



## Measuring a life in love

By Debra Filcman

GHS

Posted Apr 12, 2006 @ 08:00 PM

Last update Mar 15, 2008 @ 08:11 PM

Needham — Friends and family surrounded 17-year-old Kyle Shapiro in both life and death. The varsity baseball team stood tall in their suits and ties as Shapiro's casket traveled down the aisle of St. Joseph Church. Teenage girls, also classmates, sat together, latching arms together for support; their mothers hugged them and handed them tissues before sending them to sit with friends.

Shapiro's parents, Ruth and Andrew, clung to one another, as they walked to the forefront of their eldest son's funeral. His younger brothers, Daniel and Ruben, sat close and quiet.

Shapiro, a junior at Needham High School, took his own life last week, leaving behind many grieving loved ones and even more questions. Mourners filled the pews to capacity, as bright light poured through the church's stained-glass windows Saturday afternoon.

With no "immediate note from Kyle," family friend, Rev. Scott Euvrard said, some sought clues elsewhere. Just days before he died, Shapiro completed the third and final personal essay required of members of the junior class.

"I have imagination, I have potential, I have talents. I make mistakes, but who doesn't?" Shapiro wrote. "I love baseball and when I get thrown a curveball, I can usually catch it, literally or metaphorically."

Sad smiles crossed faces as the essay spoke to the friend they all remembered. Between Euvrard's words, utter silence ensued, save the occasional snuffle or shuffling of feet.

"I fear loss, I fear death, I fear the unknown," the essay continued. "Nothing is more unknown than the afterlife ... I tell myself we wouldn't be here in the first place if there was no place afterward."

Clergy on hand agreed with his sentiment, telling mourners Shapiro was now with God. Still, they passed on messages of love and solidarity - the suggested means of warding off future suicides.

"Sometimes living hurts when you are young, or at any age," said Rev. Phil McGaugh, pastor of the Shapiros' church, St. Bartholomew. "When the pain is so dark and deep, people do not wish to die, they just wish to end the pain."

"There's nothing that we should be afraid to talk about with others, whether bad grades, bad days, a break-up with a loved one. We must know that we are loved," McGaugh added. "When we are young, we do not have the perspective or experience of life to know how we affect others."

The Shapiros provided that love for their son and brother, McGaugh said.

"You made the best choices you could for him," he told Andrew and Ruth. "And Dan and Ruben, you were great brothers."

But Euvrard seemed to speak directly to the wide-eyed, youngest generation of mourners - Shapiro's classmates. The Shapiro family wanted Kyle to be remembered as someone who loved, he said.

"I'm reminded of the song 'Seasons of Love' from the musical 'Rent'," Euvrard said, reciting lyrics:

"525,600 minutes, 525,000 moments so dear. 525,600 minutes, how do you measure, measure a year? In daylights, in sunsets, in midnights, in cups of coffee? In inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife? 525,600 minutes, how do you measure a year in the life? How about love?"

"Kyle, as we say goodbye to you, we will measure your life in love," Euvrard said.

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