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## Donning a special shirt to honor a remarkable friend

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IN MEMORY: Raymond Flynn and his grandson, Braeden, attended the wake of Bill Kelly, above.

The other morning, as Kathy and I helped our 11-year-old grandson, Braeden, get dressed, he put on a white shirt and tie that he handsomely wears to Mass on Easter and Christmas. Today, he knew he was going someplace special, but where, he wondered?

I could see the deep look of curiosity on his face. He knows he doesn't wear a white shirt and tie to school and it wasn't Christmas or Easter, so where am I going, he wondered.

Now, Braeden doesn't like surprises, loud or sudden sounds or violent scenes, so I calmly but reassuringly said, "we're going to see your friend Billy Kelly."

Braeden always loved attending the Kelly Financial Services Christmas Party and other social events with Bill Kelly.

He and I would listen to Bill every Saturday morning on the radio. Bill always ended our conversations by saying, "God bless Braeden and give him my love."

Whenever Braeden and I are out and about, people will always tell Braeden with a smile how they heard him on the Bill Kelly radio show.

As the look of confusion left his face, Braeden set off to round up his prayer cards and books that he collects, including one Bill Kelly brought him from New York City.

Shortly after, we all headed over to Braintree for Bill Kelly's wake at Cartwright Funeral Home. At first I didn't know whether to take Braeden, but his mother was with us so we knew he could leave the funeral home with her if he got too upset.

When we arrived, Braeden immediately went over to where the prayer cards were placed and added another one to his collection. We waited in the long reception line to say a prayer for Bill, but when Braeden saw Bill's 11-year-old son, William, standing next to the casket and looking very sad, Braeden went over to him, rubbed his arm to console him and stood with him for a few minutes.

William knew who he was and it immediately brought a smile to William's face and momentarily cheered him up.

I thought back to all of the great conversations Bill and I had over the years. From Bill telling me how he often watched me play basketball on television for Providence College to me sharing stories about traveling the world with Pope John Paul II and standing next to Mother Teresa as she served breakfast to the homeless in India.

But watching Braeden calmly react to the news of his friend Bill Kelly's passing is also an experience I will not soon forget.

God places some pretty remarkable people in the world to bring us inspiration and joy. Braeden is certainly one of those people — so was Bill Kelly.

Raymond L. Flynn is a former mayor of Boston and former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican.