

## Funeral homily for Steven Rea

Dear friends, may the words of the Hebrew poet, the Psalmist, bring you consolation and peace.

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. Those whose spirit is crushed I will save”

In Mel Gibson’s masterfully done film, “The Passion of the Christ”, he places a mother at the center of Christ’s last hours, suffering along with him as only a mother can. In one unforgettable scene, Mary comes running to Jesus who is bearing his cross, saying, “I’m here, I’m here”. The mother of Jesus is a model disciple who walks with her son every step of the way.

One is reminded of the prophet Isaiah’s trenchant words, “Can a woman forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb?”.

Mary remembered!

She may have recalled the words of her cousin, Elizabeth, who said to her, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” Those words of a close devout woman of faith may have strengthened her on the day of her son’s crucifixion”.

On the day we commend Steve to the mercy of our divine Lord, I can’t help but remember with admiration his beloved mother, Libby, who served as Steve’s advocate, mentor and friend for many years. Although Steve was disabled, his mother made sure that his disabilities did not stand in the way of her son living a normal life. Undoubtedly, because of her guidance, Steve overcame many obstacles in his nearly seventy years of life. Remarkably, he learned to play the sport of golf using only one hand to swing a club! I was impressed.

Like the Lord’s mother, who was at the foot of the cross when her son was crucified, so was Libby present when her son fought all his earthly battles. Steve had the advantage of living with a determined and devoted mother.

Steve and his mother attended my ordination to the Catholic priesthood in the spring of 1984. Although not a Catholic herself, she said to me that memorable day, “John, I’m not Catholic, but that service was wonderful”. I thanked them both for their presence.

Let it be noted that the early Christians called the day of their death--- Dies Natalis—a phrase in Latin meaning birth day. Life is like a birth canal if only because life comes out of death. From the womb of the earth, we are born to everlasting life.

One of the lessons we can all derive from Steve’s life is “Love conquers all”, a maxim dating back to pre-Christian times and attributed to the poet, Cicero. Love is stronger than death. Death is not the end of the human story. We believe there is life after death.

In one of the Beatitudes of Jesus’ justly famous Sermon on the Mount”, He said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”. Christ is always true to his word!

Steve will be missed. Lord, please grant him eternal rest, amen.