

Funeral—Tyler Van Anne

12/13/13--IHM

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- Many of our parishioners will have heard the bulk of this homily last weekend, but the themes of it bear repeating—especially to our young people. What do they say?...it takes three times before something sinks in?
- Tyler's was a life barely tasted...a masterpiece of a painting abandoned after only a few brush strokes.
- A question that comes up often is whether the Catholic Church teaches that 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 Catholic 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 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 dammned--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.

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- 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 fear that they may have “missed” something with Tyler, or that they could have “done more” for him.
- But we cannot predict 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?*”
- 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?

- 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.
- And your presence and your lives are FAR more precious to your parents, your family and friends than any grades, achievements, popularity, success at sports, or whatever...ever will be.
- 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.
- My mother still gets melancholy when she thinks of the stillborn child she lost 60 years ago. Imagine, then, the agony of parents who have raised their children for many years. You are their very heart.
- Yes, the public will forget...and forget quickly.
- But friends and family will not...always a dark place in their heart your shadow will haunt.
- Eventually, after many years, you'll simply be a sad memory for friends. It is part of our internal self-defense mechanism to go on...to forget.
- But not for parents—especially mothers...who felt you grow in the womb next to their hearts...your first step...the sleepless nights when you were sick, the first-day-at-school separation, the

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Christmas and birthday squeals of delight...and a thousand other things that mothers never forget.

- No...the agony of parents lingers for the rest of their lives—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 becomes the wise and good parent, and finally becomes the treasured grandparent...adored by waves of grandchildren.
- ...To be a joyful memory rather than a sorrowful one.
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- By the very fact of your youth you are still learning how to put difficulties and hardships and sufferings—which everyone endures in life—into proper perspective.
- Simply realize that...and know that through each trial you get stronger and wiser.
- All of us who are older are ourselves testaments to YOUR ability to survive and even flourish under pressure.
- Remember St. Paul: “...*suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us...*” (Romans 5:3-5 RSV)
- Difficulties and struggles are an inevitable part of life...but the joys of a life well lived in the future will far outweigh them—the joy of achievement, the joy of children, the joy of the love that will come to you.
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- Yes, you mourn Tyler today...and will for quite some time.
- To borrow from Churchill...this funeral today is not the end, nor is it the beginning of the end. But, perhaps, it is the end of the beginning. Do not obsess over Tyler; he would not want it.
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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”.

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- 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 consider.
- So when you feel like the burden is beginning to overwhelm you, know that everyone has those times in life. Know that your life, too, touches so many others in so many ways.
- Come to Jesus...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)
- And remember with dogged determination the words of St. Paul: *“I can do all things in Christ, who strengthens me.”*