

May 3, 2020

Early yesterday evening a dear friend of mine died in his early 50's, a boy I met at Our Lady of Grace in Highland, my second year as a priest when he was 9 or 10. Our friendship and love grew over the years and it was my privilege to be one of his confidants as his journey moved toward last evening and beyond.

While I was very sad last night and shed many tears these last months, after I learned of his death and spent time talking on the phone with an older brother also a dear friend I went out to walk about 7:30 with the sun settling into the western horizon and I found myself smiling and feeling profoundly thankful, the same experience that I had the days when my parents died.

The gratitude that I felt dissolved any barriers to my belief that once we have been loved by another and have loved them in return our communion with one another becomes more real than ever when we die.

My gratitude doesn't name any specific act or time, my gratitude was last night, and it is right now, as with my parents, a deep sense of satisfaction at having been a part of the life of another, of having been in conversation with another human being.

Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

My friend went to Marquette in Milwaukee and I used to drive up there and take him to dinner occasionally and once when I went to pick him up at his dorm I was parked on a side street on an incline so when I saw him approaching the car only his lower body was visible and I could see that the shorts he was wearing were clean and freshly pressed, he had on no socks and his boat shoes were clean and almost spangling white and I knew what that meant.

I had always told him to invite a friend for dinner and he never did until this time and as we drove to pick up the friend and when he jumped out of my car to open the door for her I knew that this was to be no ordinary friend.

A few years later I married them in Milwaukee and baptized their three almost all grown up children, the youngest graduates from Lake Central this year.

When we finally get back into our church look up above the baptismal font and see the wire cable that is used to lift the top and follow it across the ceiling and down that large wooden beam to the box on the beam near that seat to where the lifting mechanism is located.

My friend provided all of that and in a very real way became a part of our baptismal ministry through which we celebrate very, very often in the past and soon again, I pray, in the future, our belief that while our minds may be terribly troubled our hearts can smile and be profoundly thankful that love conquers all things, even death itself.