

- You know...preachers of God's Word often fear to speak out boldly...because so many people are tied to their faith by barely a thread, and there is often the fear that blunt directness will be the force that snaps that thread.
- I know that I myself often think of that warning of Jesus: "*You will not break a bruised reed, or quench a smoldering wick.*" Will my directness break the reed or quench that wick of their faith?
- But...John the Baptist doesn't seem to have worried about that too much. He knew that truth is truth...and it is essential for the people of God to hear the truth.
- And truth attracts. To find truth has been the goal for mankind for thousands of years. All philosophy—a word that means "love of wisdom"—is a search for truth.
- The philosopher Diogenes wrote: "*The truth is like light to sore eyes...and he who has never offended anyone has never done any good.*"
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- Well...with the sorrowful events of this past week, it would be remiss, if not negligent, for me not to address some issues concerning the death of our young brother Tyler Van Anne, and to give you truth.
- His was a life barely tasted...a novel barely begun.
- A question that comes up often is whether suicides automatically go to Hell. The short answer is "no".
- Yes, suicide is a very grave wrong against God, family and community. Who can look at the sorrow and tears...the anguish and the anxiety...manifested by so many in the last few days and dare say otherwise?
- But with our advancement in the understanding of psychology, physiology, etc., the understanding of the causes of suicide has developed to realize that such a one is often not wholly responsible.

- The Catechism thus assures us: *“Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of one committing suicide.”* (CCC 2282)
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- Tyler, we know, was still struggling deeply with the loss of his friend Isaac several months earlier.
- And add to that our the realization that the human brain is still maturing physically until age 25 or so...and then the lack of experience and perspective of youth...and “who knows what” other physiological and psychological factors...and we can surmise that responsibility was very likely much less.
- I, myself, personally wonder if hardly any suicides are damned--at least for the suicide itself--because suicide is SO very contrary to our natural love of self. It would seem to have to be a disorder of some sort.
- Yet...as St. Paul tells us: *“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master [God] that he stands or falls.”* (Rom 14:4) It is not for us to judge ANY soul—not Mother Teresa into Heaven, or Hitler into Hell. Only the Church can canonize through its guidance by the Holy Spirit.
- And so...we urge prayers for Tyler’s eternal rest—just as we pray for ALL who have died--lest they be in Purgatory for the cleansing of non-damning sins they may have committed.
- The Church teaches us that our prayers and sacrifices help to both alleviate their sufferings and usher them into the joy of Heaven.
- Secondly, many persons have expressed a fear that they may have “missed” something, or that they could have “done more” for Tyler.
- But we cannot foresee the actions of another, so let your minds be at rest.
- St. Paul tells us: *“...what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?”* (1Cor 2:11)

- And Tyler, by all external accounts, seemed to have been doing well, so this whole incident was a “bolt out of the blue.”
- Thirdly, the question is often asked: “Why does God allow such evil and suffering to occur?”
- For one thing, God creates man a rational being, and gives him the dignity of one who can control his own actions... primarily so that man can freely choose to love His Creator or not.
- This is a great privilege for us; who would want to be otherwise... who would want to be a machine...an automaton?
- Secondly, an all-good God, though He does not want it to occur, allows evil, but always brings out a greater good from it.
- The crucifixion is the ultimate example of this—the incomparable evil of God incarnate being tortured upon a cross...brought about the redemption of the world.
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- What good can come out of our recent tragedy?
- We can only guess...but, for example...what if the shock of Tyler’s death prevented others from contemplating something similar?
- Or...what if some persons whose souls are in jeopardy through their ungodly lives, through Tyler’s tragic death realize the transience of material things, begin to pursue a greater faith and closeness to the eternal God?
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- But mostly I want to address you young people.
- Know absolutely that you are much loved—loved by your friends, family, community...and most of all by God. You need only look at the crucifix and see what God suffered for love of you.
- Young people commit suicide because of a bad grade, or a disappointment in love, a lack of popularity, or other such thing.
- But these things are trivial compared with your life.

- Ask John and Lea and Alyssa what they would NOT give up in order to have their son...their brother...back in their arms. Better a cardboard box under a bridge with him than a mansion without him.
- Some people who commit suicide—especially young people—see the commotion...the splash...that a suicide makes, and wrongly believe that they'll be remembered forever if they, too, do it.
- Yes, there might be a public outpouring of grief for a day or two... maybe a week. But it is soon gone. It is part of our internal self-defense mechanism to go on...to forget.
- Simply look on the LA Post site; Tyler is already several pages down.
- And soon there is only the lingering agony of a few relatives—a father and mother shattered...brothers and sisters forlorn.
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- How much better it is to live...to bring joy rather than sorrow...to be remembered as the faithful and good child who soon morphs into a wonderful parent, and finally becomes the treasured grandparent...adored by his grandchildren.
- ...To be a joyful memory rather than a sorrowful one. To be a long-lasting memory rather than a transient one.
- By the very nature of your youth, you are still learning how to put difficulties and hardships and sufferings—which everyone endures in life—into proper perspective.
- Just realize that...and don't let the training wheels of your early struggles overwhelm you.
- Rather than surrender to difficulties and hardships, learn to master them and use the knowledge and strength gained in that struggle to guide and strengthen others.
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- We're coming into the Christmas season, and it's time for the perennial showings of the old movie "It's a Wonderful Life".
- Yes, it's a movie. Yes, it's old and a bit syrupy. And yes, it is fiction. But it is a fiction with much truth within in—how EACH

life touches so many other lives in so many positive ways...even in ways that we do not fathom.

- So when you feel like the burden is beginning to overwhelm you, know that everyone has those times in life. Know that your life touches so many others in so many ways.
- Come to the church...come to Christ...and hear the words He gave us for just such times:
- *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* (Mat 11:28-30)

Reading 1

[Is 11:1-10](#)

On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,
and from his roots a bud shall blossom.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him:

a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,

a spirit of counsel and of strength,

a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD,

and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD.

Not by appearance shall he judge,

nor by hearsay shall he decide,

but he shall judge the poor with justice,

and decide aright for the land's afflicted.

He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth,

and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

Justice shall be the band around his waist,

and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb,

and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;

the calf and the young lion shall browse together,

with a little child to guide them.

The cow and the bear shall be neighbors,

together their young shall rest;

the lion shall eat hay like the ox.

The baby shall play by the cobra's den,

and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair.

There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain;

for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD,

as water covers the sea.

On that day, the root of Jesse,

set up as a signal for the nations,

the Gentiles shall seek out,

for his dwelling shall be glorious.

[Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17.](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (cf. 7) Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
he shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

May his name be blessed forever;
as long as the sun his name shall remain.
In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed;
all the nations shall proclaim his happiness.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

[Rom 15:4-9](#)

Reading 2

Brothers and sisters:

Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction,
that by endurance and by the encouragement of the Scriptures
we might have hope.

May the God of endurance and encouragement
grant you to think in harmony with one another,
in keeping with Christ Jesus,
that with one accord you may with one voice
glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you,
for the glory of God.

For I say that Christ became a minister of the circumcised
to show God's truthfulness,
to confirm the promises to the patriarchs,
but so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

As it is written:

*Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles
and sing praises to your name.*

[Mt 3:1-12](#)

Gospel

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, “**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said:
*A voice of one crying out in the desert,
Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.*

**John wore clothing made of camel’s hair
and had a leather belt around his waist.**

His food was locusts and wild honey.

At that time Jerusalem, all Judea,
and the whole region around the Jordan
were going out to him
and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River
as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from **the coming wrath**? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’

For I tell you,
God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.
Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees.

**Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit
will be cut down and thrown into the fire.**

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance,
but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I.

I am not worthy to carry his sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
His winnowing fan is in his hand.

**He will clear his threshing floor
and gather his wheat into his barn,**

but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

