

# RESURRECTION

A little more than a year ago, Eva Scipione lost her 41-year-old son, Danny, to AIDS. Her grief was tempered somewhat when she found out that Father James B. Callan would be delivering the homily at her son's Mass of Christian Burial.

"I've been to funerals where they barely mention the name of the person," Scipione said. "(Father Callan) talks about things that were important to the deceased."

The pastor of Rochester's Corpus Christi Parish, 80 Prince St., Father Callan said that making the Mass' homily relevant to the deceased's family and friends is a priority with him.

"I try to talk to five or 10 members of the family — usually at the wake," he said. The priest often asks family members what they learned from the deceased and finds out whether the person was shy or outgoing.

Father Callan then pieces together the deceased person's life and gives him or her back as a coherent whole to the congregation.

## *Priests emphasize personal homilies*

"The theory this rests on is that the people are only there for the deceased," he continued. "If you don't talk about that person, then you won't reach them."

Father Callan apparently touched the heart of Scipione, who recalled his homily as "beautiful" and as a great source of comfort to her at the time.

In personalizing the homily during the Mass, Father Callan liberally interprets the church's Order of Christian Funerals. In addition to instructing priests to dwell on the Mass's Scripture readings, the order emphasizes that "there is never to be a eulogy."

The order, however, also states that the "homilist should also help the members in assembly to understand that the mystery of God's love and the mystery of Jesus' victorious death and resurrection were present in the life and death of the deceased and that these mysteries are active in their own lives as well."

Father Callan stressed that generally mourners are not interested in hearing about the homilist's theological insights into the service's readings. However, when a homilist ties in the deceased's life to the Scriptures, the result is that the idea of a person sharing in Christ's Resurrection becomes alive to the congregation, he noted.

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*By Rob Cullivan, Staff writer*

