

Denis Preka

Hello. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Jamie Thom. I'm Denis' dad. On behalf of Denis' mom, Linda, his sisters Rowan and Lauren, his family members here from Albania, and all his family here today; thank you for coming. Thank you Msgr for celebrating this Mass in honor of Denis. We are here today to give thanks for Denis through the Holy Eucharist, the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and to celebrate his life.

Denis was born in Bolzano, Italy in 1997 and moved to Michigan with his mother when he was just 14 months old. Denis grew up in Sterling Heights where he attended St Lawrence Catholic School for his elementary and middle school years before graduating from De LaSalle Collegiate with honors. He was a student at University of Detroit Mercy majoring in Psychology and Business. In 2009 he and his mother had the great honor of being sworn in as United States citizens.

Denis and his mom had a unique and beautiful bond. Through the challenges of building a new life in a foreign country with no family to support and encourage them along the way, they only had each other and their faith in Jesus; a faith that his mom shared with and taught to Denis. His mom worked tirelessly to make sure Denis had the kind of life she never did, and he was the reason for all the sacrifices she made. Denis was her constant companion and biggest fan. His mother was his role model and the example he followed as he grew older and forged his own unique path. Their love for one another was complete, unconditional and a beautiful example of God's desire mother and son.

Jamie Eulogy 4-1-19

I met Denis when he was 15 years old, the summer before his sophomore year at De LaSalle. A year later in 2013 when Linda and I married, Denis finally had the siblings he always wanted and our two girls, Rowan and Lauren, finally had the big brother they always wanted. Sometimes bringing two families together can have its challenges, but not with Denis, Rowan and Lauren. They never referred to each other as “step” siblings. From day one Denis was their brother, and the girls were Denis’ sisters. To Rowan and Lauren, Denis was the coolest brother they could have hoped for, and to Denis the girls were his pride and joy. He was always looking out for them and making sure any boys who came around knew they had to pass the Denis test if they had any chance of hanging around long. He was a great big brother, and he will be a great guardian angel.

Denis had one true love in his life, his girlfriend and best friend, Nawrooz Putris. Denis and Nawrooz met the first week of their freshman year at UD Mercy, and he was head over heels in love from that day on. We thank God that Denis knew true love and was able to experience so many wonderful times with his “Zemer.” Nawrooz was a blessing and a light in Denis’ life as she is now for our entire family.

Denis was the most passionate, joyful, enthusiastic, funny and loving person I’ve ever known. He was always upbeat and excited for life’s next adventure and he saw humor in everything. His mother instilled in him a confidence and zest for life that never waned. His greatest passions were soccer, music, travel, and business. He loved pursuing these with

his friends, of which he had more than anybody I've ever met. Whether kicking the soccer ball around the backyard, playing guitar with buddies, starting the Model UN club or American Albanian Student Organization, or over the past year, building a travel agency from the ground up; Denis had an infectious passion that drew people in. He was always looking to bless others and share his joy, and he never failed in doing so. It was amazing to me when we traveled Europe how Denis could strike up a conversation just by talking about soccer. He knew all the players, stats, where they played. The conversation always included the question, "Who's your favorite team?" Regardless of the answer, he would give a gracious acknowledgment before explaining why his favorite team, AC Milan, was the best in the world. He and his mom would always make a point of going to visit stadiums and museums of the great teams like AC Milan, FC Barcelona, and Wembley in London. These are great memories that will be cherished forever.

Denis was also one of the most intelligent people I knew. His curiosity was insatiable, he read constantly, and he never stopped learning. He would gladly sit and talk about theology, philosophy, politics, psychology, really any topic you might like to dive into. His professors tell stories of how Denis would raise his hand to answer a question in class and next thing you know he's basically teaching the material of the day. They thought it was extraordinary his ability to grasp the subject and take the conversation in different directions. His desire to learn was the perfect compliment to his desire to have fun.

Jamie Eulogy 4-1-19

In closing, I'd like to share one of my fondest memories of Denis. It happened on an otherwise uneventful day while working on a cleaning project in Ann Arbor a few years ago. Denis was cleaning windows in an apartment unit when I came in to see how he was doing. I said, "Hey D," as I entered the room, but because he had headphones on, he didn't hear me very well. In fact, he heard just enough to turn and look over his left shoulder. But at that point I had just walked past his line of site to his right side and was standing right next to him when he turned back around. When he saw me standing there, I tell you, he jumped right out of his skin. He put his hand down on the window sill to steady himself, looked at me and said, "that was a real Batman move right there!" We laughed so hard we were crying. Ever since, we would joke now and then about the "Batman" move and laugh all over again. There are so many moments like that which I'm sure you've all shared with Denis. Silly, carefree, real and endearing moments that were the fabric and backdrop of our shared lives.

Denis has passed on from this mortal life, and we will miss him more than any words could ever express. However, my heart is filled with gratitude that Jesus loves us so much that he was willing to share in our sufferings, die on the cross, conquer death and live again so that Denis, right now, is more alive in heaven than any one of us are here in our mortal lives. I take great comfort in knowing that one day I will be with Denis again, and we will laugh once more about the day I pulled the Batman move.

God bless all of you. And God bless you Denis, I love you.