

## Andrew Ritchie

If like Andrew Ritchie you held jobs such as pouring concrete or roofing houses, you would come to a certain understanding of how the world works. If you saw a situation that needed fixing, you would bring the right tools, carry a confident spirit, set to work, and gain the satisfaction that you had done something to make the world right again. On the outside, Andrew's quiet demeanor housed an inside ready to overflow with energy and emotion, faith and love, wisdom and yearning.

Andrew made a lot of things right, but like anyone else he faced struggles with important areas like work and relationships. Still, he sustained meaningful and important friendships with people who stood by him not just to help him but to learn from what he had learned.

Andrew also yearned for God. He first came to know Christ through the Christians in his family. He got to know about the Catholic Church in high school and especially in college at Benedictine. He found this cathedral a place that fulfilled his yearnings, where he could pray with others, socialize with friends young and old, and serve people with his considerable gifts. In the Knights of Columbus here, he connected with an organization that helped him channel those yearnings in positive ways. He wanted more—not just to receive more, but to give more.

We each have a certain unsettled state that creates a natural yearning for God. That very human quality is one of the defining features of Advent. For these few short weeks we remember the long centuries of yearning for a Messiah. Advent always treats these yearnings with hope. It has no room for cynicism. Isaiah, for example, in today's first reading, understands ancient Israel's yearning for a better life, and he assures the people it's coming. "Thus says the Lord God: But a very little while, and Lebanon shall be changed into an orchard, and the orchard be regarded as a forest! On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book; and out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see." Isaiah greets a people in their loss with good news: Help is on the way.

We lost Andrew in a sudden, untimely way. Like a construction worker, we thought we had a certain understanding of how the world works, but its surprises sometimes create struggles. Even as Andrew experienced longings for more stability in his life, we have experienced a special longing for Andrew. We miss the guy. He was a great companion and a source of inspiration to many of us. Today he would probably want us to take Isaiah's prophecy to heart. Yes, there are sad times. But trees will grow. Sounds will return. We will enjoy seeing our friends again.

We mourn this fine man on an Advent day, a day when God greets us in our loss with hope.