

## Parish mourns teen death



**DavidSteele34-08Ck.jpg**

ASHLAND — A memorial Mass was held last Friday at Our Lady of the Mountain Parish here for David Steele, 19, who died along with six other firefighters in a helicopter crash in Northern California.

Steele, a lifelong member of the parish, is remembered by his pastor, family and friends as a very active Catholic.

“Our whole community has been really rocked by this,” said Father Sean Weeks, pastor at Our Lady of the Mountain. “The Steele family, including David, have been very involved parishioners and they know everyone — from the staff in the office, to the individual parishioners.”

One of the shining lights in all this darkness, says Father Weeks, has been how the community has come together in support of the Steeles.

“The parish community is feeling much more today like a family — which it should when things like this happen.”

David was a 2007 graduate of Ashland High School and was studying to be a firefighter and emergency medical technician at Central Oregon Community College. He played rugby and varsity football in high school.

David's grandmother, Sally Steele, was answering the phone for the family last week, and helping out around the house.

"David was a very bright boy," said Sally, who recalled the story of the young man's confirmation.

Apparently, when David was in the youth group at Our Lady of the Mountain, a gentleman who worked in Hispanic ministry came to talk about the struggles of dealing with a new culture. He informed the young Catholics that Mother Frances Cabrini was the patron saint of immigrants. David, says his grandmother, was the only one who asked, 'what can we do to make them feel more welcome?'

After that David started attending the Hispanic Mass at his parish. Later, when he was confirmed, he chose Mother Cabrini as his patron saint.

"When I asked him why he had chosen a female saint, he told me, 'aren't we all immigrants, Grandma?'" said Sally. "He was such a caring young man."

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Jon DeBellis for the Catholic Sentinel