

Onofrio Modugno

It was a blistering day in the month of July and I was famished. It was 1995 and I was 50 years old with nothing to show for myself. Living on a teacher's salary, supporting my brother and mother while also attempting to support my school, I was far from wealthy. I sought money. I sought patience. I sought happiness. However, I began to lose sight of what past generations had taught me: that happiness and patience greatly exceeded any sort of monetary value. I worked at a catholic school, teaching history to two groups of kids: "the know it all's" and the "don't give a damn's". I knew something had to change. Being a catholic and knowing my faith, I would constantly joke about joining the Christian Brothers in search of true happiness. However, I knew I would be teaching the "disadvantaged" youth, I began to ponder the option must more seriously.

It was a difficult decision. I knew that right at that moment things had to change, but running away with the brothers to explore my faith was a risky move. Would my family of lenient Catholics support and accept this decision? Or would this crucial decision be the bane of my existence? However risky it may have been, I still decided it was the right thing to do. I talked to the officials and I was set to join in early August of the following year.

My early months with the group was definitely blindsided me. The way I taught was transformed, the amount of knowledge retained by the students was too extensive not to acknowledge, and the way my emotions turned around completely was incredible. I had felt that joining this "peaceful band of brothers" was the best thing I had ever done.

The image my family received (a family of non-Catholics) was the image of a dark cult, with black hooded-robos and human sacrifices. However, this farfetched imagination was anything but accurate. The brotherhood welcomed a fellow teacher with open arms, cheering my decision and issuing support every step of the way. I began to secede from "normal" life and surrounded myself with peace of mind and a solid infrastructure. I began traveling on the road to normalcy, bliss, and peace, all without the embers of greed kindling a flame of moxie inside my soul.

Whilst in the brotherhood my mind had been put through periods of exponential growth in nearly all aspects of my life. I had begun to realize that there was so much more to life than just being a slave to your job for a paycheck. One of my many brothers, Brother James, had taken an immense amount of time out of his cluttered schedule to teach me how to play classical guitar. As a child, one of my many dreams was to be a guitar player in an acoustic group, and now, with the help of my new Brothers, I was ready to seize the opportunity. I began to play, and at first the process was disappointing. But I knew that I had to start from somewhere, so I persevered through the struggles and became the best that I could be. I knew I was not the best who had ever lived, but that desire has seized to exist.

This experience of joining the Brotherhood was something that no bonus or raise could ever replace. I had learned the true meaning of life: to be happy. It had awakened my mind to realize that life was not a competition. Life was a gift I was given. I had successfully become the author of my fate and I was living it to the fullest extent.