



In the toughest moments of our lives, the comfort of the word comes through, as this priest vividly explains

Each day is a gift — and at least for me, **the experiences during the day can be seen through the lens of three types of moments: tough moments, teaching moments, and tender moments.**

Tough moments usually are the ones that catch me by surprise. They tend to be bittersweet — and God can use these moments to make me grow in faith and love for Him.

On May 31, 1995, in Rome, Italy, I was asked to leave my study time in the seminary to serve a Mass for Cardinal Poupard's 25th anniversary of his ordination to the Episcopate. It was a beautiful ceremony in a stunning church, the Basilica of St. Mary Major's, and for some reason during Holy Communion, I felt a strong desire to pray for my dad.

Upon returning to the seminary, I was told by the receptionist that the rector of the seminary needed to see me immediately. Within seconds of walking through his door, I could tell something was amiss.

“Br. Michael, your mother called an hour ago. She wanted you to know that your father just passed away from a blood clot. I have you booked on a flight back to Detroit first

thing tomorrow morning. I am sorry,” the rector said.

My heart pounded, my head hurt — and tears burst from my eyes. This was a tough but bittersweet moment, as I processed the fact that my dad had lived a faithful and devout life. **God was there in the moment to comfort me, strengthen me — and remind me of my own mortality.**

Teaching moments happen in everyday life. When I first arrived in New York City, I packed my schedule very tight, with little wiggle room between meetings. One day, I became hyper-focused on catching the 7:23 p.m. train out of Grand Central Terminal to Rye, New York — and made sure that my appointments ended on time so I could make my train.

As I was crossing 51st Street and Madison Avenue at 7:15 p.m., I heard the voices of two girls. They were speaking in Italian, and they called out and asked me for directions as I was approaching the sidewalk. They were holding several maps and looked confused. I knew this would take more than a minute or two. So I responded to them in Italian, “Sorry, but I need to catch the next train. I will pray for you!”

Right away, as I noticed their surprised, distraught faces, **the Holy Spirit told me I should have waited and patiently helped them.** I could have caught the next train — the 7:53 p.m. — without a problem. **I reflected that as a priest, I needed to be available to help people, even those with straightforward and practical questions. Jesus kindly but firmly reminded me of this truth** — and I have since adjusted to this timely teaching on the streets of New York City.

Tender moments — truly tender moments in which God floods our souls with His peace and love — do not happen often, but nothing in this world can come close when this does happen. During my college days at Michigan State, my buddies from Notre Dame and the University of Michigan got together at a retreat center in Ann Arbor for a weekend. Fr. Lorenzo Gomez, LC, directed the retreat and there were many powerful and inspiring moments during our prayer time.

During his final benediction, he blessed all of us in the chapel with Jesus in the monstrance on the altar. My soul was flooded with His light and peace — I recall feeling thoroughly happy.

**We should all take time at the end of each day to ask ourselves these questions:
What were the tough moments, and did I respond with a greater love for God?
What were the teaching moments, and have I adjusted my attitude or behavior?
What were the tender moments, and have I thanked God for these special nuggets
of His love?**

Every day is sacred and filled with God's action. Live it, learn from it — and love God in all things.

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