

Funeral Homily for David Modell

I. Introduction

A. Michel, let me express the love and sympathy of everyone here and across the entire greater Baltimore community and far beyond as we bid farewell to your beloved husband, David. What a grace that you and David were able to travel to Rome this past fall, there to renew your commitment of love, virtually in the shadow of Pope Francis. With you, Michel, David deeply loved his children and so to Breslin, Arthur, Collier, and David, Jr. as well as to the twins, Fee and Bertie - you have all of our love, our prayers, and our support.

B. David came from a great family. We remember today his father Art and his mother Pat and think of what this family has meant and means to our community - there are so many ways to measure the impact that it is, in fact, immeasurable! So to you, his brother John, and your family we extend our love asking the Lord to bless and console you on the death of your dear brother. To all of David's relatives, his close personal friends, and community leaders, thank you for presence today as we commend David to the Lord of life and love.

C. And, of course, David had an extended family, the Ravens - To Steve, Dick, Ozzie, John and the entire Ravens family, our condolences! How David loved the Ravens! His leadership was a mix of vision, kindness, hearty laughter, and hard work. To all of you who are part of this important Baltimore family - I extend my sympathy on your loss and, with you, pray that Art, Pat, and David will be our team in heaven. With them on our side, who knows what will happen next season?

D. Let me add a brief personal note. I have not known David nearly as long as most of you but I have had the privilege of being in David and Michel's company and the honor of baptizing their twins. I discovered that David was delightful company with a touch of mischief. He certainly didn't mind having a good debate about religion or politics. He stayed away from sports with me because he knew he had an unfair advantage. In the course of time, I came to know what all of you already knew - that he possessed deep faith, deep courage, and even serenity - all of which was tested

by fire as he battled cancer for so long a time. When I visited him at Hopkins, I thought I would console him and I hope I did. But it was David who inspired me by his optimism and by his readiness to look ahead, come what may. We are here this morning in the sure and certain hope that he no longer faces a terminal illness but rather sees God face to face.

II. Training for the Ultimate Contest

A. In the eyes of the world, David lost his battle with cancer. In spite of the best efforts of the excellent team at Hopkins, the cure that all of us prayed for so ardently did not come to pass. Today's Scripture readings and today's liturgical texts speak about victory, the victory of life over death. Yet, in our grief it all might ring hollow, especially with the loss of one so young as David.

B. Yet, I would invite us all to look at the mystery of death in another way, and it's this: the goal line we are meant to cross is not merely the ones at M&T Bank Stadium. The goal line for you, for me, for David – for each person born into the world – is to reach eternity and to enjoy directly the friendship of God, to repose in the joy of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As riveting, exhilarating and disappointing as life in this world can be, it is, in fact, a form of training, a form of getting in shape for the world to come. This includes shedding the extra weight of sin and transforming the flabbiness of vice into the firmness of virtue. I've been in training for many a year now, and I'm here to tell you, there are times I don't like it at all but, like you, I try to soldier on. And we may wonder why it has to be like this – but when we stop and think of it, what the Lord is trying to do is nothing less than making us ready for heaven, hammering away at us until we love him with our whole heart and until we love our neighbors, not merely as ourselves, but as he loves them. That's what Jesus meant when he told us to become perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect.

C. David's cancer was part of his intense training for crossing the goal line, more intense, more difficult, more demanding, I daresay, than even the most strenuous training at the Castle in Owings Mills. The Word of God was his coach and the Lord Jesus his quarterback, and the Sacraments imparted to him the strength of the One who conquered death with life and sin with grace. David's illness was a crucible in

which his love was purified and in which he was prepared for that which lies beyond the playing fields of this world. And we are here today as his teammates and his cheerleaders as we pray him over the goal line into the heavenly kingdom. This is not an easy contest for us to be involved in, but with the Lord's help, David might just have caught a Hail Mary pass in the end zone.

III. Conclusion

A. Clearly, friends, I'm out of my depth when I'm talking football but it is out of the depth of my heart that I want to join you in professing faith in the Lord Jesus whose love is stronger than sin and more powerful than death. With the Book of Wisdom I want to say that David is now in the hands of God and with St. Paul that at Baptism Jesus imparted to David the gift of imperishable life, the life of the Resurrection. With Martha, I want to believe with you and confess with you that the Lord Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

B. We can no longer give to David the things of this world nor can he any longer give them to us. But what we have let us give to him confident that he will continue to give us what he now has. What we have to give David is our faith in the Lord as conqueror of sin and death and we can also give him our prayers for his safe passage into heaven. What he gives us are his prayers from eternity where he sees more clearly than we, the goal, the finish line of this contest we call life. So while we cherish memories - and many there are - let us do more. Let us continue to pray for David, not just today or tomorrow but always and let us rely on his prayers to help draw us closer to heaven with each passing day.

C. In one of my last visits with David he showed me a Rosary and if memory serves he obtained that Rosary while he was in Rome last fall. He smiled at me as he held it up and I blessed it - even though it had already been blessed by the Pope himself. What a reminder for you and me not to forget to ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for David and to greet him in eternity as his spiritual mother helping to speed his way to the complete joy of heaven. After all, Mary's goal in this life and her goal in glory is to lead us to her Son, Jesus.

D. Farewell, David, we will miss you and we will pray for you. May we meet one day

again in the joy of heaven. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.