I'm Debra Roberts and on behalf of the "Friends of the Columbarium", and especially my co-chair, Cathy Glazer, we welcome you to St. Martin's "Feast of All Souls Day Columbarium Reception". It's wonderful to have you join us!

Of the many services and celebrations hosted at St. Martin's throughout the year, **this is my favorite!**

It's the perfect event – providing something for everyone:

- An invitation to gather in this sacred space on a beautiful Fall afternoon
- The prospect of being **in community**, sharing food and fellowship on All Souls Day
- And a joyful way to honor those we've loved and lost – and ensure that their names and stories are remembered.

Having someone remember our loved ones and their stories is the real power of this event for me.

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Last year, a week or two ahead of this event, our then 5-1/2- year-old

grandson, Tiernan, was here, helping me get ready for this event, testing the votive candles.

I was having a tough time explaining the concepts of "death" and "heaven" to him, and an even harder time explaining that his **Uncle Zach** – our son - was the same age (2-1/2 years old) - as his younger sister, Rosalie, when he died in 1993 – and that Zach was buried here in the Columbarium.

I showed him Zach's spot. He stood there quietly for several minutes.

And then the questions started: *"What did Zach like to do? What was his favorite toy? His favorite book? What made him laugh?"*

In ten minutes, our inquisitive grandson accomplished what it took my husband, Ike; our daughter, Liz and me, years – and many therapy sessions - to accomplish:

*Realizing it was more important to know how Zach lived – what his story was, what made his life remarkable, what a perfect day in his life might include – then to focus on the fact that he had died.*

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One of the plusses for any of us spending time in the Columbarium is the opportunity to have a conversation with a family member who stops to visit their loved one.

**I'm not alone in this**. Cathy, Ike, Mary, me… If you're working around the Columbarium, we've all been here when adult sons and daughters, parents, nieces & nephews, brothers & sisters; – and lifelong friends - who haven't been in the area or at St. Martin's for years, happen to be in Philadelphia - or were simply drawn here and chose that particular moment to stop and visit.

A simple question – "Who are you visiting today?"– often turns into a cherished conversation. Hearing about a favorite memory. A bit of history about their relationship. Or an admission from the visitor that it's a difficult date – an anniversary, possibly – and we're there to listen. Any of us who are present for these shared moments are honored to be here.

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**The comment I hear often**, though, provides a message for our lives today. All too often, I hear "I hope he knew how I felt about him." Or "I hope she knew she was loved."

NOW is the time to have those conversations with family members and friends. NOW is the time to acknowledge how their lives and their stories have enriched our lives. Tomorrow isn't promised so please make time to have those conversations NOW. And often!

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**You're all here today** because you realize how special this Columbarium is. A beautiful, quiet corner of our campus, lovingly maintained and cared for by volunteers. Many who are here today!

We hope you'll sign up to become a "*Friend of the Columbarium*" –

- To stay current on events in the Columbarium
    - For example, next June, we'll be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Columbarium's creation. We hope you'll mark your calendar & join us.
- To learn what volunteer opportunities are available in the Columbarium
- To learn about free resources provided by St. Martin's such as our Stephen Ministry program – a lay ministry providing confidential, one-on-one support by trained caregivers to help explore a variety of concerns – loneliness, grief, etc.
- **And** learn about our commitment to create a rich history of stories of our loved ones in the Columbarium. There are hundreds of memories and stories connected to each person. We'd love to help keep those memories and stories alive.

If you're not currently receiving Field Notes emails, our weekly St. Martin's newsletter, we can add your name to our Field Notes list. Please contact our Director of Communications & Events, Noor Diskan, to be added: ndiskan@stmartinec.org

**Thanks again for being here today**. And for supporting the Columbarium.

And now, if you haven't placed a votive candle on your loved one's memorial stone, please join us.

Thank you!