

Patrick Powers Celebration of Life

Speech notes

10/17/2020

Many of you know my son, John Paul. I've had other walkers, but this is my *favorite*, my **Johnnie Walker!**

First of all, I want to start off with a pro tip: don't ever get paralyzed, because then your 10-year old son will get a big head and think he can beat you at wrestling!

GRATITUDE. One important lesson I've learned during this journey is to always be grateful for all the blessings we have. No matter how tough things are, even if you have something difficult - you always have something to be grateful for. Because of my brain tumor, most of my left side is paralyzed, disabling me from doing many athletic activities that I love, such as cycling. However, I am still grateful. Because my left side is not **fully** paralyzed, and I have a strong right side, I am still able to walk. I can also ride my modified recumbent bicycle around the neighborhood with my kids.

My family has been graced with so many blessings, such as gifts, meals, rides, handyman work, financial support, emotional and spiritual support. It is evident that God has powerfully answered so many of your prayers, thus sustaining me these 17 years. We truly have amazing family and friends.

I want to thank The Community of God's Delight for all the love and support they have shown my family and me throughout the past 30 years, and for being a second family that always helped keep my faith strong during the various trials in my life.

For Mount St. Michael Catholic School, this beautiful school. All five of our kids were (and are being) well-formed here. It has been an integral part of our family since my wife started teaching here before we were married.

I'd also like to thank Allison, Cindy and Laurie for planning this unique party, the whole Johnston family and many others who made this event happen. I also want to thank everyone here, for being a part of this journey and for all your support over the years. And of course my good friends, the Behan Band.

I especially want to thank my family and my incredible wife, Brenda. I love you all so much and cherish every moment I spend with you. Most importantly, I'd like to thank God, for giving me life and allowing me to be here with you today.

By the grace of God I was also able to live many years past my original prognosis, which has allowed me to grow friendships with so many of you and live life to the fullest. I am so grateful to have been given all these blessings, and I just wanted to remind all of you to look for the blessings in your life. Most people don't have the amazing support system that we have here together. I am so thankful to God for allowing me to be a part of this amazing group of people.

I'd like to offer some tips for death prep from my own experiences and prayers. The ultimate goal of life is **salvation**, so we should always try and nurture our relationship with God. It is not something that can be put off or ignored. No one knows when they are going to go, so we must always be ready. Lean on your family and friends when needed, that's why God gave us the amazing support system that we have. Never leave anything unsettled or let a relationship crumble because of unforgiveness.

Something that confuses me is people giving such a priority to food, water, and electricity preparation, but ignoring death prep. Why would we prep for something that may not ever happen, and ignore something that certainly will happen.

Many people in this room read the Bible often and know it well, however we tend to over-complicate the essence of the Bible and its teachings on salvation when it really is very simple. The whole essence of Christianity can be boiled down to one word: LOVE. The essence of how to become one with God and accept his invitation to eternal salvation can be explained in just two verses:

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The first verse reinforces that none of us get to be with God based on our own merits. We need Him to provide the path to salvation.

The second verse describes that path. It is a FREE GIFT of Jesus' sacrifice that we simply need to receive.

How many of you or your kids were here during Camp Jesus, in the summer of 2003?

Here's my drowning story: On June 19, 2003, I was volunteering here at Camp Jesus. It was the 4th day of working in the hot, Texas sun, so I went to the pool to cool off. After I did a flip into the pool, I had a seizure. It felt like I had a jackhammer strapped to my left leg. As I was sinking to the bottom of the pool, I experienced the grace of total abandonment to God. I

was totally at peace while I was sinking, even though I knew I was drowning. I thought, "Well, if they pull me out, they pull me out." This is why I call June 19 my Grace Anniversary. And this was the beginning of my cancer journey.

I was very fortunate to be rescued by Dawn Schell that day. To her credit, it's pretty amazing that she pulled me out as fast as she did, considering how much I joked around in the pool and frequently held my breath underwater for as long as I could. That day serves as an example of God's ultimate power, and a testament to the power of prayer. After I drowned, everyone at the camp (about 300 kids and 100 counselors) gathered to pray in this gym under the leadership of teenager Michael Tinker (who is now Fr. Antony Tinker), and those prayers helped fuel me to begin my fight against cancer.

I haven't always been 100% consistent in my prayer life, but that year, for the six months leading up to this incident, I had a consistent prayer time every day. I believe that consistency enabled my spirit to be ready to receive the infusion of God's grace when I needed it most.

Lastly, let's talk briefly about **hope**. One of the beautiful aspects of Christianity is that we believe death is not the end. Even after I pass, I will continue to be present with all of you in the Mystical Body of Christ, and I promise I'll pray for you every day. I'll miss praise and worship on Sundays, running the sound board and watching it mess up, despite it working perfectly 5 minutes earlier.

The Church offers many beautiful sacraments that allow us to stay connected to each other and to God so we can remain hopeful during trying times. Two sacraments that aid in preparing for death, and are also underutilized, are Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick, otherwise known as Last Rites. We should not wait till we are on our death bed to receive this sacrament. That's why it is called the sacrament of the sick and is encouraged for use throughout times of sickness.

I don't know if I will have three months or three decades, only God knows how long any of us will live. Thank you to everyone for all you have done for Brenda and my 5 kids, and thanks in advance for your continued support after I punch my ticket.