

Fr. Dan Brandt's Corner...

It was great to see the vast crowd gathered at Soldier Field this past month for the annual **Chicago Police Memorial Foundation's Candlelight Vigil** to pay tribute to the 575 officers taken from us over the years in the performance of their duties.



We remember these fallen heroes at our regular **police Mass**. In addition to our usual 11:00 a.m. Police Mass every 2nd and 4th Sunday at Mercy Home, next month we'll also celebrate a special Thanksgiving Mass on Thursday, 24 NOV, at 10:00 a.m. (Please note the adjustment in time for the holiday.) No matter your faith tradition, you are **most** welcome to attend. On-duty worshippers, you'll be out as usual in less than 30 minutes.

Attention married couples, active or retired: The Chaplains Unit is gauging interest in a **couples' retreat** to be held Sweetest Day of next year (weekend of 20-22 OCT 2017). If you and your spouse would be interested in attending, please email Chaplain Kimberly Lewis-Davis at Kimberly.LewisDavis@chicagopolice.org or call 312-771-6638.

Finally, the following is a reflection from the daughter of a department member written on the occasion of mom's retirement. Her words, beautifully put together, prompted me to ask permission to share them in this column... Enjoy!

Mom: When dad told me a while back that you were thinking of retiring, I freaked out. I didn't know what my life would be like without my mother being a Chicago Police Officer. All my years, I have known that I owe the life I enjoy to the Chicago Police Department, because it brought two people passionate about helping others together--two people I call mom and dad. With one of them retiring, what will I brag about when I meet new people? The fact that the woman who raised me climbed to the rank of captain of police was kind of my trump card. What would I say after that was over, who would I be if my mother wasn't a cop?

I felt really stupid after that thought crossed my mind. "Who would I be?" Of course I'd be the same person, as would you. In fact, I would have even more to brag about. I can (and do) tell everyone who will listen about my mother: how other parents with 9-5 jobs seem to pity us "Cops' kids" because we grew up "without." Without what, I always ask. People seemed to think that our parents always worked through our soccer games, missed our cross country meets, and never were able to serve as a room parent or dance chaperone. And sometimes that was true. But when you, Mom, taught us compassion, hard work, justice, clarity and strength, you taught by example.

I enjoyed the stories of the glory days: good triumphing over evil. But there was so much more: seeing through bureaucracy, listening when people speak, honoring the dead, showing compassion to the abused, loving the hated and respecting those who are never shown respect. Mom, you once told me that being a police officer was rarely "running and gunning," but rather

being there for people on their worst days. These are the day someone can't find their elderly parent, the day a college student gets mugged, or the day a fellow officer becomes a martyr.

My brother and I were raised on a steady diet of Runs to Remember, praying at Blue Masses and St. Jude Marches, and--unfortunately--police funerals. We were always taught that there were men and women willing to put their safety on the line for us to live our happily ever after. Mom, while you tried to shield us from your work when we were little, we always knew that one of those brave people was YOU, willing to run into a building when everyone else was running out. It was a hard lesson to learn, knowing the minute your uniform shirt was buttoned, the vest put on over it, the shoes tied, and the gun placed in its holster, that you then belonged less to me and more to the city.

These years haven't been easy on you. As in many professions, the higher one rises in rank, the harder one takes the hits--hits that come politically, professionally, personally. It must have been difficult to lead your fellow officers when the world seems to have suddenly turned against you--when there are people willing to do anything to disrespect you and even attack you because of the shirt you wear and the burden you choose to carry. Mom, you've handled that burden with incredible grace.

These years have been trying for me, too. But every time you have been tested, you have proven to be even more of a badass. Over the years you have excelled at thinking on your feet, knowing when to radio for backup, and finally understanding when the time came for you to change your active duty status to retired.

You have seen a lot during these years on the streets, in the office and around our city. I have seen you get screamed at, address the blood-thirsty media, supervise a district...and I have seen you cry. Some days are like a tragic movie, with the heroine having to watch the city she loves crumble due to pain and evil. But other days are beautiful: you on countless occasions have bragged about the kindness you witnessed and the beauty of other officers and civilians alike.

It's hard to believe that gone are the days of hugs through a bullet proof vest, the days that I would worry that "be safe" was the last thing you'd hear me say. It's weird knowing that your police gossip won't be as up to date, and that you won't need to bring your work phone out to dinner. But I know one thing, and that is how proud I am of my mom. Not because of her work on the job, but her work as a mother, a faith-filled Catholic, a wife and a friend. This vocation has been demanding, but I never felt cheated out of a mom, I never believed you loved your star more than me, and there wasn't a day that passed where I didn't feel proud of who I was and where I come from.

Thank you Mom, for the work you did--both at home and in uniform. You have taught me courage under fire and grace under pressure: two important lessons for a young woman to learn in what sometimes proves to be a man's world. Retired or not, you will always be my trump card! But more importantly, you will always be my mom.

Wow! Such profound words. I share in this young lady's pride and congratulations of her mom on a career well-served. God bless all our retirees!

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