

JAMESON'S GIFTS

Remarks by his father on the occasion of the death of McManus Jameson Hand

Jameson was a gift-giver.

He got this from his mother, and she got it from her parents, Jameson's Grandma and PaPa, who are here today. Every holiday or occasion, no matter how much I told him I didn't want anything, Jameson would always get me gifts that I didn't want. ...until I received them. Jameson knew how to gift-give, even to reluctant receivers. I want to talk to you about some of the gifts he gave.

But before talking about the gifts he gave, I want to talk about one of the gifts he had: the gift of Faith. This was not a gift that I gave to him on schedule. My parents had raised me to be a very proud Catholic, and my wife joined me in this Faith, and both Jameson and his sister were baptized Catholic, but for a few reasons, we didn't practice our Catholicism regularly while the kids were young, and it is one of the true regrets of my life.

We were Catholic, and many who are here know that I was very religious – for example, the songs that I wrote with my sister and which were sung today were one way I expressed my Catholic Faith even when I wasn't regularly attending Masses. I won't say we were “Christmas Catholics” but...maybe we were “Christmas and visits to Wyoming Catholics”.

Obviously, that changed.

About six months ago, I was talking to Jameson on the phone and he said, “Dad, there's something I've been wanting to ask you for a while. What was it that caused you to start going to church again, and getting active at church?”

I had an immediate answer, and I told him. “Well, it was this, which stewed and grew for a while, and then, it was THAT, and that was the moment I knew that I needed to get back where I belong.”

He said, “Yep. I *thought* it was me!”

He was right. Both the stewing “this” and the thunderclap “THAT” were acts that involved my boy. We're going to talk about what “THAT” is here in a minute.

But first let's turn to the gifts that just this act has given, not just to me, but to all of us.

- By returning to practicing my faith, I have not only received regular sustenance from the Eucharistic body and blood of Christ but fellowship with so many like-minded believers and amazing, kind people. This is a gift that my son gave me, and I applaud him for it.

- After a while, I looked for things I could do that would deepen my faith and connection to the Church, and I joined the Vocations Chalice ministry. In fact, I had custody of the chalice for nearly two years, as it was at my house when COVID caused suspension of activities. Father Tim, and Father Anthony, and Father Erin, and Father Sudheesh from afar, I prayed for you to discern your calling and to follow your vocation, and my prayers backed you then as they do now. My son gave you that gift. As you do all the good you will do in your pastoral lives, I ask that you remember that it was Jameson who gifted you with my strengthening and encouraging prayers.
- A bit later, I decided to join the Rosary ministry. I can honestly say part of my motivation was realizing that by leading the Rosary every so often, I'd give my old and weighed-down knees a break. But I wouldn't have been on my knees to make them feel that way, nor would I have been inspired to lead the Rosary as I do, without Jameson. Rick Nielsen, my son gave you the gift of one more person to fill Rosary leadership slots at Masses. And all of you who have attended Masses where I have led the Rosary, my leading you in prayer is a gift that my son gave to you. Please applaud him for that.
- After a while, I decided that I wouldn't be following my Faith fully if I wasn't dishing out pancakes and bacon each month with a group that I always admired, the Knights of Columbus, and I finally put my name on its rolls. I cannot say enough about the Knights and my love for them, for the blessings they have brought to me and my family. I truly cannot. All of those blessings are gifts my son gave me and to his family. If you are a Knight and if my being a knight has in any way enriched you, please know that my brotherhood with you is a gift that my son gave to you. Please let him know that you appreciate this by your applause.
- I am a working man. My attitude has always been to just work and let the chips fall where they may when the time comes to retire. I knew I needed insurance and some kind of plan for the years when I will have no income, but I kept putting it off, and putting it off and putting it off. But I found, to my surprise, when Jayme Sanford contacted me and started bugging the hell out of me about it, that the Knights are there for me as much or more as I'm there for them. Angie, when I go to join our boy, you won't have any financial concerns for the rest of your life, and that's because of the knights, and that's one of the many gifts that our Jameson gave you.
- My Knighthood has seen me enthusiastically raise thousands and thousands of dollars for charity. I've collected even more thousands of dollars worth of food for the underfed, clothes for the underclothed, and help for the helpless. To be able to do this good work – and all of the work itself that I have been a part of – is a gift that my son gave to me, and that he gave to his parish and community.

- When I became a third-degree knight, my wife attended the ceremony, and while there, she was approached by a number of kind women, who invited her to join them in the meeting they were holding that night of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Knights. She found immediate friendship and love in that group, and has not only embraced it but been embraced by it. She has sold poinsettias, decorated and maintained the altar, sold religious items, and baked a tremendous number of items that always sell out quickly and that are raved over at bake sales and fish fry desserts. Angie, I hope you will always know that it was Jameson behind what brought you those friends. They and your service to our church are more of his gifts. If you are in the Ladies Auxiliary, I know you consider my wife to be a gift as much as I do. Please applaud our son for giving that precious gift to you.
- Before my sister Laura died, I felt that the Marian hymns that I wrote, which she set to music, should be performed, so I contacted Mary Bellah about that. She said she'd make me a deal. She'd look at performing Laura's songs if I'd stop promising to join the choir someday and just do it already. Well, I don't know if she and the choir considers that part of the deal a gift or not, but I would ask that Mary and my friends in the choir, who have been so supportive and who Angie and I cannot thank enough, please applaud Jameson for the gift of my sister's music.
- Our Grand Knight apparently could see my love for the Knights flowing out of me, and he approached me about doing some recruiting. He was right that my enthusiasm proved contagious. In the course of a year and a half, I was credited with adding about a hundred knights to this council. To put this into context, the yearly goal for an entire council to receive recognition is fifteen. If you are one of the knights that has joined our council because I approached you to do so, be sure that your being with us is a gift that Jameson gave to you, and your knighthood is a gift that he gave to our council. Please let us know who you are by applauding to thank him for this.
- Earlier this year, my brother knights dragged me down to the Springs to the State Convention to collect a bunch of awards for this recruiting stuff, and while we were there, they nominated me to go to Quebec to attend the Knights' Supreme Convention. This trip didn't happen until after Jameson had passed, but there I was able to see more bishops and archbishops and cardinals than you can shake a stick at, and I was able to pray for solace and for Jameson privately with many of them. Just as importantly, it was there where I met other knights from around the state who joined me on the trip. Their sympathy turned quickly to friendship, and it is they who ensured that Jameson's funeral today could be served by a knightly honor guard. To have these new friends with me is an added blessing, one more gift from my son to me.

- The final gift I want to mention is a gift that Jameson gave to himself by his acts that returned me to our Church. By his doing so, Jameson's eternal soul has been prayed for by a truly enormous number of people who otherwise would not have been doing so. Look around you. All of you prayed for Jameson today and I know you all will continue to do so. Today, my boy received the gift of your prayers, and the prayers of all who attended Mass and who are not here, and even of those who watched or will watch the video stream.

I know Jameson appreciates the gift of your prayers, because in addition to being a gift-giver, he was a man of Faith. Throughout my return to activity in our Church, Jameson has been right there with me, attending Mass, leading Rosaries, helping at Knights events. He was a lover of The Holy Spirit. Jameson once remarked, “Dad, I think the Holy Spirit gets a raw deal. Everyone talks a lot about the Father and the Son, but the Holy Spirit doesn't get talked about as much.” I thought it was an odd and rather funny thing to say, but when I told this story to Father Nathaniel he thought about it and said, “Actually, I think Jameson is right!” Jameson also loved Our Blessed Mother; this showed in the song choices for his Mass today. It was a sign that we moved to Parker the week Jameson was born, and the parish here is Ave Maria, a prayer for which he and I share a deep and abiding love.

Those, of course, are just a very small number of the gifts that Jameson gave with his act that brought me back to the Church. And that was just one of countless acts that he did throughout his life. Before I tell you what that act was, let's have one more round of applause for any and every gift that you each know you received from Jameson.

Thank you. Now, let me tell you about the act that Jameson performed that brought forth all of the gifts I discussed. Many of you here will remember this act, and this moment. At my own father's funeral – Jameson's grandfather – I eulogized my dad by listing some of the things that he left us, and then I sang a song with the voice that my dad left me and that the Ave Maria choir now has to deal with – a song of a man singing his own farewell. The song involved me pouring and downing of a shot of whiskey.

When I downed the shot at the end of the song, I slammed the shot glass – this very shot glass here – top-down onto my father's pall, and left the ambo to return to my pew.

Before I could get there, Jameson jumped up from his seat with his fellow pall-bearers and he caught me in the biggest tightest longest hug I can ever remember, embracing me for the whole congregation to see, there in the aisle astride his grandfather's coffin.

It was that hug – that moment – that brought me home to our Church. And it brought him with me.

After much thought and prayer, I've decided the way to finish my talk here is to sing that same song for my son. The words will have slightly different meaning, and I changed one of the lines – the same line I changed for my dad in fact –, but I believe my Jaige will be pleased by it.

My dad's preferred whiskey was Tullamore DEW. But for Jameson, well...I've chosen Jameson.

The first verse is about the end of pain and the end of regret

Of all the money that ever I had
I spent it in good company.
And of all the harm that ever I done
Alas! it was to none but me.
And all I've done
For want of wit
To memory now I can't recall.
So fill to me the parting glass
Good night and joy be with you all.

(fill glass)

**The second verse is for friends being left behind.
Ethan, Steve, Sam, and Kathy, representing Tessa, and
any other friends of Jameson, please join me up here.**

Of all the comrades that ever I had
They are sorry at my going away.
And of all the sweethearts that ever I had
They would wish me one more day to stay.
But since it falls
Unto my lot
That I should rise and you should not,
I gently rise and I softly call
Good night and joy be with you all.

(raise glass; dismiss friends)

And the last verse is for love. Andrea, you can join me now.

If God had wished me
to tarry more,
With leisure time to sit a while
There is a fair maid in this town
Who surely has my heart beguiled
Her rosy cheeks
And ruby lips
I own she has my heart enthralled
So drink to me the parting glass
Good night and joy be with you all.

(drink glass; slam top-down on urn)