

Yogi Berra said, “Always go to other people’s funerals. Otherwise, they won’t come to yours.” Thank you for coming. I am Joe Kaboski, Lee’s middle son. I guess my family nominated me to speak because they thought as a professor I’m used to public speaking, but I don’t have any experience speaking with such a heavy heart. There will be three things on the exam that I want you to remember. First, my father died at peace. Second, he died surrounded by family who loved him. Third, we will see Lee again in Heaven. So, indeed, provided *we* persevere to the end, Lee *will* join us at our funerals. Another good reason to persevere.

Point 1: Lee died at peace. To anyone, who has ever attended a sporting event with my dad, the words “at peace” would not immediately jump out to describe him. We all know Lee. He was a good husband, good father, good man, but he was not always at peace. My dad was impatient, anxious, always in a hurry to get to some place early and then leave early. My dad could be irritable (some might even say he got “angry” at moments). “Joe, you horse’s backside”. To this day, the resemblance to a rear-end of a horse is the strongest family trait that we Kaboski siblings share... We apparently inherited it from our mother. And we were somehow related to whoever was officiated the Marquette game too... But driving home from the hospital last Friday, after my dad had passed, my son asked me, “Do you think Pop-Pop was satisfied with his life?” That was an easy question to answer. While Dad/Pop-Pop/Lee was known to sweat the small stuff, he was very much at peace about the big stuff. He got angry in the moment, but he apologized and forgave even more quickly. He didn’t hold grudges. He had a belly that needed to be fed, but he didn’t have an ego that needed to be fed. He was humble about himself though very proud of his kids and grandkids. He always looked on the bright side, one of the reasons he could be a sport fan year after year. Dad was very appreciative and of simple things – watching the Brewers after a day of work, eating leftovers, or just having a conversation with a friend, a stranger, and especially his grandkids. He wished he had more time here with us, but Dad definitely died satisfied with his life.

That leads to Point 2: Lee died surrounded by family who loved him. My dad was not a rich man. His treasures were his family and friends. Many people visited him at the end. My mom and oldest sister Cathy were ever present. My brothers, sisters, and I, along with our children visited frequently, as did many of his friends who were able.

My dad’s life was good because he was surrounded by love at every stage. He always expressed fond memories of his childhood with his parents, sister and extended family in NJ, his college years and friends at Marquette where he met my mom, and they made life-long friends. They married, and Lee then joined her family. He later gained his children’s in-laws and their families and had a very happy retirement with his grandchildren.

But despite the love, he had his share of challenges. He reminded me many times that he had four rambunctious kids before the age of 29. And that’s before Tom came around! Man, oh, man. We were packed into that tiny house on 3 Mile Rd, and then these quasi-hoodlum friends from the neighborhood and school starting causing chaos. None of that was easy. My dad’s impatience might have been caused by PTSD. ... On top of all that, he had to try to figure out how to feed and clothe us, and he suffered through some bad luck with job losses and tough patches financially. We might joke now about the string of beat-up cars we had, or the fork and tin foil antenna that kept our little 13” TV going, but those were stressful times for all of us but

especially my dad, but he never gave up, nor did he ever fail to provide us. Coming to Mass here at St. Pat's must have been more out of need than obligation. Weekly therapy for all the Catholic dads, free of charge and no copay. Dad always appreciates a bargain.

So my dad suffered at times in his life, as we all do. He also suffered in death, as we all will. It was difficult to see him suffer, especially for Mom, and watching someone you love suffer with no ability to ease it is its own type of suffering. And then those who couldn't visit him, but knowing he is suffering, that is its own type of suffering. I think of my Aunt Rita, Lee's sister, for example. As much as there are times when we feel God's presence (and I'll return to that in a couple minutes), there are times when God can seem far off or indifferent to our plight. We find ourselves in prayer to God channeling our inner Lee Kaboski, "I've got a bone to pick with you!". But I think each of us, whether believer or not, experiences this deep mystery of human life: that suffering and love are somehow interwoven. Suffering doesn't go away, but when we're surrounded by love, suffering is manageable. And indeed, the central truth of the Christian faith, is that God is *not* indifferent. That God Himself suffers *with* and *for* us, and that this suffering and love is together redemptive.

I'm not exaggerating to say that Dad became more Christ-like through his suffering. Certainly, Mom and Cathy saw moments of irritation, but I offer this as proof of his transformation: After Marquette choked in the NCAA tournament this year, Dad was downright philosophical over FaceTime, "Joe, we peaked a week to early". But seriously, despite his pain, he was kind to everyone in the hospital, worried about my health as much as his own, and focusing on making us feel better. His last interaction with anyone, maybe a week and a half before he died, was giving my son the thumbs up and a high five to reassure him that all would be well.

That leads to Point 3: we will see him again in Heaven. Suffering and death do not have the final word. Love overcomes all as we heard in the Gospel. It is the solemn promise of our Lord to those who remain faithful. Dad was not perfect, but Dad was always faithful. He was faithful in his joys and in his sufferings, faithful to his wife, his family, his friends, and to God. Okay, true story: the night he died, my wife, Juhi, asked God for a sign. The next morning she woke up, and in the middle of the room, all alone, was this DVD. On it is a talk Dad gave right here at St. Pat's for Father's Day way back in 2006. We just posted the talk on [YouTube](#), and I encourage people to watch. It has some good advice for fathers, but it's also just nice to see Lee talking. But here is the crazy thing, we had never watched this DVD, and hadn't even seen it in 17 years. Somehow, our 3-year-old Mary must have dragged it out of some box or drawer, but how did Mary pick that out? There was no picture of Pop-pop on it. I think it was a grace and reassurance from God.

I realize not everyone is convinced by such things though, so let me offer something a little more official and concrete as an assurance. For those of you who are Catholic: Lee received a "plenary indulgence" on his deathbed. For those who aren't Catholic, I'll put it in sports terms. That's Heaven's equivalent of not only your team going to the Super Bowl but then finding out you get to play the Bears. That one is for you, Dad. I love you.