

Frankie Vargas

To Sandra, Juan, Alicia, and all the members of Frankie's family and friends, we all extend our condolences. Death is always hard. It is harder when it comes to someone young. It is intolerable when it comes as an act of violence. With you, I cry out to heaven to lament this injustice.

When life is cut short this way, you think a lot about what could have been. You'll think of other things you could have said or done. You wonder about the kind of person Frankie could have become if given more time.

But even in a short life, there's a lot a person can do. A person can establish strong bonds of family and friendship, can make your life better with a smile, and can create memories that will last a lifetime. Even in a short life it is possible to perform deeds of righteousness, actions that are pleasing in the eyes of God.

The Book of Wisdom says that even if a just man dies early, he shall be at rest. It says you cannot measure honor with the passing of time or in terms of years. Rather, if you have certain gifts - understanding, purity of heart, love for others - these are equal to reaching old age. Perhaps they are even more important.

When we lose someone like this, it's going to make each of us think about how we live our lives. What if today were our last day? Did we accomplish what we set out to do? Will people remember us the way we want them to? This is a day that can change attitudes for good or for ill. It can make you angry, or it can make you helpful. It can make you turn to violence, or it can make you seek inner peace.

Jesus gave specific advice to his disciples at the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount. He said you are blessed if you are poor in spirit and meek, if you hunger and thirst for righteousness, if you are merciful and clean of heart. He said you are blessed if you are peacemakers, even when you are persecuted. The Kingdom of heaven is not like the kingdoms of earth. It rises above violence. It seeks another way. People think guns are powerful. They're not. They cannot kill faith, families and friendships. These virtues are gifts that come from God; they live forever.

We cry many tears today because our loss is real. But the promise of Christ can lift us up. Let us pray that Frankie will experience forgiveness, peace, and eternal life with God.