

## **KEVIN HEALEY – words of remembrance, April 28, 2009**

“Blessed are the mournful for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who weep for they will be consoled.” Personally, I always find it difficult to preach on the Beatitudes because they present us with a paradox that is so difficult to explain, and words just don’t seem as convincing as they should. I think those words need to be experienced and embodied for that paradox to make any sense. Today we are seeing it embodied for as much pain as you feel, Tom, Ann, and Mary Kate, you are also blessed by the presence of so many people who love you today. And it is no burden but a privilege to be with you, supporting you here today.

In some respects, perhaps not the most important ones, we at Notre Dame did not know Kevin as you did. We never saw him act in a play. I don’t remember ever hearing him play his sax. There was rarely a time when he was not going through chemo or on some combination of drugs. For awhile, especially second semester last year, much of his natural exuberance returned along with most of his hair, but we never saw him walk without a limp or run across a field. You knew him in his youthful vitality, but when he came to us he was starting to grow old and the shadow of cancer eating away at him from within was never far away. He was rarely without pain, though he tried desperately to hide it so as not to be a burden to any of us.

However, I imagine that if we were to list Kevin’s qualities, we would come up with much the same list: determined, devoted, stubborn, brilliant, dry and wickedly funny, proud of his family and Irish heritage and especially his sister, Mary Kate. He was a little quirky – most nineteen year olds don’t like to sit around watching the Food Network in late afternoons, although that may have been the corrupting influence of his delightfully quirky friends who are with us here today! He was undemanding and uncomplaining, prayerful, and a word I don’t use often, holy – and did I mention stubborn?

But despite external appearances and the internal anxieties he must have felt, we knew the same person, especially the one who was a man of great faith. He did his personal duty with regular trips to our Grotto, which he insisted on living as closely to as he could though it made him negotiate stairs in our 120 year old dumpy building when he could have had much plusher quarters. And he did his public duty too. Virtually the last thing he did, I think the night before he left Notre Dame for the last time, was to serve Mass in our chapel where he was a sacristan, even though he was too weak to stand the whole time with the others who were there with him.

Neither I nor the others from Notre Dame came here today to spend a lot of time telling you about Kevin since many of you knew him better than us, but we do want to thank you. It certainly takes a family to raise a child. It may take a village, a neighborhood, and schools, but it takes a Church to take a boy like Kevin and transform him into the man of faith that he was. And you were the Church as Kevin knew it, those of you at St. Angela’s, St. Ignatius, here in this parish, all of you who were his friends. You were the people who he grew up with, and you all helped to fashion Kevin into that man of faith.

So whatever gaping holes are in your hearts today, no matter what doubts you may have, or other ways in which you are suffering, I hope you take some time, beginning with his family, to be immensely proud of the good work that God has done through you in helping to make Kevin into that man of faith. And on behalf of everyone at the University, I also want you to know that we are immeasurably grateful to all of you for this Notre Dame man, who was your gift to us.