

# **Katherine Patricia 'Katie' Bolka: Large crowd mourns Ursuline student at service**

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By **JOE SIMNACHER / The Dallas Morning News**

An overflow crowd of friends and family spilled out of Christ the King Catholic Church on Thursday to remember Katherine Patricia "Katie" Bolka.

Ms. Bolka, 17, died Sunday at Parkland Memorial Hospital, five days after she was broadsided while driving to take her algebra final at Ursuline Academy, where she was on the cusp of beginning her senior year.

The funeral brought together people from Christ the King Church – where she was a member and had attended grade school – as well as Ursuline Academy, Jesuit College Preparatory School and Bishop Lynch Catholic High School, said her father, Richard Bolka of Dallas.

Ms. Bolka exhibited talent in the arts, including music, poetry, theater and especially painting.

At the service, her family quoted from an English paper Ms. Bolka wrote in December on the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

"Women and men fear death because it is so unknown and diverse," she wrote. "Life is too short to fear death. Although we are unsure where our final destination is, we should celebrate and observe the little things every moment we have on Earth."

Ms. Bolka was excited about what the summer and her senior year would bring, her father said. She had studied for the algebra final throughout the three-day weekend and was ready, he said.

The Rev. Jack Deeves, Ursuline chaplain, said that while he didn't know Ms. Bolka well before her accident, he came to know her through her family and friends while she was hospitalized before her death.

"I think I know her through and through after going through all this with her family," Father Deeves said. "She was extraordinarily gifted, and that's the absolute truth. We lost a great soul, and Ursuline will miss her."

Her mother, Johna Bolka, said her daughter "was a force to be reckoned with."

"She was tenacious, an incredibly strong-willed child."

Father Deeves said Ms. Bolka's primary talent was painting. She was constantly drawing, sketching or painting.

"It was in her soul," Father Deeves said. "She told her mom and dad more than once ... 'I just cannot not paint.' "

Classes at Ursuline were canceled Thursday, and more than 600 people attended a funeral home visitation Wednesday evening.

Ms. Bolka was driving west on Royal Lane at 7:45 a.m. May 30 when Elizabeth Grimes, 90, who was driving north on Preston Road, ran a red light, police said. Ms. Grimes' car struck the back of a westbound Chevrolet Malibu, which spun and struck Ms. Bolka's Honda Accord in the next lane.

The driver and passenger of the Chevrolet were not seriously injured, police said.

Father Deeves said Ms. Bolka suffered severe brain injuries in the accident.

In addition to her parents, Ms. Bolka is survived by her sister, Nina Bolka of Dallas; and her grandparents, Judge John E. and Maria Sprizzo of Staten Island, N.Y., and Ed and Kay Bolka of Oklahoma City.

A scholarship been established in Ms. Bolka's name at Ursuline. It will support a student who exhibits talent for art who might not otherwise get to attend Ursuline, her father said.

Memorials may be made to the Katherine Bolka Scholarship Fund for Academic and Visual Arts Excellence at Ursuline Academy, 4900 Walnut Hill Lane, Dallas, Texas 75229.

*Staff writer Holly Yan contributed to this report.*

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