

Father to whom we can pray. God does not, like any other father, desire the death of one of his children. God did not extinguish this vibrant life, but God is present to help us face it. How can we get comfort?

We can ~~concentrate~~ concentrate on the good memories we have of <sup>him</sup> ~~himself~~. As long as we cherish these memories, ~~we~~ <sup>they</sup> live out in our lives.

We can help one another, listen to one another, think about one another's needs.

We can pray. God promises that he will answer our prayers, God will answer.

Therefore, if we all unite our hearts in prayer, God will answer.

Let us join in praying for comfort for every person here. O God, we thank you for being with us this <sup>morning</sup> evening.

We thank you for the gift you have given us, the gift of sharing life with <sup>us</sup> ~~us~~. Help us to face this great grief with the assurance that you <sup>are</sup> with us and that you share the grief. We know you, too, faced the death of your son, we know that you know exactly what we are experiencing. We know that Jesus faced the death of a friend, forgave, gave courage and comfort to those who were dead, us in the future with our hands <sup>severely</sup> in yours. Amen

Our lives have been filled with confusing experiences and emotions. Shock, disbelief, nausea, grief, and numbness. <sup>My</sup> ~~My~~ death has touched the lives of us all. Although death is never easy to face it seems twice as hard for us when it involves a loved person like ~~Stephen~~ <sup>Stephen</sup> ~~Michael~~ <sup>son</sup>.

We are here tonight <sup>to help</sup> for one reason: to help one another receive God's comfort. That comfort is already here. We simply are helping one another receive it. Jesus told his disciples that God would send them a comforter; the promise holds true for us as well.

One way we find God's comfort is from reading the scripture. A second way is to look at what God has given us in the everyday world. I believe that a person's life-style can give us a way of looking at God's truth.

The first thing that comes to mind is the beautiful smile <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>Stephen</sup> ~~Stephen~~ always had for us. It was a smile capable of warming the coldest heart. <sup>He</sup> ~~He~~ brought joy to each of us with a big smile. <sup>His</sup> ~~His~~ smile was a gift of God because God <sup>loves</sup> ~~loves~~ us. <sup>Stephen's</sup> ~~Stephen's~~ smile was a ministry. He was willing to use that ministry. So many of us miss this opportunity to share a smile. We should take our cue from <sup>Stephen</sup> ~~Stephen~~, who believed that less energy is needed to smile, than to frown. A smile cost nothing, yet, a timely smile is more valuable than all the money in the world.

The second thing that comes to my mind as I reflect on <sup>myself</sup> ~~Sylvia~~ is enthusiasm. ~~She~~ <sup>He</sup> was always enthusiastic about what ~~she~~ <sup>he</sup> was doing. Whether it was working with her youngsters in the Wadep Program called Acts - so, rushing to get to the choir, or receiving the tickets at lunch for the Catholic Club - she did it all enthusiastically. Now that Way ~~he~~ was like Simon Peter. He was the one who said to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ." He was the one who, after the death of Jesus, said to the others, "Let's get up and go fishing instead of just sitting around." Sylvia was like ~~the~~ Peter. It remembers how she worked so hard to get a local youngsters involved in the National Wadep Act - so program - explain the program. She experienced many trials and tribulations but she didn't give up - she raised the money, gave sacrificially her self, went on to Nashville and me <sup>is</sup> now the best. ~~What~~ What would our world be like without enthusiastic people like Sylvia. There are so many negative people in the world and so many waiting around for someone else to entertain them. Like Sylvia, we need to be enthusiastic and reach out to others.

Third, I remember Sylvia as a friend. Friendships are important. I have witnessed what friends can do for ~~each~~ each other. When I arrived at Gross Mount Hospital one ~~night~~ <sup>night</sup> ago so ~~night~~ <sup>night</sup>, there I found standing beside Sylvia's bed ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> her friends

Helen, and Helen's Mother and brother. They were there because they were Sylvia's dear friends. They knew that friendships are important. With a dish of food, an arrangement of flowers, a handshake, or a hug, a friend helps. Friends laugh together and cry together. It remembers Sylvia coming to my office after taking our youngsters to Nashville and seeing her so well. Yet, having to suffer the criticism and abuse by some - she came and broke down and cried while telling me about it. It let her cry and then after a word of prayer - she jumped up, smiling and said, "I feel better now! Friends are a gift from God."

Yet the most perfect friend is Jesus, and our friendships are less perfect copies of that friendship.

It ~~do~~ <sup>may</sup> not come this evening with all the answers to your questions. There are so many people who try to give easy answers to our complex questions. Unfortunately, many of these answers are not helpful.

Some would say that this death is God's will. Such an answer introduces a foreign God to me. That is not the God whom Jesus talked about. Jesus told us a lesson