

Christmas 2024, or “How’s Martha?”



Allie White

Leatherwood Dahlias

Maggie Valley/Waynesville, North Carolina

Hebrews 12: 1 - 2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Christmas 2024

Subtitle: "How's Martha?"

It has been several years since we sent out Christmas cards to our family and friends. Every year we buy Christmas cards to send, but then in the "busyness" of Christmas, we never quite get around to send them. As you may know, we have been through a LOT this year, and we have been busier than we have ever been. Maybe this year will be the year that we will actually send our Christmas cards, even if they are a week or month late! Dad used to say that his Christmas cards were "mailed late to avoid the Christmas rush!" We really have a story to tell, but we have been too busy to write it down!!

It's hard to believe that it has been over a decade since Mom went home to be with the Lord! If you recall, just before her 92nd birthday, Mom was asked, "Bunny, what would you like for your birthday?" Mom's immediate answer was, "I think I'd like to see John!" Five days later, her wish was granted, and indeed, she went to see and be with the love of her life, our Dad, John!" In the years prior to Mom's fulfillment of her desire to "see John!", I used to call her most every night. She would always begin the conversation with the question, "How's Martha?" Today, more than 10 years later, this is the question that is probably on everyone's mind: "How's Martha?" Let me use the platform of this Christmas story of 2024 to attempt to answer this question.

Since the beginning of 2024, Martha has not felt well. In particular, she was having shortness of breath that led her allergist Dr. Cook to raise the question that, instead of being treated for respiratory problems, perhaps she should have her heart checked. Fearing that there might be such a problem, as early as spring and summer, Martha worked very hard to shop and buy gifts for ALL the children (and grownups!) in the family. Meanwhile, heart tests by her cardiologist Dr. Lozano indicated that Martha needed a heart catheterization. Decades ago, Martha's mother's cardiologist strongly recommended AGAINST such a test on grounds that such tests were very dangerous, since many hearts are not strong enough to survive the test. We are very thankful to report that things are much different today, as I will explain.

We concluded that if Dr. Lozano said we needed this test, then we should have it! In the operation that followed on October 25, 2024, in the heart catheterization, we learned that Martha had two blockages of 90% which were corrected by stents. Also, she was given a "temporary" pacemaker, with the understanding that it would run for a couple of days while it was determined if she needed a "permanent" pacemaker. We also learned that her heart was NOT strong enough to continue safely without a permanent pacemaker. This indicates to me that without this temporary pacemaker, her heart might not have

been strong enough to complete the catheterization, and decades earlier, we might have lost her in the operation. I am so thankful for this temporary pacemaker that most likely saved her life!! There were problems with installation of the permanent pacemaker with some serious swelling around the site caused by hematomas, but after about 3 attempts, the surgeon succeeded with a NEW procedure he had never used before to complete the pacemaker without swelling. Again, we are SO THANKFUL! We were all praying for the Lord to give the doctors wisdom (like a NEW procedure???). This doctor was SO proud of himself for thinking of it!!

Now, we have been out of the hospital for a couple of months. Martha succeeded in completing her Christmas shopping, Christmas wrapping, and planning to have everyone in the family over on Christmas Eve to open all those gifts. So it was hard on us, especially on Martha, but we did it! One of Martha's doctors told us that for each day in the hospital it will take a week to regain the strength that was lost in a hospital day. So here is a math question. Martha was in the hospital for a total of 20 days. Then she was at home working to plan her gift-giving and her party planning for Christmas Eve. How long will it take her (or us!) to recover? My guess is that it might be sometime in 2026. She still has a LOT of resting to do. Last week she was still in a LOT of pain, but better this week and improving as the weeks pass.

In answer to the original question, "How is Martha?", when we first got home from the hospital, it felt like we were SO thankful that we had survived everything, but something was missing! Somehow, I felt a strong need to tell someone that we were home. Then I remembered my nightly telephone calls to Mom when she was living! I needed to call Mom and tell her all we had been through, and that Martha and I were finally home from the hospital! I needed to tell Mom! Then again, I guess I didn't need to tell Mom! She probably has been watching the drama from a portal in Heaven, praying for us and cheering us on!

If you have doubts about praying mothers in Heaven continuing to pray for their children on earth, consider the dramatic changes in the lives of my own sisters and Martha's brother, all after our mothers went to Heaven. So, this message is for Mom: "We made it home! It looks like my Martha is going to be okay! Thanks for praying for us!" And to all our family, "We are home! Thank you for praying for us!!"

It appears that a LOT of our families are facing a variety of problems this Christmas. Some of our families have members out of town, some face critical illness, some have completely missed the true meaning of Christmas, the divine birth of the Jesus who died a cruel death to redeem us all. We should continue to pray for our families, especially those who are separated from us and who need a special touch from the Lord. We hope you had a

wonderful Christmas, and that you will have a very Happy New Year! Be blessed in everything the Lord calls you to do in the New Year!!]

Merry Belated Christmas to all,

Martha and Bob

We are attaching a picture of our youngest grandchildren, Paige (8), Jenna (13), and John (9) taken on Christmas Eve. They look very happy and seem to have enjoyed Nana's party!

