

## Kevin Bradley

Kevin carried a cross. When I began my ministry as pastor of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception five years ago, I often watched Kevin—just before the start of Sunday Mass—pick up the processional cross, and, as the organ intoned the opening hymn, carry it up the center aisle, leading the rest of us behind him. That simple action revealed many aspects of his life.

Kevin was a leader. He accepted responsibility for the other people in his family, caring especially for them across three generations. He carved out a path for them to follow. He served in the Coast Guard and the Navy Reserve because he loved his country and wanted to do his part to keep us safe. He worked for the Kansas Department of Transportation to see that everyone received fair treatment, and that those requiring health care got the benefits they deserved. When Kevin carried that cross, he was a leader.

Kevin was a volunteer. He loved coming to this house of God, but his love did not stop in the pew. He helped us as a reader, a communion minister, a member of the Knights of Columbus, and a singer—singing in our Pontifical Choir even as a child. He sensed that whatever organization you loved, if you wanted it to thrive, you could not just sit back and enjoy it. You had to do your part. That would help you enjoy it even more. When Kevin carried that cross, he was a volunteer.

Kevin suffered. For years he was on dialysis, and the pandemic did him no favors, increasing his isolation from the people and activities he loved. His illness diminished his available time, but it did not diminish his conviction to use every moment of life that he could, to love God and to love his neighbor, not just in thought, but in action. When Kevin carried that cross, he carried a symbol of suffering—a redemptive suffering, one that made your life better even as his life ebbed away.

Maybe 20 years after Jesus died, St. Paul wrote his First Letter to the Thessalonians. Those early followers of Jesus remembered his cross as if it were yesterday. Paul firmly believed “that Jesus died and rose,” and, as he told the Thessalonians, that God will, “through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep.... Thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

Maybe 200 years before Jesus died, the prophet Daniel had a vision of what lay ahead: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; Some shall live forever.... And those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever.” It sounds as though Daniel the prophet was thinking of Kevin, a man who led others to justice, a man who now sleeps in the dust of the earth, and who believed in life that lasts forever.

I’m guessing that everyone in this cathedral today was touched by the goodness of Kevin Bradley. He not only helped us; he inspired us. He made us want to be like him. We pray now that he will find the rest for which he longed, free from the confines of treatment, singing in a heavenly choir, and carrying a cross that no longer symbolizes suffering, but a cross that shouts, “Victory!” As he loved to enter the house of God on earth, may he now enter the house of God in heaven and be like the stars forever.

Monday, July 25, 2022