

“Giving Drink to the Thirsty”

By Sir Stephen Zabilski, KCHS (Phoenix)

“Aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I thirst.’” (John 19:28)

These two simple words, “I thirst,” extend to each of us—to every man, woman, and child—and not simply to the one billion people in today’s world who do not have regular access to clean water. For just as Jesus was referring to the physical thirst from which he was suffering on the cross, he was equally referring to his spiritual thirst for the salvation of all people.

It is this latter thirst—a thirst to provide love and kindness and compassion to our brothers and sisters, a thirst for meaning in our lives, a thirst for truth—that unites each of us with Jesus, particularly in this Holy Year of Mercy when we are asked, among other things, to give drink to the thirsty.

When we see a homeless man on the side of the street with a cardboard sign containing the scrawled printed words, “Will Work for Food,” do we not thirst to ease his burden?

When we discover the single mother, working two minimum wage jobs in order to provide her young children with life’s most basic necessities, do we not thirst to assist her in this struggle?

When a close friend informs us his wife is dying of cancer, or that his daughter is addicted to drugs and lives on the streets, or that he recently lost his management job after 25 years of service, do we not thirst, not only for the right words of comfort but also for the wisdom to know what to do?

I thirst: Occasionally for water, but daily for meaning.

I thirst: For the recognition of my other self within all those I encounter.

I thirst: For my personal salvation, for the salvation of my family and friends, and for the salvation of all people.

I thirst: To translate the Gospel into action; to become closer to one another; to be united with Christ. For as St. Augustine teaches us, “Our hearts are restless Lord, until they rest in thee.”

I thirst: The common bond that unites each follower of Christ.

I thirst.