

Eulogy for Fr. Wood

Cadet Louis Tobergte, Class of 2014

“How did the light of Christ shine through his life?”

When Fr. Nielson asked me to speak here today, I was shocked and unsure of what to say. I had been to morning Mass with Father Wood many times and worked with him as the Brigade Catholic Representative, but I felt that I still did not know him well. Father, as a person, succeeded in being a question mark in mind, just like he talked about in his favorite homily.

That night, I sat down in the Chaplain's Office, praying the rosary and asking for help with what to say about a man who served at West Point as long as I had been alive. Suddenly, the image of an oak tree popped into my head, and it seemed to be a perfect metaphor for Father Wood.

Father stood tall and majestic on this campus, dominant, but not dominating. Like both Christ and the Oak, Father offered his shelter and comfort to anyone who sought it, but would never force the issue. His knowledge and love were ours for the taking, regardless of religion. Peace and kindness emanated forth from this gentle man.

Every year, 1000 Cadets would come to West Point, and in our four years, all 22,000 of us would pass by the mighty oak tree. We went by like wind through a forest, some of us avoiding him, some of us completely changed by him, and others picking up acorns of knowledge and faith that would grow later on in life.

We would blow past the mighty oak in a typical cadet hurry, but he always remained firm, steadfast and resolute in his faith. Like Jesus in John Chapter 6 at the Bread of Life discourse, Father did not change his beliefs or his teachings because some people were uncomfortable with them. Father was a man of conviction, who knew what he believed and why.

I wish I had spent more time under that oak tree; like many of you, I want to know that great man better. Father may be gone, but the lessons he taught will remain with us forever, and fortunately for us, the main thesis of his teaching actually included a way to get to know him better after he was gone...

... after all, Father constantly called us to a closer relationship to Christ through prayer, the Sacraments, and the Scriptures, and Father tried to model his life after Christ... so, though he is gone, we can both honor Father and get to know him better by studying our faith and living it more fully...

look at Father

and through that prayer and faith Father, we hope to see you again someday. Please pray for us Father Wood... we'll be praying for you.