

Thank you all for coming and for your loving support. I am Chris Cochran, the youngest of the children—as I like to remind my “wiser” siblings. Standing up here feels familiar, after officiating my nephew’s wedding in October, this feels a bit like my second audition.

My Dad loved this place. This chapel, the Shrine and these grounds. For years he’d come for Wednesday noon Mass, and later on, when he couldn’t drive, I got to bring him. It became our little pilgrimage. His faith was something he lived every moment of every day. It was the warm rhythm beating beneath everything—steady, dependable, comforting-- like him.

His faith started early. Dad was an altar boy in Harford County, not just now and then, but for years—through his teens, even when he came home from college. For Holy Week Masses—he would stay overnight at the church to be there to help all week. And that attitude stayed with him: if someone needed help, if something could be made better, if there was work to be done, he quickly had a plan and was already rolling up his sleeves.

A lot of people knew Dad for his mind—and yes, he was very bright.

*Wicked smaht*, as my Boston cousins would say. He loved learning from the very beginning, starting in that little one-room schoolhouse, and it carried him all the way through Loyola, to Duquesne, and on to a PhD at Notre Dame.

He was drawn to understanding how the world worked. And he had this uncanny ability to see the structure behind things, the hidden architecture—whether it was science, politics, or just family decisions.

But as impressive as that was... those aren’t the things that defined him to us.

To us, he was the man who could take a ten-acre farm and turn it into a childhood wonderland. He was always building, fixing, improving—always. The soundtrack of our early years was power tools.

- He turned a henhouse into a two-car garage.
- He built hamster cages and fences,
- and then ladders over the fences for us to visit playmates nearby,
- he dug out stumps by hand,
- trimmed ponies’ hooves,
- paneled rooms,
- built a treehouse--- on the ground. Then hoisted it into the trees with a block and tackle pulley.

If something broke, he found a way to repair it. If something didn’t exist, he built it---even when he didn’t exactly know how—he never doubted he could figure it out. One of his highest compliments was describing someone who knew their job as “very capable” as in “He’s a very capable guy”

He instructed us, urged us, encouraged us in all tasks large and small to “Do a good job, now.” I suspect that is something he probably heard from his father and kept in his heart.

He did work hard—All my life he had two jobs, APL chemist by day, working nights for the county—three jobs, counting all of the work around Holly Hill. Four, actually, counting his six children!

And sometimes, out of nowhere, that hardworking man would surprise us with something unforgettable. One sunny Sunday, my brother in Frederick recalled my father calling: “Want me to fly

over and pick you up for the day? We'll go to Ocean City." And he did—just lifted my brother's whole world into the sky and set them down at the beach. That's a memory you don't forget.

He loved to tease us and pretend to threaten us with lines we heard a thousand times:

*"What are you doing?"*

*"Are you cruisin' for a bruisin'?"*

*"You want a sock right in the kisser?"*

And if you knew him, you also knew he was funny—a dry remark of his landed like a bolt of lightning. And when one of us was lucky enough to be struck, we couldn't wait to share the story with rest of the family that missed the moment.

And he slipped that humor in with perfect timing. Once, after the end an overly-long, dramatic movie—probably *The English Patient*, while everyone else was quietly absorbing the emotional weight, Dad leaned over and whispered, "Aww... is it over already?"

That one whisper is why we still remember the night.

Of course, Dad could also be impatient. Famously impatient. If he asked for pliers, you had better bring them fast. And if he needed a screwdriver, you better bring the right one—it took me way too may round-trips to learn to bring both kinds the first time!

But even that impatience came from the same place as everything else in him: that drive to get things right, to do things well, to not waste the time we're given. And as he got older, he softened. His patience grew, his smile grew easier, his conversations grew longer. He mellowed into someone who really savored life around him.

We had different theories about how he became mellow: Of course, the younger children claim the credit, since it happened mostly after the older boys took their chaos and left for college.

Most thought it was Mom's supernatural pleasantness that must have sanded off his sharp edges and worn down his defenses. His "do a good job, now" became, "I'm sure you'll do a good job."

What never changed was his very real and quiet kindness. He helped neighbors without being asked. He visited my wife in the hospital almost every day she when she was confined to bed rest for 9 weeks. He paid for things people needed and never told anyone.

And maybe the clearest window into his heart is this: every night, he opened his "Find My Friends" app. He checked where each child and grandchild was, before —naming us all in his evening prayers. He ended every day thinking of us.

Dad lived his faith by the way he showed up. For his family, for his community, for the people who needed him. He taught us to think clearly, work hard, be decent, be curious, and to love our families and our communities.

Dad, you lived a good life and you set a great example. You were always a very capable guy.

And all of us are sure.. you did a good job—such a good job.

May God in whom you trusted so deeply, welcome you home, and reunite you with Mom, and grant you the peace you earned so faithfully.