

“It makes no sense.” I’ve heard Barb say that a number of times and I continue to feel it myself. This kind of death isn’t supposed to happen and if it does you should have a reason for it but this one just doesn’t make sense.

Gary was a great, big, lovable guy, a loyal worker, yet a man who still had a child inside him alive, well, and very active, ready to laugh, ready to play. He loved his wife, he loved his kids, he loved his work -- he liked clean trucks at work. He’s the kind of person you could meet and then look forward to meeting again, and he’d give you the time. It is hard to lose that much of a guy in this short a space of time.

The Book of Wisdom says this about someone who died young: “The people saw and did not understand.” It couldn’t describe us better.

But they don’t call the Book of Wisdom the Book of Wisdom for nothing. It has some very wise reminders for us all at a time like this. In our culture we have made health a symbol of success. We have interpreted a long life to mean a good life. The Book of Wisdom says to us, “Not so fast.” Written several hundred years before the birth of Jesus, it had this to say to those mourning the death of somebody young: You don’t measure honor by the length of someone’s life. You measure honor with compassion. You don’t measure success by old age. You measure success by goodness. Any one of us could live to be twice the age of Gary Wunsch, but be half as wise, half as loyal, half as playful, half as loving. Some of us are more attracted to things than we are to people, more attracted to career than we are to family, more attracted to possessions than we are to God. We could live to be a hundred and die completely shallow. You don’t measure success by health and old age; you don’t measure it by wealth; you measure success by compassion and goodness. The Book of Wisdom says the people saw the death of somebody young and they did not understand nor did they take this wisdom into account.

It would help us if we could make sense out of Gary’s death. But if we can’t make sense, let’s at least make amends. We can still learn from his life how critical it is to define what is important to us and to commit ourselves to that treasure wholeheartedly. Gary’s death is a tragedy but his life is a success. We pray in confidence that God will grant him redemption, and we pray for that divine wisdom which will help us overcome whatever separates us from loving God.