

May I speak in the name of the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit - Amen

When I go to a funeral visit, within that sadness it is also so lovely to hear from loved ones all about the person that has passed away. About their life, their loves in life and interests. I always ask to see a photograph, as we all know a picture speaks a thousand words! It gives me a fuller picture of who I am commending to God. That is why today I have brought some pictures of my son Nick with me, so you can see who I am talking about. So that it will also speak a thousand words on his and my behalf.

Nick was born with breathing and lungs problems, and spent a long time in Great Ormond street hospital after he was born and was under them until the age of sixteen. He wasn't diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis until some years later when his condition worsened. In the early years of treating and managing children with Cystic Fibrosis the life expectancy was only until the age of Sixteen.

Nick was a very fun person---he loved to joke around, he was no way an academic but he was born a chef. I say that because that's all he wanted to do growing up, as a toddler pots and pans were often pulled out of the kitchen cupboards. Flour and eggs were mixed up in many different places including the settee in the front room.....as we know chefs can be messy. He did realise his dream, upon finishing school he went on to catering college and qualified as a chef. He worked in many local restaurants, some excellent some not so good. In that they tried to persuade him to cook meat that was off, refusing to, he was fired. I always admired him for his strong morals and principles! This happened twice in his career, both restaurants then refusing to pay what he was owed.

You might be able to imagine I was quite a protective father, we all can be as parents, especially I believe with our first born. Nick was always the smallest boy in class and not a big adult due to his condition, which people could take advantage of. I did visit those restaurants that refused to pay him on his behalf, he was then paid in full.

Nick did receive a double lung transplant on Christmas eve 2009 at the XXX transplant hospital, unfortunately the new lungs didn't take that easily and he spent six weeks' post operation struggling to recover. He was heavily sedated during this time, and that experience in his recovery led to severe depression that lasted until his death some 15 months after his transplant. I don't think he would have chosen the transplant if he could have turned the clock back, I believe the pain and discomfort of the complications that followed outweighed the good times. Selfishly the transplant was my wish for him. It did give him/us the wonderful summer of 2010, where we tried to pack as much of life in as we could.

I have personally discovered over recent years that when someone loses a loved one, they can turn away from God, someone often has to 'get the blame'. Equally I have also discovered many people come to faith this way! And the death of another can also strengthen faith.

What was Nick's role in my life? In my journey? I had been researching into the priesthood some 3 years before his transplant.....wanting to study again and fulfil the ache in my heart as God's calling grew. I was worshiping at the local Roman Catholic Church at the time, Nick was worshiping further along the same road at the Anglican Church. He had struck a good relationship with the priest there, this came from attending his fiancé's mother's funeral there. Then some months later meeting that priest again in a shopping centre, Nick was not only taken that he remembered his name but also the conversation they had had previously.

Nick found himself there the following Sunday back at the parish church, where over his time there his faith, his knowledge and love of our Lord grew. He invited me along one Sunday evening with him to evensong, I found myself back there the following Sunday morning to worship. Going along there, the warmth and welcome from those people made me want to stay in this fellowship. Also where over the following months and years my vocation was encouraged by these people and endorsed by that Priest.

At the time of, what turned out to be Nick's his finally stay in the transplant hospital his Priest went to visit him. For his stays in the transplant hospital we met the chaplain there Fr XXX, an elderly priest I used to observe a lot. I'm sure all he did was excellent, but I did have to go over to him if he put his head around the ward

door or go to find him when we felt we needed him. From what I saw he did not come forward to people and especially those patients there. Nick sadly passed away at home in my arms on March 6th 2011, surrounded by his family and his priest.

Fr Jonathan posts the question on the lent flyers: Why do they believe it? Despite of.....For me....Nick's strength in all he endured in his life, with his faith has and will receive his reward. That has undoubtedly strengthened my faith, when God decides to call me to his light I will not be frightened.

On my journey to Holy Orders I did become a Hospital Chaplin at Southend hospital for some two and a half years. In life we learn from what others teach us, what they do and how they do it. But we also learn from what they don't do. For my time on the wards in that hospital I made sure I went to each and every patient where possible. This led to anything from a long or brief conversation, running down to the shop for a newspaper or toiletries, to praying for and with them. This I believe would not have been, but for Nick and his earthly life.

Nick and I did not have the chance to worship together for long before he passed away, he did however play his part in God's hands, upon the earth, helping put me where God wanted me to be. I learnt so much of priestly ministry from his priest, in that we rejoice with those rejoicing and we weep with those weeping.

To share one last thing with you, whilst Nick was in hospital towards the end of his lifeI received a calm and excited message from him. This made me race the hour and half journey that night to be by his side. He shared in full that message when I arrived, that he had received a special visitor.....overwhelmed with joy and surprise he explained an Angel came by his side and had been sent, asking "what did he wanted to do?" Telling him "a warm robe was waiting for him" and that "he would be able to take the biggest breaths he had ever known". I carry that image of that angel with me every day -----literally, as described to me by him.

Despite not having Nick in my earthly life today, I would not be stood here in front of you if it was not for him. Every day he is part of my ministry, I try (God willing) to live a life of giving for two.

Amen