

Daughter to wear diamond from dad's ashes

Joy Nix orders special ring

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Oct. 28, 2008, 5:29PM



Courtesy Joy Nix

The Rev. Robert Dixon delivered his last sermon Sept. 16, 2007, at Church of the Holy Apostles in Katy.

Congregants who gathered on Sept. 16, 2007, at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Katy say there was a mist in the church, a palpable presence of the Holy Spirit, as Rev. Dr. Robert D. Nix Jr. gave his farewell sermon.

"When he left here that Sunday," said Katy resident Diane Russell, communications coordinator at the church, "he said he was ready to die."

He died four days later of brain cancer.

"Near the end, when he was so sick in his bed, he would scroll through his cell phone and pray for the people on his cell phone directory," Russell said. "He never felt sorry for himself. He knew he was going to heaven."

Nix, who was 65 when he died, also served at Calvary Episcopal Church in Richmond from 2001-02.

His death has left an empty hole in many hearts, especially that of his youngest daughter, 27-year-old Joy Nix.

"I was his primary caregiver when he got the diagnosis, which was two months earlier," Joy said. "He and I were very, very close. We liked to say we were two peas in a pod. My mom and sister were the carrots of our family salad, and we always blended well. But when he passed away, I lost my pod-mate."

The most difficult part for Joy, who is a training specialist for the American Cancer Society in Austin, is not having her dad nearby to share in the good and bad times.

Soon, though, the reverend, known as "Chip," will be with his daughter once again, not in the form of a human, but of something that will last longer than a lifetime – a diamond.

"Now I can have him with me through all of my life experiences," Joy said. "He couldn't walk me down the aisle. But now he can. He will be with me to do all of that."

Joy is not engaged, but plans to have the diamond set into a ring, which for now she will wear on her right hand.

Joy hopes to receive the half-carat diamond from Algodanza USA by Christmas.

Jared Parrish, Algodanza director of sales and marketing, said the company can make up to four 1-carat diamonds from one-pound of cremated ashes.

"When we receive the ashes at our office, we tag everything and give it identification before sending the package to our laboratory," Parrish said. "They put the ashes through a chemical analysis to give the remains a 'thumbprint,' as a DNA test would do. This prevents a mix-up."

From there the ashes go through several complex processes on their way to becoming a diamond.

Depending on the size, it can take anywhere from 12 to 45 weeks to complete – a time frame Parrish said is comparable to waiting for a monument to be made.

Prices range from \$4,199 to \$21,799.

Although Algodanzamakes the diamond, Parrish said customers decide how they want to mount it.

Joy is custom-designing a ring band for hers, incorporating a Celtic design and an Infinity Knot to represent Father, Son and Holy Spirit - or past, present and future.

"I think he would think it's really cool," Joy said. "He was very into being creative. He had two replacement knees, and one thing my mom is having done with those, at his request, is to have them melted down and turned into a statue of a man kneeling. So I think he would love the idea of being turned into a diamond."

Joy's mother, 65-year-old Carol Nix, and 31-year-old sister Joanna Nix, live in Pittsburgh.

"My mom and sister think the ring is a great idea, but they don't want to wear the diamond," Joy said.

"They said it's a great idea - for me."