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Subject: RE: Mass near West Palm Beach dedicated to people who overdosed on prescription drugs

Mass near West Palm Beach dedicated to people who overdosed on prescription drugs

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Survivors of those who died from prescription drug overdoses gathered at a Mass on Monday to give one another comfort, understanding and sympathy.

The service at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, west of West Palm Beach, will be an annual event to bring attention to addiction and to remove prejudice. Many surviving families say people point fingers at them.

"I take care of my kids," is a response they get from people who don't understand, said Karen Perry, executive director of the nonprofit Narcotics Overdose Prevention & Education task force in West Palm Beach. "A lot of people don't understand what families go through to get the addict into remission."

About 40 people gathered for the noon Mass celebrated by the Rev. Gavin Badway.

The theme was resurrection. Badway assured them that no death is in vain and that the crying mothers, sisters, fathers and brothers will see their loved ones again. There is nobility to suffering, he said, and from it comes strength.

"Death is not the final word," Badway said. "Love and life is the final word."

The Mass was organized by Gina Bartolucci of Vero Beach and Nancy DeMarco of [Boynton Beach](#), who lost their sons prescription pills.

DeMarco's son, Dustin, 25, died in June 2009 while working at a rehab center in Arizona. His funeral was at the same church as Monday's Mass. Bartolucci said her son Joseph, 24, overdosed after getting prescription drugs from a West Palm Beach pill mill. Monday was the second anniversary of his death.

"This is a spiritual warfare," Bartolucci said. "The Mass is to honor those who died and those who have been left behind."

She hopes it will reach Gov. Rick Scott's ears.

The governor opposes the state's prescription tracking system, saying it's not the state's responsibility. The database would become law enforcement's main weapon against the illegal doling out of painkillers by tracking patients who get multiple prescriptions from multiple doctors.

Monday's Mass will keep the spotlight on the issue, said Palm Beach County Sheriff's Capt. Jeff Lindskoog, who attended the Mass as a board member of NOPE.

"We want people to understand there is a bigger issue [than keeping track of who's getting pills]. This is about life and death," he said. "People are dying out there."

In 2009, the latest numbers available, 286 people died in Palm Beach County of prescription overdoses; 279 died in Broward County, records show.

But the victims are not just numbers. They were the dozens of smiling faces portrayed in the vestibule of the church Monday, whose unnatural deaths came too soon.

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