# LENTEN MEDITATION BOOKLET



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# **Lent 2024**

Dear Parish Family,

Each year we are call, as Christians, to the observance of a Holy Lent. Lent is the period of forty days before Easter where we attempt to focus on the life of Christ and our response to that life.

This booklet offers you a collection of stories, words or wisdom, and meditations that I hope will enhance your Lenten devotionals. There is one article for each of the forty days of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday.

All that is contained in this booklet is gleaned from a variety of sources.

I pray this booklet and its contents will be a blessing to you.

Faithfully,

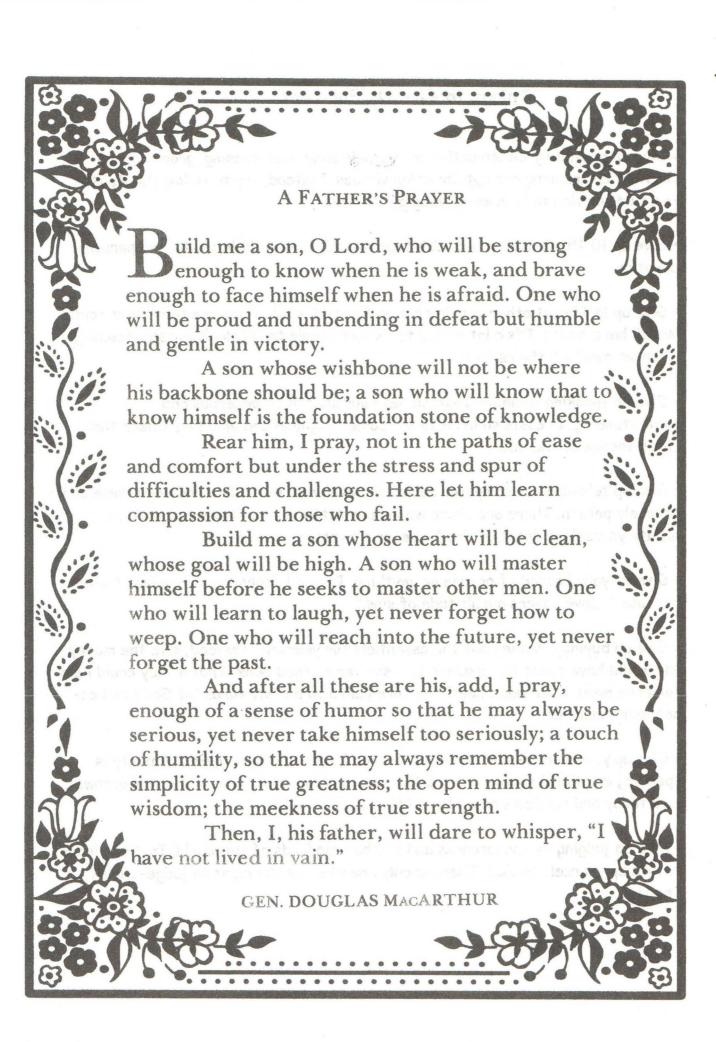
The Rev. Dr. James W. Hunter

James W. Hunter +

Interim Rector

# Things to Give Up For Lent

- + Give up grumbling. Constructive criticism is okay- but moaning, groaning, and constant complaining are <u>not</u> Christian virtues. Instead, try to follow the Apostle Paul's admonition to "...in everything give thanks."
- + Give up 10-15 minutes in bed. Use that time in prayer, Bible study, and personal devotion.
- + Give up looking at other people's flaws. Instead, concentrate on their best points. We all have faults. It's a lot easier to expect people to overlook our shortcomings-when we overlook theirs first.
- + Give up speaking unkindly. Instead, let your speech be generous and understanding. It costs so little to say something kind and uplifting. Check that sharp tongue at the door.
- + Give up television or computer games one evening a week. Instead, visit some sick or lonely person. There are those who are isolated due to illness or age. Why isolate yourself in front of the "tube" or a computer screen.
- + Give up your hatred of anyone or anything. Instead, learn the discipline of love because "....love covers a multitude of sins."
- + Give up buying anything but the essentials for yourself. Instead, give the money you would have spent for luxuries to a shelter or food bank. That money could help someone meet their basic needs. We are called to be "stewards" of God's richesnot just consumers.
- + Give up your worries and anxieties. Instead, entrust them to God. Anxiety is spending emotional energy on something we can do nothing about-like tomorrow. Live today and let God's grace be sufficient.
- + Give up judging by appearances and by the standards of the world. Instead, learn to give up yourself to God. There is only one who has the right to judge- Jesus Christ.



# The Pink Dress



There was this little girl sitting by herself in the park. Everyone passed by her and never stopped to see why she looked so sad.

Dressed in a worn pink dress, barefoot and dirty, the girl just sat and watched the people go by. She never tried to speak. She never said a word. Many people passed by her, but no one would stop. The next day I decided to go back to the park in curiosity to see if the little girl would still be there. Yes, she was there, right in the very spot where she was yesterday, and still with the same sad look in her eyes. Today I was to make my own move and walk over to the little girl. For as we all know, a park full of strange people is not a place for young children to play alone. As I got closer I could see the back of the little girl's dress. It was grotesquely shaped. I figured that was the reason people just passed by and made no effort to speak to her. Deformities are a low blow to our society and, heaven forbid if you make a step toward assisting someone who is different. As I got closer, the little girl lowered her eyes slightly to avoid my intent stare. As I approached her, I could see the shape of her back more clearly. She was grotesquely shaped in a humped over form. I smiled to let her know it was OK; I was there to help, to talk. I sat down beside her and opened with a simple, 'Hello'. The little girl acted shocked, and stammered a 'Hi '; after a long stare into my eyes. I smiled and she shyly smiled back. We talked until darkness fell and the park was completely empty. I asked the girl why she was so sad. The little girl looked at me with a sad face said, 'Because, I'm different...' I immediately said, 'That you are!' and smiled. The little girl acted even sadder and said, 'I know.' 'Little girl,' I said, 'you remind me of an angel, sweet and innocent.' She looked at me and smiled, then slowly she got to her feet and said, 'Really?' 'Yes, you're like a little Guardian Angel sent to watch over all the people walking by.' She nodded her head yes, and smiled. With that she opened the back of her pink dress and allowed her wings to spread, then she said 'I am.' 'I'm your Guardian Angel,' with a twinkle in her eye. I was speechless -- sure I was seeing things. She said, 'For once you thought of someone other than yourself. My job here is done'. I got to my feet and said, 'Wait, why did no one stop to help an Angel?' She looked at me, smiled, and said, 'You're the only one that could see me,' and then she was gone. And with that, my life was changed dramatically. So, when you think you're all you have, remember, your angel is always watching over you.

### When Life Gives You Lemons......

As a young lady, Anna Mary Robertson worked as a hired hand on a farm. While there she met (and later married) another hired hand, named Tom Moses. They eventually moved to a farm of their own and raised ten children. Anna loved to do needlework, but as she became older, her hands were stiffened with arthritis.

Finally, at the age of 80, she was no longer able to handle an embroidery needle, so she decided to try painting instead. She discovered she could handle a paintbrush more easily and so she began to paint pictures- mostly farm and country scenes and landscapes.

One day, a New York City art collector was passing through her small hometown and saw some of Anna's pictures displayed in a local drugstore window. The rest (as they say) is history. Beginning at age 80, "Grandma" Moses (as she came to be called) painted more than 1,500 paintings. Twenty five percent (nearly four hundred of them) were painted after she turned 100! She had developed an international following.

Why? Because her hands were stiffened with arthritis and she could no longer do something she loved- embroidery. Life is hard. But those who learn to accept that fact and plunge on with determination....move from simply coping with hardships to conquering them. Anna Mary Robertson (Grandma Moses) knew that.



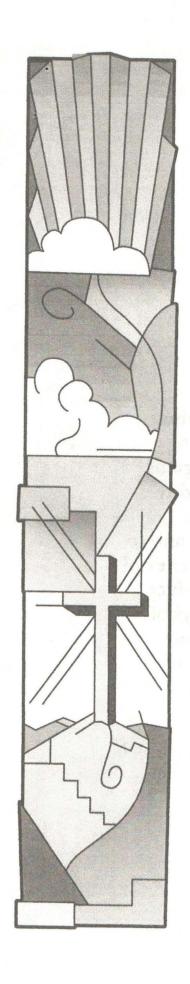
ho can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. . . . Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

# **Let's Make Beautiful Music Together!**

A composer had a little granddaughter whom he just adored. One day he lifted her up on a piano bench so she could play a duet with him. Using two fingers, she pounded out the familiar "Chopsticks" while the composer stood behind her and improvised an accompaniment. She was delighted. So her proud grandfather set the whole thing down on paper. A friend of his, another composer, Franz List, added some variations and adapted the piece for a full orchestra. It was later played and recorded by the Columbia Symphony Orchestra. When her grandfather played a recording of the piece for her, the little squealed in great awe, "Was that me?"

God wants to make beautiful music with each of us. There are all kinds of masterpieces waiting to be written down and recorded. But, if any of us plays God's song, it will be because God in His grace, took the initiative. He made the first move. He placed us on a piano bench, put our fingers on the right keys and taught us His melody. How wonderful is the grace of God!





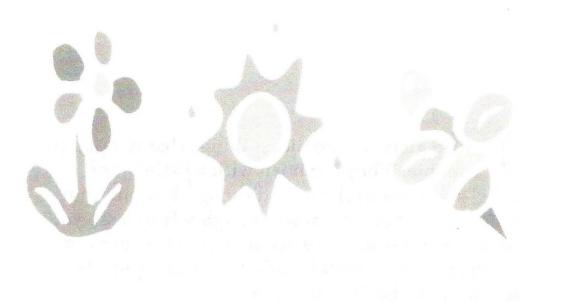
ittle girls are the nicest things that happen to people. They are born with a little bit of angel-shine about them, and though it wears thin sometimes, there is always enough left to lasso your heart—even when they are sitting in the mud, or crying temperamental tears, or parading up the street in Mother's best clothes.

A little girl can be sweeter (and badder) oftener than anyone else in the world. She can jitter around, and stomp, and make funny noises that frazzle your nerves, yet just when you open your mouth, she stands there demure with that special look in her eyes. A girl is Innocence playing in the mud, Beauty standing on its head, and Motherhood dragging a doll by the foot. . . .

Who else can cause you more grief, joy, irritation, satisfaction, embarrassment, and genuine delight than this combination of Eve, Salome, and Florence Nightingale? She can muss up your home, your hair, and your dignity—spend your money, your time, and your patience—and just when your temper is ready to crack, her sunshine peeks through and you've lost again.

Yes, she is a nerve-racking nuisance, just a noisy bundle of mischief. But when your dreams tumble down and the world is a mess—when it seems you are pretty much of a fool after all—she can make you a king when she climbs on your knee and whispers, "I love you best of all!"

ALAN BECK



Youth is the strategic time for laying the foundations for great living, for beginning worthwhile things, and for deciding in favor of God and religion. The great ethical and religious teachers of the race, and all who see life steadily and see it whole, are at one in this view of the matter. It is all right to rejoice in your youth and to thrill to "the wild joy of living," but, as the writer of Ecclesiastes insists, it is well to reflect on the fact of judgment and to remember God in the days of youth. If religion is good only for maturity and age, it is not good enough. If it is good at all, it must be good for all. It is the part of wisdom to seek it in youth.

WILLIAM O. CARRINGTON



To realize
The value of a sister
Ask someone
Who doesn't have one.

To realize
The value of ten years:
Ask a newly
Divorced couple.

To realize
The value of four years:
Ask a graduate.

To realize
The value of one year:
Ask a student who
Has failed a final exam.

To realize
The value of nine months:
Ask a mother who gave birth to a stillborn.

To realize
The value of one month:
Ask a mother
who has given birth to
A premature baby.

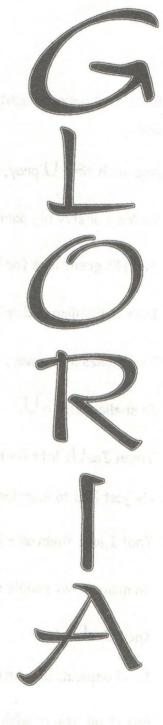
To realize
The value of one week:
Ask an editor of a weekly newspaper.

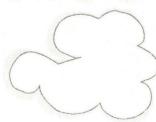
To realize
The value of one minute:
Ask a person
Who has missed the train, bus or plane.

To realize
The value of one-second:
Ask a person
Who has survived an accident.

Time waits for no one.

Treasure every moment you have.





# THE U IN JESUS

Before U were thought of and time had begun, God stuck U in the name of JesUs His Son...

And each time U pray, you'll see it's true, you can't spell out Jes Us and not include U.

You're a pretty big part of His wonderful name, for U, He was born: that's why He came.

And His great love for U is the reason He died. It even takes U to spell cr Ucified

Isn't it thrilling and splendidly grand He rose from the dead, with U in His plan?

The stones split away, the gold tr Umpet blew, and this word res Urrection

Is spelled with a U.

When JesUs left earth at His Upward ascension, He felt there was one thing

He just had to mention. "Go into the world and tell them it's true

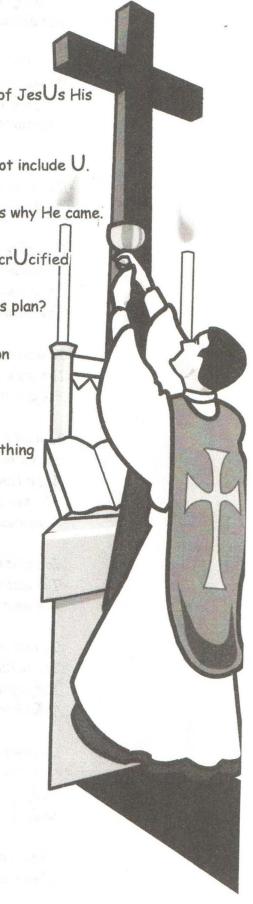
That I love them all - just like I love U."

So many great people are spelled with a U. Don't they have a right to

Know Jes Us too?

It all depends now on what U will do, He'd like them to know,

But it all starts with U.



# The Privilege of Giving

A Franciscan monk found and then kept a precious gemstone. A short time later, he met a beggar on the road. The monk was conflicted about possessing the gemstone, when this man so obviously needed it more and so he gave the beggar the gemstone. The beggar was stunned and just sat there amazed at his sudden good fortune. But the more he thought about it, the more he realized he lacked something else. He ran after the monk and said, "Sir, give me something that is more precious than this gemstone." "I have nothing more to give you, my friend," said the holy man. "Oh yes you do," replied the beggar. "Please give me whatever it was that moved you to give me this gemstone."

Imagine yourself in that story. If you were the monk, having just found the precious gemstone, would you have been willing to give it to the beggar? Or, perhaps another way to phrase that question is- "Would you be willing to take (that seriously) the command of Jesus to put other's needs ahead of your own?"

The monk gave freely what he had....a part of what was his. He was a servant of Christ and he gladly shared what he had out of obedience to his Lord. That was his conviction. It has been said that "For a true servant of Christ, it is not a burden, nor is it an obligation, to give to those who are need....it is a privilege."



#### **Jesus Knows**

A nine year old boy was sitting at his desk in his 3rd grade classroom when all of a sudden, there was a puddle between his feet and the front of his pants were wet. He was mortified. This hadn't happened to him since kindergarten and he knew that when the other boys and girls found out he had wet himself, there would be no end to their teasing.

The boy put his head down and prayed, "Dear God, this is an emergency! I need help right now because in a few minutes I'm going to be dead meat. Amen" When he looked up again, his teacher was coming toward him with a look in her eyes that said she knew what had happened. As the teacher neared his desk, a classmate (a girl named Susie) carrying a goldfish bowl full of water, suddenly tripped in front of the teacher and dumped the goldfish and the bowl of water on the boy's lap. The boy pretended to be angry, but all the while he was thinking, "Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus!"

Suddenly, the boy became the object of sympathy. The teacher rushed him downstairs and gave him gym shorts to wear while his pants dried out. All the children were on their hands and knees around his desk, cleaning up the mess. The sympathy was wonderful! But the ridicule that should have been his was now transferred to Susie. And as the day progressed, sympathy for the boy grew and Susie's ridicule grew worse.

After school, both were waiting for the school bus. Susie had been shunned by the other children. The boy walked over to her and said, "Susie, you spilled that water on me on purpose, didn't you?" Susie whispered back, "I wet my pants one time, too."

Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. He can sympathize with you. He knows what it's like to stub your toe, to be hungry and thirsty, and dirty and cold. He knows what it's like to be joyful and to be angry, to be sad, to be betrayed by a friend, to be frustrated in your purpose. He knows....he sympathizes....he understands.

**Billy Graham's Suit** 

Billy Graham is now 90 years old with Parkinson's disease. In January 2000, leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina, Invited their favorite son, Billy Graham, to a luncheon in His honor.

Billy initially hesitated to accept the invitation because he Struggles with Parkinson's disease. But the Charlotte Leaders said, 'We don't expect a major address. Just Come and let us honor you..' So he agreed..

After wonderful things were said about him, Dr. Graham
Stepped to the rostrum, looked at the crowd, and said,
'I'm reminded today of Albert Einstein, the great physicist who
This month has been honored by Time magazine as the
Man of the Century. Einstein was once traveling from
Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the
Aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he
Came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He
Couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets.
It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it.
Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.
The conductor said, 'Dr. Einstein, I know who you are.
We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket.

Don't worry about it.'
Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued
Down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to
Move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great
Physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his

Seat for his ticket.

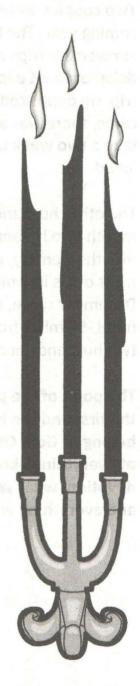
The conductor rushed back and said, 'Dr. Einstein,
Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are No problem.
You don't need a ticket.. I'm sure you bought one.'
Einstein looked at him and said, 'Young man, I too, know who I am.
What I don't know is where I'm going."

Having said that Billy Graham continued, 'See the suit I'm Wearing? It's a brand new suit. My children, and my grandchildren Are telling me I've gotten a little slovenly in my old age. I used to be A bit more fastidious. So I went out and bought a new suit for this Luncheon and one more occasion.

You know what that occasion is? This is the suit in which I'll be buried. But when you hear I'm dead, I don't want You to immediately remember the suit I'm wearing.

I want you to remember this:

I not only know who I am .. I also know where I'm going.'



"Life without God is like an unsharpened pencil - it has no point



# A Modern-Day Parable.

Two couples were going to be celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries in the coming year. The two husbands decided to honor their wives with expensive anniversary trips at the end of the year. The first husband set aside a specific dollar amount each month during the year to put in a fund for the anniversary trip. He deposited the money on the first day of each month. When December came, there was a very large amount of money saved up and they were able to take a two week trip to Hawaii. His wife, naturally, felt very honored and very loved.

The other husband had resolved to put "everything he had left" at the end of each month into his anniversary trip fund. The first month, he did fairly well. But as the months went by, unexpected expenses and spur-of-the-moment buying took most of his income, so he could only add a little bit each month to the fund. When December came, all that couple could afford was four days in a medium-priced hotel -50 miles from home. His wife was really disappointed. Now, which of the two husbands honored his wife more?

The point of the parable is that God doesn't deserve our leftovers. He deserves the first and the best. The Bible teaches again and again that the "first fruits" belong to God. Otherwise, He is not really our God This means the "first-fruits" of everything about us- our time, our talent, our treasure, our thoughts, our devotion, what we read, what we watch, what we listen to....every part of us and everything we do....the "first-fruits" belong to God.

Dear Lord,
Every single evening
As I'm lying here in bed,
This tiny little Prayer
Keeps running through my head:

God bless all my family
Wherever they may be,
Keep them warm
And safe from harm
For they're so close to me.

And God, there is one more thing
I wish that you could do;
Hope you don't mind me asking,
Please bless my computer too.

Now I know that it's unusual To Bless a motherboard, But listen just a second While I explain it to you, Lord.

You see, that little metal box Holds more than odds and ends; Inside those small compartments Rest so many of my friends.

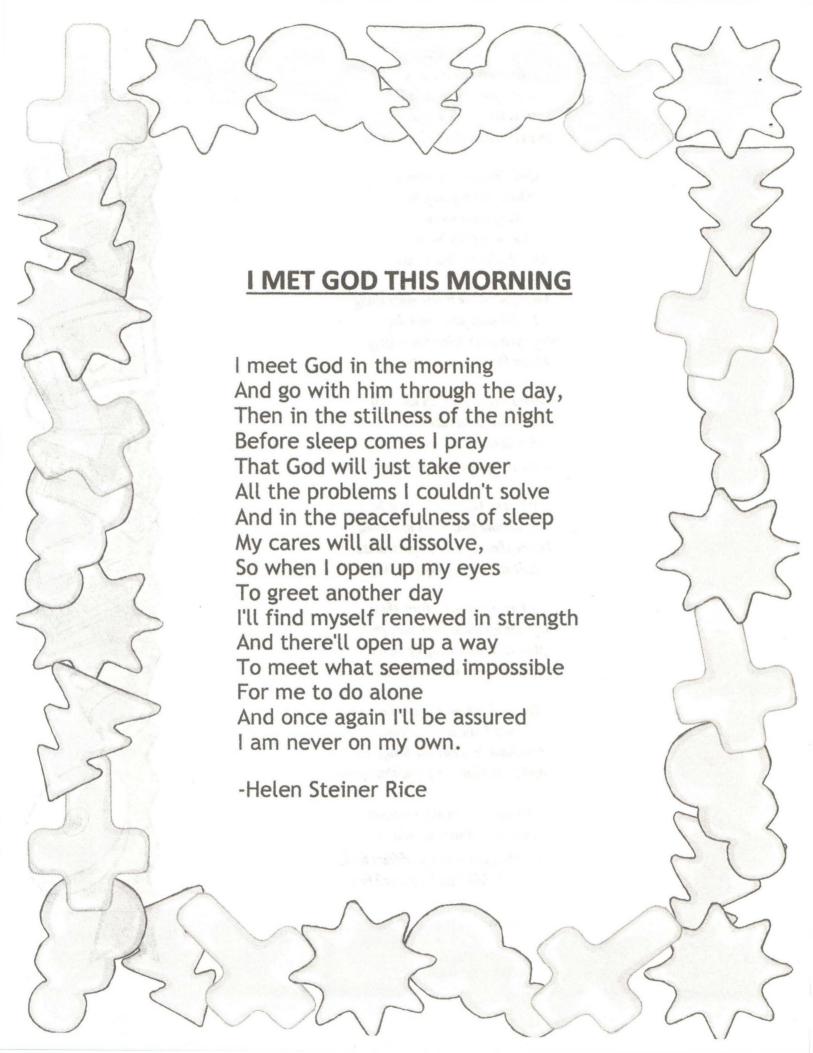
I know so much about them By the kindness that they give, And this little scrap of metal Take me in to where they live.

By faith is how I know them Much the same as you. We share in what life brings us And from that our friendships grew..

Please take an extra minute
From your duties up above,
To bless those in my address book
That's filled with so much love.

Amen





# HOPE

A small, remote Polish village had not been visited by a clockmaker for many years. After a while, the clocks in the village were all telling different times. Most villagers gave up on winding their useless clocks. Finally, a wandering clockmaker did show up. The villagers ran to him with their clocks to have them set and repaired. But the clocks had rusted and corroded from long years of disuse- except for one clock. Its owner had had wound it each day. Even though he knew it was not telling the right time, he remained hopeful that a clockmaker one day would come to the village and repair his clock.

The faithful Christian is like that one man. Hope is meant to be a glorious word....an exciting word. How glorious and how exciting it will be for us depends on whom or what we have placed our hope. As Christians, our hope rests on the promises of God. Our hope rests on His promise of unconditional love....His promise of constant care and protection....and maybe most of all, His promise of eternal life with Him. So, let us Hope!



#### LORD, PROP US UP...

Every time I am asked to pray, I think of the old fellow
who always prayed, 'Lord, prop us up on our leanin' side.'

After hearing him pray that prayer many times, someone
asked him why he prayed that prayer so fervently.

He answered, 'Well sir, you see, it's like this...

I got an old barn out back. It's been there a long time.

It's withstood a lot of weather. It's gone through a lot of storms

It's withstood a lot of weather. It's gone through a lot of storms, and it's stood for many years. It's still standin'.

But one day I noticed it was leaning
to one side a bit. So I went and got some pine poles
and propped it up on its leaning side so it wouldn't fall.
Then I got to thinking about that and how much I was
like that old barn.. I've been around a long time.

lot of bad weather in life, I've withstood a lot of hard times,

and I'm still standing too. But I find myself leaning

to one side from time to time, so I like to ask the Lord

to prop us up on our leaning side, 'cause I figure alot of us get to leaning at times.

I've withstood a lot of life's storms. I've withstood a

Sometimes we get to leaning toward anger,
leaning toward bitterness, leaning toward hatred,
leaning toward cussing, leaning toward a lot of things
that we shouldn't. So we need to pray,'Lord,
prop us up on our leaning side, so we will stand
straight and tall again, to glorify the you."

#### **EXPLANATION OF GOD:** (written by an 8 year old boy)

'One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grownups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.'

'God's second most important job is listening to prayers An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times beside bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because he hears everything, there must be a terrible lot of noise in his ears, unless he has thought of a way to turn it off.'

'God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting his time by going over your mom and dad's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.'

'Atheists are people who don't believe in God.I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church.'

'Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work, like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him. But he was good and kind, like his father, and he told his father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said O.K.'

'His dad (God) appreciated everything that he had done and all his hard work on earth so he told him he didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So he did. And now he helps his dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones he can take care of himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important.'

'You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to help you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.'

'You should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God!

Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong. And besides the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.'

'If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around you when you're scared, in the dark or when you can't swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.'

'But...you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and he can take me back anytime he pleases.

And...that's why I believe in God.'

# **Sleeping When the Wind Blows**

A young man applied for a job as a farmhand. When the farmer asked him about his qualifications for the job, the young man simply said, "I can sleep when the wind blows." This puzzled the farmer, but he liked the young man- so he hired him.

A few days later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the middle of the night by a violent storm. They quickly began to check on things to see if everything was okay. They found the shutters on the farmhouse were securely fastened and a good supply of dry logs had been set next to the fireplace. They checked on the young man- he was sleeping soundly.

The farmer and his wife then went outside in the strong wind and heavy rain and inspected their property. They found that the farm tools had been placed in the storage shed- safe from the elements the barn was properly locked....even the animals were calm. All was well. The farmer then understood the meaning of the young man's words, "I can sleep when the wind blows." Because the farmhand had done his job faithfully when the skies were clear, he was prepared for the storm when it came. So when the wind blew, he wasn't afraid- he could sleep in peace. There was nothing dramatic or sensational in the young man's preparations; he just faithfully did what was needed each day- and so he could rest in peace.

The Bible talks about this kind of preparation in the daily living of our faith. Can you sleep when the wind blows?



#### The Rain

It was a busy morning, about 8:30, when an elderly gentleman in his 80's arrived to have stitches removed from his thumb. He said he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9:00 am. I took his vital signs and had him take a seat, knowing it would be over an hour before someone would be able to see him. I saw him looking at his watch and decided, since I was not busy with another patient.

I would evaluate his wound. On exam, it was well healed, so I talked to one of the doctors, got the needed supplies to

remove his sutures and redress his wound.

While taking care of his wound, I asked him if he had another doctor's appointment this morning, as he was in such a hurry. The gentleman told me no, that he needed to go to the nursing home to eat breakfast

with his wife. I inquired as to her health. He told me that she had been there for a while and that she was a victim of Alzheimer's Disease. As we talked, I asked if she would be upset if he was a bit late. He replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now. I was surprised, and asked him,' And you still go every morning, even though she doesn't know who you are?'

He smiled as he patted my hand and said,

'She doesn't
know me, but I still know who she is."
I had to hold back tears as he left, I had goose bumps on my arm,
and thought, 'That is the kind of love I want in my life.' True love is neither physical, nor romantic.

True love is an acceptance of all that is, has been, will be, and will not be.

'Life isn't about how to survive the storm, But how to dance in the rain.'



# John 3:16 -I don't understand it.

A little boy was selling newspapers on the corner, the people were in and out of the cold. The little boy was so cold that he wasn't trying to sellmany papers.

He walked up to a policeman and said, "Mister, you wouldn't happen to know where a poor boy could find a warm place to sleep tonight would you?

You see, I sleep in a box up around the corner there and down the alley and its awful cold in there for tonight. "Sure would be nice to have a warm place to stay."

The policeman looked down at the little boy and said, "You go down the street to that big white house and you knock on the door. When they come out the door you just say John 3:16 and they will let you in."

So he did. He walked up the steps and knocked on the door, and a lady answered. He looked up and said, "John 3:16." The lady said, "Come on in, Son."

She took him in and she sat him down in a split bottom rocker in front of a great big old fireplace, and she went off. The boy sat there for a while and thought to himself: John 3:16... I don't understand it, but it sure makes a cold boy warm.

Later she came back and asked him "Are you hungry?" He said, "Well, just a little. I haven't eaten in a couple of days, and I guess I could stand a little bit of food,"

The lady took him in the kitchen and sat him down to a table full of wonderful food. He ate and ate until he couldn't eat any more. Then he thought to himself: John 3:16... Boy, I sure don't understand it but it sure makes a hungry boy full.

She took him upstairs to a bathroom to a huge bathtub filled with warm water, and he sat there and soaked for a while. As he soaked, he thought to himself: John 3:16 ... I sure don't understand it, but it sure makes a dirty boy clean. You know, I've not had a bath, a real bath, in my whole life. The only bath I ever had was when I stood in front of that big old fire hydrant as they flushed it out. The lady came in and got him. She took him to a room, tucked him into a big old feather bed, pulled the covers up around his neck, kissed him goodnight and turned out the lights. As he lay in the darkness and looked out the window at the snow coming down on that cold night, he thought to himself: John 3:16 ... I don't understand it but it sure makes a tired boy rest.

The next morning the lady came back up and took him down again to that same big table full of food. After he ate, she took him back to that same big old split bottom rocker in front of the fireplace and picked up a big old Bible.

She sat down in front of him and looked into his young face. "Do you understand John 3:16?" she asked gently. He replied, "No, Ma'am, I don't. The first time I ever heard it was last night when the policeman told me to use it," She opened the Bible to John 3:16 and began to explain to him about Jesus. Right there, in front of that big old fireplace, he gave his heart and life to Jesus. He sat there and thought: John 3:16. don't understand it, but it sure makes a lost boy feel safe.

You know, I have to confess I don't understand it either, how <u>God</u> was willing to send His Son to die for me, and how Jesus would agree to do such a thing. I don't understand the agony of the Father and every angel in heaven as they watched Jesus suffer and die. I don't understand the intense love for <u>ME</u> that kept <u>Jesus</u> on the cross till the end. I don't understand it, but it sure does make life worth living.

John 3:16 For <u>God</u> so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

# **Finding Real Life**

Jesus said, "Whoever finds his life you will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39)

One man who learned (in a very dramatic way) what there is to lose and gain was an 18<sup>th</sup> century slave trader named John Newton. The captain of a trans-Atlantic slave ship, he had everything this world can offer as he made a very lucrative living from the brutal business of buying and selling human beings. Then, one day, through a series of events, he came to faith in Jesus Christ and took a long, hard look at his life and what he was doing. He realized that, in order to follow Jesus, he needed to make some changes- he had to "lose" his life. And so he made the necessary changes and spent the rest of his life crusading to abolish slavery- the very business which had made him a rich man. He also went on to write a number of great Christian hymns- one of which goes like this: Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound! That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.

At one time, John Newton thought he was on top of the world. But in truth, he was wretched and blind. But through the eyes of faith, he came to see himself as nothing more than a cynical businessman making money in an evil enterprise. He was allowing the worldly law of supply and demand to separate him from his own conscience. Then Jesus came along and the old John Newton died. A new John Newton was born. An old life was "lost" and a new one "found"- a new life whose influence remains with us more than 200 years later.

"Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (John 12:24)



## THE BLIND GIRL

There was a blind girl who hated herself because she was blind. She hated everyone, except her loving boyfriend. He was always there for her. She told her boyfriend, 'If I could only see the world, I will marry you.'

One day, someone donated a pair of eyes to her. When the bandages came off, she was able to see everything, including her boyfriend.

He asked her, 'Now that you can see the world, will you marry me?' The girl looked at her boyfriend and saw that he was blind. The sight of his closed eyelids shocked her. She hadn't expected that. The thought of looking at them the rest of her life led her to refuse to marry him.

Her boyfriend left in tears and days later wrote a note to her saying: 'Take good care of your eyes, my dear, for before they were yours, they were mine.'

This is how the human brain often works when our status changes. Only a very few remember what life was like before, and who was always by their side in the most painful situations.

Life Is a Gift

Today before you say an unkind word - Think of someone who can't speak. Before you complain about the taste of your food - Think of someone who has nothing to eat..

Before you complain about your husband or wife - Think of someone who's crying out to GOD for a companion.

Today before you complain about life - Think of someone who went too early to heaven..

Before whining about the distance you drive Think of someone who walks the same distance with their feet.

And when you are tired and complain about your job - Think of the unemployed, the disabled, and those who wish they had your job..

And when depressing thoughts seem to get you down - Put a smile on your face and think: you're alive and still around..

Always foster an attitude of gratitude, it will change your life.

# **Hearing God's Voice**

Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."

A Native American was walking in downtown New York City alongside a friend who lived in the city. Right in the center of Manhattan, the Native American grabbed his friend's arm and whispered, "Wait! I hear a cricket."

His friend replied, "You hear a what? C'mon man, a cricket! That's impossible...this is downtown New York. There are taxis all over the place...horns are honking...people are screaming at each other...brakes are screeching. Both sides of the street are filled with people. The Subway's roaring beneath us...there's construction noise everywhere....you can't possibly hear a cricket!"

But his Native American friend insisted. "Wait a minute, there it is again!" and he began to lead his friend, the New Yorker, along slowly. They stopped, and the Native American walked down to the end of the block, went across the street, looked around, cocked his head to one side, and motioned his friend

over to him. They crossed another street, and there in a large cement planter in front of a restaurant where a tree was growing, the Native American dug into the mulch and found the cricket. "See!" he yelled, as he held the cricket high above his head.

His friend was astounded! "How in the world could it be that you heard a cricket in the middle of busy downtown Manhattan?" The Native American said, "Well, my ears are different from yours. It simply depends on what you are listening to. Here, let me show you." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a handful of change- a couple of quarters, three or four nickels, and some dimes and pennies. Then he said, "Now watch this...." He held the coins waist high and then dropped them to the sidewalk. Every head within a block turned around and looked in the direction of the Native American.

So why is it that we have so few Christians willing to go out and share the God News of Jesus Christ with others? Perhaps it has to do with what our ears are tuned to.

We hear so many voices in our day to day lives- voices telling us to do this.... voices encouraging us to buy that. People telling us how we should think and feel. There are so many things to distract us. Do we hear the voice of Jesus? Do we hear the call of Jesus Christ to go and make disciples?



#### WILL YOU GIVE THIS TO MY DADDY?

Last week I was in Atlanta, Georgia attending a conference. While I was in the airport, returning home, I heard several people behind me beginning to clap and cheer. I immediately turned around and witnessed One of the greatest acts of patriotism I have ever seen.

Moving thru the terminal was a group of soldiers in their camos. As they began heading to their gate, everyone (well almost everyone) was abruptly to their feet with their hands waving and cheering.

When I saw the soldiers, probably 30-40 of them, being applauded and Cheered for, it hit me. I'm not alone. I'm not the only red-blooded American who still loves this country and supports our troops and their families.

Of course I immediately stopped and began clapping for these young unsung heroes who are putting their lives on the line everyday for us so we can go to school, work and home without fear or reprisal.

Just when I thought I could not be more proud of my country or of our Service men and women, a young girl, not more than 6 or 7 years old ran up to one of the male soldiers. He kneeled down and said 'hi...'

The little girl then asked him if he would give something to her daddy for her...

The young soldier, who didn't look any older than maybe 22 himself, said he would try and what did she want to give to her daddy. Then suddenly the little girl grabbed the neck of this soldier, gave him the biggest hug she could muster and then kissed him on the cheek.

The mother of the little girl, who said her daughter's name was Courtney, told the young soldier that her husband was a Marine and had been in Iraq for 11 months now. As the mom was explaining how much her daughter Courtney missed her father, the young soldier began to tear up.

When this temporarily single mom was done explaining her situation, all of the soldiers huddled together for a brief second... Then one of the other servicemen pulled out a military-looking walkie-talkie. They started playing with the device and talking back and forth on it..

After about 10-15 seconds of this, the young soldier walked back over to Courtney, bent down and said this to her, 'I spoke to your daddy and he told me to give this to you.' He then hugged this little girl that he had just met and gave her a kiss on the cheek. He finished by saying 'your daddy told me to tell you that he loves you more than anything and he is coming home very soon.'

The mom at this point was crying almost uncontrollably and as the young soldier stood to his feet, he saluted Courtney and her mom. I was standing no more than 6 feet away from this entire event.

As the soldiers began to leave, heading towards their gate, people resumed their applause. As I stood there applauding and looked around, there were very few dry eyes, including my own. That young soldier in one last act of selflessness turned around and blew a kiss to Courtney with a tear rolling down his cheek.

We need to remember everyday all of our soldiers and their families and thank God for them and their sacrifices. At the end of the day, it's good to be an American.

#### Daniel's Gloves

I sat, with two friends, in the picture window of a quaint restaurant just off the corner of the town-square. The food and the company were both especially good that day. As we talked, my attention was drawn outside, across the street. There, walking into town, was a man who appeared to be carrying all his worldly goods on his back. He was carrying, a well-worn sign that read, 'I will work for food.' My heart sank.

I brought him to the attention of my friends and noticed that others around us had stopped eating to focus on him. Heads moved in a mixture of sadness and disbelief. We continued with our meal, but his image lingered in my mind. We finished our meal and went our separate ways. I had errands to do and quickly set out to accomplish them. I glanced toward the town square, looking somewhat halfheartedly for the strange visitor. I was fearful, knowing that seeing him again would call some response. I drove through town and saw nothing of him. I made some purchases at a store and got back in my car.

Deep within me, the Spirit of God kept speaking to me: 'Don't go back to the office until you've at least driven once more around the square.' Then with some hesitancy, I headed back into town. As I turned the square's third corner, I saw him. He was standing on the steps of the store front church, going through his sack.

I stopped and looked; feeling both compelled to speak to him, yet wanting to drive on. The empty parking space on the corner seemed to be a sign from God: an invitation to park. I pulled in, got out and approached the town's newest visitor. 'Looking for the pastor?' I asked. 'Not really,' he replied, 'just resting.' 'Have you eaten today?' 'Oh, I ate something early this morning.' 'Would you like to have lunch with me?' 'Do you have some work I could do for you?' 'No work,' I replied 'I commute here to work from the city, but I would like to take you to lunch.' 'Sure,' he replied with a smile.

As he began to gather his things, I asked some surface questions. Where you headed?" St. Louis "Where you from?' 'Oh, all over; mostly Florida ...."How long you been walking?' 'Fourteen years,' came the reply. I knew I had met someone unusual. We sat across from each other in the same restaurant I had left earlier. His face was weathered slightly beyond his 38 years. His eyes were dark yet clear, and he spoke with an eloquence and articulation that was startling He removed his jacket to reveal a bright red T-shirt that said, 'Jesus is The Never Ending Story.' Then Daniel's story began to unfold. He had seen rough times early in life. He'd made some wrong choices and reaped the consequences.. Fourteen years earlier, while backpacking across the country, he had stopped on the beach in Daytona... He tried to hire on with some men who were putting up a large tent and some equipment. A concert, he thought. He was hired, but the tent would not house a concert but revival services, and in those services he saw life more clearly. He gave his life over to God. 'Nothing's been the same since,' he said, 'I felt the Lord telling me to keep walking, and so I did, some 14 years now.' 'Ever think of stopping?' I asked. 'Oh, once in a while, when it seems to get the best of me But God has given me this calling. I give out Bibles. That's what's in my sack. I work to buy food and Bibles, and I give them out when His Spirit leads.'

I sat amazed. My homeless friend was not homeless. He was on a mission and lived this way by choice. The question burned inside for a moment and then I asked: 'What's it like?' 'What?' 'To walk into a town carrying your things on your back and to show your sign? 'Oh, it was humiliating at first. People would stare and make comments. Once someone tossed a piece of half-eaten bread and made a gesture that certainly didn't make me feel welcome. But then it became humbling to realize that God was using me to touch lives and change people's concepts of other folks like me.' My concept was changing, too. We finished our dessert and gathered his things. Just outside the door, he paused He turned to me and said, 'Come Ye blessed of my Father and inherit the kingdom I've prepared for you. For when I was hungry you gave me food, when I was thirsty you gave me drink, a stranger and you took me in.'

I felt as if we were on holy ground. 'Could you use another Bible?' I asked. He said he preferred a certain translation. It traveled well and was not too heavy. It was also his personal favorite.. 'I've read through it 14 times,' he said. 'I'm not sure we've got one of those, but let's stop by our church and see' I was able to find my new friend a Bible that would do well, and he seemed very grateful. 'Where are you headed from here?' I asked. 'Well, I found this little map on the back of this amusement park coupon.' 'Are you hoping to hire on there for a while?' 'No, I just figure I should go there. I figure someone under that star right there needs a Bible, so that's where I'm going next.' He smiled, and the warmth of his spirit radiated the sincerity of his mission. I drove him back to the town-square where

I wrote in his little book that his commitment to his calling had touched my life. I encouraged him to stay strong. And I left him with a verse of scripture from Jeremiah, 'I know the plans I have for you, declared the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you; Plans to give you a future and a hope.' 'Thanks, man,' he said. 'I know we just met and we're really just strangers, but I love you.'

'I know,' I said, 'I love you, too.' 'The Lord is good!'

'Yes, He is. How long has it been since someone hugged you?' I asked. A long time,' he replied.

And so on the busy street corner in the drizzling rain, my new friend and I embraced, and I felt deep inside that I had been changed.. He put his things on his back, smiled his winning smile and said, 'See you in the New Jerusalem.' 'I'll be there!' was my reply.

He began his journey again. He headed away with his sign dangling from his bedroll and pack of Bibles. He stopped, turned and said, 'When you see something that makes you think of me, will you pray for me?'

'You bet,' I shouted back, 'God bless.'

'God bless.' And that was the last I saw of him.

Late that evening as I left my office, the wind blew strong. The cold front had settled hard upon the town. I bundled up and hurried to my car. As I sat back and reached for the emergency brake, I saw them... a pair of well-worn brown work gloves neatly laid over the length of the handle. I picked them up and thought of my friend and wondered if his hands would stay warm that night without them.

Then I remembered his words: 'If you see something that makes you think of me, will you pray for me?'

Today his gloves lie on my desk in my office.. They help me to see the world and its people in a new way, and they help me remember those two hours with my unique friend and to pray for

his ministry. 'See you in the New Jerusalem,' he said. Yes, Daniel, I know I will...
'I shall pass this way but once. Therefore, any good that I can do or any kindness that I can show, let me do it now, or I shall not pass this way again.'



# The Drifter

The Marine stood and faced God, How shall I deal with you? Have you always turned the other cheek? To My Church have you been true?" Which must always come to pass. He hoped his shoes were shining. Just as brightly as his brass. "Step forward now, you Marine, How shall I deal with you? Have you always turned the other cheek? To My Church have you been true?" The Marine squared his shoulders and said, "No, Lord, I guess I ain't, Because those of us who carry guns, Can't always be a saint. I've had to work most Sundays, And at times my talk was tough, And sometimes I've been violent. Because the world is awfully rough. But, I never took a penny That wasn't mine to keep... Though I worked a lot of overtime When the bills got just too steep, And I never passed a cry for help. Though at times I shook with fear, And sometimes, God forgive me, I've wept unmanly tears. I know I don't deserve a place Among the people here, They never wanted me around, Except to calm their fears. If you've a place for me here, Lord, It needn't be so grand, I never expected or had too much, But if you don't, I'll understand." There was a silence all around the throne, Where the saints had often trod. As the Marine waited quietly, For the judgment of his God. "Step forward now, you Marine, You've borne your burdens well, Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets, You've done your time in Hell."



#### Be self-controlled and alert!

Sir William Osler was a very popular and world renowned professor of medicine at Oxford University. One day he was lecturing to a classroom full of wide-eyed medical students. His lecture was entitled: *The Importance of Observing Details*. To emphasize a point he was trying to make, he reached down and picked up a bottle of urine. He held it high for all to see. Then he told his students, "This bottle contains a urine sample, ready for analysis. You know, it is possible that by tasting his/her urine, you can determine the disease from which a patient is suffering."

Then, as his students watched in dis-belief, he dipped a finger into the urine and then into his mouth as he continued, "Now, I'm going to pass this bottle around to all of you. Each of you do exactly as I did and perhaps we can learn the importance of this technique and diagnose the case." The students were flabbergasted; but ever so slowly, the bottle made its way from row to row as each student reluctantly stuck his/her finger in the bottle, then (with a frown) bravely tasted the sample.

Dr. Ostler then retrieved the bottle and startled them all by saying, "Ladies and Gentlemen, now you will understand what I mean when I say that details are important. Had you been observant and paid attention to the details, you would have seen that I put my index finger into the bottle...but my middle finger in my mouth."

Now, just as this professor was able to get his students to taste urine because they weren't paying attention, so Satan is able to coerce us into doing things that we know are not right and that might destroy. We must be aware of what's going on around us- in our homes, in our culture, in the Church- in our lives. We need to pay attention!



The dean of a certain school wouldn't allow the star football player to play in the big game coming up Saturday. The coach brought the player into the dean's office and cried: "Why don't you let him play Saturday—we need him!"

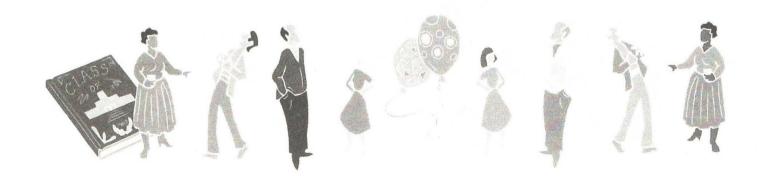
"I'll tell you why," snapped the dean. "This is supposed to be a school of learning. All he knows is football, and I'll show you how ignorant he is!"

Then he said to the player: "Tell me, how much is two and two?"

"Seven," came the answer.

With that the coach cried to the dean: "Aw, let him play. After all, he only missed it by one!"

PRACTICAL ENGLISH



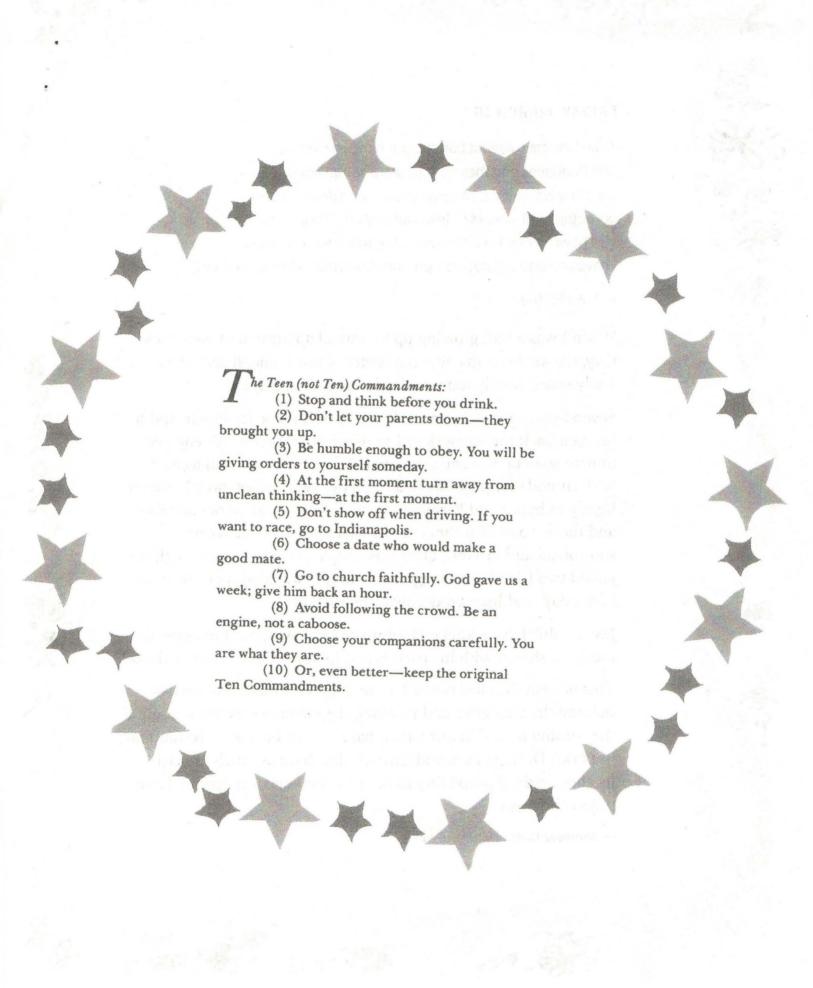
#### THE GRANDMA TEST

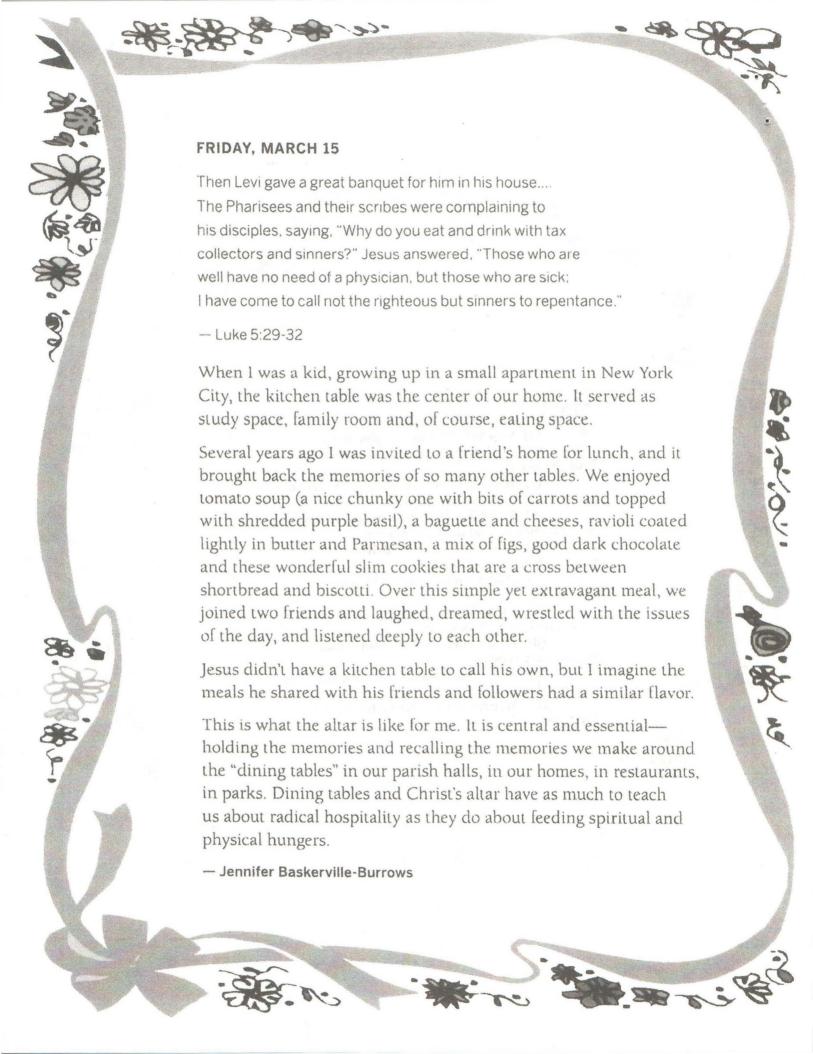
I was out walking with my 4-year-old granddaughter. She picked up something off the ground and started to put it in her mouth. I took the item away from her and I asked her not to do that. 'Why?' my Granddaughter asked. 'Because it's been on the ground; you don't know where it's been, it's dirty, and probably has germs,' I replied. At this point, my granddaughter looked at me with total admiration and asked, 'Grandma, how do you know all this stuff? You are so smart.' I was thinking quickly. 'All Grandmas know this stuff. It's on the Grandma Test. You have to know it, or they don't let you be a Grandma.'

We walked along in silence for 2 or 3 minutes, but she was evidently pondering this new information. 'Oh, I get it!' she beamed, 'So if you don't pass the test you have to be a Grandpa'.

Exactly,' I replied with a big smile on my face.







# The Old Man and the Dog by Catherine Moore

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"Watch out! You nearly broad-sided that car!" My father yelled at me. Can't you do anything right?" Those words hurt worse than lows. I turned my head toward the elderly man in the seat beside me, daring me to challenge him. A lump rose in my throat as I averted my eyes. I wasn't prepared for another battle. "I saw the car, Dad. Please don't yell at me when I'm driving." My voice was measured and steady, sounding far calmer than I really felt. Dad glared at me, then turned away and settled back. At home I left Dad in front of the television and went outside to collect my thoughts. Dark, heavy clouds hung in the air with a promise of rain. The rumble of distant thunder seemed to echo my inner turmoil. What could I do about him? Dad had been a lumberjack in Washington and Oregon. He had enjoyed being outdoors and had reveled in pitting his strength against the forces of nature. He had entered grueling lumberjack competitions, and had placed often. The shelves in his house were filled with trophies that attested to his prowess.

The years marched on relentlessly. The first time he couldn't lift a heavy log, he joked about it; but later that same day I saw him outside alone, straining to lift it. He became irritable whenever anyone teased him about his advancing age, or when he couldn't do something he had done as a younger man.

Four days after his sixty-seventh birthday, he had a heart attack. An ambulance sped him to the hospital while a paramedic administered CPR to keep blood and oxygen flowing. At the hospital, Dad was rushed into an operating room. He was lucky; he survived.

But something inside Dad died. His zest for life was gone. He obstinately refused to follow doctor's orders. Suggestions and offers of help were turned aside with sarcasm and insults. The number of

visitors thinned, then finally stopped altogether. Dad was left alone.

My husband, Dick, and I asked Dad to come live with us on our small farm. We hoped the fresh air and rustic atmosphere would help him adjust. Within a week after he moved in, I regretted the invitation. It seemed nothing was satisfactory. He criticized everything I did. I became frustrated and moody. Soon I was taking my pent-up anger out on Dick. We began to bicker and argue. Alarmed, Dick sought out our pastor and explained the situation. The clergyman set up weekly counseling appointments for us. At the close of each session he prayed, asking God to soothe Dad's troubled mind. But the months wore on and God was silent. Something had to be done and it was up to me to do it. The next day I sat down with the phone book and methodically called each of the mental health clinics listed in the Yellow Pages. I explained my problem to each of the sympathetic voices that answered. In vain. Just when I was giving up hope, one of the voices suddenly exclaimed, "I just read something that might help you! Let me go get the article." I listened as she read. The article described a remarkable study done at a nursing home. All of the patients were under treatment for chronic depression. Yet their attitudes had improved dramatically when they were given responsibility for a dog. I drove to the animal shelter that afternoon. After I filled out a questionnaire, a uniformed officer led me to the kennels. The odor of disinfectant stung my nostrils as I moved down the row of pens. Each contained five to seven dogs. Long-haired dogs, curly-haired dogs, black dogs, spotted dogs all jumped up, trying to reach me. I studied each one but rejected one after the other for various reasons -too big, too small, too much hair. As I neared the last pen a dog in the shadows of the far corner struggled to his feet, walked to the front of the run and sat down. It was a pointer, one of the dog world's aristocrats. But this was a caricature of the breed. Years had etched his face and muzzle with shades of gray. His hipbones jutted out in lopsided triangles. But it was his eyes that caught and held my attention. Calm and clear, they beheld me unwaveringly.

I pointed to the dog. "Can you tell me about him?" The officer looked, then shook his head in puzzlement. "He's a funny one. Appeared out of nowhere and sat in front of the gate. We brought him in, figuring someone would be right down to claim him. That was two weeks ago and we've heard

nothing. His time is up tomorrow." He gestured helplessly.

As the words sank in I turned to the man in horror. "You mean you're going to kill him?" "Ma'am," he said gently, "that's our policy. We don't have room for every unclaimed dog." I looked at the pointer again. The calm brown eyes awaited my decision. "I'll take him," I said.

I drove home with the dog on the front seat beside me. When I reached the house I honked the horn twice. I was helping my prize out of the car when Dad shuffled onto the front porch. "Ta-da! Look what I got for you, Dad!" I said excitedly. Dad looked, then wrinkled his face in disgust. "If I had wanted a dog I would have gotten one. And I would have picked out a better specimen than that bag of bones. Keep it! I don't want it" Dad waved his arm scornfully and turned back toward the house. Anger rose inside me. It squeezed together my throat muscles and pounded into my temples. "You'd better get used to him, Dad. He's staying!" Dad ignored me. "Did you hear me, Dad?" I screamed. At those words Dad whirled angrily, his hands clenched at his sides, his eyes narrowed and blazing with hate. We stood glaring at each other like duelists, when suddenly the pointer pulled free from my grasp. He wobbled toward my dad and sat down in front of him. Then slowly, carefully, he raised his paw. Dad's lower jaw trembled as he stared at the uplifted paw. Confusion replaced the anger in his eyes. The pointer waited patiently. Then Dad was on his knees hugging the animal.

It was the beginning of a warm and intimate friendship. Dad named the pointer Cheyenne. Together he and Cheyenne explored the community. They spent long hours walking down dusty lanes. They spent reflective moments on the banks of streams, angling for tasty trout. They even started to attend Sunday services together, Dad sitting in a pew and Cheyenne lying quietly at his feet. Dad and Cheyenne were inseparable throughout the next three years. Dad's bitterness faded, and he and Cheyenne made many friends. Then late one night I was startled to feel Cheyenne's cold nose burrowing through our bed covers. He had never before come into our bedroom at night. I woke Dick, put on my robe and ran into my father's room. Dad lay in his bed, his face serene. But his spirit had left quietly sometime during the night.

Two days later my shock and grief deepened when I discovered Cheyenne lying dead beside Dad's bed. I wrapped his still form in the rag rug he had slept on. As Dick and I buried him near a favorite fishing hole, I silently thanked the dog for the help he had given me in restoring Dad's peace of mind.

The morning of Dad's funeral dawned overcast and dreary. This day looks like the way I feel, I thought, as I walked down the aisle to the pews reserved for family. I was surprised to see the many friends Dad and Cheyenne had made filling the church. The pastor began his eulogy. It was a tribute to both Dad and the dog who had changed his life. And then the pastor turned to Hebrews 13:2.. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers."

"I've often thanked God for sending that angel," he said.

For me, the past dropped into place, completing a puzzle that I had not seen before: the sympathetic voice that had just read the right article.

Cheyenne's unexpected appearance at the animal shelter his calm acceptance and complete devotion to my father. and the proximity of their deaths. And suddenly I understood. I knew that God had answered my prayers after all.

Life is too short for drama and petty things, so laugh hard, love truly and forgive quickly. Live While You Are Alive! Tell the people you love that you love them, at every opportunity. Forgive now those who made you cry. You might not get a second time.



#### The 'OLD ONE'

A brother and sister had made their usual hurried, obligatory pre-Christmas visit to the little farm where dwelt their elderly parents with their small herd of horses. The farm was where they had grown up and had been named Lone Pine Farm because of the huge pine, which topped the hill behind the farm. Through the years the tree had become a talisman to the old man and his wife, and a landmark in the countryside. The young siblings had fond memories of their childhood here, but the city hustle and bustle added more excitement to their lives, and called them away to a different life.

The old folks no longer showed their horses, for the years had taken their toll, and getting out to the barn on those frosty mornings was getting harder, but it gave them a reason to get up in the mornings and a reason to live. They sold a few foals each year, and the horses were their reason for joy in the morning and contentment at day's end. Angry, as they prepared to leave, the young couple confronted the old folks "Why do you not at least dispose of The Old One." She is no longer of use

to you. It's been years cut corners and save so this old worn out horse Why do you keep her worn boots, holes in the Yes, I could use a pair the Old One's neck as rubbed her softly behind because of love.

the old man and his wife the city as couple shook their visit. A tear fell upon do not understand

taking, no one frayed wires in the old the "Old One". In a since you've had foals from her. You should you can have more for yourselves. How can bring you anything but expense and work? anyway?" The old man looked down at his toes, scuffed at the barn floor and replied, " of new boots. His arm slid defensively about he drew her near with gentle caressing he her ears. He replied softly, "We keep her Nothing else, just love."

Baffled and irritated, the young folks wished a Merry Christmas and headed back toward darkness stole through the valley. The old heads in sorrow that it had not been a happy their cheeks. How is it that these young folks the peace of the love that filled their hearts? So it was, that because of the unhappy leavenoticed the insulation smoldering on the barn. None saw the first spark fall. None but matter of minutes, the whole barn was ablaze

and the hungry flames were licking at the loft full of hay. With a cry of horror and despair, the old man shouted to his wife to call for help as he raced to the barn to save their beloved horses. But the flames were roaring now, and the blazing heat drove him back. He sank sobbing to the ground, helpless before the fire's fury. His wife back from calling for help cradled him in her arms, clinging to each other, they wept at their loss.

By the time the fire department arrived, only smoking, glowing ruins were left, and the old man and his wife, exhausted from their grief, huddled together before the barn. They were speechless as they rose from the cold snow covered ground. They nodded thanks to the firemen as there was nothing anyone could do now. The old man turned to his wife, resting her white head upon his shoulders as his shaking old hands clumsily dried her tears with a frayed red bandana. Brokenly he whispered, "We have lost much, but God has spared our home on this eve of Christmas. Let us gather strength and climb the hill to the old pine where we have sought comfort in times of despair. We will look down upon our home and give thanks to God that it has been spared and pray for our

beloved most precious gifts that have been taken from us.

And so, he took her by the hand and slowly helped her up the snowy hill as he brushed aside his own tears with the back of his old and withered hand.

The journey up the hill was hard for their old bodies in the steep snow. As they stepped over the little knoll at the crest of the hill, they paused to rest, looking up to the top of the hill the old couple gasped and fell to their knees in amazement at the incredible beauty before them.

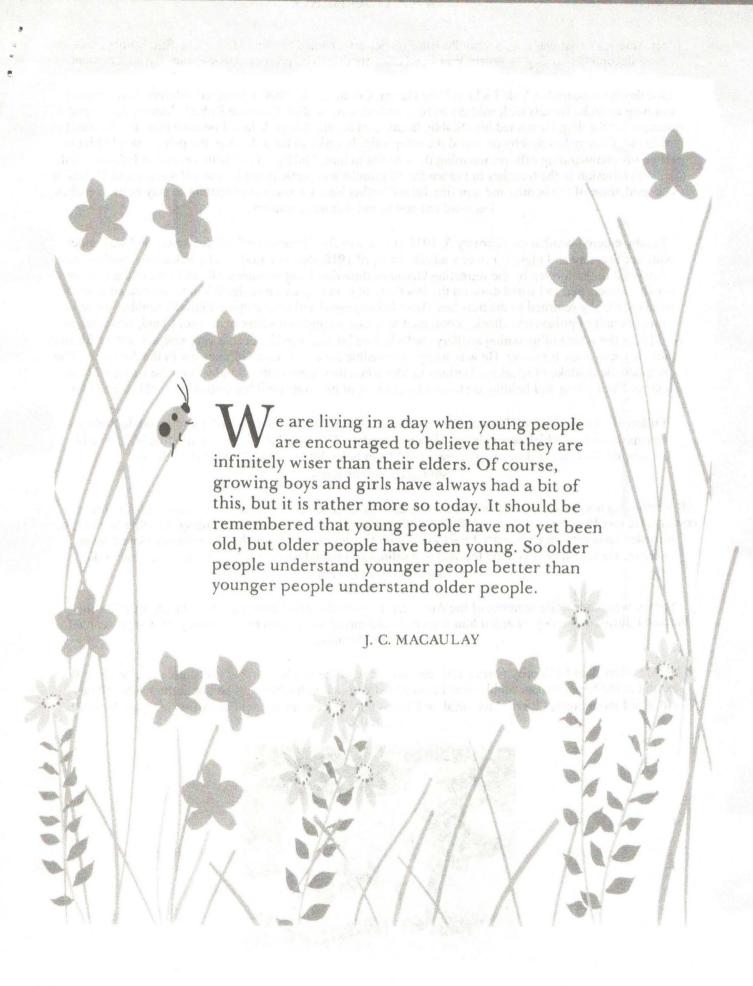
Seemingly, every glorious, brilliant star in the heavens was caught up in the glittering, snow-frosted branches of their beloved pine, and it was aglow with heavenly candles. And poised on its top most bough, a crystal crescent moon glistened like spun glass. Never had a mere mortal created a Christmas tree such as this. They were breathless as the old man held his wife tighter in his arms.

Suddenly, the old man gave a cry of wonder and incredible joy. Amazed and mystified, he took his wife by the hand and pulled her forward. There, beneath the tree, in resplendent glory, a mist hovering over and glowing in the darkness was their Christmas gift. Shadows glistening in the night light.

Bedded down about the "Old One" close to the trunk of the tree, was the entire herd, safe. At the first hint of smoke, she had pushed the door ajar with her muzzle and had led the horses through it. Slowly and with great dignity, never looking back, she had led them up the hill, stepping cautiously through the snow. The foals were frightened and dashed about. The skittish yearlings looked back at the crackling, hungry flames, and tucked their tails under them as they licked their lips and hopped like rabbits. The mares that were in foal with a new years crop of babies, pressed uneasily against the "Old One" as she moved calmly up the hill and to safety beneath the pine. And now, she lay among them and gazed at the faces of the old man and his wife. Those she loved she had not disappointed. Her body was brittle with years, tired from the climb, but the golden eyes were filled with devotion as she offered her gift---

Because of love. Only Because of love. Tears flowed as the old couple shouted their praise and joy... And again the peace of love filled their hearts.

This is a true story.



#### SGT. STUBBY WAR DOG HERO

Meet America's first war dog, a stray Pit Bull/Terrier mix, named Stubby. He became Sgt. Stubby, was the most decorated war dog of World War I and the only dog to be promoted to sergeant through combat.

One day he appeared at Yale Field in New Haven, Connecticut; while a group of soldiers were training, stopping to make friends with soldiers as they drilled. One soldier, Corporal Robert Conroy, developed a fondness for the dog. He named him Stubby because of his short legs. When it became time for the outfit to ship out, Conroy hid Stubby on board the troop ship. In order to keep the dog, the private taught him to salute his commanding officers warming their hearts to him. Stubby served with the 102nd Infantry, 26th (Yankee) Division in the trenches in France for 18 months and participated in four offensives and 18 battles. The loud noise of the bombs and gun fire did not bother him. He was never content to stay in the trenches but went out and found wounded soldiers.

Stubby entered combat on February 5, 1918 at Chemin Des Dames, north of Soissons, and was under constant fire, day and night for over a month. In April 1918, during a raid to take Schieprey, Stubby was wounded in the foreleg by the retreating Germans throwing hand grenades. He was sent to the rear for convalescence, and as he had done on the front was able to improve morale. When he recovered from his wounds, Stubby returned to the trenches. After being gassed and nearly dying himself, Stubby learned to warn his unit of poison gas attacks, continued to locate wounded soldiers in no man's land, and since he could hear the whine of incoming artillery shells before humans could, became very adept at letting his unit know when to duck for cover. He was solely responsible for capturing a German spy in the Argonne. The spy made the mistake of speaking German to him when they were alone. Stubby knew he was no ally and attacked him biting and holding on to him by the seat of his pants until his comrades could secure him.

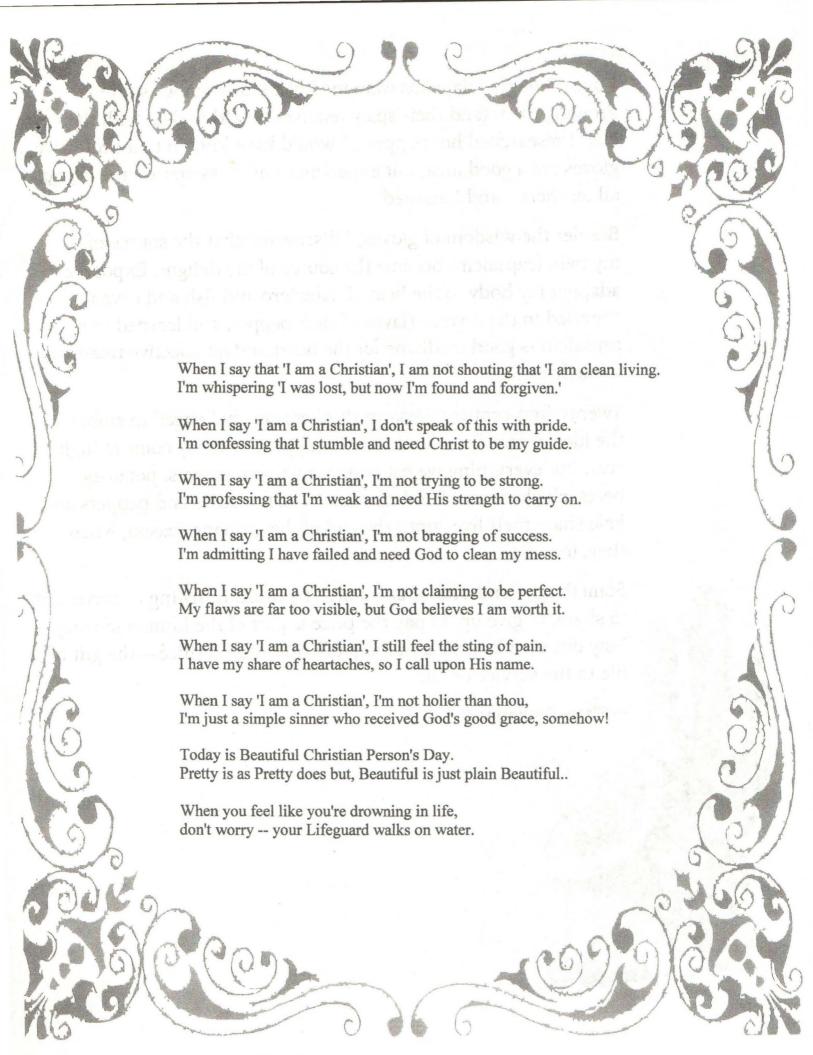
Following the retaking of Chateau-Thierry by the US, the thankful women of the town made Stubby a chamois coat on which were pinned his many medals. There is also a legend that while in Paris with Corporal Conroy, Stubby saved a young girl from being hit by a car. At the end of the war, Conroy smuggled Stubby home.

After returning home, Stubby became a celebrity and marched in, and normally led, many parades across the country. He met Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Calvin Coolidge, and Warren G. Harding. Starting in 1921, he attended Georgetown University Law Center with Conroy, and became the Georgetown Hoyas' team mascot. He would be given the football at halftime and would nudge the ball around the field to the amusement of the fans.

Stubby was made a life member of the American Legion, the Red Cross, and the YMCA. In 1921, the Humane Education Society awarded him a special gold medal for service to his country. It was presented by General John Pershing.

In 1926, Stubby died in Conroy's arms. His remains are featured in The Price of Freedom: Americans at War exhibit at the Smithsonian. Stubby was honored with a brick in the Walk of Honor at the United States World War I monument, Liberty Memorial, in Kansas City at a ceremony held on Armistice Day, November 11, 2006.





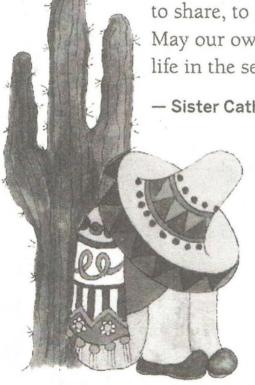
I once thought jalapeños were inedible. But when we started growing them (and their spicy relatives), I had to deal with them. Had I researched hot peppers, I would have known that protective gloves are a good idea. But experience and missteps are the best of all teachers...and I learned.

Besides the wisdom of gloves, I discovered that the source of my pain (capsaicin) became the source of my delight. Exposure adapted my body to the heat of habañero and fish and cayenne; I reveled in the diverse flavor of each pepper, and learned that capsaicin is good medicine for the heart and an effective treatment for arthritis.

Twenty-first-century Western thinkers are challenged to embrace the idea of sacrifice—that something precious may come at high cost. But everything we eat costs something: carrots, potatoes, beets, chickens and fish lose their lives; tomatoes and peppers and kale share their lives until the end of the growing season, when they, too, die.

Something wonderful often comes at a price. Learning to surrender, to share, to give up, to pay the price is part of the human journey. May our own lives be a fragrant offering and sacrifice—the gift of life in the service of Life.

- Sister Catherine Grace





Thee woman whispered, "God, speak to me" and a meadowlark sang. But, the woman did not hear.

So the woman yelled, "God, speak to me" and the thunder rolled across the sky. But, the woman did not listen.

The woman looked around and said, "God let me see you." And a star shined brightly.

But the woman did not see.

And, the woman shouted, "God show me a miracle." And, a life was born.

But, the woman did not notice.

So, the woman cried out in despair, "Touch me God, and let me know you are here."

Whereupon, God reached down and touched the woman.

But, the woman brushed the butterfly away and walked on.

I found this to be a great reminder that God is always around us in the little and simple things that we take for granted ... even in our electronic age..

May God Bless You Richly