

Loyola University grapples with murder of Dean's List student

Jesuit Father Brian F. Linnane, president of Loyola University Maryland, used Scripture and the sentiments of the grandparents who raised the deceased in attempting to make sense of the grisly murder of one of the college's rising sophomores.

Jimi Taro Patrick, a 19-year-old Dean's List student, was killed July 5, in what Bucks County, Pa., authorities described as a drug deal gone bad.

Father Linnane led a vigil for the missing student July 12, when "we wanted to hold on to hope," before Patrick's body - along with those of three other murder victims - were unearthed on a farm in Solebury, approximately 45 miles north of Philadelphia.

Father Linnane offered a memorial Mass July 19, in Alumni Memorial Chapel, for Patrick, a member of the class of 2020. During an otherwise quiet summer week at Evergreen, approximately 100 faculty and staff members were in attendance, including, despite the cafeteria being closed, a food services worker.

Patrick's funeral is to be held July 21, at the Church of St. Andrew in Newtown, Pa., Patrick's hometown. The university will have a presence there, and hold another memorial Mass for Patrick after students return for the fall semester.

Father Linnane noted the absence at the July 19 memorial Mass of his student peers, and their closeness to him, something the university president discovered in consoling Richard and Sharon Patrick, his grandparents.

"The interesting thing that I took from the grandparents who raised him," Father Linnane said in his homily, "was their concern for his roommates and friends. He had a wide network that he established in his first year here. It's rare for roommates to stick together after their first year.

"That speaks to the quality of the person."

A business major at Loyola University Maryland, Patrick was a Maguire Scholar, which benefits graduates of Catholic high schools in the Philadelphia area.

According to an obituary in the Bucks County Times, Patrick attended St. Andrew School in Newtown, Pa., where he played CYO basketball. A standout baseball player, he played that sport and was an honors student at Holy Ghost Preparatory School in Bensalem, Pa.

Cosmo DiNardo, who confessed to killing Patrick and two of the three other men, graduated a year ahead of him at Holy Ghost Prep. According to the Associated Press, DiNardo told authorities “he wanted to set the victims up when they came to (his family) farm to buy marijuana.” According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, he had been diagnosed with schizophrenia.

“There is something about Jimi’s death that is particularly chilling,” Father Linnane said at the start of the memorial Mass. “Such a manifest act of evil. I have to be careful, as a moral theologian ...”

Addressing the media after the Mass, and asked about passing judgement on the murderer, Father Linnane said, “It’s difficult to cope with this. I don’t know their soul ... but what Jimi experienced in his last moment of life was an act of evil.

“As educators, you never get used to this type of thing. This was chilling, just so senseless.”

In his homily, Father Linnane leaned on a passage in the day’s Gospel, Matthew 12:30: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

“Jesus is telling us,” Father Linnane said, “that following him does involve a burden, does involve a yoke. But it is in knowing Jesus and trusting in his words, that this burden and yoke become our means of freedom, both in the life we live, and the life we anticipate.

“All of us struggle to find what eludes us. ... Be mindful of the joy that was Jimi’s life. Be mindful that we’re all on the same journey.”

In his opening remarks, Father Linnane said, "Let us be mindful of our failures."

In closing, he told his community, "We have great kids. Sometimes they do dumb things. I thank you for involving yourselves in the lives of these young people. It's important to recognize what we do as a university, what Loyola is about, is how we (respond) in a time like this."

After Mass, Father Linnane was asked how Loyola can use Patrick's death as a teaching moment.

"We'll talk about life," he said. "It's fragile. Be careful with this precious gift of life."

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