

Loving Legacy

St. Sylvester parish is a special place. So many of the people I have come to know well in our parish have confirmed my observation of this. I am a better man because of the many friendships, life experiences, and opportunities to grow that are directly attributable to the environment of our parish. There are many people who have contributed in many positive ways to my personal growth since my family arrived in Navarre 17 years ago. But there are a handful of people who have impacted me in very significant ways. Oliver Semmes is one of those people.

This is no surprise because we all have seen that Oliver is, at foremost, a gentleman, a faithful steward and a kind and humble brother. But these traits alone do not set him apart from the many other suchlike men of our parish. I was finally able to articulate my thoughts on what sets Oliver apart as I prepared the lecture I presented at our Knights of Columbus meeting this month. My presentation was about the gifts from the time I spent with Oliver over the last year of his life journey. I spoke of seven obvious and positive movements of my heart that came from sharing life with Oliver and his loving wife Julianne who never left his side. These seven heartfelt observations of them started with welcoming acceptance, then continued with earnest gratitude, intimate friendship, unwavering faith, affirming love, comforting peace, and ultimately, eternal joy. I won't expound on these here, but my presentation notes are available on our KoC website if your interest is piqued for more detail.

But of more importance to know is that these are the same movements of my heart that I have realized in my personal renewal since becoming part of St. Sylvester parish. I am certain that I am not alone in having experienced this same pattern of heartfelt growth from both my friendship with Oliver and my friendship with St. Sylvester parish. I know Oliver would humbly deny being the benefactor and cause of these experiences. He would claim to be an equal recipient of the gifts that St. Sylvester parish offers. But either way, we should realize and appreciate the legacy that has been gifted to us and build on them. That is what a good steward like Oliver Semmes would do.

Peace Be With You,

Marc Barrett