

I come to you in the name of one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple--truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

A cup, a single, solitary cup of cold water.

That's all it takes.

Pretty simple right?

Can it really be this simple?

If it is really this simple, how do you explain this world, a world where pain, hunger, thirst continue to dominate the lives of many (even perhaps all, if we're honest with ourselves), if this is all it takes to follow Christ's example of ministry to others?

What is that cup of cold water that we are called to give and receive? What is that cup of cold water today that will guarantee our reward, that will quench the thirst of all who seek it, that sees us following in the footsteps of Christ as we offer it to one of these little ones?

We have to honestly ask ourselves: what do people need today? What do people thirst for today? What does that cup of cold water mean to those we encounter in our lives? Perhaps it is the simple act of acknowledging someone's humanity, that we all have a thirst, a need to be filled with the life-giving source that is water. Jesus modeled this giving and receiving of water, giving and receiving of recognition, when he met the Samaritan woman at the well, in the middle of the day, when temperatures were at their hottest, when no one else would dare be out at the well, and yet water, and in turn recognition of a shared humanity, was still sought by someone who was otherwise so ostracized from her

community. Jesus gave her this cup of humanity, this recognition of the life she had lived, the pain she had endured, the distance she was held from others, and filled her, so much so that she evangelized for the Lord.

Yet still we ask, how can it be that one cup be all that is needed to guarantee our reward? How can one cup of cold water be all that is required of us?

I think we still ask this question, because even though the task is small, simple, routine even, we can't ever seem to do it when the opportunity arises before us to offer that cup of cold water, to welcome, to acknowledge, to recognize on the most basic level what we all must have in order to have life and have it abundantly.

We see this failure daily. We have been given opportunity after opportunity to welcome, to recognize, to give water, and we have said no thank you, we have clutched to our cups of destruction, hoping that they will sustain us, hoping that they will meet our need, ignoring how it will impact the least among us, ignoring how it will impact these little ones who come to us, seeking welcome, seeking a cup of cold water.

Fear, hatred, xenophobia, Islamophobia, are encouraged and applauded when we allow travel bans to be unfairly enacted, targeting our Muslim (or Christian or Jewish or...) brothers and sisters who are hoping to flee places of war, unrest, danger, and we shut the door in their face.

We fail to welcome, to recognize humanity in each other when conservatives and liberals cannot even be in the same room with one another for civil conversation has given way to a need, a hunger, to be right, to win, even when in winning we lose, lose respect, lose patience, lose our common humanity. We fail to welcome when conservatives and liberals

promote fake news on social media, when conservatives and liberals bash each other with name-calling, with secretive policy meetings that don't even attempt to appear bi-partisan, with a dividing of a country based on misleading information and outright lies.

We fail to offer that cup of cold water when we fail to welcome the stranger in our midst. We fail to offer a cup, when we fail to introduce ourselves, to get to know someone new (even if they've been coming for the past 3 weeks, 6 months, 5 years, 30 years). We fail to offer a cup when we don't know the correct information to share with someone who asks us a question and instead of admitting that and trying to help them find the correct answer, making it up in an attempt to "save face".

We fail to accept that cup of cold water when we allow change to fill us with fear and trepidation, rather than accepting the presence of the Holy Spirit with us, among us, leading us, guiding us. The Church has survived these past 2000 years even with our best efforts to bring it down by failing to accept the cup, to give the cup.

Christ gave us a simple model of ministry to follow. One cup of cold water. One healing, one offer of health and wellness, one life-giving, life-sustaining, life-affirming, and life-prolonging cup of cold water. And yet, it's this same cup that we fail time and time again to offer because we are addicted to other cups.

We are addicted to cups full of money, full of oil, violence, fear, hate, self-harm. We are addicted to cups that force us to come into contention with one another. We are addicted to cups that only serve to divide, to take life, to take our dignity, to take our very humanity away. We are addicted to cups that can never fulfill us. And, because of this, we seek them out more and more.

Because of our nation's addiction to financial wealth, the poor drift further and further away. The gap between the world's richest and everyone else only continues to grow. Because of our nation's addiction to financial wealth, we refuse to provide health care for every person in our county. Not that it would cost any of us more money than it currently does to have provided health care, but if we simply gave it out, then the richest amongst us wouldn't be able to prosper from it, to go from 10 digit bank accounts to 11.

Because of our nation's addictions, to financial wealth, to being "right": our environment continues to degrade as we pull out of the Paris Agreement, our national parks and landmarks will shrink so that they may be harvested and developed on, our health and safety from (previously banned) dangerous food pesticides that are proven to cause birth defects is no more, the existence of potable and safe (read: non-lead containing) water is less and less sure, the collective failure to vaccinate our children based on a completely debunked, retracted junk "study" threatening not just them but their classmates, the sick, the old, the immune-compromised, oh and by the way, you as well even though you've been vaccinated, all of this happens because we are addicted to filling ourselves with that which does not fulfill, that which cannot sustain us, that which can only leave us wanting more and more, to the detriment of all.

Our call as followers of Christ is to admit our addiction to these cups which only drain us. Our call as followers of Christ is to admit our addiction and work to overcome it, to seek out that simple cup of cold water, and seek to give out that same cup of cold water to all who come to us, the addicted, the thirsty.

We have the opportunity to welcome and give. To give of the cold water that we do have, that we receive every week when we come here, to be in the presence of God, in community with each other, to receive the holy communion that is offered at this table. We confess every week to our addictions. We confess every week that we seek out that which does not fill but rather divides and drains us. And, we are forgiven of those sins, of that addiction. We are forgiven through Christ. With Christ, we are handed a model of ministry that we must hold to, that we must practice day in and day out, a simple practice that calls us simply to welcome and to give a single cup of cold water. And then give that single cup of cold water again and again, to quench the thirst of all who come (and to all who have to come a few times before they fully accept what is being offered). This is our call as followers of Christ, and through this simple act, we guarantee our reward.

Amen.