

# KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE CROSS

Fr. Joseph Hornick's Amazing Life of Service and Sacrifice

Soldier, husband, father and Catholic priest. Fr. Joseph Roy Hornick was a man of faith, who served his country, raised his children in the Church and spent the last years of his life serving a parish in rural Pennsylvania.

"From my earliest years I have been surrounded by veterans," Fr. Hornick shared during a 2012 military memorial service. "Some died in combat; some carried steel in their bodies to natural death... Serving is part of my family's DNA."

His three children also answered the call to military service. Today, Theresa (Hornick) Larson '99 carries that call in her work with wounded veterans; Robert Hornick '94 serves his country as C130 pilot in the U.S. Coast Guard; and Paul Hornick '96 lives in Northern California after spending four years in the Marine Corps Infantry.

"Faith keeps you together as a family, no matter how far apart you are in the world," said Paul.

Faith and family were integral parts

of Fr. Hornick's life, imparted to his children early on. "As a family, we valued time together: Family Day, dinner, even daily prayer – just like at Prep. We also volunteered a lot," said Theresa.

"Our parents were a strong, committed Catholic couple, connected by faith, and they believed in Catholic education," Theresa recalled.

Participation in their faith life was non-negotiable. "I remember one Sunday as a teenager, when I didn't want to go to church, and my dad asked me where I planned to sleep that night (because it wouldn't be under his roof)," chuckled Robert.

"Every family has a conversation about faith," said Paul. "My dad always talked about the tripod of life – mental, spiritual and physical. He always believed if your spiritual life is solid, you can do anything."

Fr. Hornick drew on his faith in difficult times, sacrificing a career in finance to focus on his family. "When my mom got sick, my dad started his own business so he could take care of her," Paul continued.

Their mom, Mary Ann, died of breast cancer in 1991. Theresa and Paul were in middle school at Holy Rosary. Robert was a sophomore at Prep.

Catholic education was another non-negotiable. "Dad was at home taking care of my mom. I remember walking two miles to catch a bus to Prep from





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Woodway for basketball practice before school,” said Robert.

“I tried to enlist in high school. Dad drove me back to the recruiter’s office and told him I was going to college.” Both Robert and Theresa attended Villanova, as their father had.

“I know my dad sacrificed a lot so we could go to Prep.” Paul shared. “We all did work study. At the time, I was thinking, why am I cleaning erasers after school? He told our teachers and the janitors to come down hard on us. ‘I give you my permission. I want them to know what work is.’”

“We weren’t rich, so at times, it was hard to fit in.” Theresa recalled pulling weeds during work study to help pay for her Prep education. “It was important to my dad that we worked for what we had and I really valued it. Sometimes I felt uncomfortable, but I wouldn’t trade it (that experience) for anything.”

After his children began their careers, Fr. Hornick answered another call to serve.

“I am extremely proud of my dad, Father Joe,” Theresa wrote in her blog. “My dad is 68 years young – a father, a grandpop, a veteran, a coach, a workout stud – and a second vocation Catholic priest. When he is not training, he is

visiting the sick, saying baptisms, funerals, weddings, listening to reconciliation, marriage counseling, and writing homilies ... My dad is one of the most driven and passionate men I know!”

All three children spoke of his tireless service to a tiny parish community, wishing at times he would slow down. But that never happened. “He was always taking care of others. Even as a priest, every other person’s problems came before his,” said Robert.

“Dad paid attention to everyone, whether he was homeless or the richest man in Pennsylvania. He always gave 110% of his time, energy and heart,” Theresa recalled.

Fr. Hornick died suddenly of a heart attack during a 100-mile charity bike ride last fall. “Dad died doing what he loved – and that matters to me,” shared Theresa.

“He was insanely strong,” Paul added, “and a man of action. He always said he would die with his boots on.”

Fr. Hornick included Prep in his estate, gifting some of the proceeds from the sale of his home. His gift will be used to establish a new endowment to support tuition assistance.

“I can’t think of a better way to honor my father than through a scholarship,” said Paul. “There are a lot of good schools

– but I think the main reason he gave (to Prep) was so that a kid could have an education centered around our faith. He had a deep love of our Church and faith. He always wanted our eyes set on the Cross.”

Fr. Hornick spoke solemnly of sacrifice. “If we perform our duty well, we have truly honored and preserved the memory of those whom we speak; if we fail, however, we have also failed to honor and preserve the memory of these dead.”

The Hornick Family Endowment serves as one way to honor the memory and sacrifice of one man’s service.

“My fellow Americans,” Fr. Hornick wrote, “Only two defining forces have ever offered to die for you: Jesus Christ and the American Soldier... one died for your soul, the other for your freedom.”

The French preacher, Lacordaire, said, “The vocation of a soldier is next in dignity to the priesthood, not only because it commissions him to defend justice on the field of the battle and order on the field of peace, but also, because it called him to the spirit and intention of sacrifice.”

*To read about other individuals who included Prep in their estate visit <http://seaprep.giftlegacy.com>*