

Then he told me not to worry, and that he was happy for me to have his room, his bed, his games, etc. He gave me a beautiful smile, and he left as he came, enfolded in blue light which grew smaller and smaller until it disappeared into the darkness of the room.

After listening to my response, my Mother then asked me how Stephen was dressed. I responded by describing the exact clothes he was wearing in his casket, which I did not remember...but I remembered vividly his coming from that beautiful blue light, how he looked, what he wore then, and the happiness that seemed to come from everywhere in and around him. I shall never forget it.

### HEAVEN IS REAL

After the experience, I felt not only comforted, but also inspired! I thought to myself, how wonderful it would be to help people get to Heaven, because my brother had told me what a magnificent place it is.

At a tender age of less than five, *I knew there truly is a Heaven!* I made up my mind that one day, God willing, I would become a priest. I wanted to go there, and I wanted to help others to go to Heaven, as well. I entered the seminary in November of 1980, and I have never been happier.

I thank God for that great gift of the visit of Steven which inspired my vocation...which I now know is an even greater gift from God.



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## *A Visit from Heaven*



*“Why didn’t Stephen  
love me?”*

## A Visit from Heaven

A story by Fr. David J Pekola, New Jersey

**M**y brother Stephen died at the age of 15, when I was four and one-half years old. He had been sick with a kidney disease that he contracted when he was only two years old, but at the time, it was the usual pattern of death for boys with that type of disease.

**W**hen I was 2, 3, and 4 years old, I still remember being told to: “Be quiet, Be still, Stephen is sick.” What did that mean to a little guy? To me, it meant that I could not play with Stephen...and he did not want to, or was unable to, play with me.

### I Felt Unloved

**B**eing sick might mean that I should not touch him or hug him, as I could readily do with my parents and my sister, because I might get his sickness. It meant that I should avoid him, and perhaps he wants to avoid me. It meant that maybe he did not love me, and I should not love him.

**I** remember that I used to run away from him, and that I did not go near him very much...not that I did not want to do so, for he was very sweet, but I was reluctant because of an inner fear of disturbing him. Perhaps I had some kind of negative feeling about his illness. I don't know.

**M**ostly, however, I could not understand why he was sick, why he would not play with me, and why he did not love me. I was sad about it, and perhaps I felt rejected and lonely.

**T**hen, when Stephen died, I felt even more rejected and unloved. He left me...**he left me**, and I did not understand where he went and why he went away. Over and over again, I kept asking my mother and sister, “Why didn't Stephen love me?” They tried to comfort and reassure me that he did love me, and it was to no avail. My sadness continued. My brother was gone.

**W**hen I was given his room, games, and toys, that made me even sadder than before! I continued to ask, “**Why didn't Stephen love me?**”

## I Suddenly Changed

**T**hen, one day a few months after Stephen's death, I became happy, and my demeanor changed. I stopped asking that question. I became like a different little boy, and the change was remarkably evident. My family asked me why I was suddenly so happy.

**I** said, “I know that Stephen loves me, that there is a Heaven, and I want to become a priest to help people to get to such a wonderful place.” They were dumbfounded!

**T**hey asked how this little child, just past the age of four, going into his fifth year, could think of such a thing when he never spoke of it before! Then I told them of the beautiful thing that happened to me.

**O**ne night while I was sleeping in my brother's room, I awoke and began to stare into the utter darkness, when suddenly a small blue light appeared in the left hand corner near the window. This blue light grew and grew until my brother Stephen was standing at the foot of my bed.

**T**he first thing that he said, was: “**David, I love you.**” The words were spoken with such affection, tenderness, and joy, that *my* little heart pounded with happiness.

**T**hen Stephen told me that he was no longer sick or in pain, that he was in the most beautiful place that one could ever imagine, and that it was a place filled with brilliant light, majestic trees, lovely flowers and gardens, crystal clear streams, and so much more!

**H**e said that he was in Heaven, and that no words could describe the beauty and joy of it. He let me understand that he was filled with intense happiness in a place where **there is no sickness and everyone feels so loving and loved!**