

Sometimes you meet someone who seems so larger than life, you figure they could never die - like death is something they just don't have in their repertoire of behaviors. Joe McNamara struck me that way.

His illness came up so suddenly and so furiously we all seemed surprised that he could be ^{this sick.}

^{in my life} I've visited many people as they lay dying, but my visit with Joe will remain unique in my memory. He seemed so alive in the way he died, so filled with light, so conscious of the people in the room, symbols of his faith and his love.

Joe possessed a capacity for inspiring other people. He didn't just live in love for his church, in love for his wife and family - he inspired other people to do the same. Look at the number of people in this church, and you'll realize that if you loved Joe McNamara, there are plenty of others who'll tell you you could love him with good reason.

St. Paul, writing his 2nd letter to the Corinthians, contrasts the earthly body we inhabit with the heavenly dwelling which awaits us. He says our earthly body may be destroyed but our heavenly dwelling will last forever. Watching life slip away from Joe's earthly body could not convince us any differently. St. Paul says he felt at home in his earthly body but he knew that while he kept life there he was away from the Lord - he always desired to see God more perfectly.

Joe had accepted Christ as the way, the truth, and the life - all his days. He brought about a union of faith in God + hard work in his human body. Now his faith finds its reward as he rests from his labors.

It's sad to have to let Joe go, but I know he'd want us to hear loud + clear this message from our first reading today - Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ - not sickness, disappointment, persecution, not death. Not even Joe's death can separate us from the love of Christ. This is a man who inspires people. And the memory of Joe will continue to inspire all those who choose to make a difference in the world by rooting themselves - ~~by~~ heart, mind, soul, and strength, in the love of Jesus Christ.