

10th Anniversary Memorial Mass  
Matthew Joseph Thaddeus Stepanek  
July 17, 1990- June 22, 2004

*Personal Reflections*

Jeni Stepanek, Ph.D.

Mother of Katie, Stevie, Jamie and Mattie Stepanek

Author of *Messenger: The Legacy of Mattie J.T. Stepanek and Heartsongs*

I want to express my gratitude to the Franciscan Monastery for the use of this beautiful and significant space, And also to NCPD, to the priests celebrating, and to those who have helped to plan and carry out this Memorial Mass. And I want to acknowledge my family and friends, and all of those who have joined in prayer here today, and who have prayed for Mattie and for our family across these years.

-----

It's hard to believe that ten years have already passed since we said goodbye to Mattie. How wonderful it is that we have gathered together today, in prayerful reflection and celebration of his life and spirit.

Mattie's time with us on earth was brief, but his moments were filled with meaning, and depth. Throughout his "almost 14 years" of living, he shared a message that he said was placed in his heart, by God. A message that he shaped with his words and with his choices, so that he could share it with diverse groups of people in ways that they could understand, and believe, and embrace, and celebrate – a message of Heartsongs and purpose, and hope and peace.

He shared that message in books, in poetry and essays, in speeches, and most of all in his everyday conversations and living. He moved from attitude to action with this message, serving as a lector and as a catechist in our parish, and as a volunteer and an ambassador for many organizations tending to the needs of people. He did all he could to engage and inspire people with this message – people of all ages, abilities, and aspirations.

In sharing this message, Mattie wanted to remind us to reflect on and recognize God's presence within us, and among us. He wanted to encourage us to reach *within* ourselves and appreciate our Heartsongs – our unique reason for being, and to recognize that hope is real, and peace is possible, and life is worthy, even with the burdens that must be balanced in with the blessings of life.

Mattie also wanted to inspire us to reach *beyond* ourselves, and appreciate and nurture and celebrate our neighbors – neighbors we know and neighbors we don't know, and neighbors who are like us or who agree with us, and also neighbors who are not like us, or with whom we disagree. Most of all, Mattie wanted to serve as a witness to God's presence in all life moments --- the tragic and triumphant moments, and the momentous and mundane moments.

While there were many good times, Mattie endured a very challenging existence. I was proud of Mattie's living – his way of *being* – how he reflected God's presence in the good times, and also in the tough times. And though it tore up my heart to say goodbye 10 years ago, I have to say that I was proud of how he embraced his transition from mortality to eternal life. Mattie did not want to leave me, or the gifts and people of everyday life, but he had unwavering faith – even excitement – about the glories of Heaven, and about the opportunity of an eternity of ongoing service to God in a different realm.

Today, I am proud of Mattie's legacy – the *essence of his existence*, as he would call it. The message he shaped and shared, from God and for God, continues to ripple out in the world, touching lives and spirits, opening minds and hearts, and inspiring faith and good deeds.

I think that Mattie would want us go forthward from this moment, from this this celebration of his life and spirit, by calling us to move from *attitude to action*. Even as we are praying for him, I am certain that he is praying for us – so that we are reminded and inspired, even empowered, to move *forthward* – in life, and in faith. To move forthward –

making choices in word and deed that allow each of us to become a source of inspiration, and to be a reflection of God's presence in any and every moment, so that we are nurturing and encouraging others to realize and celebrate a simple, but profound message:

**Hope *is* real, peace *is* possible, life *is* worthy – and God *is* with us!**

Thank you. And God Bless.

Jeni Stepanek, Ph.D.  
"Mattie's mom"  
June 22, 2014

### **When I Die (Part II)**

When I die,  
I want to be  
A child in Heaven.  
I want to be  
A ten year old cherub.  
I want to be  
A hero in Heaven,  
And a peacemaker,  
Just like my goal on earth.  
I will ask God if I can  
Help the people in purgatory.  
I will help them think,  
About their life,  
About their spirits,  
About their future.  
I will help them  
Hear their Heartsongs again,  
So they can finally  
See the face of God,  
So soon.  
When I die,  
I want to be,  
Just like I want to be  
Here on earth.

Mattie J.T. Stepanek  
November, 1999  
In *Journey Through Heartsongs*  
(Hyperion, 2002)