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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, POLICE COMMISSIONER O'NEILL DELIVER
REMARKS AT DETECTIVE STEVEN MCDONALD'S PLAQUE UNVEILING**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I want to thank everyone for being here today. This is one of those moments when we gather in common cause, in unity, because we're honoring someone who was the very best amongst us, who exemplifies everything we hoped to be in this city, in this department as human beings.

I want to thank everyone who's here. A special thanks to Commissioner Jimmy O'Neill and the leadership of the NYPD that's here. Special thanks as well to everyone associated with Central Park for helping to make this day possible – our Manhattan Borough Parks Commissioner Bill Castro, and everyone at the Central Park Conservancy. And I also want to acknowledge and thank Mayor David Dinkins. This is his birthday week; you could have been doing a lot of things but this is where you wanted to be and I appreciate that.

[Applause]

The thing I want to say today and it's really – it's striking to be in a setting like this. This is a place where something horrible happened. And we don't feel the same today as we did back then 32 years ago. The world has changed in so many ways, thank God, for the better. It's a site where something horrible happened and that could have been the end of the story, but it was the beginning of a story that was so extraordinary and so inspiring – that there are very few we could possibly name in history that could reach the level reached by Detective Steven McDonald.

So we all came to know him because of what happened very near here. What we came to know is was a man who showed us the full potential of humanity, nothing less than that. And I am struck when you look around even though this is a site where there was a tragedy. Today on this beautiful day it reminds us of the beauty around us as well, and I am struck – I remember many years ago I visited Assisi and Saint Francis so famously gave us an understanding of harmony and what it meant to truly love those around us, and I am reminded of the fact that once upon a time Saint Francis was just a man like any of us, someone who might have been mistaken for someone without a special gift, and we now speak his name centuries later because of what he taught us. I think there is a strong parallel to Steven McDonald. He might have been mistaken early in his life for just another man, just another public servant, just another cop. We honor and

appreciate everyone who serves us, but you might have said he is one of many. We came to know him as a kind of Saint who walked among us. We came to know Steven McDonald as someone who had something to teach that we all needed to learn.

His example is humbling – it’s humbling to all of us to think could we possibly have done what he did in the face of adversity. I am humbled by it, but I am inspired by it too. You know scripture tells us, there is a powerful passage that says “clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.” Think of how much compassion it took for Steven to summon within him after what have happened to him. Think of how much patience it must have taken. Think of the kindness and the gentleness with which he approached each person in the years after the event that happened here, and think of how much he taught us by his example. You can use words all day long, but nothing is more powerful than an example. Thousands – tens of thousands of officers were directly taught by him and moved by him. So many officers who heard him tell them how important their work was, how sacred their work was. Millions of New Yorkers who gained from his example - we are different people because Steven McDonald lived. It’s as simple as that. He is one of the irreplaceable people in the modern history of New York City. And I wish he did not have to go through his ordeal, I wish we had not come to know him the way we did, but because we did we were made better.

My last conversation with him was so powerful to me because of the hope in his voice. He loved this Department; everyone knows that he loved this Department and the men and women in it. He loved the history and the tradition, but he believed this Department was shepherding us to a better future. He believed that the NYPD was going to help us heal all the challenges and wounds of the past. He had such tremendous faith. And I hope that every officer who walks a beat out there feels his guiding hand on their shoulder, as I certainly do. I think there are millions of New Yorkers who have felt that feeling over the years. To the family, and I always say, Steven’s story is extraordinary, but it was not a solitary story. It is the story of an entire family. To all the family members, our profound thanks for what all of you have done for all of us. Patty, you – I always marvel at you. I marvel at everything that you’ve shown us. And I don’t have to say it, but I think it bears saying – and I imagine Steven would be the first to say it – there’s no way he could have done all he did, there’s no way he could have uplifted us all without you. Let’s thank Patty for all she has done.

[Applause]

And to Conor, possibly the single most enthusiastic member of the NYPD –

[Laughter]

I don’t know what Conor eats for breakfast but I want to eat that too. You know what, I’m a father myself so I can take this as a point of privilege – I can only imagine the pride your dad felt in seeing you put on that uniform, and not just wearing the uniform; living the life, living the ideals with such passion. And I know every day what he stood for is being carried out through your great work, thank you Conor.

[Applause]

So I'll conclude with this: we'll put up this marker to help people remember, to help people contemplate the meaning of Steven McDonald's life. I have no doubt, when anyone of us stops just for a moment in this busiest of places, even for a New York minute, we stop and contemplate the life of Steven McDonald; in that moment we will be made better. We should try to take that moment as often as possible, to live just a little bit as well and as powerfully and as beautifully as he did. Thank you and God bless you all.

[Applause]

Lieutenant Tony Giorgio, NYPD: Thank you so much Mr. Mayor. Ladies and gentleman, it's now my pleasure to introduce the Police Commissioner of the City of New York, the honorable James P. O'Neill.

[Applause]

Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill: Good morning everyone and welcome to Central Park. Thank you Mr. Mayor. Mayor Dinkins, it's always great to see you, McDonald family, Central Park Precinct personal and everybody that is here this morning, it's quite a turnout. 32 years ago today, very close to where we gathered, Steve McDonald's life changed forever. In an instant his world and the world of his young wife and unborn life were shattered. It was brutal, tragic, and utterly senseless and would have destroyed most people. But Steven certainly was not most people. In that moment the life he had known for 29 years was over. But his new life as one of our most powerful symbols of courage, perseverance, and hope had just begun. And today we are back here where so much has changed for so many. Some of the changes were immediate, like the physical limitations that would affect Steven and his family every day for the rest of his life. And some of the changes happened over time, like the emotional and spiritual impact Steven had on the millions of people who heard his message of forgiveness, compassion, and love.

That's why Steven's legacy is so meaningful, because he had the power to change people. And his legacy lives on in his wife and partner Patti Ann, and his son Conor of course, and every past, present, and future member of the New York City Department. We will never forget what Steven did for all of us. As part of that for future generations who never had the privilege of knowing Steven personally we have plaques, memorial wall, inscriptions, street signs, and much more dedicated to him. These are places where we can celebrate Steven's life, remember his message, and retell his story, but I would like to think that this site marker we are dedicating here today can serve a slightly different purpose.

When we come to this area, the place where Steven's life was changed forever, instead of thinking about how he responded to what happened, think about what you would do. How would you respond if everything in your life changed in a flash? How would you react to the end of all that you knew, and the beginning of something that was impossible to prepare for? We pray that we never have to endure what Steven did but we all face turning points, we all have moments when you have a choice between two extremes and that choice will impact the course of our lives and the course of our lives around us also. We all know the choices Steve made. We also know that there will never be another Steven McDonald. Each of us has to decide for ourselves,

how we deal with adversity when we face it and what we are willing to do to overcome it. Steven's example can be a guide but remember it won't be easy. It certainly wasn't easy for Steven and his family so we can't let that discourage us. But this site, on the grounds near where the Sisters of Charity Convent stood 160 years ago and beneath our nation's flag, let this site be our reminder. We can persevere, we can keep moving forward, and we can come out stronger on the other side. Thank you again to Patti Ann, Conor, the extended McDonald family, to Katie – you got a couple of weeks, you can change your mind.

[Laughter]

Conor you can't change your mind.

[Laughter]

To the men and women of the Central Park Precinct and everyone involved in creating this site marker and in making today's ceremony possible, thank you. And thank you Steven, for the incredible life you led and everything you taught us, you showed us what was possible when we seek to truly understand others and by doing that you helped us understand our selves. We miss you every day but we know you are always with us. Thank you very much.

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