

## PURGATORY

by Thomas A. Gosink, Scientist

The word "purgatory" appears nowhere in the Bible, but then neither does the word "trinity" which is accepted as basic doctrine by essentially all Christians.

Many Christians do not admit to the existence of purgatory. It seems they think that at death, one is immediately sent to heaven or hell. Indeed, for a small minority, that is the case. But what about the vast majority of souls?

### Pray For The Dead

In the Book of Maccabees, people are urged to pray for the dead (2 Macc 12:44). Now if the dead are in either heaven or hell, what would the purpose be to pray for them? Therefore, we must conclude that there is a temporary pre-heaven "place" we call purgatory.

Purgatory is the last merciful act by God to save a soul from eternal damnation. God is for us. He wants everyone's salvation.

God is a merciful Being. He is not bent on our destruction (hell), and is sorry to see the death (condemnation to hell) even of the truly wicked (e.g. Ez 18:23). Perhaps this mercy is what people sense, but then go off on a tangent, denying the existence of hell. We need to understand and accept both the mercy and justice aspects of purgatory.

### Visions

Numerous saints in the past and visionaries today, of many different denominations, have been given visions of heaven, hell, and purgatory, generally for the purpose of warning people that these places do exist.

Purgatory is seen as having many different levels of suffering. The lowest levels are said to be akin to hell, but all in its grips will

eventually be released. The upper levels of purgatory have been described as dismal places, ashen, drab, and sorrowful because the souls there now know that they could have been in heaven.

### Recent Reports

At Fatima, Our Lady mentioned heaven and purgatory, and spoke of and showed the children hell.

Saint Faustina, in the 1930's in Poland, has such a report amid her main ministry of reporting on the Mercy of God. The visionaries from Garabandal in Spain during the 1960's, and those at Medjugorje, from the 1980's to the present, mention seeing these places.

For many decades, Maria Simma, an Austrian who died recently in her late 80's, has had many visits by souls in purgatory, sent to her by God for our benefit.

She said: "No souls would want to come back from purgatory to our darkened earth. They have knowledge which is infinitely beyond ours. That is because they have briefly seen God and know with certitude that He exists. They are very willing to suffer in order to purge the stain of sin and bad habits that sully them. They would no more want to be in His Presence with the blot of sins, than one would go to a formal wedding in muddy shoes."

Maria Simma said: "The souls in purgatory do not have joy, but they do have hope." She said: "The average soul in purgatory spends the equivalent of 30 to 40 earth years there, but that some souls only make a brief pass through. On the other hand, there are a few who will be in purgatory until the end of time."

Our Lady at Fatima also said the same thing about the extreme length of time that some people will be in purgatory. They are powerless to help themselves anymore, and so rely on the prayers of the living.

Two questions then arise: 1) What is time? and 2), How long is it "until the end of time?"

In answer to the questions:

1) Time is a measure of motion, planetary motion — how long (minutes and hours) it takes the earth to complete one rotation (a day), and how long (weeks and months) it takes the earth to make a circuit around the sun (a year).

2) St. Peter tells us (2 Peter 3:10) that in the end "the elements will melt in a fervent heat." The calculation of this normal event has been within the purview of science for about 70 years.

When the sun begins to die, it will swell up and engulf the earth and other planets, thus ending earth days and years. That will occur in about 160 million years. That is an awfully long time to have to spend in purgatory (even just 30 years is long), especially when we do not have to go there at all!

### Try For The Narrow Gate

In the Gospel, Jesus advises us to try for the narrow door to heaven and to avoid "jail" where you will remain until the last penny is paid.

"He will sit refining and purifying, like silver." (Mal 3:3)

"Lose no time, settle with your opponent while on your way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the guard, who will throw you in prison. I warn you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny." (Matt 5:25-26; 18:34, Luke 12:58-59)

We are all members of the fallen human race and have long since been found guilty. Let us settle with our opponent now, for in the presence of God, there can be no vestige of sin.

The judge is Jesus, the Messiah (John 5:22), who has arranged full pardon, ...if we admit our guilt, seek reconciliation, and accept Him as our Lord and Savior. +++

# God Spoke Within

by Del Jones

My job is to keep my stretch of I-80 clear in a blizzard; however, one time that changed my life, I was told that I was needed elsewhere on the road.

Most people who live where I do, in Scranton, PA, see winter snowstorms as threatening. Or worse, go 20 miles outside the city and you are in hilly country. The snow covers the roads like a lumpy white comforter. They get slick and dangerous. Accidents can happen. I know. My job is to clear the roads and keep them safe, and help with emergencies.

I drive a snow truck for the Pennsylvania DOT. One of those huge yellow dump trucks filled with salt, with a snowplow attached in front. I am up high, in a cab 10 feet in the air. I have been doing it for 20 years. I love the work. It keeps me outside, with no boss hovering over me and it gives me the chance to run heavy equipment... a perfect recipe for me... except on a January afternoon of 2004, when I needed some emergency help of my own.

## I Went Out Alone

I had gotten the noon to 8:00 p.m. shift. Usually we work in pairs, two trucks together. That afternoon, however, since the snow was not coming down too heavily, the foreman sent me out alone. There is a regular stretch that I am responsible for: 30 miles of highway ramps and shoulders along I-81.

I went through the usual safety check: wipers, oil, motor, fan belt, coolant, air brakes, plow... and then rumbled onto the interstate. More than 80,000 vehicles passed daily through my section, and already in some places three inches covered the road, and more snow was falling

I plowed, spread salt. Plowed, spread more salt. The going was slow... and also nerve-wracking. Traffic all around, most of it moving much faster than I was. I checked to be sure my emergency lights and blinkers were on.

As I often do when I am under pressure, I thought of my father-in-law, Joe Santos. Back when I was in my twenties and had some wildness in me, Joe had tried to point me in the right direction. He encouraged me to take this job. It was the best decision I ever made.

The guys on the crew were solid citizens, and my boss was a good man. Together with Joe, they kind of mentored me. I grew up and learned responsibility. Joe was proud. "I think God wants you to have this job," he said.

## I Started Going To Church

I didn't know why. I had never been a particularly godly man, though lately because of Joe, I had started going to church. Joe always saw the best in people, as he had seen in me. One day after services, I asked him, "How can a man be sure he is doing the right thing?"

"Listen for God's guidance," he said.

"But how will I know when I hear it?"

"You just will."

Joe's words were with me as I headed south down I-81, clearing and salting the ramps and shoulders. One section worried me. At the point where I-81 and the Central Scranton Exp. converge, there is a spot where snow always drifts. I neared it. Not as much snow had gathered as I had feared. Still, it had to be plowed.

I got the truck ready... but something stopped me. Maybe it was that traffic was moving well and I was needed elsewhere. Maybe it was that I was a little nervous about driving so slowly in poor visibility with fast-moving vehicles zipping around me. I had had my own close brush with a highway accident. My truck once spun out on an icy road while carrying 15 tons of salt, barely missing a car.

## I Heard A Voice

What should I do? I was trying to figure it out when *I heard a voice inside my head*. "Go north," it said, clear as a bell. I sat still in my truck, straining to hear the message again. "Who is that talking to me?" I said to myself.

"Go north," the voice repeated. I could not get it out of my head. I did something I had never done. I raised the plow, exited the highway, entered

back on the north side of I-81 and went back to work. I figured I would get to that last southern stretch later. Dusk was 45 minutes away.

The snow fell hard, then slackened. The sun tried to peek through the sky. I rolled slowly along the shoulder, doing my work.

## Skid Marks... A Tail light!!

In front of me, I spotted tire tracks near the guardrail. They are skid marks, I thought. I peered into the ditch below. A red glint caught my eye. A tail light! Down at the bottom of the embankment, at the edge of the trees! The setting sun shone on it like a spotlight. *I never would have seen it if I had not been on my 10-foot-high perch*. No one seated lower, in a car or truck, would have seen it at all.

I parked the truck and ran down the slope. A wrecked car! It had plunged down the embankment. Its doors were flung open. It lay twisted over a frozen creek bed. A man was wedged beneath the car. He did not even have on a coat!

"Please help me," he said. His right leg jutted out from beneath the vehicle. I could see from the leg's bent angle that it was badly broken. I pulled off my coat and wrapped it around his chest and shoulders.

## I'll Call For Help

"I am afraid to move you," I said. "I am going to call for help."

"Don't leave me," he begged weakly.

"My truck is right up there, parked on the shoulder," I said. "I won't be long. I promise."

I raced up the embankment and radioed my supervisor for help. When I knew an ambulance was coming, I ran back downhill to the trapped driver.

"I am so glad you are back," he said, hoarsely. "I have been lying here for hours, screaming for someone to help me." I knew no one could have heard him above the whine of the highway. His lips and face were bluish white. From time to time he would shiver violently. I crawled under the car and started asking him questions to keep him engaged, to keep him from passing out.

"My name's Del Jones. What's yours?"

"Ed Fox."

"How did this happen?"

"Another car went into a skid and forced me off the road," he said. He had been on his way to East Stroudsburg University to deliver a lecture. I asked if he had family. That is when he broke down.

"I have a wife, Clare, and four kids. I thought I would never see them again," he said.

Help arrived in 20 minutes. Ed had more than a badly broken leg. His ankle and hip were fractured, as well. An EMS technician told me they had reached him just in time. Ed had lost the pulse in his leg.

Ed called me from the hospital a few days later. "You have no idea *how hard I was praying* for somebody to find me," he said. "The doctors said if you had not come along when you did, I would not have survived the night."

That is when I broke down, a big guy like me. I knew what my father-in-law had been trying to tell me: that godliness is everywhere, *just as long as you listen*, even in the cab of a snow truck. +++

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## Giving All

by Fr. Edwin J Duffy  
from *Fr. Duffy's Reflections*, p. 123

I read of a missionary whose residence was infested by crocodiles. He spent most of his nights sleeping in a tree. Cardinal Cushing once remarked, "As a class of people, missionaries are the most impressive people in the world."

Not only is the missionary a holier person, he is a happier person, even when he is suffering the most painful hardships. Why? Because he has learned and mastered the ultimate secret that God has revealed to us — the secret of giving.

The missionary gives everything and gives it spontaneously. He gives not because he expects to receive, but because giving is the essence of love — and love is the true meaning of God. +++

# The Miraculous Medal

from *A Pocket Full Of Miracles*, p. 14

Because I was nothing, God chose me." Those were the words of Catherine Laboure, an uneducated but devout Sister of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

On the night of July 18, 1830, she was awakened by her Guardian Angel and led to an appointment with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Catherine had come to the convent from a large rural family in Burgundy, France. Her life was not easy. For a long time, her father was opposed to her vocation, and after taking her vows, she was generally unpopular with the other nuns. She was considered stand-offish.

Unknown to most others, she was a mystic. She had visions of the heart of St. Vincent de Paul, and of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The night that her Angel led her to the chapel, Our Lady spoke to Catherine for two hours, and alluded to a task that the nun would be required to undertake.

Several months later, in a second apparition, Catherine saw a vision of Mary which would become world famous: Our Lady stood on a globe, rays of light streaming from Her hands, surrounded by the words,

*"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee."*

After the third vision, Catherine told her confessor that the Blessed Mother wished a medal struck, and a devotion inaugurated to the Immaculate Conception. The priest consulted the Archbishop of Paris, and the medal was minted in 1832.

### Jewish Convert Becomes a Priest

Immediately people began claiming favors and miracles obtained through the devotion. In 1836, the Archbishop approved the devotion and the effectiveness of the medal.

The miracle which led to papal approval of the visions and the use

of the Miraculous Medal was a religious conversion.

Alphonse Ratisbonne, a wealthy Jewish attorney and banker from Alsace, was fiercely anti-Christian. When his beloved brother, Theodore, became a Catholic, and moreover even became a Catholic priest, Alphonse disowned him. As a result, Alphonse vehemently hated all Catholics and the Catholic Church.

### Prayers and Sacrifices

After prayers and sacrifices by Theodore and some friends, in Rome in 1842, in the church of St. Andrea della Fratte, Alphonse Ratisbonne had a vision of Our Lady as She appeared on the Miraculous Medal. He instantly understood everything about the Holy Roman Catholic faith and begged for baptism.

He was baptized two weeks later. Then he became a priest, as well, and spent the rest of his life working tirelessly for the conversion of Jews to the Roman Catholic faith, founding several Religious Orders for that purpose.

### Lived Simple and Unknown

Catherine Laboure lived as a simple nun for 47 years after her visions of the Medal. Her own Sisters did not know that she was the nun to whom Our Lady had appeared. Although they knew that it had happened in their convent, they never suspected the simple and quiet Catherine to be the nun of the apparitions. And, Catherine was happy with that.

Only on her deathbed was it revealed to her Superior, and this, only because The Blessed Mother had made one more request that still needed to be fulfilled... the request that a certain statue of Our Lady be erected and venerated in the convent chapel. It eventually was.

Catherine's incorrupt body can be seen today in that same chapel at the Rue du Bac in Paris, near the beautiful statue that Our Lady had requested. Saint Catherine was canonized in 1947. +++

# *What Happened in Akita, Japan*

from *God-Sent* by Roy Varghese

The main events in Akita, Japan, occurred between 1973-81. Sister Agnes Sasagawa (born 1931) entered the convent of the Institute of the Handmaids of the Eucharist in Akita, Japan, on May 12, 1973. Not long before, she had lost her hearing.

A month after joining the order, she came to the convent chapel to adore the Eucharist. Upon opening the tabernacle door, she was astounded to see a light brighter than the sun coming from within, and prostrated herself before it. She witnessed the same phenomenon on several subsequent occasions when she came to the chapel.

She also saw "spiritual beings" worshiping the Holy Eucharist. She reported these experiences to Bishop John Ito, the bishop of Niigata, the diocese to which Akita belonged, and he advised her to be open but cautious.

## **Receives the Stigmata**

Later in the month, Agnes discovered that she was receiving the stigmata. On Thursdays, the palm of her left hand would start to hurt and on the next day a red cross would form on it. On Sunday, she would be healed and the pain would go away.

At 3:00 a.m. on the morning of July 6, she saw a beautiful person in the chapel, her guardian angel, who told her, "Be not afraid. Pray with fervor, not only because of your sins, but in reparation for those of all people.

"The world today wounds the most Sacred Heart of Our Lord by its ingratitude and injuries. The wounds of Mary are much deeper and more sorrowful than yours. Let us go to pray together in the chapel."

After the angel disappeared, Sr. Agnes saw that a three-foot-high

wooden statue of the Virgin in the chapel was blazing with light. The statue was modeled on the image of the Virgin as She appeared in Amsterdam in 1945 (*Our Lady of All Nations*).

## **Our Lady Speaks**

The statue spoke to Sr. Agnes and asked her to pray in reparation for the sins of humanity, and to follow her superior. After this apparition, Agnes and the other nuns found that there was a wound in the palm of the statue, which continued to bleed until Sunday.

On July 26, the pain from Sr. Agnes's wound was almost unbearable. Again, her angel said to her, "Your sufferings will end today. Carefully engrave in the depth of your heart the thought of the blood of Mary.

"The blood shed by Mary has a profound meaning. This precious blood was shed to ask your conversion, to ask for peace, and in reparation for the ingratitude and the outrages against the Lord.

"As with devotion to the Sacred Heart, apply yourself to devotion to the most Precious Blood. Pray in reparation for all men. Say to your superior (Bishop Ito) that the blood is shed today for the last time. Your pain also ends today.

"Tell them what happened today. He will understand all immediately. And you, observe his directions." The angel then disappeared and Sr. Agnes noticed that the pain from her wound had subsided.

## **God Preparing a Chastisement**

On August 3, Agnes again heard from the statue. The Virgin told her that the Heavenly Father was preparing a great chastisement for the world. She asked for prayer and penance.

On September 29, the statue stopped bleeding, but tears started flowing down its cheeks.

## **The Last Message**

On October 13, Sister Agnes received her last message from the

Virgin. Sr. Agnes was told that God the Father would inflict a terrible punishment on humanity, that fire would fall from the sky and wipe out a good portion of humanity, and that the devil would infiltrate the Church.

## **Blessed Mother Loves Japan**

In May 1974, her guardian angel told Agnes that her hearing would be temporarily restored, and then permanently cured later.

On October 13 of that year, Agnes regained her hearing, but by March of 1975, she had lost it yet again.

At the end of 1975, the angel told her, "Do not be so surprised to see the Blessed Virgin weeping. She weeps because She wishes the conversion of the greatest number. She desires that souls be consecrated to Jesus, and to the Father, by Her intercession.

"He who directs you told you during the last sermon today: Your faith diminishes when you do not see. It is because your faith is weak.

"The Blessed Virgin rejoices in the consecration of Japan to Her Immaculate Heart because She loves Japan. But, She is sad to see that this devotion is not taken seriously.

"Even though She has chosen this land of Akita to give Her messages, the local pastor does not dare to come for fear of what one would say.

"Do not be afraid. The Blessed Virgin awaits you all."

## **Statue Wept 101 Times**

Meanwhile the statue continued to weep on certain given days, and by September 15, 1981, the last time this happened, it had shed tears a total of 101 times.

The angel said that the number 101 signifies that sin came into the world by a woman, and it is also by a woman that salvation came into the world. The zero between the two signifies the Eternal God Who is from all eternity until eternity. The first one represents Eve, and the last, the Virgin Mary. +++

## St. John Berchmans

from *A Pocket Full of Miracles*, p. 20

There may be only one shrine in the U.S. situated on the exact spot where a miracle occurred. Today it is a chapel, but in 1866 it was an infirmary — the convent infirmary of the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau, Louisiana.

On December 14, 1866, Sacred Heart novice Mary Wilson lay on what was presumed to be her death-bed. A convert to Catholicism at the age of 16, Mary had joined the Society of the Sacred Heart as a postulant in St. Louis, Missouri, earlier that year.

Her health was poor. She suffered from a debilitating pain in her side, and frequently vomited blood. She had no appetite. Tuberculosis was suspected, but the doctor in St. Louis could find nothing the matter with her lungs. "The doctor added," Mary Wilson recalled, "that I could not be cured as long as I remained in this climate."

The Society graciously moved Mary to Grand Coteau, where she entered the novitiate in September. However, the hoped for improvement in her health did not occur.

### Sufferings Were Intense

By mid-October she was bed-ridden again. "My sufferings were intense," she wrote, "and I lay unconscious for twelve hours."

By the first week of December, no one, including herself, expected her to recover. She had received the last sacraments, and her Sisters kept a prayer vigil at her bedside. One of the Sisters, Mother Moran, prayed in particular to Blessed John Berchmans, asking his intercession for a cure.

### Newly Beatified

John Berchmans (1599-1621), had been beatified just the year before by Pope Pius IX, and devotion to him was popular. Berchmans was a Flemish youth noted for his holiness.

As a teenager he had joined the Jesuits, and traveled to Rome to study philosophy. His quiet, unassuming spirituality is reminiscent today of the "little way" of St. Therese of Lisieux.

"My greatest penance," Berchmans said, "is common life."

John Berchmans died tragically young in 1621, and although he would not be beatified for two centuries, devotion to him sprang up immediately as a patron of youth, particularly altar boys and those studying for religious life.

The novice who lay dying in 1866 knew of Blessed John, and joined in her Sisters' petition. "Lord," she prayed, "Thou Who seest how I suffer, if it be for thy honor and glory and for the salvation of my soul, I ask, through the intercession of Blessed John Berchmans, a little relief and health."

### Standing By My Bedside

Mary Wilson would later describe for investigators what happened on December 14. "Then, standing by my bedside, I saw a figure. He held in his hands a cup, and there were some lights near him. At this beautiful sight, I was afraid.

I closed my eyes and asked: 'Is it Blessed Berchmans?'

He answered: 'Yes, I come by the order of God. Your sufferings are over. Fear not.'

Mary Wilson opened her eyes and sat up in bed. She felt no pain. By the evening she was walking. The next day she indulged a hearty appetite and was visited by her doctor, who was astonished at her condition and declared that no human means could have wrought such a change.

In due course the miracle was investigated, documented, and approved. Blessed John Berchmans was canonized in 1888. However, Mary Wilson did not live to see the ceremony.

Only a month after her cure, she received another vision of Blessed John, and was told she would not live to complete her novitiate. She died of a stroke on the eve of the Assumption, 1867. +++

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# A Holy Kiss

by Dr. Rosalie Turton

In my Roman Catholic *Holy Bible* from the ancient Eastern text, taken from the Aramaic of the Peshitta, in *Romans 16:16*, it says, "Salute one another with a holy kiss." In another version of the Roman Catholic *Holy Bible*, called *The Way*, printed by Our Sunday Visitor, (my favorite bible, and one that I think is translated particularly for youth and college age folks, because it is very easy to understand), *Romans 16:16* says, "Shake hands warmly with each other."

In either case, the Bible tells us to touch a fellow wanderer on this earth.

Why shake hands or embrace a friend with a holy kiss? Because smiles and touching seem to have a great salutary effect. I believe that it is actually affection from others which mankind needs, in order to be happy.

That action says, "I love you. I accept you. I am happy to see you. Your presence delights me. You are cared for, I enjoy you"... and mankind surely needs that affirmation. It brings about a smile, joy, and the good feeling that one is wanted and loved.

You see, mankind needs to be loved. I dare say that loneliness and suicide may often be a result of feeling unworthy, unwanted, and unloved.

## The Power Of A Smile

I once read of a man who was driving toward a high bridge, so that when he got there, he could jump off and commit suicide. On the way, he stopped for a red light, and a little old lady, using a walker and with a worried frown upon her face, was slowly and painfully trying to get across the street as quickly as she could manage.

He waved to her, indicating that she should not try to hurry... that he was happy to wait for her to cross. A big, broad, and bright smile came

across her face toward him, as her head bobbed gratefully for his patience. After she had passed, he turned around and went home, saying to himself, "I'm not so bad, after all."

## I Accept You As You Are

Embracing a friend or a relative, says, "I love you, and I accept you as you are. With all your faults and failings, I still want to give you a welcome hug to show you that you are like family to me, and that I enjoy being with you."

In Europe and other countries, it is often the custom in greeting friends and family to kiss BOTH cheeks of the face, one side after the other. It is great.

## The Joy Of Family

And, why do we like being with family so much? It is because we accept each other for what we are. We know we are not perfect, but we want to help each other, to stand by each other in case of need, to care for each other, and to have others to love.

Why do we end letters with, "Love" or "Love you?" First of all, because WE DO, and secondly, because we know that our loved ones NEED to know they are loved.

## No Living Blood Relative!

I read recently that if current trends continue, by mid-century, many adults will live in a society without having a single living blood relative. We have always heard that "blood runs thicker than water." It is true. Can you imagine what kind of a world it would be without having one living blood relative? Think about it.

Some people right now are living in that situation, and it is often brought about by employment mobility. Some people have living relatives, but, usually because of distances, they do not "know" each other anymore. They might not even recognize each other if they were passing each other on the street. Love is lost!

While in the U.S., Mother Teresa said that the greatest poverty here is loneliness. How many elderly and sickly persons rarely or infrequently have a relative pay a visit to them? Too many, I am afraid.

## "Love One Another"

Is it any wonder why John the Evangelist, who was *the beloved disciple*, repeated over and over again, "Love one another. Love one another." After loving God, it is His greatest commandment, and it sums up all the others. One's quality of life depends upon it.

## The Physiology And Theology Of The Hug

Dr. Donald DeMarco recently wrote about Kyrie and Brielle Jackson, who were born on Oct. 17, 1995, a full 12 weeks ahead of their due date.

The standard practice at The Medical Center of Central Massachusetts in Worcester, where the twins came into the world, was to place them in separate incubators in order to reduce the risk of infection.

Kyrie's birth weight was 2 pounds 3 ounces. She gained weight quickly and slept calmly. Brielle, however, three ounces lighter than her sister, had breathing and heart-rate problems. The oxygen level in her blood was low, and her weight gain was slow.

On Nov. 12, tiny Brielle went into critical condition. Her stick-thin arms and legs turned bluish-gray as she gasped for air. Her heart rate soared. The Jackson parents watched, terrified that their little daughter might die.

## A Desperate Moment

It is said that desperate moments call for desperate measures. Nurse Gayle Kasparian, after exhausting all the conventional remedies, decided to try a procedure that was common in parts of Europe but virtually unknown in the United States. With parental permission, she placed the twins in the same bed.

No sooner had she closed the incubator door, than Brielle snuggled up to Kyrie and began to calm down. Within minutes, her blood-oxygen readings improved. As she dozed, Kyrie wrapped her left arm around her smaller sister. Brielle's heart rate stabilized and her temperature rose to normal.

In due time, the twins went home. Their parents placed them, once again, in the same bed where they continued to thrive. Even after five years, according to mom and dad, the twins still sleep together and, not surprisingly, still snuggle.

The photograph of Kyrie hugging her little sister, dubbed the "Rescuing Hug," appeared in both *Life* magazine and *Reader's Digest*. It brought fame to the pair and spurred a growing interest in co-bedding premature twins, triplets, and quads.

The University of Massachusetts Memorial Hospital, for example, has co-bedded at least 100 sets of multiple birth preemies. Observing this practice over a period of five years, the hospital staff there has not found a single case of twin-to-twin infection.

In addition, clinical studies have shown that premature twins enjoy substantial benefits when they are placed in the same bed together.

One researcher, Mary Whalen, reports the following benefits: 1) decreased number of apnea problems, 2) improved blood-oxygen levels, 3) increased weight gain, 4) better feeding, 5) greater temperature regulation, 6) decreased agitation, 7) decreased length of hospital stays, and 8) decreased likelihood of readmission.

Someone has said that we need four hugs, strokes, or touches a day for survival, eight for maintenance, and 12 for growth. This may not be mathematically accurate, but it does illuminate a truth about human beings: "I touch, therefore, we are," is infinitely more revealing of human nature than, "I think, therefore, I am." Science tells us that hugging is healthy in a variety of ways. It strengthens our immune system, reduces stress, assists sleep, and is an antidote to depression.

Researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill state that cuddling with your spouse can be good for your blood pressure.

Kathleen Keating may not tell us everything we want to know about the mutual benefits of hugging in her book, *The Hug Therapy*, but she does make it clear that hugging can be wonderfully therapeutic in a variety of ways for people of all ages.

The word "miraculous" is often associated with the benefits of hugging. It would seem that the word "natural" would be more suitable. After all, we are naturally constituted with bodies.

And, it is through our bodies that we come into contact with the outside world and the people who inhabit it. And, it is by means of our bodies that we come to understand who we are as embodied persons.

### **Every Human Being, Our Neighbor**

Consider what Pope John Paul II, author of the *Theology of the Body*, has said about how we function as human persons: "As human beings, we are capable of participating in the very humanity of other people, and because of this, every human being can be our neighbor... The Gospel also suggests this by using not the word other, but the word neighbor."

We adults are often blind to the obvious. Sometimes it takes two premature infants (young enough to be dispatched through abortion as unwanted others) to remind us of what kind of beings we are, and that we are primarily natured to each other precisely as neighbors. Yet we are embodied neighbors.

Through hugs and handshakes, smiles and squeezes, touches and tickles, kisses and cuddles, we honor and affirm one another. This is not something we need to learn. Brielle and Kyrie knew this long before they were conscious of it. But it is something we may need to re-learn, and surely something we should never forget.

Participation reveals more truly the most fundamental dynamic of

our human nature. Unfortunately, we are caught up in the frenzy of individualization, and as a result, sometimes forget who we really are. In trying to secure our "right" to be an individual, we can easily lose sight of the more basic fact that we are persons whose destiny is to live and love on the interpersonal horizon of giving and receiving.

Little baby Kyrie's hug encircles everyone of us, reminding us in the most gentle of manners, that we are called to participate through love in the lives of all our neighbors.

### **Be Healthy And Happy**

I suppose that I would be satisfied with 2 bear-hugs a day, and I heard that everyone needs that much to be healthy. Well, why not! It is also fun.

So, do what the Bible says, and greet each other with a holy kiss or a warm shaking of the hand. It is the touching that matters.

Try it, and see what happens. *You will be bringing joy into the world around you, and most of all, you will be healthier and happier yourself.*

Obey the Bible, for Scripture is the inspired Word of God. It works. Be happy. Love one another. +++

### ***A Smile***

*A smile is quite a funny thing.*

*It wrinkles up your face.*

*And when its gone, you never find,*

*Its secret hiding place.*

*But far more wonderful it is,*

*To see what smiles can do.*

*You smile at one, he smiles at you.*

*And so, one smile makes two.*

*He smiles at someone since you smiled,*

*And that one smiles right back,*

*And that one, too, smiles until in truth,*

*You fail in keeping track.*

*And since a smile can do great good,*

*By cheering hearts of care,*

*Let's smile, and smile, and not forget,*

*That smiles go everywhere.*

## *I Know Something Good About You*

*Wouldn't this old world be better  
If the folks we meet would say,  
"I know something good about you!"  
And then treat us just that way?*

*Wouldn't it be fine and dandy  
If each handclasp warm and true  
Carried with it this assurance,  
"I know something good about you!"*

*Wouldn't life be lots more happy,  
If the good that's in us all  
Were the only thing about us  
That folks bothered to recall?*

*Wouldn't life be lots more happy,  
If we praised the good we see?—  
For there's such a lot of goodness  
In the worst of you and me.*

*Wouldn't it be nice to practice  
That fine way of thinking, too?—  
You know something good about me!  
I know something good about you!*



In Akita, Japan, on September 28, 1981, Sister Agnes suddenly felt the presence of the Angel at her side during the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. She did not see the Angel in person, but a Bible appeared open before her eyes and she was invited to read a passage (Genesis 3:15)...the voice of the Angel was heard explaining in sort of a preamble that the passage had relationship with the tears of Mary, then continued:

*"There is a meaning to the figure one hundred and one. This signifies that sin came into the world by a woman and it is also by a woman that salvation came to the world. The zero between the two signifies the Eternal God Who is from all eternity until eternity. The first one represents Eve, the last the Virgin Mary."*+++

# Pilgrimage Program:

SEND FOR COMPLETE ITINERARIES

**Medjugorje & Prague** — Mon., March 6 to Wed., March 15, 2006 (10 days), \$1298. (One day in Prague.) +++

**Betania, Venezuela** — Tues., March 21, to Mon. March 27, 2006, (7 days) \$1689. We will be there for the March 25 anniversary celebration. +++

**Fatima** — Tues., April 18, to Tues., April 25, 2006 (8 days) \$1399. Visit **Aljustral, Lisbon, Santarem, Coimbra, Fatima, Ourem**, and the Shrine of Our Lady of Nazareth at **Nazare**. +++

Shrines of **Italy** — Wed., May 8, to Fri., May 24, 2006 (17 days) \$2899. Visit **Milan, San Damiano, Montichiari, Fontanelle** (Rosa Mystica), **Padua, Venice, Florence, Siena, Cotrona, Assisi, Loreto, Osimo, San Giovanni Rotondo, St. Michael's Cave, Pietrelcina, Mugnano** (St. Philomena), **Pompeii, Rome, & Civitavecchia**. +++

**Fatima** — **Marian Conference and Retreat**. (Topic: *Our Lady and the Reality of Heaven, Hell, & Purgatory*.) **International guest speakers**. Fri., July 7, to Friday, July 14, 2006 (8 days), \$1799 (Land only, \$1299.) July 13 anniversary celebration. +++

**Fatima and Lourdes** — Thur., July 20 to Sat., Aug. 5, 2006 (18 days) \$2799. Our most popular pilgrimage. Feast Day visit to **Santiago Compostella** (Shrine of St. James), **Pontevedra, Zaragosa, Avila, Braga, Santarem, Covadonga, Fatima, Ovieto, Lourdes, Garabandal, etc.** +++

**Ireland** — Sat., Aug. 12, to Thurs., Aug. 24, 2006 (13 days) \$2198. **Knock, Inchigeela, Ballinspittle, Melleray Grotto, Attymass** (Fr. Patrick Peyton), **Achill House of Prayer, Dublin**, visionaries Mary Casey, & Tom Lennon. +++

**Poland Shrine Tour** — Sat., June 10, to Fri., June 23, 2006 (14 days), \$2699. Includes **Warsaw, Zoliborz, Krakow** (Corpus Christi Procession), **Niapokalonow, Zakopane, Zelazowa Wola, Wagnivniki** (Divine Mercy Center), **Wadowice** (birthplace of John Paul II), **Kalwari Zebrzydowska**, and the beautiful Shrine at **Lechen**. +++

**France** — Mon., Sept 11, 2006, to Wed., Sept. 27 (17 days), \$2899. Visit **Paris, Chartres, Paray-le-Monial, La Salette, Ars, Chateaufeuf-de-Galaure St. Baume, Lisieux, Pellevoisin, Nevers, Lourdes, Normandie, Mont St. Michel, Pontmain, Carcasson & more.** +++

**Medjugorje & Prague** — Mon., Nov. 6 to Wed., Nov. 15, 2006 (10 days), \$1398. (One day in Prague.) +++

**Guadalupe, Mexico** — for Feast Day celebrations. Dec. 6 thru 13, 2006 (8 days) \$1399 (Land only, \$899). Feasts of the Immac. Concep., Juan Diego, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and visits to **Ocotlan, Puebla, St. Michael's Well, & Our Lady of Good Remedies**. +++

**WHITE MARTYRDOM PEACE FLIGHT**, Oct. 5 to Oct. 23, 2007, (19 days) \$3999 (if deposit is paid by 3/25/06). We visit Fatima, Rome, Turkey, Lebanon, the Holy Land, Medjugorje, & Lourdes. +++

**Germany, Austria, & Switzerland**— (Passion Play) **Ulm**, 2008, \$3399, **Oberammergau**, in 2010, \$3699. +++

*All pilgrimages include: priest on each bus, daily Mass & four Rosaries, breakfast & dinner, and a blue 101 jacket. Non-refundable deposit is \$150 per person.*

VISIT FATIMA HOUSE  
and the St. Joseph Great Room.  
Spend a few quiet days near the  
Blue Army Shrine in Washington, NJ.  
Call 101 Foundation for details.

Write for information regarding the  
**Garabandal** Miracle Flight.

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