

RESPECT LIFE HOLY HOUR REFLECTION FOR MARCH 5, 2025: “And to Dust You Shall Return”

I fully intended to write this month’s reflection on the pre-born when my thoughts were diverted today, the day before Ash Wednesday, by a funeral.

A couple of weeks ago we had a terrible wind storm which downed power lines throughout the region, leaving many without electricity for days. The night of the storm, I woke up to flashing lights of several emergency vehicles outside my house, illuminating my bedroom walls. Peering drowsily out of the window, I decided they were there to restore power to the area and went back to bed. A week later, I learned from my next-door neighbor that the emergency vehicles were responding to her 911 call. Mojo, an army veteran, for whom she had cared for 14 years, had tragically died, having fallen down the dark stairs the night of the storm. I had for years marveled at my neighbor’s loving dedication to Mojo, seeing to his every need when he was not in daycare. Twenty years ago, Mojo had suffered a severe brain injury while serving in the military. During the last two years of his life he had also developed dementia, which further limited his cognitive and communication skills. My neighbor had to anticipate his every need. There she was, caring for him in the morning, in the evening and on weekends when he was not at daycare. She told me that he had no family and that his funeral would be at a nearby VA cemetery.



Mojo’s Funeral

No stranger to the range and depth of emotions that death and a funeral can bring, I asked my neighbor if I could attend Mojo’s funeral and say goodbye. When I arrived at the funeral home on the grounds of the cemetery, my neighbor, her daughter and son, a military vet, and a friend were already there, waiting for a brief service to begin. We were escorted into a room where we saw Mojo’s flag-draped coffin and a man who would preside over the service. He asked us to rise as a trumpet salute was played and a military honor guard, a man and a woman, entered the room, and addressed and saluted Mojo. In an awesome display of military precision, the two military guards removed the flag from the coffin and folded it in traditional military style. Then, one of the guards approached my neighbor, who had started to cry, and, kneeling before her, extended the folded flag toward her. Placing the flag in her hands, he addressed her with words which honored both Mojo and her. As he spoke, tears poured even more profusely down her cheeks.

And then the man, who was presiding over the brief ceremony, sprinkled sand on top of Mojo’s coffin, reminding us that we were all made of dust and to dust we would return. It immediately struck me that on Ash Wednesday I would hear those same words spoken to me as an ashen cross was traced on my forehead, reminding me that I too will one day complete my life’s journey...in one state or another... and face the God who created me... alone.

Normally our monthly Holy Hour reflection deals with the inherent dignity of the unborn and the tragedy of prematurely ending a pre-born child’s life. Today was a reminder of the dignity one bears at every stage of life, from conception to death... no matter the state of that life!!! I was so glad there were people (both friends, acquaintances and strangers) who recognized, respected and admired Mojo’s service to his country and his dignity as a human being and a friend. What my next-door neighbor had been doing for the past 14 years, without realizing it, was living and sharing what Saint John Paul II called a Culture of Life.

St. John Paul II, Pray for us!

March 4, 2025