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Slain realtor remembered

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BY KIMBERLY FORNEK

At her funeral Mass Friday morning, friends and family members of Cindy Bischof spoke of the sister and friend they loved and her loyalty, passion and kindness.

Women who had been the 43-year-old Bischof's girlfriends for 30 and 40 years hugged and supported each other as they participated in the service at St. Anne Catholic Church in Barrington.

"Cindy was compassionate and kind," Jill O'Brien said. "She accepted you as you are, she never judged."

O'Brien told of several precepts that both she and Bischof believed. "Be the change you want to see in the world," O'Brien said. "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

Michael Bischof described his older sister as a natural leader with a charismatic presence.

'My inspiration'

"You were my inspiration," he told his sister.

Bischof spoke about his sister's love of travel, horseback riding, cooking and golf. After her death, he found her note pad and pen on a table in her house in Arlington Heights as though she had just set them down. In her notes was a list of what she most enjoyed: Sunsets on the beach in southwestern Michigan, Lake Tahoe "anytime of the year," the Tivoli Gardens, horseback riding at a dude ranch and "any golf course in a warm climate during the winter months."

The speakers focused on how Cindy Bischof had enriched their lives, but the tragedy of her death at the hands of an ex-boyfriend turned stalker, Michael L. Giroux, 60, could not be overlooked. Her shooting and Giroux's ensuing suicide March 7 outside the real estate office where she worked in Elmhurst was recalled in the Bible readings and song lyrics, starting with the opening hymn, "Be Not Afraid."

From the second epistle of St. Paul came the passage "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," read by Jill Ryan as she fought back tears.



Parents Frank and Barbara Ryan, left, and brother Michael, right, embrace after the funeral service for Cindy Bischof at St. Anne's Church in Barrington on Friday. (Allison Williams/Staff Photographer)

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The Rev. Britto, who led the service, acknowledged the range of emotions the mourners were feeling: “Anger, hurt, disbelief, sadness, anguish ...”

It was natural to feel anger and disappointment with the Lord over their loved one’s early death, Berchmans said, and, “There’s not really any answer why it happened. ‘Don’t give up’

“But don’t give up,” the priest continued. “You hurt so much because you love so much. Sustain yourself with the faith you have.”

Berchmans also urged the group, “Channel this energy, so this will not happen to other women, ... fight against this senseless thing so that nobody has to face what you face today.”

Michael Bischof already has started that effort through the Cynthia L. Bischof Memorial Fund, which will be used to combat domestic violence, harassment and stalking.

“I ask everyone here, I challenge you to ban together as a powerful community ... leveraging all the talents, resources, contacts we have available so that this will not happen to you or someone else’s daughter, sister or friend.”

Referring to his sister’s success as a Realtor who developed industrial and commercial properties, Bischof said he was sure his sister was scouting “new real estate opportunities for us in heaven. She will be waiting to greet us with that warm and infectious smile.”



Pallbearers carry the casket of Arlington Heights native Cindy Bischof at a funeral service at St. Anne’s Church in Barrington on Friday. (Allison Williams/Staff Photographer)