

**Eulogy – Brother Timothy Rapa**  
**Wednesday, May 23, 2018**  
**Mont LaSalle – Main Chapel**

**Delivered by Brother V. Kenneth, F.S.C.**  
**Director, Holy Family Community**

It is said that the measure of a man is evidenced in how much he loves and is loved by others. Brother Timothy's life has shown that he has met and has exceeded these very qualifications. The number of people's lives he has touched over his 92 years is innumerable. Lorraine Hansbury wrote it best in her book, "A Raisin in the Sun": "When you measure a man, measure him right. Take into account all the hills and valleys he crossed through to get where to he is today." Throughout his life, Brother Timothy's "hills and valleys" were many.

Joseph Thomas Rapa was in the military serving as a combat medic parachuting into Normandy and Holland with his fellow soldiers in 1944, when he found his unit surrounded by a much larger Nazi force. They were about to be overrun when he made a promise to serve God for the rest of his life if he got out of there. No sooner was that said when the shooting stopped and the Germans withdrew. He never forgot his promise. The rest, as they say, is history. When his unit entered Berlin, he assisted the Catholic Sisters with the needs of their orphanage and helped the starving find food and warmth in a war-ravaged Berlin; he was always there for someone else. Yet, his was never a grab for "star-status," but a quiet and consistent effort to do God's Will on this earth. He did.

His family has been a clear beneficiary of Brother Timothy's love and devotion; it was undeniable, as was his constant care and his concern for their well-being. His sister, brother, nephews and nieces felt the warmth of his character on a very regular basis, especially his niece Karen, whom he loved very much and took genuine delight in caring for her. His parents, Pasquale and Amelia could not have asked for a better son. Yet, the words of others speak much better and more eloquently than my own, and these form the real text of this eulogy. Those most affected by Brother Timothy, his life, and his example wrote this text; I am merely the fortunate transmitter of their stories. In their young lives, they had the wonderful experience of this teacher – no – this educator and they were kind enough to share some of these remembrances with all of us. Here are just some of those testimonies to Brother Timothy:

- During my freshman year, Brother Timothy rescued me from a situation that threatened to end my attendance at LaSalle Academy and would make me a ward of the state. Brother Timothy stepped forward and became my legal guardian. This intervention resulted in my continued education at LaSalle and residing at the Brothers' Residence until graduation. But understanding, pats on the head and fatherly talks were not his style. He was a private person and a man of few words. There was no ambiguity. He got his point across and moved on. I liked that about him. In our last telephone conversation he told me that he was not afraid to die and that he had lived a good life.
  
- In my freshman year at De LaSalle, Concord, the fall of 1979, I met Brother Timothy for the first time. He was in his 60's, had a chiseled jaw, a mane of black hair, and toughness written all over his face. He carried a wooden pointer while teaching class, as well. One day, when a classmate of mine made the mistake of turning around in his seat, Brother Tim cracked a blow across the top of the student's desk sending a sharp thunderclap across the room. The room of twenty 14 year-old boys sat in stone silence, eyes fixed on Brother Tim. He reminded us of the duties of a student in classroom, not the least of which was our undivided attention. I knew this was going to be another entirely different world from any of the schools years that preceded it. I was right.

- But Brother Tim was memorable for much more than that wooden stick. He was the first teacher who ever spoke to us as adults. The stories he shared about the tragedies and the struggles of his own life still stand out vividly in my mind. There was a time when he described a foxhole experience he had during World War II, and how an incoming mortar shell had mortally wounded his foxhole buddy, whose battered body he held as the soldier died, but left Brother Tim unharmed. My classmates and I sat silently listening to his heartfelt remembrance, even as tears welled up in his eyes. Just hearing such a powerful story reminded us that we were not going to be treated like children any more. Brother Tim opened himself up to us and, consequently, got deeply, deeply inside of us. His classroom became a powerful vehicle for sharing and growth in the process of becoming a young man. I attribute much of my own later success in connecting with people, both personally and professionally, to the lessons he gave us in transparency and honesty. He was tough, he was fearless, and he had a solid grasp on the priorities of life – a life that was dedicated to others.

- Not every tale of Timothy was a terribly serious one. This particular reminiscence was shared by a member of the Class of 1967 from LaSalle Academy: Brother Timothy discovered that the famous singing group, later the subject of the popular play, “Jersey Boys,” Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons was touring New York. He also learned that Frankie was a Catholic, Italian, and grew up in a neighborhood much like his own. He was going to get them to perform at LaSalle. How? Well, they wanted to be paid in cash, as they owed money to both the IRS and to “The Mob.” No problem. Brother Timothy “made a few calls.” Done. Brother Timothy received the cash; (No one ever asked where he got it.) hid it in his room, and paid the group the cash they requested. Later, Brother Tim showed us a letter written by Frankie Valli, saying what a privilege it was to meet Brother Timothy!
- His “calls” were legendary. The time the typewriters were stolen from the school. He made some “calls.” The next morning, the room was filled with new typewriters. The need the school had for a new walk-in freezer. You guessed it. All it took was a word from Brother Timothy, and at midnight, a truck drove up to the door and the man asked: “Where do you want the freezer, Brother?” All I can say is that I am still searching for that telephone number...

Yes, those were only some of the stories which typified the extraordinary life of Brother Timothy; these could go on for days, including his reception of the Phi Beta Kappa and his being a Fulbright Scholar, as well as the many Brothers he took care of here at the Holy Family Community with such tender loving care. He dressed them, fed them three meals a day, and wheeled them outside to fresh air and sunshine while maintaining the dignity of each Brother. That kind of charity lives in rarified air. Brother Timothy breathed fully of that air.

He taught through example, using more actions than words. He didn't only just educate his students, but he educated all of us who knew him in whatever capacity we might have served: Family member, student, Christian Brother, Military personnel, friend or acquaintance, or yes, even the stranger whose path he crossed only once. One day, many people, even those in the highest places can say: "Brother Timothy Rapa passed this way."

The words of Senator Reed of Rhode Island sum him up best: "No one gave more to his country, to his Brothers, to his community, to his comrades, and especially to his students than Brother Tim. He gave me strength and reminded me that I still have a long way to go to match his service and sacrifice."

Thank you, Brother Timothy for a life well-lived and lessons well-taught. Farewell, Timothy until we meet again.