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KTVU-TV staffers, including reporter Randy Shandobil, left, and anchor Leslie Griffith, center, attended funeral services for their late colleague, reporter **Faith Fancher**, Wednesday at St. Leo's Catholic Church in Oakland. [D. Ross Cameron/STAFF]

St. Leo the Great church was too small to hold everyone longtime KTVU-Channel 2 reporter **Faith Fancher** kept close to her big heart.

Mourners young and old filled the pews, lined the walls and crowded every inch of the Catholic church to say goodbye to a woman defined by her strength and optimism. Her courage was with her even as she fought a losing battle with breast cancer, friends and colleagues said.

Fancher, 53, died Sunday at her Oakland home surrounded by close friends and family. More than 650 people gathered at her funeral Wednesday to celebrate her life.

It was a traditional Catholic service with selections about faith in God and bravery read from the Old and New testaments.

A painting of Fancher lit up the church altar. It was surrounded by pink lilies, the color chosen to signify breast cancer awareness.

Many of the male and female mourners pinned pink ribbons to their chests, wore pink shirts or pink blazers. A large heart made of pink roses cast a soft pink light on a cream-colored pillar near the altar.

Fancher spent 32 years in radio and television journalism, becoming the first African-American television reporter in Knoxville, Tenn. Many of her KTVU colleagues attended the service, including anchor Dennis Richmond, Leslie Griffith and former anchor Elaine Corral.

Corral and Fancher detailed her struggle with the disease in a documentary for KTVU.

When she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1997, Fancher turned the camera on herself and told her story to anyone who would listen. She

established the Friends of Faith Foundation, an Oakland-based organization that has raised more than \$500,000 to help low-income women with breast cancer.

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Noting Fancher was a religious woman, Alta Bates Hospital Chaplain Father John O'Leary said she seemed to become one with Christ as she participated in the Eucharist each day.

O'Leary said Fancher stole his heart when he met her. Her sparkling eyes, her big smile and her love of life never faded even in her sickness, he said.

"She did not lie down under her illness but got proactive in her treatment," he said. "Nobody is better named than Faith and she knew it. She did not see her disease as a calamity but as a cause."

He also liked to sample the treats her loving friends and family brought her, he joked.

Perhaps the most touching memories of Fancher were told by her husband, William Drummond, after the Holy Communion. Drummond, a professor at the Graduate School of Journalism at University of California, Berkeley, learned alternative treatments such as massage, reflexology and Reiki energy healing to help Fancher.

Drummond said he was a detached journalist when he met his future wife, and Fancher taught him how to love. "She made me realize I was worthy of love," he said.

Fancher was the type of person to match her words with deeds, he added. She was an accomplished journalist, the first at a story, and a powerful speaker who encouraged women to get tested for breast cancer and, if necessary, get treatment.

"She was not only a love, a companion and a colleague," Drummond said, "she was my hero."

Fancher was a board member of the National Association of Black Journalists, and in 1993 was named Journalist of the Year by the Bay Area Black Media Coalition.

The family requests memorial contributions be sent to Friends of Faith, 6114 LaSalle Ave., Box 324, Oakland CA 94611.

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