

Clarksville pastor remembers VMI cadet

St. Louis in Clarksville is mourning the loss of John Alexander Evans, a 19-year-old parishioner who died Nov. 7 after completing a 10-mile road march at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington.

The freshman cadet was a graduate of St. Louis School and Mount St. Joseph High School in Irvington.

“The parish is deeply saddened because he was so young and so vibrant and so dedicated to God and country,” said Monsignor Joseph L. Luca, pastor. “He really did touch the lives of many people.”

Monsignor Luca described Evans as a young man who was greatly respected for his natural leadership abilities.

“He was the kind of kid who would see an adult who needed some help and he would be the one to offer help without anyone asking,” Monsignor Luca said, “whether it was cutting the grass or helping us here at the church.”

Evans didn’t settle for dreaming about taking on new adventures, the priest said. Instead, he set out to accomplish his goals. Monsignor Luca recalled that when Evans was 8, he told his parents he wanted to learn to sail. Every morning, he rode his bike to sailing school. Five years later, he taught himself bow hunting.

“After three weeks, he got a six-point buck,” Monsignor Luca said. “Many people don’t get that in their whole lifetimes. As a result of his engagement in these activities, the family got involved. He was a catalyst to really bring the family together.”

Evans, a former varsity football player at Mount St. Joseph, was very involved in St. Louis’ Catholic youth ministry.

“He was very accepting of all people and he could befriend anyone,” Monsignor Luca

said. "There was no guile in him."

Evans great dream was to serve his country, the pastor said. He was an international studies major at VMI and a member of the Marine ROTC program.

Monsignor Luca offered a Nov. 14 funeral Mass that was attended by about 1,200 people.