Testimony

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Scrapyard Crosier Leads Man Back to Church After 40 Years

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"I always like to see what's new,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Jeff Helgeson found a bishop's crosier lying in a pile of scrap metal in 2025, and the discovery brought him back to the Catholic Church after 40 years away. Helgeson, 62, of New Richmond, Wisconsin, was delivering scrap metal for a manufacturing company when he spotted the golden staff in the brass section of a scrapyard in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

It was in pristine condition, untouched among the rust and bent metal around it, and he knew at once what it was.

He had not set foot in a church as a practising Catholic for four decades. Yet the moment he pulled the crosier from the pile, he recognised it - the hooked staff a bishop carries, the symbol of a shepherd guiding his flock.

He had seen one as a boy, serving at Mass in Fargo, North Dakota, while the late Bishop Justin Driscoll presided. Fourty years later, the shape of it came back to him in an instant.

Helgeson drives scrap metal to Saint Paul about once a month for the electric motor manufacturer he works for in Woodville, Wisconsin. While his truck is being unloaded, he likes to walk around the yard.

He found the crosier in March, during one of those routine drop-offs, following his usual habit of looking at what is new.

"I always like to see what's new," Helgeson said. "They have it separated with different metals. So, in the brass section, I saw this crosier."

The staff was bright gold, its hook holding an ornately fashioned cross, sticking up out of the brass pieces around it. Helgeson pulled it out of the pile and felt its weight and quality in his hands. It looked as though it had been thrown in there without a thought, and yet it was completely undamaged.

"It was absolutely in pristine condition," he said. "(It) defied my logic and how it could be undamaged in there. (It) looked like it was haphazardly thrown in there."

He went straight to the supervisor and asked if he could buy it. His words were simple, and they said everything about how he saw the thing in his hands.

"This does not belong here."

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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