



OBITUARY

Bob Murphy, 51; Christian singer

By Jack Williams

STAFF WRITER

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The words of philosopher/theologian St. Augustine – “to sing is to pray twice” – resonated mightily in the life of Bob Murphy.

His music was his ministry, a way of intimately sharing his faith – on stage, on a CD or around a campfire at a Christian retreat.

“Bob was willing to forgo all the stuff the world likes – money, status, possessions,” said retired Superior Court Judge Bob O’Neill, a longtime friend. “None of it was important to him. He was more interested in the joy he got from his music and the joy he gave.

“He was an inspiring guy without being flamboyant.”

Mr. Murphy, a singer, guitarist and songwriter, put together the Bob Murphy Band in 1999 and recorded a CD, “Child of God.” Although the original group dissolved over the years, various members united for performances, including fundraisers for Christian causes.

“Bob considered his music a form of prayer-leading rather than performing,” said Jim House, his roommate in Lakeside and a youth minister. “He figured his voice was a gift from God, and he was happy to share it. There was no ego involved.”

Mr. Murphy, a music leader and director of religious education at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Jamul, suffered a heart attack June 1 at the home of a friend. He was 51.

He was stricken while working out on an exercise bike and never regained consciousness, House said.

A former college and high school athlete, Murphy had no history of heart problems. “I never knew him to even go to a doctor,” House said.

The day before he died, Mr. Murphy took a homeless man to lunch after attending a noon Mass at St. Joseph’s Cathedral downtown. It typified his generosity, friends said.

“Bob seemed to have a sixth sense in visiting people who were down and lifting them up,” Dean Dwyer said. “He just knew when to show up – either to play music or just being there to listen.”

Before his death, he had been providing care for a friend, Teresa Marcotte, who is recovering from brain surgery. He also helped care for her children, one of whom has cystic fibrosis, Dwyer said.

When word of Mr. Murphy's death reached Holy Trinity Catholic Church in El Cajon, where he was a former youth group leader and music director, classes were canceled, and the children attended Mass to pray for him, Dwyer said.

At Holy Trinity, Mr. Murphy had led music at the 5:30 p.m. Mass for the past 15 years.

Although most of his music in the contemporary praise and worship genre was original, he became known for his stirring rendition of "The Centurion Song."

The song, expressing a change of heart by a Roman centurion on the way to Christ's crucifixion, was included on Mr. Murphy's CD.

"His solo rendition of that song at a men's retreat was overpowering," O'Neill recalled. "Everybody who knew Bob could tell you a story of when he caused them to see something in a new way by the way he performed and the songs he wrote."

Robert Anthony Murphy Jr. was born Feb. 23, 1955, in San Diego and grew up in East County.

After graduating from El Cajon Valley High School, where he competed in football, basketball and wrestling, Mr. Murphy attended College of the Siskiyous and Christian Heritage College.

He gave his first solo performance as a musician at Holy Trinity when he was 12, his family said.

In June 1996, he was invited to sing at a Mass attended by Mother Teresa at St. Jude's Shrine in Southcrest. He later formed the Bob Murphy Band, which performed before its largest crowd at the East County Performing Arts Center.

Survivors include his mother, Marie Therese Murphy of Clairemont; son, Skylar Murphy; sisters, Mimi Davey, Colette Hazlet, Kathleen Murphy, Rose Remillard and Tricia Long; and brothers, Ed, Jim, Joe and Dennis Murphy.

Services were June 7 at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in El Cajon. Donations in Mr. Murphy's memory are suggested to Serving Hands International, 4607 Mission Gorge Place, San Diego, CA 92120.

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