

## *Mark Anthony Gallaher*

We are gathered here this afternoon to bear witness to our faith in the resurrection, the resurrection of all who are buried in Jesus Christ the Lord and the resurrection of Mark Anthony Gallaher. Mark died at home on Monday evening, after a short but intense battle with gastric cancer. He was 54.

The son of Bill and Helga Gallaher, Mark Gallaher was born March 11, 1955, at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. His father was a career Marine, so Mark, his mother, and two sisters moved a bit during his childhood. When Bill Gallaher retired from the Marines in 1968, the family settled in Richmond. Mark graduated from Huguenot High School in 1973. He earned an academic scholarship to the University of Richmond, from which he took his undergraduate degree in 1977. Two years of graduate study in biology at VCU followed. Mark entered the school of dentistry of MCV in 1979, receiving his DDS degree in 1983. The following year Mark opened his dental practice, and began a 25 year career as a dental practitioner, only closing his practice earlier this year when his last illness forced him to do so.

Mark and Lesley Vaughan met in 1976. Lesley had a summer job at Virginia Blood Services. Mark's sister Stephanie also worked there, and she persuaded her brother to come into give blood – and gain an introduction to the Radford University co-ed working at the reception desk – Lesley. They dated for two years, before being married on June 10, 1978, in this sanctuary. Mark and Lesley enjoyed 31 years of marriage, and had two children, Lauren, born in 1982, and Jordan, born in 1988.

Mark was an avid reader. Whatever he read, he read cover to cover, whether it be a novel or the newspaper – and he seemed to remember everything he read. He enjoyed many expressions of science fiction literature. He liked Star Trek, but didn't consider himself a "Trekkie", and knew the lore of the Star Wars saga, but didn't consider himself a Lucas groupie.

Mark enjoyed the outdoor life, particularly fishing. He gained a well-deserved reputation as a gadget man, and owned at least one – if not two – of just about any gadget you could imagine that would make life or some at home project easier. Mark loved to cook on his outdoor grill or smoker. He had aspirations of becoming a grill master. He also aspired to becoming a home brewing beermeister, but that project never got off the ground. At this time of year you see numerous snow village type collections adorning homes. Mark was a village collector for his favorite season – Halloween.

Mark was self taught on computers. He enjoyed computer gaming, starting with the first generation Pong. He stood in line at night to get one of the early Wii game consoles. In many ways, he was just a big kid who never grew up. And he followed his own drummer. Lesley was the sports fan, glued to the games on the tube. Mark watched the movies.

Mark was fed by learning. If he could have had his way, he would have been a perpetual student. For his wife Lesley and his children, Mark was the “go to” answer-man, who always could come up with the right or a helpful answer. He could be a little playful with that, however – one of his favorite self-descriptions was, “I know everything, and what I don’t know, I make up.”

Mark was devoted to his dental patients, but his favorite role was as the attentive father. When his son Jordan was young, he coached him in T Ball and little league was one of the leaders of the Cub Scout Pack sponsored by this church. He never missed a game or event featuring one of his children. Mark was also *there* for his children. And there for his children’s *friends* as well. He was never reluctant to change a diaper – or to provide counsel for a child in a jam. One of his great joys – and a goal that led him through his final month – was holding his newborn granddaughter.

Mark was not a joiner, but in recent years he got interested in his Irish roots. He joined the Irish American Society, and found a home with his Irish friends. He attended Celtic festivals and bought – and was known to wear – a kilt.

Mark faced his cancer with a combination of humor, combativeness, informed understanding, and a refusal to roll over and accept the inevitable. Mark wanted to live, and was willing to pay the price for it in chemo therapy and radiation therapy. At the milestones of his granddaughter’s birth and his son’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, Mark reached for acceptance of his illness.

Mark was baptized a Roman Catholic, but for the last 30 years counted Bon Air Presbyterian as his church home. His spirituality was more of the inward, highly personal type, informed by his wide and deep reading on religious topics. Like most of us, he had his struggles. But in his last days, coached by his nephew Josh, Mark at last found peace with his God.

Mark Gallaher is survived by his wife of 31 years, Lesley Vaughan Gallaher; his daughter Lauren and her husband Brian Harris, and their child, his granddaughter Leah Brooke Harris; his son Jordan; his parents Bill and Helga Gallaher; his sisters Stephanie Fulton and Vicky Morris; and nieces, nephews, and an extended family.

Having gathered for our mutual support and to hear the witness of the scriptures, let us worship God:

R. Charles Grant  
Bon Air Presbyterian Church  
Richmond, Virginia  
December 19, 2009