

Paul and Eileen, I'm so sorry. I know I speak for everyone here. Our hearts are heavy that this grave sorrow has come to a family we love. We never expected to be here for this.

Joe had a lot going for him. He was smart. Always had been. A scholar. He mastered law. He mastered computers. Two fields that leave most people clueless. He had friends who cared about him. He had a family that loved him immensely. Do anything for him. Joe spent time with his dad at the lake and helped out his mom. He had a lot going for him.

On paper, he should have been the happiest man alive. But human beings don't live our lives on paper. We are very complicated people. Joe lived a small life in society, but a large life inside himself. That interior life was darkened by fear and self-doubt; it drove his depression to despair. It's a painful thing to watch happen to somebody you love. In fact, you have to be careful -- it can be contagious. You can start feeling that fear and self-doubt too.

Fear will threaten Joe's mourners whenever we do one of two things: whenever we look to the past and whenever we look to the future. When you look to the past you're going to wonder did you do enough? What could you have done differently to change Joe? Don't go down that road. We Americans are technologically crafty. We like to think we can fix anything. We can't. There's some stuff we can't fix. We all have flaws. God made us that way. Joe had his flaws too. So do computers. If the wrong part malfunctions it can crash your hard drive. Did you do enough for Joe Monteil? You bet you did. You surrounded him with love. You created opportunities for him. You gave him your patience. A lot of folks, even perfectly healthy folks, don't have family and friends who will do that but Joe did. He had you. He was with us for a brief time but this much he knew: He knew people loved him. A lot of folks never find that out. What could you have done differently? Probably nothing. There's just some stuff we can't fix, that's all. You gotta remind yourself of that whenever you look to the past.

When you look to the future you might also get scared. You may wonder what does God do with someone who dies by their own hand? Our church does not condone suicide, but we realize that people who are gravely disturbed do not act with full responsibility. We also believe that God still offers the opportunity for repentance and the embrace of mercy in ways we do not know or comprehend. Will Joe enjoy the peace of eternal life? I believe so. I believe God is anxious to grant him the peace he didn't know how to get on his own.

When a man lame from birth appeared at the temple in Jerusalem one afternoon as Peter and John walked by, he turned to the apostles and asked for the wrong thing. He wanted some coins. Peter gave him something else -- health, life, and faith. When you're not well, you don't even know what to ask for. Sometimes God has to reach down through somebody else's hand to give you what you really need to get up on your feet. Joe didn't know what to ask for. God sent so many people around him sticking out their hand like Peter did, ready to help him up; all Joe had to do was grab on, but he just couldn't do it. So now it's God's turn. God

placed Joe in the midst of many people who loved him and helped him as best they could; I have every confidence that the God who did that will do the rest of the job himself. And if God fails, there's always Rita.

Paul and Eileen, Marilyn, Patty, Paul, Katie, and Jim, we give you our love, our appreciation for the support you gave to our friend, and the assurance of our faith that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.