

Chairman Green, Vice-Chair Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy and Members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on House Bill 431 which would name a portion of US 33 the "Officer Thomas Hayes Memorial Highway".

I am Father Kevin Lutz pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church in German Village, Columbus. I also serve as a Chaplain to the Columbus Police Department.

The gesture proposed is noble and yet small in significance to the man. It is a measure of thanks for a job well done and a life well lived.

Consider the bullet that pierced his back. Look at it like a tipping point with half of Tom's life on one side the other half of his life on the other. What a balance point it is. Before the bullet that paralyzed him from mid-chest down, he served in the seminary, the US Army, the Columbus Division of Police, married his devoted wife, Mary Hayes (a legend herself) and served Columbus with dedication. Then the bullet. It remained with him until death. Never did a bullet travel slower in the taking of a life.

Then we look at his life on the other side. I met Tom at Riverside Hospital in 1979 about eight hours after he was shot. The smiling and cheerful Irishman I saw seemed to be in better spirits than those attending to him. A few minutes later he told me that he had already forgiven the man that shot him and was praying for his soul. Thus began a friendship that lasted over three decades. In all that time he remained resolute in his forgiveness of the man that never apologized.

I was with Tom his last night. The bullet finally found its mark. About three months after Tom's death, I found the man who had shot him. Ron McClary was a complete invalid himself. Ron cried and shook when I told him that Tom had forgiven him the very day he was shot and that Tom had prayed for him every day since. Eventually Ron was baptized and was brought to Holy Family on a stretcher to make his First Communion. He was placed front and center before the altar (where Tom's casket had reposed a few months earlier) and Tom's family welcomed him. The Lord called Ron home not long after. I have a strong belief that one of Columbus' Finest was there to welcome that repentant soul.

Tom was all about his faith In Jesus Christ. Tom was all about America Law and order were the themes that governed his life and his service to the community. For the first years after he was shot he was a local celebrity. He once remarked that all the attention would fade and he would be forgotten, a fact that didn't seem to bother him. He was much more comfortable on the sidelines than in the limelight. He wouldn't worry too much about the sign on US 33. It's really not for him. It's for us, lest we forget.

Twenty years ago I started the Jubilee Museum in Franklinton, which is the largest collection of diversified Catholic art in the United States. There we maintain a display dedicated to Officers Hayes' heroic witness of Christian forgiveness.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify on House Bill 431. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.