

# Close to You

Category: Cancer

written by Esther Pottoore | June 4, 2021

Her breath rasped, heavy, traveling all the way from an ICU in India to my ear pressed to the phone in Yonkers, New York. My mom's best friend, her cousin, was dying far away from me. She had been like a mom to me.

Her sister had put the phone to her ear so that I could speak to her. She was unconscious for the most part, her body ravaged with cancer, her systems shutting down, one by one.

I whispered prayers and then sang her favorite hymn, wondering if she even heard me. The tears coursed down my cheeks as I sang my heart out, pouring out my love and comfort to ease her suffering. The sound of her breathing was the last time she "touched" me. I prayed that she might have a peaceful death and not suffer any more.

The next day she died. None of us, including her children, could make it to the funeral. Forty days later, her children had a memorial mass for her here in Queens. We went as a family, and I missed not seeing her. When I went up for communion, my steps slowed and my eyes filled, for the song they were singing was the hymn I had sung for her as she lay dying.

My heart broke but at the same time rejoiced! Surely she is here, I thought, smiling through my tears as I went back to my pew.

*Esther Pottoore*  
*Yonkers, New York*