

Wojtyla & Edyta

from *International Herald Tribune*,
4/6/05, by Roger Cohen

During the summer of 1942, two women in Krakow, Poland, were denounced as Jews, taken to the city's prison, held there for a few months and then sent to the Belzec death camp, where in October they were killed in primitive Nazi gas chambers by the carbon monoxide from diesel engines. Their names were Frimeta Gelband and Salomea Zierer; they were sisters.

As it happens, Frimeta was my wife's grandmother. Salomea, known as "Salla," had two daughters, one of whom survived the war and one of whom did not. The elder of these daughters was Edith Zierer.

She Could Barely Walk

In January 1945, at age 13, Edith emerged from a Nazi labor camp in Czestochowa, Poland, a waif on the verge of death. Separated from her family, unaware that her mother had been killed by the Germans, she could scarcely walk.

But walk she did, to a train station, where she climbed onto a coal wagon. The train moved slowly; the wind cut through her.

When the cold became too much to bear, she got off at a village called Jdrzejow, and sat in a corner of the station. Nobody looked at her, a girl in the striped and numbered uniform of a prisoner, late in this terrible war.

Unable to move, Edith waited. Death was approaching, but a young man approached first, "very good looking," as she recalled, and "vigorous." He wore a long robe, and appeared to be a priest.

"Why are you here?" he asked. "What are you doing?"

Edith said she was trying to get to Krakow to find her parents. The man disappeared. He came back with a cup of tea. Edith drank. He said he could help her get to Krakow. Again the mysterious benefactor went away, returning with bread and cheese.

They talked about the advancing Soviet Army. Edith said she believed that her parents and younger sister, Judith, were alive. "Try to stand," the man said. Edith tried and failed. He carried her to another village, where he put her in the cattle car of a train bound for Krakow. Another family was there. The man got in beside Edith, covered her with his cloak and made a small fire.

His name, he told Edith, was Karol Wojtyla. Although she took him for a priest, he was still a seminarian who would not be ordained until the next year.

Transform The World

Thirty-three more years would pass before he became Pope John Paul II, and embarked on a papacy that would help break the Communist hold on Central Europe and so transform the world.

What moved this young seminarian to save the life of a lost Jewish girl cannot be known. But it is clear that his was an act of humanity made as the two great mass movements of the 20th century, the twin totalitarianisms of Fascism and Communism, bore down on his nation, Poland.

Here were two people in a ravaged land, a 24-year-old Catholic and a 13-year-old Jew. The future pope had already lost his mother, brother, and father. Edith, although she did not know it yet, had already lost her mother at Belzec, her father at Maidanek, and her little sister at Auschwitz. They could not have been more alone.

Pope John Paul II is widely viewed as having been a man of unshakable convictions that some

found old-fashioned or rigid. But perhaps he offered his truth with the same simplicity and directness he showed in proffering tea, bread, and shelter from cold to an abandoned Jewish girl in 1945, when nobody was watching.

It was based in the belief that, as he once put it, "a degradation, indeed a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human being" was at the root of the mass movements of the 20th century towards Communism and Fascism. Stalin once contemptuously asked, "How many divisions has the pope?" Starting with his 1979 visit to Poland, John Paul gave an answer.

Acts Of Courage

Perhaps the strength that enabled him to play a central role in ending Communism, and the strength that led him to save Edith Zierer, did not differ fundamentally. Like his healing ecumenism, those acts required the courage born of a core certitude.

Edith fled from Karol Wojtyla when they arrived at Krakow in 1945. The family on the train, also Jews, had warned her that he might take her off to "the cloisters." She recalls him calling out, "Edyta, Edyta!" the Polish form of her name, as she hid behind large containers of milk.

But hiding was not forgetting. She wrote his name in a diary, her savior, and in 1978, when she read in a copy of *Paris-Match* that he had become pope, she broke into tears. By then, Edith Zierer was in Haifa, Israel, where she now lives.

Letters to him went unanswered. But at last, in 1997, she received a letter from the Vatican in which the pope recalled their meeting. A year later they met again at the Vatican. Edith thanked the pope for saving her. He put one hand on her head, another hand in hers, and blessed her. As she parted, he said, "Come back, my child." +++

Our Lord & Sister Betrone

by Dr. Rosalie Turton

Sr. Consolata Betrone, was born in 1903 and died in 1946. She was a Capuchin nun in a convent in Turin, Italy. During the last 15 years of her life, Jesus appeared to her many times, giving her a special and simple mission for the world.

Our Lord called it “The Littlest Act of Love,” founded on the framework of a simple act of love: “Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save Souls!”

Frankly, I always pray, “Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I love You. Save Souls.” I do not think that He minds that I added Joseph to this powerful little ejaculation. But, you pray it as you prefer. *JUST PRAY IT!*

Powerful Book

Also, if you can, do read the book of Jesus’s messages to Sr. Consolata, *Jesus Appeals to the World*, written by Fr. Lorenzo Sales. It is tremendously inspiring.

Acts Of Love

The following are excerpts from Our Lord’s words to Sr. Consolata:

“I prefer one act of love to all other prayers. ‘Jesus, Mary, I love You, Save Souls!’ includes all souls... the souls in Purgatory, as well as those in the militant Church, the guilty as well as the innocent, the dying, and the Godless!

“Think: One act of love can determine eternal happiness for a soul. Therefore, be careful never to omit one ‘Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save Souls!’ Lose no time; every act of love is a soul!

“One ‘Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save Souls!’ atones for many thousands of blasphemies.

“Put together all virtuous acts of today that you can perform, and place them next to a day of uninterrupted acts of love — and I will take the love-filled day in preference to anything else you have done or offered Me. ‘Jesus,

Mary, I love You. Save Souls!’ — here-with you offer Me everything.

“I prefer an act of love, and a Communion of love, to any other gift which souls can offer Me! Yes, an act of love is better than discipline, for I thirst for love. Poor souls! They think that in order to reach Me it is necessary to live an austere, penitential life. See how they misrepresent Me. They make Me out to be feared, whereas I am kindness itself. Today, as yesterday and tomorrow, I ask only and always for love from my poor creatures.

“After you have prayed your last ‘Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save Souls!’ I will accept it, and through your writings, I will make it accessible to millions of souls. Even sinners will take it up and will follow you in the simple way of trust and love, and will love Me in this way.”

The Power Of It

(Awhile back, the following article was written by Fr. Bernard McWilliams, c.SS.R.):

“This is for you,” said the young assistant parish priest as he entered the dining room. He deposited a thick packet of leaflets alongside the senior missionary.

“A woman in the parish wants you to take up this leaflet and give a copy to all those who are attending the mission.”

“We’ll see,” said the missionary. He took one of the leaflets from the packet and began to read. As he did so, he chuckled quietly to himself.

“Listen to this,” he said. “Think. One act of love can determine eternal happiness for a soul. Try to say often: ‘Jesus, Mary; I love You. Save Souls!’ Lose no time. Every act of love may mean saving a soul.”

“Well, Monsignor, guess you do not need us around here to preach the Word of God. Just get these people to say this little prayer, and every soul in your parish will be saved in no time.” The Monsignor chuckled as he took one of the leaflets.

“Some people,” he said, “will believe one verse like this more firmly than all the verses of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John put together.”

A phone rang somewhere. A moment later, the parish secretary entered to

inform the senior missionary that he was wanted on the phone.

The missionary excused himself, and left the room. As he went to the phone, he reflected on how satisfying the lunch had been, and how pleasant it would be to take a short nap before going over to the church for the long afternoon of confessions.

Wants To Go To Confession

“This is Father Smith,” he announced into the phone.

“Father,” said a woman on the other end, “there is a young man who wants to go to Confession this afternoon at two o’clock. Could you be in the church at that time?”

“Well,” said the missionary, “I will be taking care of a rather important matter at that time. Couldn’t he come at the regular time?”

“No,” she replied, “his employer will not let him come at any other time. And, Father, he really needs to go to Confession.”

“Okay, I will be there,” said Father.

After a very brief nap, he went over to the church and entered the confessional. A moment later, a man came in and began to unfold a long and sordid tale of sin.

Give Thanks For The Mission

Later, when the man had finished telling his sins, the missionary pondered for a moment on the great power a mission has, for drawing the inner self back to God.

“You must give thanks,” he murmured to the penitent, “for the special grace of repentance that God has give you during the parish mission.”

“I don’t understand, Father.”

“Don’t understand what?”

“This mission you are talking about. What is that?”

“The preaching we have been doing here this week. You mean that you have not been attending the services?”

“No, Father.”

“Well, then, how did you get here after all these years?”

“Father, there is this woman who has been talking to me the last few days. A nice woman. She gave me one of her leaflets. You may have seen them, Father. There was this prayer

on it, 'Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save Souls!'

"This woman said she was saying the prayer for me, and I should go and make my peace with the Lord... so I dumped the rest of the Scotch I was drinking down the drain, and here I am."

The missionary, reflecting humbly on this unusual conversion, went back to the rectory.

Afterward he returned to the confessional. For two hours, the missionary listened to people tell how the mission had flooded their thoughts with grace and brought genuine tears of repentance. "This is more like it," he said to himself.

Then came one person who seemed particularly repentant. There were ugly slimy things that were dredged up from the depths of a sinful past. In the voice of the penitent, the priest could sense the titanic struggle to overcome a deep feeling of shame. When it was all over, he said to the penitent:

"You must give thanks to God for the great graces of the mission."

"Well, Father, I hate to disillusion you, but I am not here because of the mission."

"No?"

"No. I made a mission five years ago and at the time I was determined to go to Confession. But I lost my nerve at the very end. Three years ago I made another mission. Incidentally, you were one of the missionaries. The same thing happened.

"Oh, I agreed with the preacher that some day I would be judged when there was no longer any mercy to be had. I was convinced that it would be much better for me to make my confession then and there; to throw myself on God's infinite mercy while there was still time.

"But the last day of the mission came and went, and I still could not bring myself to go to Confession. And now this mission!

"All this week I have been trying to get up my nerve. I have even stood in the confessional line at night, and then walked away before it was my turn.

"So you know what I did? This afternoon I sat before Our Lady's shrine, and said to Her: 'I am not leaving this spot until I get the grace to go into the box.'

"I had been sitting there for two hours when a lady came up to me and handed me this leaflet. Do you want me to read it to you, Father?"

"No," said the missionary, "I know all about it!" +++

Amputated Leg Restored

(This incident was related in the book, *The Miracle* by Vittorio Messori, the famous writer whom Pope John Paul II chose as his interviewer for the book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*.)

It happened on March 29, 1640 in Calanda, a village of the Spanish region of Aragon. That evening, through the intercession of Our Lady of Saragosa, a young farmer suddenly got his right leg back, which had been amputated more than two years before!!

The entire village witnessed the fact, and only a few hours after the miracle, a legal document was prepared by a notary. A few months later, the Archbishop of Saragosa opened an austere trial, during which dozens of testimonies were heard. Not only do we have before us a unique event, but we have confirmation of what Mary can obtain from Her Son.

We Can See The Mural

Each year, on the 101 pilgrimage in July and August to Fatima and Lourdes, we stop at the majestic Cathedral in Zaragoza, where there is a large mural of this great miracle.

In this Cathedral, there is also the pillar which Our Lady stood upon when She appeared to the apostle St. James, the brother of St. John, in approximately seven AD. This may have been Mary's first reported bilocation.

To everyone's delight, the pillar gives off a delicate and sweet fragrance which everyone is able to detect. To breathe it in, somehow brings joy into one's heart. Our Lady is truly a wonder worker! +++

Flight Into Egypt

from *Children of Medjugorje*
by Sister Emmanuel

Let me share something I learned in Egypt. To my surprise, it seems that the Holy Family had a difficult itinerary when they fled to Egypt.

Like many others Jews had done, I believed that Saint Joseph had found work among the few local Jews there, but this does not seem to be the case.

In actuality, in order not to be spotted by Herod's soldiers, the Holy Family had to constantly hide and move about. They were isolated and lacked everything.

They travelled more than 2000 kilometres in the most precarious conditions, suffering from hunger, thirst, extreme heat, scorn, and insecurity in all its forms. Their situation was not even up to refugee standards, because they had to remain silent and anonymous. It was extremely difficult.

Tradition has it that the Holy Family had remained in Egypt for almost four years. This tells us what training Our Lady, the Queen of Peace received during Her first years as a Mother. It also shows us how our world treated the Son of God in His early years, and how He was treated during His lifetime, even to His death on the Cross!

Such sacrifices on the part of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus are heart-breaking. In view of what They did for us, how can we refuse Them our meager but loving prayers and sacrifices? In the same way, how can we take lightly the precious messages from God through Mary, which She lived out Herself to the extreme, when on earth.

It is time to live the Medjugorje messages. Pray, fast, and begin to work towards saving your soul, and the souls of others. Do you really think that you have so much time left, that you can afford to wait till "later" to change your life? +++

The Odor of Sanctity

from *Meet Padre Pio*, pp. 83-84
by Patricia Treece

Among the accusations during the first decade after Padre Pio received the visible stigmata, was that he (most unsuitably for a friar) used perfume. In time, it became understood that what people sometimes (not always) smelled around Pio, was not something from a bottle. It was instead often an odor emanating from his blood.

Dr. Giorgio Festa, who wrote extensively from firsthand study on the stigmata of Padre Pio, once took cloths saturated with blood from Pio's stigmatic wounds with him when he drove back to Rome. Blood rapidly becomes putrid with a foul odor, but for a long time these cloths gave off a wonderful perfume that filled, not only the car Festa drove, but also the office in Rome where they were stored.

Indicates an Unseen Presence

Naturally inexplicable perfumes also seemed to indicate the unseen presence of Padre Pio among his many spiritual children by the phenomena of bilocation. For instance, one of Pio's converts, after meeting the stigmatist, adopted the habit of beginning work at his typewriter with the Sign of the Cross. One day when he forgot, he immediately smelled an odor for which he could find no natural cause. He recognized it as a smell connected to Pio and told his family, most of whom smelled it as well, that the Padre had "come" to give him a friendly reminder not to forget to pray when he started to work.

Various Fragrances

This phenomenon, known as the odor of sanctity, was not, in Pio's case, always the same. Some people, even at the same moment, smelled a flowery perfume; others smelled

incense; others... "fine tobacco"; and still others... nothing. Whatever the odor, it always heralded some grace given through the prayer intercession of Padre Pio.

A certain nun, who had written the overwhelmed stigmatic priest several times about some concerns without receiving an answer, woke one night to this odor. She immediately sensed that Pio was there in some way, assuring her that he had taken her prayer requests to heart. From that moment, she felt herself borne along on a great current of peace... a grace much more important than the perfume that had signaled it.

Years later, after his death, testimonies of favors and graces received by people who asked for Padre Pio's prayer intercession would sometimes mention wonderful perfumes that had no possible human source. +++

Sam's Change

by Denis Nolan
from *Children of Medjugorje*, 7/15/03

Our Lady's primary message is Her presence in Medjugorje!

Years ago, I remember Sam Belardinella coming up to me after I had finished speaking to a group about Our Lady's apparitions in Medjugorje. "It is easy for you to talk. I am a poor barber. I do not make enough money to pay my taxes every year. Where am I going to get the money for a plane ticket to Medjugorje?"

"Sam, just ask Mary," I remember saying. "And, if She does not give you a ticket, Jesus will be so excited someone is paying attention, He will give it to you Himself!"

It Happened!

TWO WEEKS LATER SAM CAME UP TO ME WITH A SHOCKED LOOK ON HIS FACE. HE WAS HOLDING A LETTER IN HIS HAND FROM MARK BAVARO, TIGHT END FOR

THE NEW YORK GIANTS. (Sam used to cut his hair when he played football as a student at Notre Dame.)

Mark and his wife were planning to go to Medjugorje, the letter said, but his wife, Suzie, was now pregnant and they could not make the trip. Their two Rosaries were in the envelope.

The letter said, "Sam, would you please do this favor for me! Of course, I will understand if you cannot. Here is a check for \$2000. Would you and your wife please go to Medjugorje and take our Rosaries there so that they can get blessed by our Blessed Mother!" And, so it happened.

Life Has Changed

Upon returning from Medjugorje Sam installed a statue of Our Lady in his barber shop and forbade the telling of any improper jokes or stories. From then on, his barber shop belonged to Our Lady!

Sam will tell you that before his pilgrimage to Medjugorje, if he had had a choice between flying his pigeons on Sunday, or going to Mass, he would fly pigeons. That has all changed.

It has been 15 years now since that trip to Medjugorje, and not only has Sam attended Mass every Sunday, but since his return, he has faithfully served every morning as the altar boy at his parish's 6:45 a.m. weekday Mass!

Sam changed. Perhaps you should make some changes in your life as well. Think about it, and think about a way to act upon it. Find a way to keep improving each day of your life. That is why God is still giving you time... in order for you to make changes. (Be ye perfect, as ye Heavenly Father is perfect) *Mat. 5:48*.

Yes, make some changes. It is time to stop flying the pigeons, and go to Mass... everyday, if you can. Do it while you still have the time. Start with twice a week, then three times, and then more. Make a day without receiving Christ an imperfect day, an incomplete day, a day where your Treasure has not been found. Make some changes *now*. +++

A Prayer Answered

by Cherie Herrera

Living in Fiji, I couldn't argue with the superlatives used to describe the South Pacific jewel where my parents were stationed. What 17-year-old would not be awed by the beauty of the crystal-clear water, the lushness of the palm trees and sugarcane fields, and the fragrance of soft tropical breezes?

Then came the beginning of the long wet season in November. The daily soaking rains wore on my nerves. Worse, though, was the violence of the tropical gales that could strike the islands at any time. The sound of the rain pounding on the tin roof was deafening, and our wooden house shuddered.

One afternoon at about three p.m., lightning flashed and thunder crashed. Still, I kept washing the lunch dishes. I was determined not to let the storm get to me.

The Urge To Step Back

Then something unexplainable came over me. Stop. Get away. I had to step back from the sink. Just then, there was a thunderclap so loud it drowned out my terrified scream. All the lightbulbs in the house exploded and the microwave blew up. The air reeked of acrid smoke.

The storm over, Dad went outside to inspect the house. The roof was still fine, but our water tank was damaged. Lightning had hit it, sending electric current throughout our pipes and wires. I remembered my fear, and how I stepped suddenly away from the sink.

The very next day my grandmother telephoned us from back home in Cincinnati. "Are you all okay?" she asked. "My friend Donna called. She was upset. She woke up at ten o'clock at night with a terrible sense that you were in danger. She had an overwhelming urge to pray for you."

Ten at night? That would have been around three in the after-

noon in Fiji, right after lunch, when the storm hit. Just before Grandma hung up, she said, "Oh, there's one more thing. Donna told me that she prayed specifically. Over and over, she felt compelled to pray, 'Don't put your hands in the water.'"

Half a world away, God gave someone the urge to pray for me, and because of those prayers, He gave me a warning.

When you feel an urge to pray for someone, understand that it is a grace and a generous gift from the Holy Spirit. Be sure to do it immediately. Never underestimate the power of prayer. I know, because someone's prayer saved my life. +++

Two Kinds of People

by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

There are two kinds of people on earth today. Just two kinds of people, no more, I say.

Not the sinner and the saint, for it's well understood, the good are half bad, and the bad are half good.

Not the rich and the poor, for to rate a man's wealth, you must first know the state of his conscience and health. No; the two kinds of people on earth I mean, are the people who lift, and the people who lean.

In which class are you? Are you easing the load, of overtaxed lifters who toil down the road?

Or are you the leaner, who have others share, your portion of labor, and worry and care?

The man who prays, lifts those who fall, and makes things happen for the good of all.

The man who prays not, must lean on the others. He doesn't respond to God's call to help brothers.

Lift up your brother, and you will rise, too. God's promise of that is certainly true.

Become a lifter, not a leaner; leave those who don't pray, and join the lifters, who bless everyone's day. +++

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On the Ice

by Chet Mostue, Denver, CO

Life is full of stress, even for us ministers. Everyone has his own way of coping. Me, I fish. I will fish any time of the year; it does not matter. It is a good, safe way to unwind... usually.

Pastoring a church may not sound like a high-stress job, but I am here to tell you it can be, especially when the church operates a day-care center and a school that goes from kindergarten to twelfth grade, like our Christian Fellowship of Denver.

Juggling budgets and meeting with state certifications, as well as preparing a weekly sermon and performing counseling duties, can really take a bite out of your peace of mind. Things feel like they are spinning out of control around here sometimes. That is when I grab my tackle box.

It was a Thursday last January when a few other men and I gathered at the church parking lot in the shivering predawn dark. We piled into my van for the two hour drive across I-70 to a little icefishing spot that I had discovered tucked away on the sprawling plains of eastern Colorado, about 60 miles shy of the Kansas border.

Unseasonable Warm Day

The forecast called for sun and spring-like temperatures. But, in the dead of winter, I felt certain the ice would hold solid, even on an unseasonably warm day.

We were five that day: me; Dean; Charlie; Charlie's dad, Jim; and Reggie. Except for Jim, the others are all members of my church... and Reggie is my best friend. He joined our congregation about 10 years ago, and the minute I heard his rich baritone voice raised in praise, I knew he was special.

Our work was worlds apart; he was an ex-cop working as a security supervisor; but we grew close. Reggie, a soft-spoken man of few words, was the first person I called when I needed prayers, and vice-

versa. He had gone through a rough patch, with back problems and then a recent divorce.

I had been concerned for him. A few years older than me at age 47, he was just getting back on his feet.

The most important thing about these outings is not the fish; it is the fellowship. I had really wanted Reggie to come, and we had planned our ice fishing around his day off.

By the time we reached the lake, dawn was a rosy smear on the granite horizon. I gave Reggie a slap on the back as we grabbed our gear from the van, eager to get started.

About 200 yards from shore, we pull-started a gasoline-powered auger, punched some holes through the two-and-a-half-inch-thick ice, and settled in, each stationed at our own hole. A cracking wind whipped in off the Kansas prairie as the sun climbed high and bright in the morning sky.

Eventually I peeled down to my flannel shirt. The Colorado plain is more than 4000 feet above sea level. You feel the sun when it is out.

It beat down on the frozen lake and the ice threw off a blinding glare as the temperature rose. The fish were biting. My five-gallon pail was a quarter full by 10:30 a.m., when Reggie and Dean went off to check on a nearby pond to see if we could fish there later.

Dangerous Dark Ice

Forty-five minutes had passed when I spotted them returning across the lake. What got my attention was the dark ice beneath their feet. It was flexing, undulating like a big flag in a lazy breeze. The lake had grown deathly quiet... not a good sign.

Strong ice "sings." That is, it cracks and groans when it is thick. Weak ice is silent and dark when it begins to thin. We have got to get off this lake fast, I thought, snatching my gear.

"We had better go!" I shouted. Everyone collected what he could and started in. I had been fishing closest to shore, so I was maybe 75 yards in the lead, afraid even to

breathe. Every few seconds, I looked over my shoulder, making sure the others were keeping up.

Dean Disappeared!

About 30 yards from the bank, I glanced back to see Dean disappear through the ice. It was as if the lake swallowed him whole, the way a hungry fish takes bait. Then I saw his head bob up. He was sputtering and gasping, fighting to pull himself out. I quickened my pace, slipping and sliding. There was a good strong rope in the van, if I could only get there...

Really in a Fix!

Too late. The cold hit me like a sledge. I had fallen through! A dozen things shot to mind... thoughts of Debbie and our three girls, of my congregation, and the 375 students and teachers at our school. None of that seemed stressful now, just precious.

My head popped to the surface and the glare of the sun mirroring off the ice momentarily disoriented me. I got my bearings. Charlie and Reggie were in the water, too, thrashing desperately.

I had put my heavy coat back on. Now it felt like lead. Soaking wet, my felt-lined boots must have weighed 25 pounds each.

I am going under! With frigid fingers I fumbled for my Leatherman tool, and was able to open the largest blade. I dug it into the ice in front of me so I could hold on and keep afloat. But, there was no chance of pulling myself up. "Lord," I prayed, "I am really in a fix here."

I looked to see Charlie, the lightest man in our group, roll himself out of the water and back onto firm ice. He crawled onto a section of thicker white ice that was near where Dean went through. Charlie lay flat on his belly and stretched his arm out to Dean. "He will never do it, Lord. Dean must weigh 300 pounds wet. Help him."

Somehow Charlie was able to drag Dean out of the water onto the white ice. Charlie started over to

Reggie while Dean caught up to Jim, the only one who had not fallen through.

They continued toward shore urgently, but with 75 pounds of extra water weight, it was just a matter of time before Dean crashed through again, taking 66-year-old Jim with him.

My arms ached and my thoughts raced madly. Charlie tried to reach Reggie, but could not. Miraculously, Jim and Dean made it to shore.

"There is a rope in the van!" I yelled, barely able to gasp the words. Hold on, I told myself. Hold on till they get the rope. I could no longer feel my hands. My mind was clouding. How long had I been in the water? Ten minutes? Twelve? Too long!

Suddenly Dean was standing on the ice a few yards away. "Grab it!" he screamed, tossing me the rope. I held on for dear life. In a few minutes, I was out of the water and standing on dry land.

Go And Save Him!

But, Reggie was still battling for his life in the freezing water far out on the lake. My overwhelming instinct was to go and save him.

"You would be crazy," said Dean, nodding at my waterlogged clothes.

Dean, soaked to the bone, jumped into the van and tore off in the direction of a farmhouse, while Jim went back out with the rope. I watched as he and Charlie tried to reach Reggie again. The rope was too short. They could not get close enough without plunging through the ice.

I have to do something! I was a man of action, a man who took charge. Now my best friend was in trouble, and all I could do was stand on shore helplessly.

Helplessly? How many sermons had I preached about prayer being our first and last resort, our one true strength in times of terrible trouble? *What greater action is there but prayer?*

"Lord, that is my best friend out there. He must be getting real cold. Please warm him. Take away his fear and give him strength. Please, God,

keep Reggie alive until we can get him out."

I did not stop praying for a second. Even as I shivered uncontrollably, I prayed for Reggie's arms and legs and feet, for his hands and his face and his fingers, that the Lord keep them warm. I prayed for his body temperature not to fall. I asked God for help specifically, as I always counseled others to do.

I wished I could freeze time, for as the minutes sped by, Reggie's chances dimmed. We were miles from help. No radio. No phone.

"Lord, don't let him die!..."

Suddenly, a red blip appeared against the snow-washed background. Then another. Then a whole cluster. Fire-and-rescue vehicles! Someone had gotten through for help!

Another Prayer Answered

Soon they had Reggie out of the water on the other side of the lake. They packed him in blankets, loaded him into the ambulance and, sirens wailing, roared off. We followed the van, heater blasting, as Dean explained he had gone to the farmhouse only to find it empty. He said, "I did not know what to do; then I saw a truck come up the road. It was the owner of the house. He is a wildlife officer. He got on his radio right away. Funny thing is, *he had not planned to come home*, but at the last second he decided he needed something."

At the hospital, Reggie greeted us with an exhausted smile. "Nice day for a swim, huh?" he joked. The twinkle in his eye told me he would be all right. We spent the next couple of hours alternately ribbing him and giving the Lord thanks for saving our lives.

Hospital workers warmed him with dry clothes, blankets, and coffee, before sending us on our way. Although he had been in the frigid water for 25 minutes, more than enough time for hypothermia to set in, Reggie's body temperature had dropped only two degrees. The doctors had no explanation for it.

But I did. It was the same ex-

planation for why the Colorado wildlife officer just happened to stop by his house that afternoon, and why Dean was able to make it off the thin ice, even though he weighed 300 pounds soaking wet. The Lord had kept an eye on us.

While driving back to Denver, I thought about how *prayer is often the most decisive action to be taken in any given situation*.

I had preached that message many times before, but now I had a chance to live it.

Heading home, I found life's stresses a little less daunting. My best friend was alive and well, my family and church were waiting for me, and God's protecting hand never felt firmer. +++

Christ's Chair

by Fr. Edwin J Duffy
from *Fr. Duffy's Reflections*, p. 140

I stand at the door and knock," says the Lord. "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with him, and he with Me" (Rev 3:20). I read where a family, taking those words of Christ seriously, placed a chair at the head of the dinner table and labeled it "Christ's chair."

A prayer is said at the beginning of the meal, begging Him to come to share and bless the evening dinner. The conversation is centered on Christ. Even the little ones have something to say and questions to ask. The father and mother answer the questions as best they can.

Grace After Meals

The awareness of Christ's presence has cut down on the squabbling and disputing of the teenagers. They are well-behaved. After saying grace after the meal and thanking God for His presence, each one touches the arm of Christ's chair asking for His blessing and protection. If only more and more families copied that example, what a beautiful blessing for the families and the nation! +++

“Knock on Wood”

from *The Spirit of Medjugorje*, 10/2005

by Carolanne Kilichowski, Librarian

Often people use the phrase, “knock on wood,” and proceed to do just that: knock on a table or a door, or whatever is handy. Most do not know that the origin of the phrase and practice comes from the Rosary.

Rosaries in the old days were mostly made out of oak wood, and were fingered in time of distress or trouble. Thus, holding on to, or rubbing the wooden Rosary or its wooden Crucifix when danger was near, became a common way for Christians to deal with hardships and difficulties. The practice slipped into the common saying as, “knock on wood.”

They were right... so do it. Nothing has changed. It is still an excellent remedy to alleviate all problems. Our Lady asks for it. Start “knocking” on the wood again, and experience its many benefits. +++



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 5 to Wed., March 14, 2007 (10 days), \$1499. (One day in Prague.) +++

Betania, Venezuela — Tues., March 20, to Mon. March 26, 2007, (7 days) \$1689. We will be there for the March 25 anniversary celebration. +++

Fatima — Mon., April 23, to Mon., April 30, 2007 (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 10, to Fri., May 26, 2006 (17 days) \$2899. Visit Milan, San Damiano, Montichiari, Fontanelle (Rosa Mystica), Padua, Venice, Florence, Siena, Cotrone, Assisi, Loreto, Osimo, San Giovanni Rotondo, St. Michael's Cave, Pietrelcina, Mugnano (St. Philomena), Pompeii, Rome, & Civitavecchia. +++

Poland Shrine Tour — Sat., June 10, to Fri., June 23, 2006 (14 days), \$2749. 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. +++

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, Ovieta, Lourdes, Garabandal, etc. +++

Ireland — Sat., Aug. 12, to Thurs., Aug. 24, 2006 (13 days) \$2399. Knock, Inchigeela, Ballinspittle, Melleray Grotto, Attymass (Fr. Patrick Peyton), Achill House of Prayer, Dublin, & time with visionary Tom Lennon. +++

France — Mon., Sept 11, 2006, to Wed., Sept. 27 (17 days), \$2899. Visit Paris, Chartres, Paray-le-Monial, La Salette, Ars, Chateauneuf-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), \$1499. (One day in Prague.) +++

Guadalupe, Mexico — for Feast Day celebrations. Dec. 6 thru 13, 2006 (8 days) \$1499 (Land only, \$1099). 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) \$4499 (if deposit is paid by 12/31/06). 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 the 101 Foundation for details.

Write for information regarding the
Garabandal Miracle Flight.

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