

John Carroll sophomore remembered as “saintly”

By Elizabeth Skalski

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FULLERTON – Xavia Pirozzi was buried on a bright, sunny day, which is fitting for a teenager who is said to have always had a smile on her face and a sunny disposition.

Pirozzi died March 21 from lymphoma. A sophomore at The John Carroll School in Bel Air, the Fallston resident was 15.

Nearly 500 people attended her Mass of Christian Burial March 26 at St. Joseph, Fullerton.

Pirozzi, who had a successful heart transplant in 2007 at age 10, was diagnosed with lymphoma in June.

She had been at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) since November and recently ended chemotherapy treatments. Pirozzi went home March 18 for hospice care.

Sister of St. Joseph Alice Edward Strogon, chaplain of CHOP, said in her eulogy that when Xavia left CHOP “she had a big smile on her face.”

“She was ready to go home to God,” Sister Alice said.

In the six years she knew Pirozzi, Sister Alice said Xavia was full of life.

“That (new) heart gave her five more years to live life,” Sister Alice said. “(Xavia) had a faith which gave strength and purpose and meaning to her life.”

During his homily, Father Stephen R. Sutton, associate pastor of St. Ignatius, Hickory, and a religion teacher at John Carroll, continuously circled back to the theme that “God is good, all the time.”

“Not just in the good days but in the bad days,” Father Sutton said. “In the darkness sometimes it’s hard to see the light. She finished the race, she stayed with it.”

The John Carroll community had celebrated a Mass in Pirozzi’s honor less than 12 hours before she died.

“We prayed her into heaven,” said Patti Murphy Dohn, campus minister, director of campus ministry and a religion teacher at John Carroll. “We had no clue as to when she would go. We did know that she was really weak.”

Pirozzi is survived by her parents, Nicolle and Ralph Pirozzi, and four siblings – Adria, Darius and Ianna, who are triplets and in the seventh grade at St. Joseph School, Fullerton, and Alita, a second-grader at the school. Pirozzi attended St. Joseph before attending John Carroll. The family worships at St. Joseph.

Pirozzi’s siblings visited her at CHOP every weekend she was there, Sister Alice said.

“They arrived every Friday afternoon with a burst of energy and raced to her room,” Sister Alice said. “They called her ‘tofu.’ ”

Christy Kim, a sophomore and classmate of Pirozzi’s at John Carroll, said she will remember her “sweet smile.”

“I was really touched by how brave she was,” said Kim, 15. “She went through a lot. She never complained.”

Kim and Pirozzi, who became a member of the National Art Honor Society her freshman year, were in the same art class.

“She had a really good artistic talent,” Kim said.

Sister of Notre Dame de Namur Marjorie Gallagher, a John Carroll religion teacher who taught Pirozzi until she left for CHOP in November, said she had a “deep faith” and “a gentle spirit.”

“Saintly is my word (to describe her),” Sister Marjorie said. “Anyone who knew her is touched by her.”

To learn more about Xavia Pirozzi's life, read "Xavia's heart. "

View a slideshow of Xavia Pirozzi's funeral: