

God of all compassion, through the suffering and death of your Son, you have shown us how far you will go to share in our suffering. Help us to trust in your promise of resurrection in the midst of suffering and death. Amen

I have had the privileged of presiding at a number of funerals over the past 7 years, but I have never buried a friend before. Brian was a son, a brother, a husband, a father, an uncle, a grandpa and a friend. I'm guessing that there isn't anyone here who did not have an opportunity to know and to love Brian. I met Brian about this time of the year in 2002 just a few months after I came to LCM. Pr. Dawson said, "There is a guy who has been going through a really tough kind of chemotherapy and I think you would enjoy meeting him. I called to set up a time to meet with Brian and after our first meeting, we clicked, not just in pastoral type of relationship, but as friends.

A short time later, Brian came to church on Sunday with his wife Kathleen. When I saw her, I was shocked. You see she looked just like someone that I worked with at Fenton High School. I went up to her and said, "Wow, you look exactly like Peggy Fox, the director of the media center where I work." Kathleen's response was, "she is my twin sister." What has followed has been a wonderful relationship with both Brian and Kathleen."

How does one describe Brian Kremian. His voice was distinctive, his warmth was disarming and his determination to beat this cancer thing was admirable. How could you not love Brian. In his relationships, it was not all about him. When you were talking with him you had his full attention. He loved to talk to anyone who would

listen. Kathleen remarked that wherever he was, he talked to people as though he had known them forever. My guess is that he was never bored while he was waiting in line.

Brian met Kathleen at the Mc Donald's Corporate headquarters in Oak Brook two years before they were married in September of 2000. "Brian became my best friend," Kathleen said. In spite of the cancer diagnosis only a year after they were married, Brian and Kathleen had a wonderful marriage. Their blended family included Kathleen's two girls, Meghan and Katie and Brian's boys, Ryan and Zach. It may have been work for all of them in the beginning but over the years they were able to come together as a family. Brian had a deep commitment to his family.

When I asked about Brian's hobbies, in addition to talking, he loved being loud. He enjoyed watching sports, especially the Bears and the Cubs. Well, maybe, it's a blessing that he doesn't have to watch the Cubs right now. And it is too bad he won't be able to see whether or not the Bears new quarterback, Jay Cutler will be a success this year. Brian like to fish especially after he learned to fly fish. OI didn't know he liked to cook. He loved the out of doors and listening to Kenny Chesney. Two of his favorite vacations in recent years were with his brother Terry and the family. They went fly fishing a few years ago to celebrate a "big" birthday of Terry's and just last month, Brian and Kathleen spent time again with Terry and Kriee enjoying the beautiful attractions in and around Seattle.

When grandchildren came into their lives, Brian really enjoyed being Popeye to Connor and Papa Brian to Danee, Green Lee and CJ. CJ is apparently a crazy about baseball, so he and Papa Brian had fun with their mutual love of baseball. On Friday morning on her way to the Hospice Unit, Katie and CJ went to a McDonald's. CJ asked Katie if they could get an egg Mc muffin for Papa Brian.

I was privileged to participate in Ashley and Jeremy's wedding a few years back. Brian was so proud of his daughter and her new husband, Jeremy. And Ryan and Zach looked awesome in their tuxedos. Brian was so pleased that Zach was nearing the end of his college degree in journalism. And Ryan really stepped up to the plate as Brian became less able to take care of himself. Brian was very proud of all 3 of his children, his step-girls and all of his grand children.

Some years back, I was introduced to a song by a young mother who was my Stephen's ministry care receiver. Lynda was only 33 years old, was a classically trained soprano who lived only 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  years after she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Lynda sang this song during a mini concert she gave while she was going through some aggressive chemotherapy. After she died, I needed to understand how a loving God could let this young woman leave her 3 young children and husband. My relationship with her led me to go to the seminary for answers. Somehow the words of this song helped me to grieve her loss and I hope they will help you too. It is called *This Day* and was recorded by Point of Grace.

This day is fragile, soon it will end and once it has vanished, it will not come again.

So let us love, with a love pure and strong, before this day will end.

This day is fleeting, when it slips away, not all of our money can buy back this day.

So let us pray, that we might be a friend, before this day will end

This day is fragile, it will pass by. So before it's too late, to recapture the time.

Let us share love, let us share God, before this day is gone.

Friday afternoon, I was with Brian and Kathleen, daughter Ashley and step daughter Katie and her son Christian in the Rainbow Hospice Unit. Brian was in the last hours of his life here on earth. Brian knew and believed in Jesus. We prayed together as we laid our hands on him. As I left, I said good bye to Brian and thanked him for being my friend. When Kathleen called to say Brian had died shortly after I left, she said, "He closed his mouth, smiled and stopped breathing."

I am certain Brian, at that moment was in the presence of Jesus. Just as Brian smiled, Jesus too smiled as he welcomed Brian into heaven. May the knowledge that not only on this day do we ceremonially give Brian back to the Lord, but we also have the opportunity to share the joy of knowing the love of Jesus with one another. Keep the love you have received from Brian alive in your hearts.

May God bless you with the assurance of God's love and the knowledge that someday you will be united with Brian and those you and he loved, in the presence of God. Amen