



Mary Martha Corinne Morrison Claiborne "Cokie" Roberts

December 27, 1943 - September 17, 2019

Cokie Roberts, an excellent journalist who was the epitome of both intelligence and independence, was given the dignified farewell she richly deserved. RIP Cokie Roberts.

Noted broadcast journalist and author Cokie Roberts was remembered as a Washington icon, a national treasure and a woman devoted to her family and her faith as luminaries from the worlds of media and government joined friends and admirers at her Sept. 21 Mass of Christian Burial at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in the nation's capital.

Roberts, who had breast cancer, died on Sept. 17 in Washington at the age of 75.

"We give thanks for the time that Cokie Roberts graced this world of ours," Washington Archbishop Wilton Gregory, the principal celebrant of the Mass, said in his homily. "We rejoice in her humor, her conviction of faith, and her womanly ability to bring out the best in us – and to insist on nothing less. Thanks be to God for the time that He gave her to us."

The mourners at the Mass included Sam Donaldson, with whom she anchored ABC News "This Week" from 1996 to 2002; former NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw; and Bob Schieffer, the retired longtime anchor of CBS News' "Face the Nation," which like Roberts' program aired on Sunday mornings. Speaker Nancy Pelosi of the U.S. House of Representatives offered a remembrance of Cokie Roberts at the Mass, and Sonia Sotomayor, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, was also among the mourners.

Just as her family was central to Cokie Roberts' life, they played a central role at the Funeral Mass, with her husband Steven Roberts offering a heartfelt remembrance after Communion. Their daughter Rebecca Boggs Roberts read the first reading from Ecclesiastes, and their son Lee Harriss Roberts read the second reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians. And Cokie and Steven Roberts' six grandchildren offered prayer intentions.

In her eulogy, House Speaker Pelosi said, “Cokie Roberts is a national treasure whose passing is a great loss for America.” She later added, “Cokie was an American icon. She will forever be in the pantheon of the greatest professionals in her field.”

The ushers listed in the Mass program included Roberts’ longtime colleagues at National Public Radio, Nina Totenberg, Susan Stamberg and Linda Wertheimer.

The offertory gifts at the Mass were brought to the altar by members of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the congregation that taught Cokie Roberts, a New Orleans native who attended the Academy of the Sacred Heart in that city and who graduated from the order’s Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Bethesda, Maryland, in 1960. Over the years, Roberts supported Stone Ridge in many ways, speaking at the school, attending Masses there and serving as an honorary chair of the largest fundraising campaign in the school’s history.

In his homily, Archbishop Gregory noted the impact of the Religious of the Sacred Heart on Roberts’ life, saying they helped form her as a woman who believed in and fashioned her life around God’s word, “and she also used her own words so exquisitely.”

Praising her faith, the archbishop said, “We grieve this day and will grieve for a great many days to come because a woman of faith who has touched us, loved us, and taught us has been taken from us... She was for so many – a wise woman of faith. She called us to be our better selves and she was quick to point out when we behaved as our lesser selves.”

Archbishop Gregory noted how Roberts challenged people of different ideologies to resolve conflicts by listening to each other and recognizing their dignity as human beings.

“She challenged us all to work together for the building up of this nation and our Church and for the increase of everyone. She was unafraid of bishop or political figure and she delighted in letting both know that fact!” the archbishop said. “Her faith and determination to improve the Church she loved and the nation that she cherished accomplished great good for us as individuals and as institutions.”

Just before the Mass began, the cathedral’s Schola Cantorum sang Mozart’s “Ave Verum,” and the congregation joined in singing the entrance hymn, “Amazing Grace.”

Speaker Pelosi noted that she and Roberts had been friends since the days when their fathers served in the House of Representatives together. Roberts’ father, Rep. Thomas Hale Boggs Sr. represented Louisiana in Congress, as did her mother, Rep. Lindy Boggs,

who later served as the U.S. ambassador to the Vatican.

“Cokie was raised in a family that believed public service was a noble calling,” said Pelosi, who praised the journalist for illuminating “the workings of Congress in the fairest way for all the people of America.”

Pelosi praised Roberts’ for her pursuit of truth as a journalist, and for writing books about the unsung heroines of American history whose stories were too long untold. She also praised her friend for inspiring “countless girls and young women to follow in her groundbreaking footsteps.”

“God truly blessed America with Cokie’s life and legacy,” Pelosi said.

In his remembrance for his wife, Steven Roberts noted how their family received many messages of condolence and gratitude since her death, including from a woman journalist whom she had mentored who said Cokie Roberts “used her power to empower others.”

Tracing her career as a radio correspondent for CBS to reporting on Capitol Hill and providing political commentary for NPR to serving as a panelist and anchor for ABC and then as a best-selling author, Steven Roberts said, “Even as she climbed the ladder of success, she always reached behind her to help others.”

Cokie Roberts, he said, was a true Christian, who treated people, especially those who were not wealthy or famous, with respect. He noted how her face lit up with “the incandescent smile we’ve all loved so long,” when before her death, she saw a photo of the young children of the nurse who was caring for her. That, he said, typified how Cokie Roberts opened her heart to others, to “make the world a better place.”

“What a beautiful smile. What a beautiful spirit. What a beautiful life,” Steven Roberts said.

Before the Mass, Major Garrett, the chief Washington correspondent for CBS News, told the Catholic Standard that “Like many reporters of my generation, I admired her first from afar, seeing how she covered politics, hoping some day I might come close to that.”

Garrett, who attends Mass at St. Matthew’s Cathedral, said that when he began working in the nation’s capital, Roberts offered him “encouraging words that meant the world to me as a young reporter in Washington.”

“Meeting her was even better than I imagined,” he said. “She had all the steel, grit and

intensity that you would expect from a first class political reporter, but she also had a genuine humanity.”

That point was echoed after the Mass by Bob Schieffer, who for years anchored “Face the Nation,” a program that rivaled Roberts’ “This Week” show for Sunday morning viewers.

“She made everything a little better, whether it was her work or the way she lived her life,” he said. “...She lived her religion. I just loved her.” As he left the church after Roberts’ Funeral Mass, Schieffer spoke of his respect for his friend and fellow journalist. “I would have come to this if I didn’t know her.”

In the closing words of his homily at the Mass, Archbishop Gregory offered thanks to Steven Roberts and to his and Cokie’s children and grandchildren, saying, “It would not be an overstatement to admit that our entire nation is deeply indebted to you and to your family for this great lady, this dear friend, this extraordinary professional servant of the truth.”

The archbishop noted that Cokie Roberts had a “blessed life with you long before the camera let us meet her... May Cokie now be one with the Lord that she loved and Whom she invited all of us to love as well.”

Obituary Credit:

<https://cathstan.org/news/us-world/at-her-funeral-mass-journalist-cokie-roberts-remembered-as-an-american-icon-and-a-woman-of-faith>