

All the deaths and funerals we celebrate are sacred. From time to time, I like to include in the bulletin a funeral homily of a person who was well known to many parishioners. This is the homily I gave for Tommy Corrado on January 4.

Father Pat

Tommy died. Of course, we needed only one name to share this very sad news that impacted many people here in Bethpage and in many other places. There are certain people who become so famous or so loved that they need only one name to be spoken and everyone knows of whom we are speaking. We say the name *LeBron* and everyone thinks of the great basketball player LeBron James who plays for the Los Angeles Lakers, the name *Bruce* and you immediately think of the great rock n roll singer Bruce Springsteen, and the name *Oprah* needs not be accompanied by Winfrey since we all know her by her first name. I think it would fair to say that Tommy Corrado reached that status here at St. Martin's Parish and among his family and friends. You said the word *Tommy* and the image of a kind and loving man comes to your mind immediately. We were blessed to know Tommy and to experience his love and generosity. Tommy was a most special part of the parish here at St. Martin's, especially to his many friends from the 7:00 p.m. Saturday Night Mass. When Tommy became ill, and began to be unable to usher at the 7:00 p.m. evening Mass, so many people asked me, *where is Tommy? What is going on? We miss him.* How true...we do and will miss him so very much. I will not attend the Saturday night Mass without thinking of him, and his asking me if there was a second collection or and I needed any help. Once in a while I would ask him if wanted to give the sermon and he would laugh and say *that's your job Father.* Actually, I was afraid to let him give the homily because people would find him far more interesting than they did me.

I want to offer my deepest sympathy to those who are hurting the most: his dear and loving sister Julie and her husband Steve, his niece Juliet and her husband Rickie, his nephews and their spouses Stephen and Dena, and Derek and Elizabeth. Tommy never married or had children but was deeply loved by his

family and he loved his family so very much. I met the other day with his sister Julie and her husband Steve and they were devastated by the death of Tommy. They loved him so very much. Years ago, when Tommy's mother Mary was dying, Julie promised her mother that she would always take care of Tommy and watch out for him. Julie, no sister could have been more loving and faithful to brother than were you and Steve, no brother-in law could have more supportive to Tommy and Julie. To listen to them was an honor for me since I was hearing a beautiful story of love. The Bible tells us that wherever there is love, God is present. God was truly present in this family. I believe Tommy's parents, Mary and Fred, now reunited with their precious son, are smiling down in love at all the Corrado and Campange family. Julie made it clear to me that being with her brother was a joy and not an obligation. He brought all the family great joy.

I know he had a special place in his heart for his grandchildren: Gabriela, Gavin, Caeden, Owen, Derek, Jayden, and Mel. I know that you have been praying very hard that Tommy would get better and that it hurts very much that he has left us to go home to God. We have just celebrated Christmas; the whole reason for Christmas, all the presents and decorations and trees is because God decided to come among us and help us get home to heaven when we died. I believe that Tommy is now in heaven because Jesus loved him and Tommy loved Jesus. You know have a special uncle in heaven to which you can ask to bring your prayers to God. Tommy still loves all of you. I also offer a special word to some of Tommy's special friends, Pam and Joey Carlucci, Dee Gianni, Jennette Lessard, Dawn Smith, Barbara Casey, and Kathie Spellman. You all held a special place in Tommy's heart. He had a gift for friendship.

The family picked beautiful readings for Tommy's Mass. We heard Pam read the following words to us today from the Bible: *The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace.* We draw consolation in knowing that Tommy was a just man and he is now at peace. In our second reading, Dee read: *See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are.* We all have special roles in life; Tommy was a son,

a brother, an uncle, a great uncle, a friend, the head usher of the 700 p.m. Saturday Mass, but the greatest title he had was in what we heard in that reading. We are the children of God. Nothing could be greater than that. Tommy is a child of God.

I chose for our Gospel a reading where Jesus is surrounded by children. The apostles tell the children to leave Jesus alone since he is busy but Jesus tells the apostles let the children come to him. Jesus loved these children and blesses each of the children. He then tells us that the innocence of a child is what is needed to enter the kingdom of God. I always found Tommy to be childlike. I mean that as the greatest compliment that I can give a person since Jesus says that is the most important quality one needs to have in life. Our Lord tells us, *such as these belong to the kingdom of God.*

On Saturday nights, after the 700 p.m. Mass, I would go to my man cave, have a nice cold soda, and turn on the Mets or a Notre Dame football game. I would be in my nice recliner, with the work of the day finished. At about 8:30, I would hear a knock on my door. I would reluctantly get up and say *who it is. It's me Father, Tommy. Everything is done and the collection if put away and the church is locked.* I would thank Tommy and say *see you next week.* I will miss that knock on my door very much. ON December 29th, Tommy went home to the God who created and loved him. He did not have to knock. The door was wide open to welcome him.