



Reflections

International
Catholic Family Newsletter

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Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness

A Final Letter to My Children

Our Lady of Africa Basilica

Seven Miracles that Science Cannot Explain

Bible Verse for the Day: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matthew 5:7

Thought for the Day: God's mercy is bigger, than any mistake you have made.

Prayer for Today: Dear God, show me where I am inviting temptation into my life. I don't want to make bad decisions that are giving the enemy a foothold in my life.

Blessing to All:
By: Richard Pickard

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy." 1 Cor 3:16-17.

This passage written by St. Paul was directed to the young Christian church members. They were baptized into the body of Christ but many of them fell back into an immoral lifestyle.

The word 'temple' has several meanings. In Paul's time, the temple was a sacred place to worship. You were on holy ground as the Spirit of the Lord

was present. It also has a meaning of "a place dedicated to a special purpose."

The "purpose" of our lives through Baptism, is to have a new purpose and direction in life. To live a changed life for the better towards each other and as examples to those who do not know Christ. To live in peace with each other.

Is your life full of peace or the opposite? Is your life filled with good thoughts or bad thoughts? Do you pray each day or never pray? These are questions which help show you the purpose and direction of your life.

No one is judging you but be honest with yourself. You have a purpose the God wants to give you. So that you can have joy and peace in your life. If your life is filled with anger, immorality, and trying to keep up with what the world is telling you, it is time to change.

Jesus is the answer. He has always been the answer. Find the purpose in your life and start enjoying peace within.



Give Jesus a try with the problems and temptations you have.

What do you have to lose? Decide to ask Jesus for help. You have all eternity at stake.

The article below is from a Mother's last letter to her children before her death. Please read it slowly and let the Lord move your heart to understand the beauty of life and love.

A Final Letter to My Children



My dearest children,

As you can imagine, this is the most difficult letter for me to write. Right now, as I contemplate death, it is not fear of dying that causes me pain, but rather the thought of leaving my family behind.

When I was younger, I was always so grateful for living, but I was also so curious about why we are here and where we were going after this part of our journey ends. I spent hours thinking about the meaning of life and, in particular, what was I doing here. Of course, I never had any answers to these age-old questions, so I would end my internal philosophy lesson with the feeling that there must be something more besides this existence on earth. Part of me could not wait to find out what that was.

I suppose I can dig deep down and still find that feeling, but something drastically changed in me after I married your dad and started our family.

For the first time I planted roots. I mean emotional roots. The kinds that attach you to another human being and are so strong that they stretch to the far corners of the earth. I can remember being afraid to love your dad as much as I did. I thought love was like this mathematical equation. The amount that a heart loves is in direct proportion to the amount that a heart can feel pain. As I grew more deeply in love, I was acutely aware of how painful it would be to lose him.

And then you, my children, came along. That bond is so different. It was solid from the second you were born. Life began to make more sense to me and I could not imagine life without my family.

Every year, every day, every moment is a gift. I have been blessed with many wonderful memories that bring a smile to my face or tears of happiness to my eyes. I have also struggled and suffered, and I remember those times as well with a smile on my face, because in the end, so far, every struggle has helped form the person that I am. As I think about my own death, and my own life, I keep coming back to that mathematical equation about love. The pleasure of knowing and giving love is what really matters on earth. And I feel content. I have felt love and I continue to feel love every moment of every day.

I may not be the richest, most beautiful, or healthiest person. Considering the size of this planet, I may not know very many people intimately and deeply. And God knows I have not suffered or felt the deep pain that many others have in this lifetime. So, was my life worth it? Did I make a difference? Did I laugh and cry through the years? And most importantly, did I know love?

Yes, yes, yes. And I pray that in your lifetime, you, too, will experience all the pleasure and pain that life brings you with open arms. This way, you will also leave this earth with a full heart.

I can only imagine this to be a difficult time for you as well. Find strength in your faith. Let our fond memories comfort you now. We have had so much. You have given me so much. Now your outgoing spirit and your generous heart will fill you with the desire to go on to live a wonderful life and to share your gifts with others.

I will close with this, my dears. As you get older, I pray that your life will be filled with people and love. Make loving one another your priority for, as I

have heard many times before, when that final day comes, you will not be concerned with how much money is in your bank account or how successful you were in business. You will only care about the people you love and the wonderful memories of times spent with them. So, please take the time to cultivate those memories and you will reap the harvest of life's sweetest fruit.

I have enjoyed each and every moment of this life with you. I can still remember the first moment I saw your face and held you in my arms. My memories are filled with your sweet smiles and your chunky tears and everything in between. I will remember you and everything about you.

Although I will miss you greatly, I believe that someday we will be together again. On that day I will look into those sweet eyes to thank you once again for bringing more joy to my life than I could have ever imagined.

So, until that day, good-bye.

I love you,
Mom

.

Our Lady of Africa Basilica

The first Bishop of Algiers, after the conquest of the country by the French at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was without a church or residence. He was also without funds and surrounded by Moslems whose hostility was evident and whose friendship had to be won. The Bishop returned to Lyon and related his distress at the Convent of the Religious of the Sacred Heart; his appeal was spread and he did not have long to wait before he was offered, by the Sodality of Our Lady, **a bronze statue of the Immaculate Conception**. It was the express desire of the donors that this dark-hued statue should be considered the Protectress of the Mohammedans and the Aricans. When he returned to Algiers, the Bishop gave the statue into the custody of the Trappist Fathers, also recently arrived, who according to their severe rules were beginning to cultivate the barren African soil. Bishop

Dupuch was not to see his plans for the construction of a church realized; however, his successor, Bishop Pavy, laid the cornerstone for the present Basilica in 1858, on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean. This Basilica, which recalls the Cathedral of Our Lady of Fourvieres in Lyon, was consecrated in 1872 by Cardinal Lavigerie, famous for his activities to spread the Catholic faith in Africa. When this appropriate shrine was ready, the Bishop asked the Trappist Fathers to return the statue, which had previously been placed before the entrance of the Trappist monastery. The Trappists, however, had become so attached to this precious statue that they acceded to this request reluctantly, and only because she was to be placed in the new, magnificent church of Algiers, one of the gates to the "Dark Continent." Shortly thereafter, the image became known as **Our Lady of Africa**, Consolation of the Afflicted. The poor, the blind, the crippled and especially sailors and soldiers came from all over to implore her aid and the walls of the Basilica were soon covered by great numbers of offerings which attested to miraculous cures. A lady from France, who wished to perpetuate her thanksgiving for a great favor, made a white satin gown for the statue and another lady offered a blue silk mantle.

After the donation by Pope Pious IX of a golden diadem with precious stones with which the statue was crowned, Cardinal Lavigerie placed the newly founded Congregation of the Missionary Sisters under the protection of Our Lady of Africa, with the privilege of replacing the gown and the mantle of the statue.



Though Our Lady of Africa's abode is a Catholic church, she is venerated by Mohammedan men and women as much as she is by Christians. Every day, one can see kneeling Mohammedans who

have come to ask Lala Meriem, as they call the Blessed Virgin, for her special favors.

Faithful Moslems are familiar with Our Lady and the Saviour because Mohammed speaks of them in clear and penetrating terms in the Koran. ***Chapter III of Sura quotes the words of Allah: "Oh Mary! Lo: Allah hath chosen thee and made thee pure and preferred thee above (all) the women of creation."*** And Sura XIX is entirely dedicated to Mary, and mostly to the history of the Annunciation. The Koran accepts the fact of the Immaculate Conception, though Christ is considered only a prophet. The devotion of the Saviour to his Mother is also known to the faithful from Sura XIX where Mohammed attributes the following words to Christ: "...And (hath made me) dutiful toward her who bore me, and hath not made me arrogant, unblessed."

Thus, it is understandable that Mohammedans, who become aware of the unique position of Our Lady among Catholics and generally among all Christians, are devoted to her. There is much evidence, throughout the centuries, of this Moslem veneration of the Gracious Lady. Though they fought Christians because Mohammed, in the Koran, blames the followers of Jesus for many evils, only the savage or ignorant would have done any harm to an image of the Virgin. St. Louis, King of France, who was the prisoner of Moslems in the Holy Land, was treated generously, and received a gift, an image of the Holy Virgin, from the hands of the Sultan. This image, later enshrined in Le Puy, France, was venerated by the Moslems. The holy places in Palestine, and particularly those of *Lala Meriem*, are kept in greatest esteem.



At present, the veneration is extraordinary because the Moslems frequent Catholic churches. Once, the chaplain of the Basilica in Algiers approached two Mohammedans after their prayer and asked them why they had come. They answered that they had come to ask *Lala Meriem* to obtain the cessation of the famine in their

village. A kneeling woman cried: "I am sick and suffer so much. You must cure me, *Meriem*." Another woman said: "I am praying to *Meriem* so that she will send me a good husband," and innumerable people go by themselves to one of the chaplains if he is around and say: "I was asking *Meriem* for her *Haraka* (blessing)." Many women, with veiled faces, after having received permission from their husbands, come simply to place a candle before the shrine of *Lala Meriem*.

Update on Our Lady of Africa Shrine

The Basilica of Our Lady of Africa stands on a cliff overlooking the bay of Algiers. The church, the construction of which was begun in 1872, is visited by Muslims as well as Catholics. Women, young girls and grandmothers, alone or accompanied, can be seen praying here in front of the beautiful bronze statue of Our Lady of Africa clothed in a richly embroidered Tlemcen style garment. The church custodians say many Muslim visitors ask about Mary, about the Bible, why the four Gospels. They spend time looking at decoration, the Stations of the Cross, and frescoes of the life of Saint Augustine the 4th century Bishop of Hippo, born in Tagaste. Augustine is Christianity's first and most famous Algerian. Below the frescoes runs a phrase of St Augustine in Arabic, French and Cabila: "Brotherly love comes from God and is God". Strong words in a very difficult context of the country where many kill in the name of Allah.

Algeria was Christian and Marian from the 2nd century AD. Numidia (Berbers are Numids), was colonized long before the Christian era by the Fenicians who settled along the coasts while the Berbers held the center of the country. In 200 BC the kingdom passed under the dominion of the Roman Empire for nine centuries until the Arab invasion and Islamization. However, the Arab-Islamic conquest was slow and arduous because this part of northern Africa had a flourishing Christian community.

The conversion to Christianity of Roman Emperor Constantine in the 3rd century increased the Church's influence in northern Africa. Carthage became important as the city of Saint Augustine a Berber Christian and one of the most universally known Doctors of the Catholic Church. Algeria has many Christian basilicas and shrines.

But with the Arab invasion the Church of Africa was decimated and was only re-established here in 1830 with the arrival of France.

Although Islamized and shaken by bloody violence, Algeria, an ancient Christian and Marian land, a land of martyrs' **is still entrusted to Our Lady of Africa. Muslims too respect the Blessed Virgin Miriam, the Holy Mother of Jesus.** And along with Christians still today many Muslims come to pray and lay flowers in front of the statue of the Blessed Virgin in this great Basilica dedicated to Our Lady of Africa where underneath the main altar lies the inscription: "Our Lady of Africa pray for us and for all Muslims".



Men and women praying in Church

The Magnificent View of the Altar Inside the Basilica



The feast of Our Lady of Africa has its origin in the blessing of a statue of the Blessed Virgin, known as Our Lady of Africa on April 30, 1876 in the newly built church of Our Lady of Africa in Algiers.

Since then the church throughout Africa has adopted Our Lady of Africa as the Patroness of the African Continent.

The feast of Our Lady of Africa is celebrated on April 30. On that day people pray for peace and prosperity as well as for greater faith and vitality of the church in Africa.

7 Modern Miracles That Science Can't Explain

God is still in the business of miracles.

By Megan Schmidt



Many Christians have given up believing in miracles. For them, the age of miracles belongs to the early church, when awe-inspiring events—like Moses parting the red sea, the virgin birth, and Jesus rising from the dead—

confirmed the authenticity and divine nature of God and Jesus. But just because we don't see phenomena of biblical proportions occurring today does not mean that God has left the business of miracles. From second chances at life to scientifically unexplained mysteries, these real-life stories are powerful reminders that God is at work in modern times, and that we must never give up hope and faith.

A "mysterious voice" led rescuers to find child who survived for 14 hours in submerged car.



In March 2015, Lynn Jennifer Groesbeck, 25, lost control of her car and landed in the icy Spanish Fork River in Utah.

Fourteen hours later, first responders found her 18-month-old daughter, Lily, in her car seat hanging upside down just above frigid river water.

Prior to finding Lily, both police officers and firefighters report that they heard an adult voice yell **"Help me!"** from inside the car.

They discovered that the voice could not have come from the young mother, who likely died from the impact.

The rescuers still can't explain the voice or how the girl survived hanging upside-down for 14 hours in freezing temperatures without being dressed for the cold.

A woman who came back to life after having no pulse for 45 minutes.



Ruby Graupera-Cassimiro, 40, fell unconscious from a rare amniotic fluid embolism during a cesarean section in September 2014 at the Boca Raton Regional Hospital in Florida.

Doctors tried to revive Graupera-Cassimiro for three hours. After 45 minutes without a pulse, doctors decided to invite her family into the operating room to say their last goodbyes.

Then what doctors are calling a "miracle" occurred — her heart began beating on its own.

Graupera-Cassimiro has revealed that during the experience, she felt herself floating along a tunnel and seeing spiritual beings, including her father, surrounded in light.

What's even more incredible is that Graupera-Cassimiro suffered no brain damage and made a full recovery. Her baby girl is also healthy and happy.

A boy who fell into an icy stream was resuscitated after nearly two hours of CPR



Gardell Martin, 22-months-old, was playing with his siblings outside his parents' home in Mifflinburg, PN, in March 2015 when he fell into a gushing creek with 34-degree water.

Gardell was found a quarter of a mile away by a neighbor, unconscious and without a pulse. Emergency personnel were called to the scene and immediately began performing CPR, which continued uninterrupted for 101 minutes as they transported him via an ambulance and a helicopter to a hospital.

His body's temperature upon arrival was 77-degrees, well below the normal temperature of 98.6-degrees. After doctors gradually warmed the boy over 24 hours—he remarkably woke up without any apparent signs of neurological damage.

The power of community prayer sparked a healing miracle that doctors can't explain.



The end of Grayson Kirby seemed inevitable when he was thrown from a demolition derby car at the Mid-Atlantic Power Festival in Ruckersville, VA, in June 2014.

The accident left him in a coma. His lungs were crushed and nearly every other bone in his body was broken. His brain also suffered multiple strokes and hemorrhages and his kidneys were failing. If he did wake up, he would likely—to put it bluntly—be a vegetable.

But his family refused to give up and turned to prayer. Thousands of people in the community and beyond kept Kirby in their thoughts and prayers and wore red shirts designed to show support for the injured man.

In a final attempt to revive Kirby, doctors hooked him up to a machine typically used for transplant patients, not trauma patients. Whether it was due to a divine intervention or medical intervention (or both), it worked.

Ten days after the accident, Kirby opened his eyes and mouthed the words, “I love you,” to his father.

The doctors couldn't believe it, and neither could Kirby.

“I'm humble, I'm grateful, just amazed.” Kirby said. “I know that God saved me. I know that prayer and believing saved me.”



Vatican confirms Colorado boy was healed by nun from the beyond the grave.



The Roman Catholic Church has a rigid, formalized vetting process when evaluating miracles, which are defined as divine events that have no natural or scientific explanation. Investigating a single miracle could take *years*. After a 14-year process, the Vatican released its verdict on a young boy's sudden recovery from a debilitating gastrointestinal condition: It was a miracle.

Doctors tried everything: antibiotics, diets, and tests. But it seemed nothing could stop 4-year-old Luke Burgie from literally wasting away in 1998. The eight to 10 violent bouts of diarrhea he experienced every day for six months forced him to drop out of preschool. After doctors began to suspect cancer, the boy's mother, a devout Catholic, began looking outside of medicine for a cure. She asked nuns to pray for Luke.

Sister Margaret Mary Preister and the late Sister Evangeline Spenner knew what to do. They asked the founder of their order, Mother Theresia Bonzel, a German nun who lived 100 years ago, to intervene. The nuns prayed a novena, a nine-day vigil, asking Bonzel to heal Luke.

As soon as their novena was complete, Luke woke up and his stomach no longer hurt him. The illness never returned.

"I knew immediately that it was a miracle," mother Jan Burgie said.

Little Humor Section. We all need a little humor.



“Please don’t pray for healing. If it works, your insurance won’t know who to reimburse and it messes up our accounting system.”

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Bringing Light Into A World In Darkness



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