

## He Witnessed a Miracle!!

*(The following article is excerpted from the book, "Voyage to Lourdes", written by Nobel Prize winner (biology, 1913) Alexis Carrel. The book was published posthumously by his wife, Ann, in 1950 and relates the great research physician's experience on a trip to Lourdes in 1903.*

*At the time, Alexis Carrel was on the staff of the medical school at the University of Lyons, and he accompanied a group of patients from Lyons. He had been raised a Catholic, but had given up religion and become a skeptic, having been influenced by the stoic and Kantian philosophies (Cassagnard, 1971, p. 76).*

*In the following excerpt from the book, Carrel uses the name Lerrac to refer to himself; the patient, Marie Bailly, is referred to as Marie Ferrand.)*

Lerrac leaned over the bed and studied Marie Ferrand. She was laying on her back, inert. Her head, with its white, emaciated face, was flung back on the pillow. Her wasted arms lay flat at her sides. Her breathing was rapid and shallow.

"How are you feeling?" Lerrac asked her, gently. She turned her dim, dark-circled eyes toward him, and her gray lips moved in an inaudible reply. Taking her hand, Lerrac put his fingertips on her wrist. Her pulse was excessively rapid, a hundred and fifty beats a minute, and irregular. Her heart was giving out.

"Get me the hypodermic syringe," he told the nurse. "We'll give her an injection of caffeine."

Pulling back the covers, the nurse removed the cradle that held up the bed clothes and the rubber ice bag which hung over the patient's abdomen. Marie Ferrand's emaciated body

lay exposed again. The abdomen was distended, as before. The swelling was almost uniform, but somewhat more pronounced on the left side.

Gently, he let his hands slide over the smooth surface of the belly, lightly palpating it. The solid masses were still there; at the center, under the umbilicus, he could still feel the fluid.

Again Lerrac thought to himself that a small two-inch incision below the umbilicus would have been more useful than sending her to Lourdes. He turned to A. B., who was standing a little way off, visibly moved by the sight of this sickness and suffering.

"It's just what I told you," said Lerrac, ... "advanced tubercular peritonitis. The fluid is almost gone. You can feel the solid masses at the sides. I told you that both her parents died of tuberculosis.

"At seventeen, she was already spitting blood. At eighteen, she had a tubercular pleurisy; more than half a gallon of fluid was drawn from the left lung. Then she had pulmonary lesions. And now, for the last eight months, she has had this unmistakable tubercular peritonitis. She is almost completely wasted away. Her heart is racing madly. Look how thin she is. Look at the color of her face and hands. She may last a few days more, but she is doomed. Death is very near."

### At the Grotto at Lourdes

He walked past the lines of little carts and through the crowd toward the Grotto. Pausing for a moment at the edge of the stream, he observed the crowd. A young intern from Bordeaux, Mr. M., whom Lerrac had met the day before, greeted him.

"Have you had any cures?" Lerrac asked him.

"No," replied M. "A few of the hysteria cases have recovered, but there has been nothing unexpected, nothing that one can't see any day in a hospital."

### I Think That She is Dying

"Come and look at my patient," said Lerrac. "Her case is not unusual, but I think she is dying. She is at the Grotto."

"I saw her a few minutes ago," said M. "What a pity they let her come to Lourdes. She should have been operated on. Bringing her to the Grotto does not seem to have helped her."

In front of the iron grille and almost touching it, a stretcher was already lying. He and M. made their way toward the Grotto where they could have a close view of the sick and the pilgrims. They stopped near Marie Ferrand's stretcher and leaned against the low wall.

She was motionless, her breathing still rapid and shallow; she seemed to be at the point of death. More pilgrims were approaching the Grotto. Lerrac glanced again at Marie Ferrand.

Suddenly he stared. It seemed to him that there had been a change, that the harsh shadows on her face had disappeared, that her skin was somehow less ashen.

Surely, he thought, this was a hallucination. But the hallucination itself was interesting psychologically, and might be worth recording. Hastily he jotted down the time in his notebook. It was twenty minutes before three o'clock. But if the change in Marie Ferrand was a hallucination, it was the first one Lerrac had ever had.

He turned to M. "Look at our patient again," he said. "Does it seem to you that she has rallied a little?"

"She looks much the same to me," answered M. "All I can see is that she is no worse."

Leaning over the stretcher, Lerrac took her pulse again and listened to her breathing. "The respiration is less rapid?" he told M., after a moment.

"That may mean that she is about to die," said M.

Lerrac made no reply. To him it was obvious that there was a sudden improvement in her general condition. Something was taking place.

### A Miracle

He stiffened to resist a tremor of emotion, and concentrated all his powers of observation on Marie Ferrand. He did not lift his eyes from her face.

A priest was preaching to the assembled throngs of pilgrims and patients; hymns and prayers burst out sporadically (the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the Grotto), and in this atmosphere of fervor, under Lerrac's cool, objective gaze, the face of Marie Ferrand slowly continued to change.

Her eyes, so dim before, were now wide with ecstasy as she turned them toward the Grotto. The change was undeniable. The nurse leaned over and held her.

Suddenly, Lerrac felt himself turning pale. The blanket which covered Marie Ferrand's distended abdomen was gradually flattening out.

"Look at her abdomen!" he exclaimed to M.

"Why, yes," he said, "it seems to have gone down. It's probably the folds in the blanket that give that impression."

### Going Mad!

The bell of the basilica had just struck three. A few minutes later, there was no longer any sign of distension in Marie Ferrand's abdomen. Lerrac felt as though he were going mad.

Standing beside Marie Ferrand, he watched the intake of her breath and the pulsing at her throat with fascination. The heartbeat, though still very rapid, had become regular. This time, for sure, something was taking place.

"How do you feel?" he asked her.

"I feel very well," she answered in a low voice. "I am still weak, but I feel I am cured."

There was no longer any doubt; Marie Ferrand's condition was improving so much that she was scarcely recognizable. Lerrac stood there in silence, his mind a blank. This event, exactly the opposite of what he had expected, must surely be nothing but a dream.

Abruptly, Lerrac moved off. Mak-

ing his way through the crowd of pilgrims, whose loud prayers he hardly heard, he left the Grotto. It was now about four o'clock.

### The Dying Girl Was Recovering

It was the resurrection of the dead; it was a miracle! He had not yet examined her; he could not yet know the real condition of her lesions. But he had seen with his own eyes a functional improvement which was in itself a miracle!

How simple, how private, it had been! The crowd at the Grotto was not even aware that it had happened.

At half-past-seven, he started for the hospital, tense and on fire with curiosity. One question alone filled his mind. Had the incurable Marie Ferrand been cured?

Opening the door of the ward of the Immaculate Conception (hospital) he hastened across the room to her bedside. With mute astonishment, he stood and gazed. The change was overpowering. Marie Ferrand, in a white jacket, was sitting up in bed.

Though her face was still gray and emaciated, it was alight with life; her eyes shone, a faint color tinted her cheeks. Such an indescribable serenity emanated from her person that it seemed to illuminate the whole sad ward with joy.

"Doctor?" she said, "I am completely cured. I feel very weak, but I think I could even walk." Lerrac put his hand on her wrist. The pulse beat was calm and regular. Her respiration had also become completely normal. Confusion flooded Lerrac's mind.

Was this merely an apparent cure, the result of a patient's stimulus of autosuggestion? Or was it a new fact, ...an astounding, unacceptable event... a miracle? For a brief moment, before subjecting Marie Ferrand to the supreme test of examining her abdomen, Lerrac hesitated.

Then, torn between hope and fear, he threw back the blanket. The skin was smooth and white. Above the narrow hips was the small, flat, slightly concave abdomen of a young, undernourished girl. Lightly he put his hands on the wall of the abdomen, looking for traces of the

distension and hard masses he had found before. They had vanished like a bad dream.

The sweat broke out on Lerrac's forehead. He felt as though someone had struck him on the head. His heart began to pump furiously. He held himself in with iron determination.

He had not heard Doctors J. and M. entering the ward. Suddenly he noticed them standing beside him.

"She seems to be cured," he said, ...and then "I cannot find anything wrong. Please examine her yourselves." While his two colleagues carefully palpated Marie Ferrand's abdomen, Lerrac stood aside and watched them with shining eyes.

There could be no doubt whatever that the girl was cured. It was a miracle, the kind of miracle which took the public by storm and sent them in hordes to Lourdes.

And the public was justified in its enthusiasm. Whatever the source of these cures, the results were not only breathtaking but positive and good. Again it swept over Lerrac how fortunate he was, that among all the patients at Lourdes that day it was the one he had known and studied carefully whom he saw cured!

### Searching for Causes

When a scientist tried to apply his intellectual techniques and convictions to metaphysics, he was lost. He could no longer use his reasoning, since reason did not go beyond the establishing of facts and their relations to each other.

In the search for causes, there was nothing absolute; there were no sign posts along the way, there was no proof of right or wrong. All things in this mysterious realm were therefore possible. Intellectual systems no longer seemed to count. In the face of life and death, the mere theories were void. It was not science that nourished the inner life of man, it was the faith of his soul.

He had to reach a conclusion. He was certain of his diagnosis. It was incontestable that a miracle had taken place. But was it by the hand of God? Perhaps someday he would know. Meanwhile, it was safe to say it was a cure; that much he could

guarantee. Yet deep within himself, he felt that was not all.

He climbed the steps of the church in the glitter of lights while the organ boomed and a thousand voices chanted. He sat down on a chair at the back, near an old peasant. For a long time he sat there motionless, his hands over his face, listening to the hymns.

### **He Prayed**

Then he found himself praying: "I believe in Thee. Thou didst answer my prayers by a blazing miracle. I am still blind to it. I still doubt. But the greatest desire of my life is to believe, ...to believe passionately, implicitly, and never more to analyze and doubt. Beneath the deep, harsh warnings of my intellectual pride, a smothered dream persists. Alas, it is still only a dream... but the most enchanting of them all. It is the dream of believing in Thee and of loving Thee with the shining spirit of men of God."

### **Completely Cured!**

Subsequent examinations over the years have revealed that her cure was indeed instantaneous, and permanent. Marie Bailly entered the Order of Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul the following August as a postulant, and then later as a novice at the mother house of the sisters of Paris on Rue du Bac.

She lived for 35 years as a Sister of Charity at various locations in France and Italy, taking care of the poor, the sick, and the infirm. She died in February, 1937, at the age of 57 of causes unrelated to her earlier illness.

### **They Laughed at Him**

In the short term, the event cost Carrel dearly. His colleagues at the University of Lyons at first laughed at his naivete, then grew angry when he refused to deny what he had experienced, and he was shortly after forced to leave his position.

### **Nobel Prize Winner**

He left France and came to the

United States, where he joined the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. There he had a long and brilliant career in the course of which, in 1913, he won the Nobel Prize for his studies in biology, the first by an American (Cassagnard, 1971, p. 150).

Eventually, in his late years, he teamed with Charles Lindberg in development of a mechanical heart. He won the Nordhoff-Jung Cancer Prize in 1931, the Foundation Award in 1937. He died in November of 1944, having lived a life dedicated to science, during which he published several books on a theme basically spiritual, but showing the relationship of the infinite God with the world of science.

The incident described changed his life entirely. It was included in the excellent book, *Turning Point* (Dunaway, 1958), as one of the fifty or more examples in which a single event is identified as the crisis in life.

### **I Hope I Die Soon!**

It was also well covered in the book, *The World's Greatest Secret*, by John M. Haffert (Haffert, 1967). Regarding the book, which had already sold some 200,000 copies in Haffert's lifetime, St. Padre Pio said, "In Haffert's lifetime, it will have a moderate degree of success, but after his death, it will help to save a great number of souls."

When John Haffert heard this, he responded, "In that case, I hope that I die soon!" He died some 30 years later, on October 31, 2001, at the age of 86.

Many people are already calling John a great man and a possible saint, and many are already praying TO him, including the editor of this paper.

The book, *The World's Greatest Secret*, is available from the 101 Foundation for \$6 and \$4 postage and handling. A free prayer card, having a picture of John and a small segment of his clothing attached to it, will be enclosed in each book ordered.

The card may also be requested without ordering the book, but please send a small contribution for printing

and postage.

It is respectfully requested that any cures brought about through Mr. John Haffert's intercession be documented and reported to the 101 Foundation, so that the information may be filed in the event that, in the future, his cause should be promoted. +++

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## ***Somalia: Missionary Woman Killed***

from *Echo of Mary, Italy*

sixty year old Italian woman, Annalena Tonelli, was killed on October 5, 2003 in Somaliland. She had spent over 30 years of her life in the remote Horn of Africa treating and curing people with tuberculosis and other diseases.

She also opened a school for the children of tuberculosis patients, and for deaf-mute and physically handicapped children.

Two years ago, Annalena began working against "female circumcision," and most recently had begun providing HIV/AIDS care and pre-vention. Her efforts were appreciated by Somaliland authorities, but local extremists, for whom the sick were untouchable, were less appreciative.

### **Gave Her Life For the Poor**

She is remembered as a true missionary who gave up her life to serve the poor. She had recently confided in a friend: "The people here in Somaliland are all Muslims, but for them I am a woman sent by God. This makes me feel honored, even though I feel unworthy of the mission I have received. They know that I am a Catholic, for they pray at the Mosque for my conversion." +++

## Interview with Marija Pavlovic-Lunetti

by Bernard Gallagher  
from *The Medjugorje Star*  
Vol. 18, #8, 9/04

*The United Nations had declared 2004, International Year of the Family. Has Our Lady said anything about this?*

*Marija:* No, not up to now. But you know, Our Lady has said from the beginning of the apparitions, that the most important thing for families to do is to put God in the first place in our lives. She says that the first prayer group needs to become our own family, and then, after that, in our parishes.

Also, we visionaries, now that Vicka is married, are all with families, and I think Our Lady is calling all of us in a special way through the family.

*Q. You must know of many parents who worry about their children who lose faith during their teen years and stop going to Mass. Have you any words of hope or encouragement to give to these people?*

### Become an Example

*Marija:* Our Lady always says pray and become an example with our own life. She asks us, as does Holy Scripture, to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I think in this way we become a testimony for all our children, and also for people who work with us.

Our Lady also asks us to carry, to use, and to wear holy objects such as medals, Rosary beads, and the Scapular, as signs that we belong to Our Lady and Jesus.

*Q. Often, a partner in marriage, after a "conversion" experience in Medjugorje, returns home and begins to try to convert a husband or wife, and other members of the family. Sometimes it creates difficulties. Then resentment and frustration can creep into the relationship. Has Our Lady ever*

*given advice for these situations?*

*Marija:* No, but I think it is much better when a husband and wife go together to Medjugorje, so the experience is deeper and more beautiful, and it becomes easier to pray together.

Also, I think it is good, if possible that the whole family decides to go together, as they do when going on vacation to a seaside. It is a good opportunity for the family to be renewed, and Our Lady is sure to help bring new spirit into the family. I see many families *that have never prayed, begin to pray together* after going to Medjugorje.

*Q. It is also said that those who give their lives to Our Lady come under a lot of pressure from the enemy. Is there any truth in this?*

### We Must Become Those Who Bring Peace

*Marija:* True! I always say, when we are with God, Satan is not happy, and that is always the case when we work for peace. Today, peace is destroyed by murder and terrorism. Our Lady says *we must become those who bring peace.*

*Q. Our Lady has given you a special mission to pray for the Holy Souls...*

### Make Friends!

*Marija:* No -- for priests -- for the consecrated! But I also love praying for the Holy Souls. Many people do not know that *when we pray for the Holy Souls, they become our friends.* But, Our Lady asked me, particularly, to pray for all people who are consecrated in a special way to God.

*Q. For people who, for whatever reason, cannot go to Medjugorje, how can Medjugorje come to them?*

### Live Paradise Here

*Marija:* I thank God, Who thanks you for your work. Thanks to all who spread the messages of Our Lady. It can come by way of the press and in our personal conversations

with friends.

For example one time, at the invitation of my parish priest, I went to Brazil. At one church, I met a man who had never been to Medjugorje, but he knew and really lived all of Our Lady's messages.

He said, "I chose the way of holiness for my life and my family. We try to live Our Lady's message and *we live love and peace in our family.*"

This was just as when Our Lady said, "*I want you to live Paradise here.*" It is possible and really beautiful. So, I see many people and many families live the message because of the way Our Lady uses people to spread Her message, and this also is very beautiful.

*Q. The tears of a mother can touch all hearts. On the third day of the apparitions, you witnessed Our Lady weeping in front of a dark cross when She called for peace and reconciliation. This must have had a dramatic effect on you?*

### Through Prayer and Fasting, We Can Stop Wars!!

*Marija:* You know, exactly 10 years after this apparition when Our Lady wept, the war began in Croatia. When Our Lady cried, we did not understand that the meaning was for peace.

It was also at this time that She gave us a sign, when She said that *through fasting and prayer, wars could be stopped.* (editors note: She gave *this exact same message* at Fatima to the three little children, Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco!)

But, in some way we did not understand or believe that Our Lady was trying to help us. It was as if the situation had become relaxed.

But, after 10 years, our inner peace changed with the horrible destruction of people and their homes and the fighting, and there was no peace. Then we understood Our Lady's tears and Her words about fasting and prayer. (*We should all pray and fast more.* Our Lady says it could save us from the pains of such calamities!) +++

# A Time For Love

by Dr. Rosalie A. Turton

card... be it a birthday card, Christmas card, some other holiday or happy occasion card, it is a time for remembering and a time for love. Not the least joy of Christmas or other occasion, is sending or receiving a card to or from someone whom you love, whom you remember fondly, or to whom you are sincerely grateful.

## It Warms The Heart

It warms the heart. It says, "You are not forgotten and are still loved and appreciated by me," and, "I am not forgotten and am still loved and appreciated by you." Yes... I will say it again: it warms the heart.

I remember once visiting a widow during the Christmas Season. It struck me how she had received only six cards that year. I felt a twinge of loneliness for her, and I realized how important each card is. I vowed that, as long as I could in the future. I would send her a card.

A handicapped man whom I know has no income and cannot afford to send cards, but he does receive a few. He does not expect to receive any, but those few cards adorn his dresser.

## Beginning a New Life

Reamer Klein tells of one Summer when his family gave work and shelter to a wondering man, even though they suspected that he had a problem with alcohol. In the Fall he left them, but at Christmas, a greeting card arrived from hundreds of miles away — no personal message, just a signature. Then, in the Spring, he came to see them.

"I have stopped drinking," he said. "I am going to a permanent job." When they thanked him for the Christmas card, he told them that it was the *only card* he had sent. "I wanted it to say 'Thank you,' not for the work, but for the respect that you gave me. It helped me to begin a new life."

Then there was a lady in the state hospital. She carried the card a friend of ours had sent to her in a little drawstring bag, and during the entire Christmas Season, she would stop people, and say, "Look at my Christmas card. The lady I worked for sent it to me. I am not forgotten." We heard later that card, the *only one* that she had received, was the beginning of her recovery.

Kline said, "Today, I approach Christmas by recalling those two lone cards. Each represented a new birth at Christmas, and both are a reminder to me that Christmas is always a time for remembering."

## And a Time For Love

Yes... a card... a small thing, but the time that it takes to send it or receive it, is a time for love. Francy, Peter, Debbie, Tom, Allen, Lee, etc.... this card says, "I love you"... and I do. Though distance is between us, I feel your love for me as well. Thanks for the card. +++

## My Cherished Friend

*My friend is one who speaks to me  
And takes the time to write,  
Who has a thought to spare for me  
Whether day or night,*

*Who comforts me, and wants to make  
My worry his concern,  
Who does a favor but expects  
No favor in return.*

*The one who knows the faults I have,  
But does not criticize,  
And who is always at my side  
To help and sympathize.*

*He is the brother of my soul  
Forever good and kind,  
And he is first and foremost  
In my grateful heart and mind.*

*Mr friend is one who keeps me  
In his every memory,  
And now and then, will turn to God  
And say a prayer for me. +++*

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# More Than Enough

by Sergio Conde Varela  
(Juárez, Mexico)

will never forget the way my young wife's eyes sparkled as she opened the gift box that day in 1970. Inside was a bracelet with a one-hundred-year-old gold coin attached to one of the links. It was a special piece of jewelry, but it was a special occasion... our fifth wedding anniversary.

"Sergio, it's... magnificent!" Lucia's pleasure, though, was not half as great as mine, at being able to give her such a costly present. Lucia's father was a top officer in the Mexican customs service. She had grown up in a lovely home, gone to the best schools just across the border in El Paso, Texas.

As for me, my father had died before I was born, and my mother had made barely enough as a telephone operator to keep food on the table. All through college and law school, I had worked two night jobs. Then I fought to stay awake during classes.

The hard work paid off. I graduated second in my class and landed a good job in government. Giving Lucia expensive things helped banish the fear of poverty that I carried over from my childhood.

As my career advanced, other gifts followed: antiques, designer clothes, more jewelry, Lladro figurines. At 35, I became Juárez's chief tax collector, with an office in the splendid city hall right next to the mayor's. I was good at my job; fair, but tough.

Lucia and I had no children; with each salary increase there was no reason not to spend the money on ourselves. We hired a maid and a gardener, bought a bigger car... and still we were able to maintain what my banker approvingly termed a "healthy" bank account. Lucia and I had been married 10 years the day my assistant came into my office looking anxious.

## Operation of an Illegal Store

Earlier that morning I had sent him down to the city dump to bring in some people who were operating an illegal store, selling things to what newspapers called "the dump people."

Juárez was overrun with these folks, who came from the country hoping to find work and ending up living in shanty communities on the outskirts of town. I intended to close down the store.

"Do you know who is running that store on the dump?" my assistant asked... "Guillermina Valdez Villalva!" I was taken aback.

Guillermina was the wife of one of Juárez's most-respected doctors; she had gone to school with Lucia across the river in El Paso. I knew Senora Valdez Villalva was involved with charitable causes... but this!

I stood as my assistant ushered Guillermina and her group into my office. "Before you arrest me," Guillermina said... then launched into a description of the 12-hour days that the dump dwellers put in, scavenging for whatever they could convert into a few pesos... cardboard boxes, bottles, rags.

"What they earn would not buy a handful of rice in a regular store... if there were a store anywhere near."

I was not interested. This lady, no matter who she was, was breaking the law with her little tienda, which she kept calling by the strange name of "the Lord's Store."

I leaned back, lining up my reasons why those folks must apply for a business permit and pay taxes like anybody else. And yet, I found myself listening as Guillermina described a group of Mexican and American church people who, she said pointedly, could not stand by idly while people starved on their doorstep.

## A Weekly Report

"We do not sell food at the Lord's Store," she said. "We give it away. How can we be taxed when there is no income?"

"Well... perhaps," I found myself saying, "perhaps... if in fact there is no money involved. To the surprise of my staff and myself, I agreed

that the Lord's Store could remain open, provided I received a report on its activities each week.

(Why had I said that? It would mean having more to do with those people than I had intended.)

## Your Friend Was Almost Arrested

That night, after the maid had cleared away the dinner dishes, I told Lucia, "You will never guess who nearly got arrested today — your friend, Guillermina."

And so, Lucia and I came to learn about the work on the dump. Every week somebody from a prayer group that met in El Paso came to my office with the latest report. They had managed to get running water to one edge of the dump; they had broken ground for a day-care center; they had begun to charge a few pesos for the food they had been giving away. "This way the poor can keep their dignity."

"But doesn't that make you a proper store?" I asked.

"Hardly. We sell at such a loss that there is an enormous deficit."

"How do you keep going, then?"

"The money comes in, somehow."

I suspected that "somehow" meant members of the prayer group made up the difference.

Increasingly intrigued, Lucia and I decided to attend one of the group's Wednesday night prayer meetings in El Paso. They were led by a young Jesuit, Father Rick Thomas, whose faith was so joyful and contagious that we went back the following week... and the next.

Lucia and I had been Easter and Christmas churchgoers, so, attending a weeknight prayer meeting, going to Mass on Sunday, and studying the Bible were new to us.

One hot day in October 1975, some new friends from the prayer group drove Lucia and me out to the dump. The stench made me gag; the acrid smoke from fires fed by rotting garbage stung my eyes. Whole families — mothers, fathers, children, grandparents — were working with makeshift rakes, digging through the stinking trash.

Father Rick was there, setting up improvised benches, getting ready

to say Mass. In the middle of the Mass, Lucia nudged me. "Look!"

A girl, maybe six years old, had retrieved half a rotting orange from the filthy ground. She brushed away the dirt against her thin dress, then put the fruit into her mouth. Lucia's voice choked with tears. "How can we eat steak while that little girl eats garbage?!"

Mass ended and we left the dump... but the dump would not leave us. The following Wednesday, Lucia and I went once again to the prayer meeting in El Paso. Perhaps 60 people crowded the bare hall that night... well-to-do people from both sides of the river, middle-class people, like a U.S. postman, and some poor people from the slums of El Paso. All were concerned for the really poor on the dump.

"There is another huge shortfall at the Lord's Store," Father Rick said, as the collection plate started its rounds. "Give whatever you can. Even fifty cents will help a lot." More than five hundred dollars was raised that evening, a good sum, but still short of what was needed.

That night, as we were getting ready for bed, Lucia crossed to her dresser and came back with something in her hand. It was the bracelet with the antique coin.

"I love this, Sergio, because you gave it to me. But... how many fifty-cent pieces does it represent?" I opened my mouth to protest, when into my mind came a picture of the little girl eating a discarded orange.

Father Rick was delighted with the gift. "It should cover the deficit for a week!" The next week, before going to El Paso, Lucia and I went around the house, looking for other salable items.

When we drove across the river, Lucia carried one of her precious Lladro figurines. The following week we brought our television set. Then it was an antique vase... some silverware... a coat. I traded in our car for a smaller one, and we gave up the gardener and the maid. None of those things did we really need... not like the people on the dump needed food and shelter.

And, curiously, once we began

shedding these things, we did not want to stop. It never seemed like a sacrifice; we were just giving away the surplus. And, we got so much in return!

### Our Lives Changed

As we began living simply, we found ourselves appreciating what we had. The emphasis of our lives began to change. I started helping out at The Lord's Store in the evenings and on weekends. At work, I asked to be transferred to a department that served the poor. When that did not seem enough, I gave up my job and took over management of the Lord's Store... the place that just a year earlier I had threatened to close down!

By then, Lucia and I had divested ourselves of the things we did not need. What, we asked each other, about the money lying idle in the bank? Week by week, we gave that away, too.

Then came the Friday, in October 1976, when the banker called to say we had withdrawn the last of our savings. Later that morning, Lucia and I drove, as usual, to a midday service at Immaculate Conception church in El Paso. Time came for the collection. As the usher came up the aisle, I took out my wallet. It held three one-dollar bills. I took them out, showed them to Lucia and raised my eyebrows. Should we?

Lucia smiled, and nodded. At 11:30 that morning, we put our last three dollars into the collection plate. Oddly, on our way home that afternoon, we returned to Juárez by the free bridge because we had no money to put in the toll basket.

Neither of us raised the question of what we were going to do then. We had given away the things we did not need, but there were things we did need. We had no idea where the money for food, gasoline, water, and electric bills was going to come from.

But, a hint came at eight o'clock that evening when the phone rang. It was a man who had owed me five thousand dollars for so long, that I had written off the debt. He was sorry to be so late; he was sending it at once.

### God's Economy

Perhaps there is a balance in God's economy. When we do not hold on to more than we need, then our real needs... ours, and those of others... will be met.

Of that five thousand dollars, we kept what we needed and gave the rest away. And so it has gone ever since. I started a small law practice in the evenings, representing the poor. My clients cannot pay much, but it is enough.

Always, there has been enough for Lucia and me to live on, stay in our home, run our automobile; our food seems to stretch; our clothes do not seem to wear out as quickly.

### Far Too Rich!

I ran the Lord's Store for more than 20 years; then in December of 1996, I turned over management to others, so that I could devote myself full-time to my legal practice.

Once in a while, when Lucia and I are passing a jewelry store, we look in the window to enjoy the lovely things there. We do not own jewelry now, but that is not because we are too poor. We simply do not equate abundance with money.

I no longer try to chase away the specter of poverty by surrounding ourselves with things. I do not need to do so. We are far too rich. +++

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This remarkable story, about the work of Fr. Rick Thomas, S.J. and the dump people, can be seen on the excellent video called, *Viva Cristo Rey*. On this video, the food at The Lord's Food Store *multiplies!*

This video is not on our regular product list, but for now, a copy of this fine 1981 original is available for \$6 and \$4 postage. When you send in your payment, please ask for video #V430.) +++

## The First Message of Akita: The Fatima Prayer

The first message communicated to Sister Anges (who is to Akita what Sister Lucia is to Fatima) was given to her by her guardian angel in 1969, four years before she came to Akita. She was in the hospital in Myoko saying her Rosary.

Her angel appeared and told her to pray at the end of each decade: **“Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of Hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.**

Later, a priest recognized it as the prayer taught at Fatima, and was amazed that Agnes knew it, for it had not yet been published in Japan.

The angel was to appear to Sr. Agnes many more times, but this was the first, and perhaps most important time. This prayer is also a message of Akita... although it is not singled out as such. When the children of Fatima (and now Sr. Agnes) were instructed to pray this prayer, it means that we, too, were and are now instructed to pray it. +++



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

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

# Pilgrimage Program:

SEND FOR COMPLETE ITINERARIES

**France** — Mon., May 2, 2005, to Wed., May 18 (17 days), \$2699. Visit **Paris, Chartres, Paray-le-Monial, La Salette, Ars, Chateaufort-de-Galaure** (Marthe Robin), **Pellevoisin, Nevers, Lourdes, Normandie, L'ile-Bouchard, Mont St. Michel, Pontmain, Lisieux, St. Baume, Carcasson** & more. +++

**Poland Shrine Tour** — Sun., May 22, to Sat., June 4, 2005 (14 days), \$2499. Includes **Warsaw, Zoliborz, Krakow** (Corpus Christi Procession), **Niapokalonow, Zakopane, Zelazowa Wola, Wagnivniki** (Divine Mercy Center), **Wadowice** (birthplace of John Paul II), **Kalwari Zebrzydowska**, and the beautiful Shrine at **Lechen**. +++

**Fatima — Marian Conference and Retreat.** (Topic: *Our Lady and the Reality of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory.*) **Internationally guest speakers.** Thurs., July 7, to Thursday, July 14, 2005 (8 days), \$1799 (Land only, \$1299.) July 13 anniversary celebration. +++

**Fatima and Lourdes** — Wed., July 20 to Sat., Aug. 6, 2005 (18 days) \$2599. Our most popular pilgrimage. Feast Day visit to **Santiago Compostella** (Shrine of St. James), **Pontevedra, Zaragoza, Avila, Braga, Santarem, Covadonga, Fatima, Ovieto, Lourdes, Garabandal, etc.** +++

**Ireland** — Fri., Aug. 12, to Wed., Aug. 24, 2005 (13 days) \$1998. Visits to **Knock, Melleray Grotto, Ballinspittle, Inchigeela, Attymass** (home of Fr. Patrick Peyton), **Achill Sound House of Prayer, Dublin,** & more. Meet with visionaries Mary Casey, & Tom Lennon. +++

Shrines of **Italy** — Wed., Sept. 7, to Fri., Sept. 23, 2005 (17 days) \$2699. Visit **Milan, San Damiano, Montichiari, Fontanelle** (Rosa Mystica), **Padua, Venice, Florence, Siena, Cotrona, Assisi, Loreto, Osimo** (St. Joseph Cupertino), **Cascia, San Giovanni Rotondo, St. Michael's Cave, Avellino, Pietrelcina, Mugnano** (St. Philomena), **Pompeii, Rome, & Civitavecchia.** +++

**EUCCHARISTIC PEACE FLIGHT** with Frs. Arellano & Santos. Tues. Oct. 4 to Fri. Oct. 21, 18 days, \$5399.

**Medjugorje & Prague** — Mon., Nov. 7 to Wed., Nov. 16, 2005 (SOLD OUT). +++

**Guadalupe, Mexico** — for Feast Day celebrations. Dec. 6 thru 13, 2005 (8 days) \$1299 (Land only, \$899). Feasts of the Immac. Concep., Juan Diego, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and visits to **Ocotlan, Puebla, St. Michael's Well, & Our Lady of Good Remedies.** +++

**Medjugorje & Prague** — Mon., March 6 to Wed., March 15, 2006 (10 days), \$1198. (One day in Prague.) +++

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

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

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

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

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Spend a few quiet days near the  
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Call 101 Foundation for details.

Write for information regarding the  
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