Good afternoon, and thank you for being here to honor my mother, Margaret Ann Caldwell—our beloved Gran.

She was born in Chicago on January 20, 1942, and she left us at 82, with a life’s work complete and a legacy that still feels wonderfully unfinished in all of us.

Gran believed in steady hands and a steady heart.
She earned her nursing degree and found her calling in pediatrics, serving children and their families for forty years.
People said her hands were calm, but what I remember most is that her calm came from a fierce, disciplined compassion.
After she retired, she moved to North Carolina to be closer to family, and it was as if the circle of her care widened—nurses do not retire so much as continue their rounds at home.

She was the widow of our father, Thomas, and she carried that chapter with dignity.
She was the mother of two daughters—one of whom stands here today as her grateful student in strength and grace—and she was Gran to five grandchildren who knew exactly where to go for wisdom, cookies, and a crossword hint.

Professionally and personally, she had a gift for advocacy.
She spoke up for children’s health clinics, lent her weekends to outreach through her church, and quietly made sure someone got the appointment, the medication, the chance.
Her faith was deep and steady—never loud, always lived.
She found solace in hymns, in service, in the simple promise she loved to quote: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”

I will never forget one Christmas Eve at the hospital.

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Her shift had ended; the lights were dim; the snow was a rumor at the windows.
She took off her coat, walked back into the ward, and sang lullabies to the children who could not sleep.
A nurse’s badge can confer authority, but her song that night conferred belonging.
In that moment, she taught me what compassion looks like when it walks back into the room even after the work is done.

Gran was disciplined and dignified.
She could fold an entire day into neat corners by 9 a.m., and she met sorrow the same way—orderly, prayerful, with courage.
And then, just when you were certain she was all backbone and protocol, her quiet humor would land—gentle, wry, the sort of smile that made heavy moments float a little.

She loved quilting circles—piecing memories into something warm and durable.
Birdwatching—naming what others might miss.
Sunday crosswords—where patience meets curiosity.
And classical music concerts—where beauty comes from careful practice and honest feeling.
These weren’t hobbies to her; they were ways of paying attention.

What people will miss most is her steady counsel.
You could arrive tangled and leave with one thread to hold onto.
They will miss her handwritten letters—her penmanship like a small promise—and her unwavering belief in doing the right thing, especially when it was the hard thing.
Her grandkids will miss the way she listened as if the world had time.
Her daughters will miss the quiet hand at the small of the back, guiding, not pushing.

She taught us that mercy and goodness do not chase us down; we choose to walk with them.
She believed that faith isn’t an escape hatch—it’s a way of standing.

And she showed us, every day, that love is a practice, not a performance.

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Today we grieve, but we also give thanks for a life that made room for others.
For the babies who breathed easier because she was there.
For the families who found their footing at a clinic meeting she organized.
For church meals served with an extra plate set aside.
For grandchildren who learned the names of birds and the power of a thank-you note.

To our family—to those who knew her as Thomas's Margaret, as Mom, as Gran—may we keep what she gave.
Let us stitch our days with patience and purpose.
Let us be brave enough to be kind.
Let us write the letter, sing the lullaby, tell the truth, and do the right thing even when no one is watching.

And when we are uncertain, may her favorite verse be a lantern to our steps:
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

Gran, your goodness has not stopped following us.
It is here, in this room, in our memories, and in the lives we will try to live a little more like you.
Thank you for your strength, your grace, your humor, and your song.
We love you.
We carry you.
And we will walk on.

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