

It was 39 Good Friday's ago *today* that I *vividly* and *palpably* felt the *tug* of my heart to Christ's priesthood. Looking back at that 10-year-old altar boy, serving the Stations of the Cross,

I *marvel* at the *thirst* for Christ that changed my life forever. But what's *truly mind-blowing* is how *Jesus* thirsted *first* -- For *each* of us! And how *incomplete* and *lacking* life is if *our* thirst doesn't meet Christ's. I shuddered with *goosebumps*, the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end, and my eyes were just *beginning* to be opened -- How could such a *perfect* love exist?! But there it *is* -- in Christ crucified -- bearing the *brunt* of human frailty and thirst.

On that *first* Good Friday some 2,000 years ago, Jesus poured out His love even to His persecutors. And most of His *friends* ran *away* and *hid*, in fear, confusion, and despair. But today, we *know* Jesus is risen. *Our* challenge is to *trust* in the way of the *Cross* -- the way of selfless love. To *trust* in that God thirsts for *us*! To *trust* that *our* thirst is *only* quenched by surrendering our hearts to Jesus.

We have a choice. *We* can run away, in one *grand* wild goose chase, trying to quench our thirsts on lesser things, or we can *embrace* the Cross that *saves* us and *completes* us. Christ bore *excruciating* pain out of love for us -- *Excruciating* literally means something that hurts as bad as a *crucifixion*!

It's a *strange* idea, that in the midst of His torture on the Cross -- Jesus should be making His way to the heights of peace and joy. No, He's *not* a masochist! But He *is* the God who *thirsts* for us. It's *unbelievable*! That someone should find true happiness in bearing pain for another, yet we *see* it every day! Every *day*, we see a mother who'd rather die *herself*,

If it meant her child will thrive. Every *day*, we see a father *happily* endure the dead-end drudgery of grunt work, if it means his child will have better opportunities than *he* had. Every day we see young people gladly push aside instant gratification, and pursue their studies to build a life with meaning and purpose. Every day we see people who sacrifice themselves for the sake of others -- even for strangers!

Look at *Don Giuseppe Berardelli*, the Italian priest, who *died* from the Coronavirus after freely giving up his ventilator to a younger person in need. Look at the martyrs who *happily* give their lives rather than deny Christ. *No one* wants to suffer or die. But who wouldn't *happily* sacrifice their *lives* for their true love? My friends, *behold* the wood of the Cross. Behold the love of *God* who stops at *nothing* to save *His* true love -- you and me! *Astonishing*!

I was giving out communion at Mass once, and I was *elsewhere* -- *self-absorbed* --

Taking for *granted* -- the presence of Jesus Christ in my own hands! It took a feeble old *blind* woman of *mighty faith* to open *my* eyes in my communion line. She needed the aid of her husband -- *Himself* tottering along on a cane -- To approach the Eucharist. He guided his wife's trembling hands to receive her sweet Jesus. And, didn't her eyes *shine* with the vigor of Christ crucified! You could *see* and *hear* her *thirst* being quenched! Her face *glowed* in utter *peace* and *satisfaction*, despite her suffering, and she shuddered in *ecstasy* -- Tasting the love of God in the Blessed Sacrament.

Do *we* see as well as that blind woman? That *only* Christ can satisfy our thirst? The *upside* of this terrible Coronavirus pandemic is that we're shaken out of our routines, and our

complacency toward the sacraments. I can't *wait* to be able to share Jesus in Holy Communion again. In the *meantime*, May we join our thirst to that of Jesus, who thirsted for *us first* on that wondrous Cross. May our communion with our Lord be our life's purpose, and give our struggles meaning. May we *never* take for granted the sacrifice of Christ, as *I* had on that communion line.

My friends, starting today, and *every* day: *behold* the wood of the cross, upon which hung our salvation! Our Lamb of God, Who will wipe *away* our tears; who *is* our strength and our hope in all our travails.

Do we each *have* a crucifix in our homes and bedrooms? Do we *pray* with it? When the journey is hard, *embrace* the cross -- *Literally* -- taking it *down* off the wall and *hugging* it into our hearts. May we *not* be afraid, but *trust* in Christ's Cross, As *the* path to a happy life, *Quenched* by the waters of our baptism, and the blood of the Lamb -- A life *committed* to God's love, *consummated* on the Cross, So that *no one* need ever *thirst* again.