

**“It... is... finished!”**

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, there was a Protestant minister, who, after the usual Sunday hymns at the beginning of the service, walked to the pulpit, **BUT**...instead of delivering his sermon, he introduced a guest minister. He told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest, childhood friends and that he had invited him to say a few words to the congregation this day. With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit. He began:

**“Once upon a time...there was a father, his son, and his son’s friend. They were sailing off the Pacific Coast late one afternoon. Suddenly, a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to the shore. The waves were so high and the winds so fierce that, even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright. The boat capsized and the 3 of them were thrown into the raging sea.”**

*The old man at the pulpit hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenage-boys, who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his nautical story of life and death.*

*The aged minister continued:*

**“Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: to which boy would he throw the rescue line with a buoy on the end of it? He had only seconds to make his decision. The father knew his son was a true Christian. Furthermore, he knew his son’s friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched, not even by the torrent of the 6-foot waves and the howling wind!**

**As the father yelled out, ‘I love you, son!’ he threw out the lifeline, not to his own son, **BUT**... to his son’s friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells of the black, inky deep. His son’s body was never to be found.”**

*By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up, straight in the pew, anxiously awaiting the next words to come out of the old minister’s mouth. **BUT**... he said no more. He only went back to his place and sat down.*

**“Why did the father make such a choice?”** you ask, as did the teenagers.

**Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

*You see, the father knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus ...and he could not bear the thought of his son’s friend stepping into eternity, (what’s a polite way to say it?) withOUT Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save his son’s friend.*

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*Now, I have just told you, in a different way, the story of Good Friday. You see, the decision that father made at that capsized sailboat is the same decision our Heavenly Father made for us, long before the Big Bang or Creation ever began. How great, indeed, is the love of God, that he should do the same for us! To be specific, our Heavenly Father sacrificed his only begotten son to save us ...from drowning the raging sea of sin!*

*It is important for us to stop and realize how real and, yet incomprehensible, God’s love is for each and every one of us. He has made us to his own ‘image and likeness,’ giving us, among other things, an immortal soul!*

**He has thrown us a lifeline** ...to survive the torrents of daily life, when all seems to be in chaos, making no sense.

**He has thrown us a lifeline** ...when we seem abandoned, misunderstood, and, so often, taken for granted.

**He has thrown us a lifeline** ...for those times... we don't even like ourselves.

God's lifeline ...is his own son, Jesus Christ ...with his wonderful Church and REAL Sacraments. I urge you to step back and appreciate all that God is offering us every day of our lives and, especially so, every Saturday/Sunday, if not daily, when we can receive his Son in the Eucharist at holy Mass.

Today, we have gathered to pay respect to the phenomenon of Golgotha Hill ...the love of a God for his beloved sons and daughters, you & me. When you kiss the cross today, be sure to whisper:  
**"Thank you, Jesus, for saving a sinner like me!"**

Now, I must tell you the rest of that old minister's story. Within minutes after that service was over, the 2 teenagers were at the old man's side.

**"That was a nice story,"** one of them politely stated. **"BUT, I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in the hopes that the other boy would become a true Christian."**

**"Well, you've got a good point there,"** the old man replied, glancing down at his worn bible. Then, a big smile broadened his, otherwise, narrow face. He once again looked up at the boys, straight in the eyes, and said:

**"It sure isn't very realistic, is it? BUT... I'm standing here today to tell you... that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up his son for me. You see... I was that father... and your pastor... was my son's friend."**

I pray that very same God, our Abba, blesses you now,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(And, when you get up here to reverence the crucifix, remember to whisper:  
**"Thank you, Jesus, for saving a sinner like me!"**)