

# Eulogy for John Wesley Fisher

By Robert Porter Lynch December 7, 2024



We have all gathered today to celebrate the life of John Wesley Fisher, not to mourn him, but to honor him, to embrace his spirit, his essence, that inner drive that propelled him, the qualities that made us cherish him. John and I were neighbors and good friends. But more: we all loved John, who was a brother to all of us. *He was like a brother to me* – the brother I always wished I had. Today I will try to capture his essence, the wondrous qualities that made him dear to all of us.

Take a deep breath -- let your soul embrace John's Spirit – he is in this room, surrounding you with his warm, gracious smile, a gentle laughter -- a vibrant life-force present with us right now.

We all know that if John were speaking to you about his life itself, he'd never boast of his many accomplishments. No, John would be too humble. Instead, he'd want to inspire each and every one of us; giving us a personal gift, delivered from the realm of heaven, with the intention to lift our souls and delight our minds.

John had many God-Given graces, I'll try to enumerate seven of those that we all experienced, and are worthy of our emulation:

- 1. Courage:** If there was one incident we shared that exemplified his courage, it was during Hurricane Ian two years ago. The raging sea began to swamp his first-floor condo. When the tide began flooding into the windows, John calmly cuddled his beloved wife Joanne into his broad arms, trogged through water up to his chest, and began the trek to higher ground, where I met him with a rope to secure them until they could safely reach the second floor. He was brave. But the most touching memory of John's courage came just a few short months ago, last June, when John came to my birthday party. He'd lost a lot of weight and looked gaunt. He took me aside and quietly said, forlornly, "I'm dying." A shudder went down my spine, a tear came to my eye, I looked up at him and said "Brother, I'm so sorry; have courage, I will stand with you when you need me." He said, "I know you will," at which point we hugged each other in a long, silent embrace. In the months that followed, we watched this virile man wither in body, but never in spirit; steadfast until the end. John, we honor you for your courage, your fortitude, and the example you gave us all for the time we will too shall meet a similar fate in the hands of God.
- 2. Humility:** While John came from a well-founded prominent family, John was never arrogant, nor boastful, nor filled with a holier-than-thou demeanor. He was always humble, gracious, and ever-attentive to the needs of others. Few will ever know the devotions, commitments, and donations he made to others, often silently and anonymously. There are many people in this world -- many in this audience today -- to whom John reached out to give aid organizationally or individually. His gifts were more than monetary – they were a commitment and belief in those who he knew, by his support, would multiply and amplify his generosity to a multitude of others far beyond his own reach.

3. **Duty:** John realized that his role in life was not as a taker, but as a giver – he had a duty to God and to his country, and his community. He was an American Patriot – committed to the core values of the United States of America. He served in the Air Force during the Vietnam era, having achieved the rank of Sergeant. As two military veterans, we often talked of the heroism of Americans who had won the Congressional Medal of Honor, or of war heroes like General Washington, or General Patton. When I wrote stories of American heroism, John was the first to revel in their exploits. We so much enjoyed exchanging stories of WWII fighter aircraft, comparing the fighting qualities of warbirds like the P-38 Lightning to the P-51 Mustang or the DeHavilland Mosquito Bomber. Into the wee hours of the morning, he so much enjoyed flight simulation in those planes, or a simulated naval engagement. But much more than that. His sense of duty was 24/7. He served as dockmaster in our condominium; together, with me as his assistant. When a storm would blow up in the middle of the night, he and I would be out on the docks protecting boats: hauling lines, setting fenders, preventing boats from crashing into docks while the winds howled around us. Most of the time the boat owners never knew how John had saved their boats – he knew his duty, never wanting to be acknowledged for his good deeds.
4. **Community:** There was perhaps no greater exemplification of John’s commitment to his community than his willingness to support and build its organizational institutions. He knew that *communities thrive* because of those people like yourselves willing to ensure *local organizations and schools of learning would prosper and thrive*. So many of you in this room today served with John on Boards of Directors and grew your organizations because of his beneficent donations of time and money. So, to understand the breadth and depth of John’s community engagement, I’d like to ask all of you who served with John in some organization, or were recipients of his beneficence, or received encouragement from him, to please raise your hands so all those in this room can see the wide extent of his love of community.

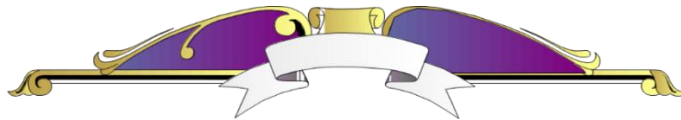
*Pause to let everyone raise their hands* – John would be so pleased to have served with you in each of your honorable endeavors – he’d thank you all for your generous contributions.

5. **Trust:** One of the hallmarks of a great leader and honorable person is their quality of TRUST. John was like the Rock of Gibraltar in the realm of trustworthiness. We could always count on John reliability to be Fair and Reasonable; Accountable: never blaming others; Respectful: even if others were not; Truthful in every way; Honorable (some of us called him Sir John like he was an old English knight). John was always Ethical: holding the highest of standards; Safe: keeping others secure and holding confidences; and Transparent: never having hidden agendas. Because people could trust John, he became both a great leader and great friend.
6. **Wisdom & Learning:** As we all knew, John was not just a knowledgeable man; he was a learned, wise man. Some of that wisdom came from his strength of character, but much of his wisdom was spiritual – he cherished a deep understanding of human passions and psyche. John had a beautiful soul – he loved life, loved his wife, loved his neighbors, and loved nature. He beheld the finest in everyone and tried to bring out the best in all those he met. John saw every moment as a learning experience; thus he was a student of history, and listened carefully to everyone he encountered. He was an avid reader, drawing on the insights of others to hone his own perceptions of what was possible. He was fond of cherishing the

highest ideals, keeping his eyes on the stars, while his feet were busy working on the ground. John shared many talks with of us – he loved history, philosophy, politics, religion, and just about anything that would expand his mind and spirit. This gave him a Happy Heart and a healthy outlook on life. Many times, I would seek John’s perspective on a troubling issue, always to receive the guidance of a wise sage. He was a comfort to our souls; his wisdom seemed to come from a deep source far beyond our age and experience. I thought of Brother John as an “Old Soul,” a present incarnation of an ageless source of insight. It was one of the sources of John’s Bright Spirit – he always greeted all of us with an endearing smile and a cheerful word. For this I have been truly amazed and I am forever grateful.

- 7. Family & Love:** John’s life was filled with joy and happiness in the beautiful marriage to his beloved Joanne. Their love had no bounds – eternal, soulful, joyful, and passionate. I would be terribly remiss if we didn’t acknowledge Joanne as the other true hero in this story. There are no words that can truly express *her* love: the intense devotion, commitment, and dedication she displayed these last few years to do everything in her power to keep John alive, driving him to medical treatments, and giving everything she could possibly provide to comfort him in his final days. So often, we overlook the energy expended by the primary caregiver, particularly in the final months of their loved-one’s life. Please, everyone, join me in acknowledging our dear friend Joanne for her heroic efforts, her strength, and the enormous love she gave John for so many years!! *Applause*

In closing, I’d like to recite one of my favorite poems as a tribute to Brother John’s soul.



One ship drives East another West,  
By the very same winds that blow.

‘Tis the Set of the Sails and not the Gales,  
That determines the way they go.

Like ships upon waves are the Winds of Fate,  
As we voyage along through life.

‘Tis the Set of the Soul that decides the Goal,  
And not the calm nor strife.



**Final Gratitude:** John, our dearest friend, we are all so blessed and grateful to you for playing a rich symphonic harmony with a sacred instrument filled with wisdom and joy. We thank the dear Lord for the time we had to experience your wondrous energy. Let us all pay the greatest tribute to John by giving unto others as Brother John hath given unto us. Let us be filled with the courage to create a community -- building common unity -- for the good of all! Thank you, our blessed friend. Let us now all stand, as we give our final tribute to our beloved John Wesley Fisher – *play video clip*