

Our Lady of Florida July 30, 2018

Funeral Homily for Father Damian Towey, C.P.

Born April 29, 1927

Professed August 15, 1949

Ordained April 28, 1956

Died July 23, 2018

Picture this: A young man, 6 feet tall weighing 118 pounds comes out of the Navy and meets a girl he really likes. She tells him he's too skinny, and he never saw her again! Not long after that, one of his friends invites him to go with him to St. Michael's Monastery because he wanted to see a priest. As his friend spoke to the priest, Damian walked around the grounds. While he was exploring, he met a priest at the cemetery, Father Colman Healy. At the end of their conversation, Fr. Healy asked him, **"Are you satisfied with your life?"**

Those simple but challenging words were the beginning of a journey for our brother Damian.

However, before we talk about his journey, we must first recall his early life. Don't be alarmed, Damian told me keep it short. I'm not going to say everything that I would like to, other than that he came from a very Irish Catholic family. His parents were immigrants, and they pursued the American dream, seeking to raise their children in the faith and to provide them with an education.

But back to Damian's encounter in the cemetery of St. Michael's Monastery.

Damian thought, "How dare this Passionist priest ask me if I am "satisfied with my life." So our brother simply replied: "Yes, I am."

After that chance meeting, Damian could not get those challenging words out of his head, so he made an appointment to see Father Colman. Soon after that, he found himself heading to Dunkirk, New York to Holy Cross Seminary for a year's stay to refresh himself in Latin. As Father Damian said, "To tell the truth, I wasn't absolutely certain that I had a vocation, and I wondered whether I would stick it out. But I knew I felt so strongly about it, that it was the only thing I could do."

As many of you may know, "D" (as his family called him) joined the Passionist community and lived the same life that our Holy Founder lived. It was very strict, and I am happy to say that I also lived the same strict life that "D" did for my early years as a Passionist.

In those days you moved from one Monastery to another during student life. After ordination on April 28, 1956, "D" began what we called "Sacred Eloquence" for a year to learn how to preach. One day the Provincial assigned everyone in his class to write a letter volunteering for one of the Passionist's overseas missions. In "D's" letter, he told the Provincial, "I don't feel

called to service in any of our overseas missions, but I will go if I am sent." A few weeks later, the Provincial told him that he was assigned to study missiology in Rome, Italy. He lived there for three years at our motherhouse of Saints John and Paul, and he attended the University of the Propaganda Fidei where he received his Doctorate in Canon Law. (He also acquired a great taste for Italian cuisine, especially pasta!)

Those were very exciting times in the church; St. John XXIII was elected pope on January 25, 1959. The church that Damian was raised in and the community that he joined was changing. And Damian adapted to it. He held many important positions within the Passionist community: Lector, Director of Students, Vicar, Rector, and Consulter to the Provincial.

"D" served as a Parochial Vicar in Boston, and then on September 18, 1991, he was transferred by the Provincial Fr. Robert Joerger to Our Lady of Florida to **reopen the Monastery and Retreat House**, along with Fr. Francis Finnigan, a fellow Passionist.

Damian told me many times that he'd never thought he would fall in love with retreat work, but he did. He served Our Lady of Florida very faithfully, becoming a spiritual director and guide for many people, along with being a good and gentle confessor to so many of our priests and faithful.

I'd never lived with Damian until I was assigned to Our Lady of Florida. I found him to be a wonderful community man, not only very human, but one who loved his Passionist vocation and his priesthood.

So many wonderful people arrive here each day for Morning Prayer and Mass, and they came because of Fr. Damian's prayerful, thoughtful spiritual reflections.

Damian felt that the following words from St. Paul the Apostle best described him:

"Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. --- 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

Many years ago at St. Michael's Monastery "D" was asked a question by Passionist Father Colman Healy: "Are you satisfied with your life?"

And he has just answered it, "Yes, more than satisfied."

Thank you Fr. Damian for your humanity, your understanding, your guidance and your love.