

HOMILY

FUNERAL MASS FOR JOHN PATRICK

“JOHNNY” WILLIAMSON, JR.

(February 25, 1987-January 25, 2009)

GOD’S BUDDY—BUDDY TO US ALL THROUGH JOHNNY GOD BLESSED US EVERYONE

Once there was a young man who had trouble sleeping.
He heard an unfamiliar voice in his sleep.
Through the guidance of his mentor, Samuel realized that it was God calling **HIS** name.
Samuel finally answered,
“SPEAK, LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING.” (1Sm.3:10)

Once there was a young woman who received a perplexing request delivered by an angel.
She was greatly troubled by what was said to her. **WHO, ME?**
Through her surrender to Divine Providence Mary offered her body and spirit to God
and said,
**‘BEHOLD, I AM THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD.
MAY IT BE DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.’ (Lk.1:38)**

There’s this very special young man, **“a godly man”** as Sirach noted. **(Sir. 44:10)**
He was equipped with a wealth of gifts and a broad smile
and belonged to many communities—many families.
Through his witness and service he wanted all to know that he was
a **Devout Pro Life Catholic and proud of it.**
Johnny responded to the Lord’s call by living these words:
“HERE I AM, LORD, I COME TO DO YOUR WILL.” (Ps.40:8a,9a)

Today our hearts are broken. There is much sadness and anguish.
We face the painful truth of how fragile life is and how hard it is to say goodbye
to someone so young who is beloved by so many.
But, today also brings an opportunity to testify to how precious and sacred life is--
how very good and deeply enriching-- a life of **SERVICE** is.
When you discover the deep desire to do God’s will in your life
as Johnny did -- you become a positive force for good, a healer, a uniter
one who brings people together acting **in persona Christi**

in the person/image of Christ.

Today we look for signs of solace.

We wrap ourselves in the symbols of our faith to console and guide us.

As much as the candlelight vigil on Monday evening at Drexel warmed the bitterness of a winter's night and the numbness of the loss that we feel — this candle – the Paschal Candle-- goes further and pierces the darkness of our pain and desolation with new life. This Easter symbol reminds us that we are living out what began in baptism as we immerse ourselves further into the Paschal Mystery where loss and sorrow become hope and resurrection.

Today we throw ourselves into God's arms just like Samuel, Mary and Johnny and discover we stand strong with the Resurrected Christ, the Wounded Healer, the One who make all things new.

Yes, our hearts are broken, afraid, and troubled as Jesus reminds us in John's gospel. (cf. Jn. 14:1)

That is the stark reality. But there is a deeper mystery to discover-- a longing for fulfillment, to be made whole, to find the missing pieces in life lost through sin.

God made us to experience loss, restlessness and incompleteness in order to discover our dependency on Him.

As Saint Augustine observed: **“OUR HEARTS ARE MADE FOR YOU, O LORD, AND THEY WILL NOT REST UNTIL THEY REST IN YOU.”**

This ache will remain in us until we are truly home with the Lord.

As Saint Paul reminds us.

“WE HAVE AN EVERLASTING HOME IN HEAVEN.” (cf. 2Cor.5:1)

Heaven is our final destination, our final resting place-- an experience of total and complete oneness with the Lord.

No matter how brief or long our lifespan on earth may be our goal is to offer our bodies and souls in the Lord's service.

When we do this—we glimpse heaven and we share oneness with God by humbly living out our Christian vocation.

Jesus' words in the gospel confirm the reward for union when He says

he has prepared a place for each one of us and he comes to us and takes us to himself. (cf. Jn. 14:2-3)

We experience God, who made His dwelling among us, in many dwelling places as we journey through life.

Johnny cultivated union with God nurturing the many dwelling places in his life. This was his sacred space with God.

It is often expressed among young people, “I’m spiritual, but not religious.” Johnny would **NOT** agree. His religious faith was of the utmost importance, a top priority. Just ask his fellow classmates at Drexel how much he treasured his faith. Through the authority of his witness and his charming persuasiveness he was able to bring some of his peers back to Church. And there is no better example to share than the commitment he made to his cherished girlfriend Jamie to be her sponsor in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults so that she too would share in the inheritance of Christ through baptism.

Johnny’s pursuit of a genuine spiritual life was demonstrated by faithfully attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion, going to confession, singing in the choir, being charitable in works of service and spreading the gospel of life—**CHOOSE LIFE and A PERSON IS A PERSON NO MATTER HOW SMALL** could be found on his face book page. He looked beyond the my space and facebook pages of his generation and was able to use these tools to point to the face of God. In doing so he actively cultivated a life worthy of a Christian gentleman. Johnny had his faults and weakness too just like each one of us. What I noticed about him was his ability to return to that sacred space and renew himself and find forgiveness.

Johnny had a desire to make a difference in the world. With his family and the Church to teach and guide him he found something meaningful and true in his faith and devoted his talents and abilities for the betterment of the many communities he was part of. **“IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE THERE ARE MANY DWELLING PLACES,”** Jesus said to his disciples. (Jn. 14:2) Johnny was not only connected to these rooms in his Heavenly Father’s house but he was fully invested in each of them. These communities were part of who he was—his identity. And he never forgot us. The Saint Pius X Parish Family nourished him sacramentally The Cardinal O’Hara Family, of which he was a proud graduate, mentored his spiritual and academic growth. His admiration for Drexel University and his great love for Greek Life, most especially for his brothers at the Alpha Chi Rho Fraternity, was a cause of great joy.

Just before Mass Dr. David Ruth, Dean of Students at Drexel University informed me that Johnny will receive his degree to be conferred at Commencement this June.

As a collegian he was also a parishioner at Saint Agatha/ Saint James Parish in University City where he served as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist and a choir member. And for me as chaplain of the Newman Center at Drexel his vital participation as Service Chair in our Executive Council helped to promote Catholic life on campus. It was in the Fall of 2007 that I first encountered his charismatic personality, his warm embracing smile, his innate ability to make people feel welcome and comfortable ,

his tenacious competitive spirit especially in board games and sports,
his passion for the Phillies and the Eagles and, of course,
his deep love of his Catholic faith, which included an abiding respect and devotion
for the priesthood as evidenced by the number of clergy present today
even the attendance of Bishop McFadden, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of
Philadelphia.

Each of our communities knows that he made quite a difference.

And we can promise that the words from the Book of Sirach will ring true

“FOR GODLY MEN THEIR VIRTUES WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN.”

(Sir. 44:10)

A couple of days ago Johnny’s dad asked me to make a promise to him.

A promise I highly recommend to you especially to our young people.

Johnny’s last words to his parents were

I LOVE YOU MOM... I LOVE YOU DAD...

And he departed with that trademark smile.

John and Donna Marie, you know that I kept that promise.

I told my mom and dad that I love them, which for me is a sentiment felt
but sadly not spoken. They responded together, “We love you too.”

It was medicine for my soul.

On behalf of us all I say in a most public way:

WE LOVE YOU JOHNNY.

Johnny was so blessed because he knew that God loved him.

Still does—in a fuller and most profound way.

Johnny is now experiencing what the psalmist wrote:

**“LOOK UP AT THE LORD WITH GLADNESS AND SMILE
YOUR FACE WILL NEVER BE ASHAMED.” (Ps. 34:6)**

JOHNNY, WE MISS YOU A LOT. WE WILL MISS YOUR SMILE.

GOD’S FAITHFUL FRIEND.

A FAITHFUL FRIEND TO ALL OF US.

REST IN PEACE.

Homilist: [Father Vince Morabito](#)
[Chaplain, the Newman Center at Drexel University](#)

[Saint Pius X Church, Broomall, PA](#)

[January 29, 2009](#)