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Tribute to Professor Fred Zacharias

MICHAEL J. PERRY*

Larry Zacharias is Fred Zacharias’s older brother. Larry and I became close friends during our three years together at Columbia Law School, from which we graduated in 1973. We have remained close friends ever since. Because of our friendship, I came to know about Larry’s only sibling, Fred—and then to meet Fred—early on. Perhaps in part to distinguish himself from Larry, as younger siblings are sometimes wont to do, Fred made the misguided decision to attend law school not in Manhattan, where he and Larry were raised, but up the street in New Haven, Connecticut.

From time to time, for many years, I had thought about joining the law faculty at the University of San Diego School of Law (USD). I remember sitting with Fred and his wife Sharon in their living room, in La Jolla, California, in December 1999, prior to going to dinner at a nearby restaurant with Fred and several of his colleagues. I remember thinking how wonderful it would be to have my dear friend’s brother Fred as a colleague and friend. A month or two later, however, my family and I decided not—not then—to relocate to California.

Fast forward: in September 2008, I accepted an offer to teach three consecutive fall semesters at USD: fall 2009, fall 2010, and fall 2011. At last, I thought, Fred and I would be colleagues! Several months later, I was shocked to learn that Fred had been diagnosed with cancer. When

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I arrived in San Diego in August 2009 to begin teaching at USD. Fred had less than three months to live.

On Sunday, November 8, 2009, as I was biking the strand between Coronado and Imperial Beach, a text message appeared on my cell phone. Larry, at Fred’s bedside, wrote to say that Fred—surrounded by Sharon, Fred and Sharon’s two sons, Fred’s mother, and Larry—had just passed.

Fred was such a wonderful man. Those whom Fred has left behind—family, friends, colleagues—are so bereft.

What a great consolation that love is stronger than death. “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” – Julian of Norwich.¹

¹ ALL SHALL BE WELL: HOPE AND INSPIRATION FROM GREAT CATHOLIC THINKERS 61 (Jane Cavolina & Matthew Bunson eds., 2004).