



## Derek Joseph Rojas

January 19, 1983 - March 6, 2026

It is with broken hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved son Derek Joseph Rojas. He entered into heavenly rest on March 06, 2026 at the young age of 43.

Derek was born in Turlock, CA on January 19, 1983, to Thomas Rojas and Monica Pope. He lived with his parents in Hilmar on his grandparent's dairy until he was 10 years old. Then he moved from the dairy into "town" and downtown Hilmar was never the same again.

Derek attended school in Hilmar from kindergarten until graduating from Hilmar High School in 2001. He was an outstanding student and a three-sport athlete, excelling in baseball, basketball and soccer—a third-generation, natural-born athlete following in the footsteps of his Papa Joe and his father Tom.

With his God-given ability, determination, and hard work, Derek was a stand out. At only 5 feet 8 inches tall, he was the starting point guard for the varsity team both his junior and senior years.

In 1999-2000, Derek's junior year, he helped lead his soccer team to both the Trans Valley League and San Joaquin Section Championships. That team was later inducted into the Hilmar High School Athletic Hall of Fame. During Derek's senior year, the soccer team again won the TVL championship.

Unfortunately, they were eliminated in the section semi-finals but Derek was chosen as a TVL all league player. Derek was also a dynamic 2nd baseman, and a dominant hitter for the Hilmar Yellowjackets. Whether it was turning double plays, shooting 3 pointers, or executing his lock-down soccer defense, Derek was an impact player who made a difference.

Derek's lifetime dream was to become a firefighter, and he set his dream into motion by graduating from Modesto Junior College in Spring 2006 with an associate's degree in Fire Science which included completing the MJC Regional Fire Academy.

While attending college, he was a volunteer firefighter for Turlock Rural Fire Department and in July 2006, immediately after graduating from the academy, he was hired by Cal Fire and spent six seasons as a firefighter at the Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit at the Healdsburg Station and the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit at the San Andreas and West Point stations. Derek loved being a fire fighter and the many friends he made at Cal Fire and Turlock Rural.

Derek married Danielle DeMateo in 2011, then moved to Puyallup, WA in 2013 where he worked for the United States Postal Service in Covington, WA. When his marriage ended, Derek returned to California. He then began working side by side with his stepfather and brother in the construction industry where he remained until his passing.

In 2018, Derek became a father to his son Legend. This was his proudest moment, his greatest joy, his greatest accomplishment. He was a devoted father to Legend. Their relationship was so very close. They spent a lot of time on their shared love of sports. Derek worked with Legend on everything from hitting a baseball to kicking a soccer goal or shooting hoops, even running football routes, and Legend kept Derek informed of which NFL teams were

playing on any given Sunday. Derek was so proud of Legend and of his natural ability. Like father, like son.

They also loved Christ. Derek was a member of New Life Christian Center in Turlock where he strengthened his personal relationship with the Lord and introduced Legend to Jesus.

For the past three and a half years, Derek was a loving partner to his girlfriend, Melinda, and an incredible father figure to Melinda's son, River. Derek showed up for them with spiritual leadership, patience, strength, silliness, and so much love. Melinda was a warm and committed partner to Derek and is an important part of our family.

Derek was an incredible father, loving son, brother, grandson, uncle, nephew, cousin, and best friend to many. He was preceded in death by his grandfather Joe M. Louro, grandmother Lynne Marie Lear, grandfather Jack P. Doo Sr., and his uncle and Godfather Craig Rojas.

He leaves behind his son Legend Funakoshi Rojas, mother Monica Pope and stepfather David Pope, father Thomas Rojas, brother Kyle Rojas and wife Danielle, sister Tori Bushay and husband Dante, his partner Melinda Sanders and her son River. Derek is also survived by his nephews Brandon Rojas, Jack Rojas, Frank Rojas, Holton Rojas, Rhett Bushay, niece Parker Bushay, grandparents Abe and Sharon Rojas, and grandmother Janice Louro.

A visitation will be held on Thursday, March 19, 2026 from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm at Turlock Funeral Home, 425 N. Soderquist Road, Turlock, Ca.

A funeral service will be held on Friday, March 20, 2026 at 10:30 am at Turlock Funeral Home, 425 N. Soderquist, Turlock, Ca Followed by an

interment at Turlock Memorial Park, 575 N. Soderquist Road, Turlock, Ca.

Derek's family would like to thank everyone for their love, support and prayers during this time.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAR **19**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (PT)

Turlock Funeral Home  
425 North Soderquist Road  
Turlock, CA 95381  
(209) 632-9111  
<https://turlockfuneralhome.com>

## Funeral Service

MAR **20**. 10:30 AM (PT)

Turlock Funeral Home  
425 North Soderquist Road  
Turlock, CA 95381  
(209) 632-9111  
<https://turlockfuneralhome.com>

## Interment following Funeral Service

MAR **20**. 11:30 AM (PT)

Turlock Memorial Park  
575 N. Soderquist Rd.  
Turlock, CA 95380  
(209) 632-9111  
<http://turlockmemorialpark.com>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Enduring Grace was purchased for the family of Derek Joseph Rojas.*



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March 19 at 04:20 PM



“ *EI CHARRO purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Derek Joseph Rojas.*



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**EI CHARRO** - March 19 at 02:04 PM



“ *EI CHARRO planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Derek Joseph Rojas.*

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**EI CHARRO** - March 19 at 02:04 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Derek Joseph Rojas.*

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March 18 at 11:08 PM



“ Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Derek Joseph Rojas.



March 18 at 11:08 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Derek Joseph Rojas.

March 18 at 10:32 PM



“ Brianna M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Derek Joseph Rojas.

Brianna M. - March 18 at 02:58 PM



“ Whenever “Seven Nation Army” song comes on, brings me back to our 20s of Derek pretending to be singing it and air drumming to it. It’s been 20 years but the good memories with him will always stay.  
RIP D

Brianna Machado Rush - March 18 at 02:58 PM



“ Love, Terry & Lori Gray planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Derek Joseph Rojas.

Love, Terry & Lori Gray - March 18 at 10:48 AM

LG

“ Love, Terry & Lori Gray purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Derek Joseph Rojas.



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**Love, Terry & Lori Gray** - March 18 at 10:48 AM

LS

“ Love, Julie DeMateo & Ted Simental purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Derek Joseph Rojas.



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**Love, Julie DeMateo & Ted Simental** - March 18 at 12:03 AM

JH

“ Jim and Nancy Higgins planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Derek Joseph Rojas.

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**Jim and Nancy Higgins** - March 17 at 11:20 PM

JH

“ Jim and Nancy Higgins purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Derek Joseph Rojas.



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**Jim and Nancy Higgins** - March 17 at 11:20 PM

YF

“ *Your Friends! purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Derek Joseph Rojas.*



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**Your Friends!** - March 17 at 07:59 PM

LM

“ *Lucia Mendes lit a candle in memory of Derek Joseph Rojas*



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**Lucia Mendes** - March 17 at 07:07 PM