

Reflections

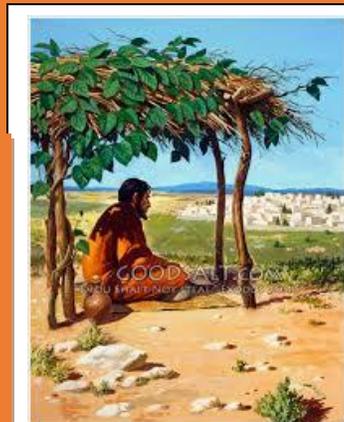
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St. Paul Ministry

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Have You Experienced Being Job?



Blessings to All:

Bad things happen to good people, just ask Job!

No one can escape having bad things happen in their lives or in the lives of their families. Arguments, illness and a host of other disagreeable things can come into our lives. It is the choices we make when things go bad, that can make the difference.

Take heart and don't lose the peace within you. Many of our saints had bad things happen to them also. Each may have handled their situation differently, but they never lost hope in God.



I am sure that many of you if not all of you reading this Newsletter have helped a family member or friend get through bad times. Like an unexpected death or a serious illness or by visiting someone (photo) who is in a nursing home to cheer them up.

Through the love we share with others who experience these bad things, we show that we are all God's children. We show them love. That is the number one attribute of God. "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 Jn 4:16).



The world has moved away from loving one another or so says the news networks. The evil in the world does exist but so does love. Our prayers are a twofold message of love. The first is that we believe that God hears our prayers and we unite ourselves to those in our prayers through love. We do this because the Holy Spirit moves us to reach out to God in times of trouble.

Perhaps the people we are praying for will never know about the prayers raised to heaven for them. But we are a part of Christ's mission on earth in offering our prayers of hope for others. We are a part of Christ's body and as such are united through love in His mission.



Millions upon millions of rosaries are said each day for loved ones and for friends. The rosary is a sign of hope for those that pray it. Our Blessed Mother at Fatima told the children to "Say the Rosary every day, to bring peace to the world..." If you have situations in your family that need to be resolved and need to bring peace back into hearts, then say your rosary. Our Lady is listening.

Our Lady caused the first miracle recorded in the bible at the Wedding at Cana. Jesus listens to His mother's requests. Take courage and use the rosary to help bring peace into hearts. You will not regret it.

Your prayers are like a candle in the darkness when bad things happen. Jesus is listening to your prayers. For He is the light that shines in the darkness. (Jn 1:5)



The Little Texas Girl Who Saw Heaven And Was Cured



In a remarkable true story of faith and blessings, a mother tells of her sickly young daughter, how she survived a dangerous accident, her visit to Heaven and the inexplicable disappearance of the symptoms of her chronic disease. Annabel Beam spent most of her childhood in and out of hospitals with a rare and incurable digestive disorder that prevented her from ever living a normal, healthy life. It also caused her stomach to bulge out with severe pain.

Christy Beam, is Annabelle's mother and recounts her daughter's story in a new book titled, "Miracles From Heaven." Annabelle, 12, suffered from chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction, a painful disorder that involves how food is processed, among other complications, before a bizarre incident unfolded in 2011 in which she was trapped for hours inside of a hollowed-out tree.



Annabelle's mother said it was during this accident that her daughter claims to have met Jesus and visited heaven — explained how Annabelle and her sisters were playing on the family farm in Texas three years ago when chaos unfolded.

"Annabelle and her sisters — they all three are rough and tumble country tom boys," she said. "They were out doing what they love to do which is climb trees. They climbed up and were just sitting on a branch talking, and then the branch began to give way."

Attempting to scramble to safety, Annabelle ended up falling into a hole on the side of the tree,

tumbling 30 feet head-first into the trunk. The family was unaware at the time that the cottonwood tree had hollowed out after a branch detached, creating the dangerous opening.

"I kept thinking she climbed and had gotten stuck and needed help getting down," Beam said of her first thoughts when her frantic daughters ran into the house to explain what happened.

The reality, of course, was much direr, as firefighters and rescue teams arrived at the house and spent hours trying to figure out a way to get Annabelle out of the tree. They eventually rigged up a series of pulleys and ropes that made the rescue possible.

As the 9-year-old girl remained stuck inside of the trunk, Annabelle's mother said that she had a troubling thought running through her mind.

"Anna had told me a few weeks prior that she wanted to die and go to heaven and live with Jesus, where there is no more pain, because the pain was so severe from her disorders that she was just so tired of living that life," the mother recalled. "And I remember thinking, 'Don't you take her, God, don't you answer her prayer like this.'" Despite her fears, she also had a feeling of confidence, as though everything would somehow be okay. She knelt beside the tree and prayed.



In the end, the ropes and pulleys were successfully employed to rescue Annabelle and, remarkably, she had no severe injuries, though she was kept overnight at a local hospital to be observed.

It was the next day that her mother learned of the supposedly heavenly encounter that the child had while inside of the tree.

"The next day after they released her from the hospital ... we were driving down the road ... and she just turned to me out of the blue ... and she just said, 'You know mommy, I went to heaven when I was in that tree,' and that's how it started," Beam said. "My very, very first thought was, 'Did you hit your head really hard? Was it just a dream ... what is she talking about?'"

But Beam said there were a number of elements that caused her to begin taking her daughter's story more seriously. For one, Annabelle described seeing her

great-grandmother, who she said looked much younger in heaven, and also described a purported encounter with Jesus.

"She said that she sat on Jesus' lap and that they talked and that he said that the firemen will get her out and when they do there will be nothing wrong with you," Beam recalled. "And [Jesus said], 'I'm going to send my guardian angel to light the tree and to stay with you.'"

Annabelle recalled asking Jesus if she could stay in heaven, as she felt no pain during the encounter, but she told her mother that he said that wasn't possible.

"He said, 'I know you want to stay Anna, but I have plans for you on Earth that you can't fulfill in heaven,'" Beam recalled.

It wasn't long after that encounter that Annabelle said that she was suddenly aware of the fact that she was back inside of the tree, but that there was a light source that she believed came from an angel — a light inside the deep, dark of the tree that helped her find the ropes and pulleys that the firefighters had rigged up.

All that aside, Beam said that the key moment that convinced her that Annabelle was telling the truth came when she said that she saw a little girl in heaven who God told her was her sister.

"I had had two miscarriages, and one of them had been the creation of life," Beam said that the one pregnancy resulted in a blighted ovum, a situation in which a fertilized egg doesn't develop.

She once told her daughters that she had two miscarriages but did not go into detail about the blighted ovum.

"When Anna was telling me about [heaven], she said, 'I saw a little girl in heaven, mommy, and she looked just like you ... and [she] said, 'I know that face and I asked God who is that little girl and he said, 'Anna, that's your sister' and that did it for me,'" Beam said. "I just remember thinking there's no way for her to have known."

Beam said that she remembered thinking at the time that, if Annabelle were lying, she would have said that she saw two children in heaven, but, instead, she said she only saw one. Considering that only one of the pregnancies progressed, she was floored.

"I thought at that moment, 'This is real, this happened,'" Beam said.

After the incident with the tree, Annabelle's illnesses cleared up and she went from taking 10 medications per day to taking none, according to her mother.

"Her life is different, and everybody sees it," she said.

Beam said that she and her daughter believe that the story, which is captured in the book "Miracles From Heaven" and will be a feature film set to release in 2016, will change lives and people's personal relationships with God.

Annabel Beam was only 6 when doctors said she suffered an incurable disease that left her unable to digest food. Her young life is now the subject of Jennifer Garner's film, "Miracles from Heaven," in which the actress plays Christy Beam, Annabel's mom. The movie is now showing on TV (2018). Catch it. You will be amazed.

Annabelle Today



**The inspiring story of the great Catholic woman
who was twice-divorced and became a Nun**



Remembering the "Prison Angel," Mother Antonia Brenner

Can a Catholic woman get married and divorced twice, give birth to eight children with two different men, become a nun and eventually found a new religious order? The answer is Yes! In fact, this same woman would, on Mother's Day, 1990, walk the steps alone to present the gifts to Pope John Paul II for the Mass he was offering during his visit to Mexico and, in return, receive his blessing. After all, with God, all things are possible.



This woman was Mother Antonia Brenner, who came to be known as the "**Prison Angel**" of La Mesa Prison. Mother Antonia died three years ago on October 17, 2013. I believe history will show that this woman was one of the greatest among Catholic women of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Mary Clarke was born in Beverly Hills on December 1, 1926. Her dad, Joe Clarke, was a successful businessman and Mary and her two siblings grew up surrounded with affluence and the glitz of the movie world. Their neighbors included Hollywood luminaries such as William Powell, Hedy Lamar and John Barrymore.

Joe Clarke had a deep love for all people. No matter how good life was for his family he made sure his kids were always taught to help the less fortunate. That desire to help others would blossom in Mary and was destined to explode. However, before the "explosion," Mary embarked on a circuitous life journey.

Mary married at 18 and had three children, the first dying shortly after birth. That marriage ended in divorce. As a divorcee, Mary now felt distanced from her Catholic upbringing. She married again, this time in a civil service in Las Vegas, to a man named Carl Brenner. She and Carl had five children together but ultimately, that marriage also ended in divorce. No matter, God "writes straight with crooked lines" and apparently the Holy Spirit had his eye on Mary Clarke Brenner her entire life. God was about to shower his grace all over his daughter.

Mary became a Nun..... and took the name of Antonia (after her mentor, Monsignor Anthony Bowers) and became Mother Antonia Brenner. *Here's how she became a Nun.* She sewed together a nun's habit, put it on, and went to see



Bishop Leo Maher of San Diego. She got down on her knees and told him her story. He knew all about her and gave her his blessing, validating her ministry. She would even start a new order, Eudist Servants of the Eleventh Hour, an order for women 45 and older

who wanted to serve the less fortunate. In addition to the blessing from Bishop Maher she also received the blessing of Bishop Juan Jesus Posadas of Tijuana. She had Church authorization for her ministry from bishops in two separate countries.



Her children grown and on their own, now known as Mother Antonia Brenner, gave away her belongings, moved out of her home in Ventura and headed to La Mesa Prison. She had received permission to live there by the Bishop and prison authorities.

"I have to be here with them in the middle of the night in case someone is stabbed; in case someone has an appendix attack; in case someone dies."



Her new home was to be a 10 ft by 10 ft cell in the women's section of the prison. She would live as any other inmate, sleeping in her concrete cell and having only cold water and prison food. The amenities in her room included a crucifix on the wall, a Bible, a Spanish dictionary and a hard prison bed. In the morning, she lined up with the other prisoners for roll call. **This was to be her home for the next 32 years.**

"La Mama" also became known as "The Prison Angel." She moved freely among the drug traffickers, thieves, murderers, rapists and others, touching cheeks and offering prayers. Many of these people were among the

most violent and desperate of both men and women. Yet she happily walked with them and comforted and consoled them, dried their tears and held their heads between her hands as they were dying. She even single-handedly stopped prison riots.



Mother Antonia Brenner truly saw the face of Christ in each and every prisoner she came in contact with and extended mercy and love to them all. Why else would hardened criminals, some who had never loved or been loved, call the diminutive woman who hailed from Beverly Hills "Mama"? They loved her in return.

She was an example for each and every one of us showing us how to selflessly "love our neighbor" no matter who that might be. Her life also shows all of us that no matter who or

what we are or where we have been or what we have done, God is always calling us. (Written by Larry Peterson 2016, Aletia.Org)

Alex Jones: the Evangelical who became a Catholic Deacon



Ten years ago, Alex Jones was the charismatic preacher of a thriving black independent Pentecostal congregation, Maranatha Christian Church in Detroit. Today, he still preaches, but it's as an ordained Roman Catholic deacon.

Jones doesn't like to use the word "convert" when it comes to his experience, but his story makes him one of the Catholic church's rarer flowers – a black evangelical Protestant who has wholeheartedly embraced the faith.

"There is spiritual conversion and ecclesial conversion. I was the latter. I was a Christian before I became Catholic," says Jones.

"It was never about going to heaven or knowing the Lord. Those things were accomplished while I was in the Pentecostal church. It was simply coming into the fullness of the Christian faith."

Indeed, Jones says he's still often asked why he would want to be Catholic. **"No one wants to be Catholic where I come from. Not even Catholics," he says with a laugh.** "It was almost like you were leaving Christianity."

Jones says his journey is one from which the church – which has 130 million Catholics in Africa but only 24,000 blacks among his Detroit diocese's 1.3 million members – can learn.

His conversion began, he says, when he began looking at early Christian worship with a congregational study group. That led to a reading of the early church fathers, including St. Ignatius of Antioch, a friend of the apostle John, and St. Clement of Rome, the third successor to St. Peter as head of the church.

"I wasn't looking for truth," he says. "But I saw the continuity from the apostles to the church today, and that necessitated a further look." As he continued to pursue his questions, he instituted a Liturgy of the Word and a Liturgy of the Eucharist on Easter Sunday. He took the Bible from front and center on the Communion table as it morphed into an altar.

He began to see that as a pastor, he was missing apostolic succession and a hierarchy that ensured continuity of teachings. It took a two-year journey during which he sought help from other Catholic converts, but after he saw what he needed to do, "it was clear as a bell," he says.

Jones joined the church in 2000. His wife, family members and 54 of his church's members followed. Some of those people have "returned to their Pentecostal roots," he says, but many have remained.



He now is a deacon for St. Suzanne/Our Lady Gate of Heaven Catholic community, two congregations that share one priest.

He also has written a book and produced a documentary about his experiences and speaks at Catholic events nationwide.

Jones says the reasons more American blacks are not Catholic are partly historical and partly cultural. American blacks "tended as slaves to take on the faith of their slaveholders," he says, noting that only in Louisiana and Maryland were they Catholic.

And within the church even today, he sometimes finds an "us-and-them" mentality about those from other races or denominations.

"If (they) blacks knew more about Catholicism, if they saw their face reflected in the liturgy and the church leadership, they'd be more inclined to investigate further," he says.

Catholic parish schools, another traditional influence on blacks, are on the wane in many city neighborhoods where black families live because they are expensive for dioceses to maintain, Jones says.

"The Catholic Church is going to have to learn how to enculturate," he adds. Jones, 66, who was director of evangelization in the Detroit diocese until his recent retirement, says he has asked his bishop twice about becoming a priest.

"Both times the answer was no, so that's that," he says. "If they offered it to me, I'd take it in a heartbeat, but it's not likely in this diocese. They don't allow married priests."

He points out that 80 dioceses do allow priests who are married when they come to Catholicism from other denominations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DEACONS

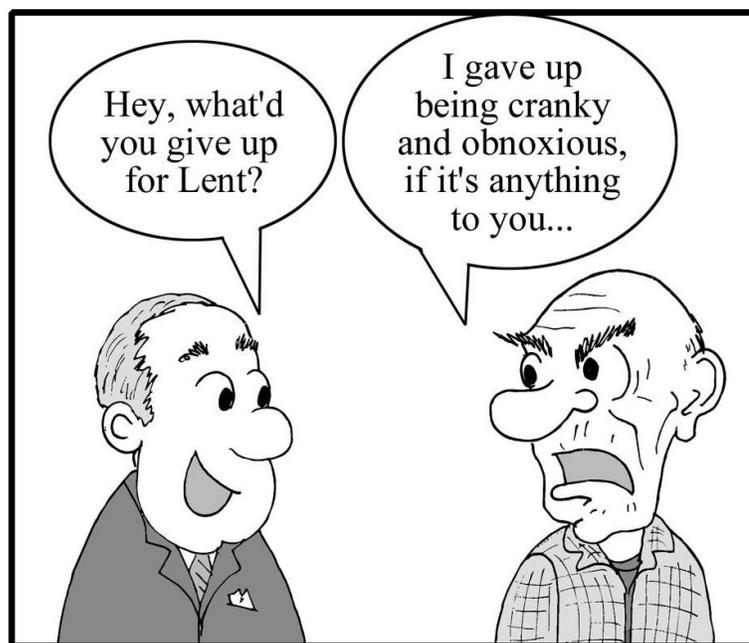
Who is a Deacon?

A deacon is an ordained minister of the Catholic Church. There are three groups, or "orders," of ordained ministers in the Church: bishops, presbyters and deacons. Deacons are ordained as a sacramental sign to the Church and to the world of Christ, who came "to serve and not to be served." The entire Church is called by Christ to serve, and the deacon, in virtue of his sacramental ordination and through his various ministries, is to be a servant in a servant-Church.

What are these "various ministries" of the Deacon?

All ordained ministers in the Church are called to functions of Word, Sacrament, and Charity, but bishops, presbyters and deacons exercise these functions in various ways. As ministers of Word, deacons proclaim the Gospel, preach, and teach in the name of the Church. As ministers of Sacrament, deacons baptize, lead the faithful in prayer, witness marriages, and conduct wake and funeral services. As ministers of Charity, deacons are leaders in identifying the needs of others, then marshaling the Church's resources to meet those needs. Deacons are also dedicated to eliminating the injustices or inequities that cause such needs. But no matter what specific functions a deacon performs, they flow from his sacramental identity. In other words, it is not only WHAT a deacon does, but WHO a deacon is, that is important.

Little Humor Section



www.catholiccartoonblog.blogspot.com

“There is no evil to be faced that Christ does not face with us. There is no enemy that Christ has not already conquered. There is no cross to bear that Christ has not already born for us and does not now bear with us.” St. Pope John Paul II

Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.

St. Paul Ministry, Cypress, TX

