

The author discusses his *Eulogy for My Mom*

Eulogy for My Mom is a celebration of my mother's love but it is also a plea for everyone to love one another.

It is not about crying although it uses that emotion to lead into the celebration of love and as a metaphor for speaking. It starts with an image that is meant to evoke humor—the first time you see your mother is when you are a baby and the first thing you do is cry. You don't cry because you are happy. You probably cry because you are trying to breathe. This contradiction is a clue that the eulogy has a deeper meaning. This opening line will be mirrored later when I say I am sad. It also has a contradiction then since I say I haven't cried even though that is when most people cry.

It then takes the emotion of crying and applies it to my mother's death but switches the focus to remembering her. It uses that to evoke more humor—an acknowledgment that she had dementia and that is why she repeated that she loved you. Some see dementia as a sad loss but I see it as my mother making the most of what she had left, especially since she did have a lot left. And it was fun to repeat I Love You as long as the fun was bonding and not deprecating.

The eulogy uses love in the next stanza to evoke memories of those she loved. It calls by name those who meant the most to her. It begins with her parents and siblings who of course are the first people she loved, but it stresses that she loved them. Like the contradictions, this is a clue to what follows—like with most families, there were some conflicts but in the end she loved all of her siblings and that is what she wants from her children. Of course, she loved everyone because she was about love.

Our mother is about love. She asks for our love, that we always love each other means she wants us to stop fighting, to stop saying negative things about each other, to forgive and forget, to focus on positive things—as with her dementia, where instead of dwelling on the loss of memory, we should be cherishing what she has left. Despite her death, if we can focus on love then she will always be with us.

Thus happiness and love are synonymous with positive thoughts and crying is a metaphor for expressing those thoughts. We were there when she died and, of course, that is a sad time. Usually you would cry when you are sad. I didn't but I usually don't anyway. In this eulogy, *I have not cried yet* can mean I am sad and won't cry until I am no longer sad. However, it also means I won't say sad things--negative things, blaming people, harshly judging people, carrying grudges. I will forgive and forget and see the good that was done, not things that weren't done. I use the word yet because it is early in my mourning but also to raise doubt that I can avoid saying negative things.

I repeat the advice I gave earlier if you are going to cry, having changed it from *because* you are happy to *when* you are happy. *Because* is that moment in time when you are focused on her death whereas *when* is for your memories of her. In giving the eulogy, I recited the first parts of the refrain in a monotone so that I could deliver the last part, *Cry when you are happy*, as sort of a plea, but one also tinged with doubt, a contradiction—will we be happy . . . will we stay positive? – a challenge to say only positive things and look for the good.

My mother was named for two historical figures that lived a few decades before she was born. Edith Cavell was a very brave British nurse who helped soldiers during World War I and was executed for treason by the enemy. My mother did not like the negative talk that had been festering in our family for a few years and refused to contribute to it. That was a brave approach, especially when you consider how vulnerable people with dementia can feel. She used *I Love You* as a means to alter conversations that might feel negative. Uldine Uxley was a child evangelist and 'beautiful spirit' is a reference to her as well as a comment on my mother's physical beauty, demeanor and current existence.

I end the eulogy with a firm repeat of the last call. *Cry for her love* is a call to remember my mother by saying positive things and trying to get along.