

Witness Talk at Ultreya
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Table of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

In late 2016 my condo unit was in the middle of turmoil – I had a leak in my kitchen that ended up wreaking havoc all over the place. I had mold, ruined carpets - damage that expanded to other areas besides the kitchen sink. At the worst of it, my kitchen was quarantined off due to mold fumes, and the wall under the sink was torn open (and left that way for months), allowing roaches to scurry around my quarantined kitchen. I battled lots of roaches, every day. My son's room was torn up due to the carpet and wall damage.

One day, in the midst of all the chaos – my a/c broke. It broke over the weekend (of course), and although it wasn't summer, it just so happened to be unusually, almost unbearably hot and humid. It was also a weekend filled with some of the worst thunderstorms I'd ever seen, which meant I couldn't even open a window to get some fresh air. Over that weekend I slept in the living room, thinking it would be slightly cooler in that area of the condo.

I remember lying there on the couch, unable to sleep, watching the storm, keeping an eye out for escaped roaches, and reminding myself that God promises that everything happens for a reason, and there is some good that will come out of every seemingly negative thing, even if we don't see it. Keeping that thought in mind enabled me to refrain from becoming completely frustrated with my overall living situation. I was proud of myself for looking for the good in the situation, and watched for the blessings that might come out of it.

When Monday rolled around and I could call my contractor and friend, Frank Paros, to tell him of my a/c problem, he said "no problem. I got a great a/c guy, I'll call him right now." The a/c guy amazingly came out to my place that day, I'm sure as a favor to Frank. I was just praying to have someone come out that week, let alone that day. Anyway – my a/c is conveniently located on the roof of my 8-story building, so the poor guy had to go up on the roof just to look at it.

The problem turned out to be relatively simple; it was clogged and he was able to clean it out and get it working. I was at work when he came, so when Frank notified me that the problem was taken care of and told me what the issue had been, I was amazed at the a/c guy's honesty. He could have easily told me it was something major and made some money off of me. And I hate to say it but I believe many people would have done just that. I

thanked Frank profusely for sending this guy out and asked how I go about paying him. Frank told me the guy said not to worry about it. He told Frank, "She's a friend of yours, it was a simple job, and I'm not charging her anything."

I was astounded and insisted that I had to give him something. Frank told me he'd talk to him again about it, but bottom line is..... I never paid a dime for what anyone else would have charged me plenty for. Not only was he honest about what was wrong, but he fixed it out of the kindness of his heart. He even showed Frank's son how to clean it out himself, in case it ever happened again. The guy didn't even know me - he wasn't a friend of mine, he was a friend of a friend. I told Frank that if I ever need a/c work done, or knew anyone else who did, I would without a doubt call this guy or recommending him to make sure he got the business.

Anyway, life went on, my house is back together again, thanks to Frank and all of his "guys." Just recently, about six months after the a/c incident, I was at the June Utreya listening to Frank give a very emotional and inspiring talk about evangelization at work. I was so moved and inspired by the story he shared, but what came after the talk blew me away completely.

As I approached Frank to tell him what an amazing job he did with his talk, he pulled me aside and said "Lynn, I never told you this, but the a/c guy who came and fixed your unit and wouldn't take any money.....he died a few days later." He told me how he had died very suddenly and unexpectedly..... a seemingly perfectly healthy man about my age, and he literally just dropped dead out of the blue with his wife right there in the room.

And then Frank said something that I could not get out of my head for several days after. He said, "You were probably the last good deed he did before he died."

Naturally I got goosebumps when he said that, but the more I pondered on it the deeper that reality went. Thinking back to when I was congratulating myself for being so spiritually advanced as to look for the good in this situation, in my self-absorbed vanity I was assuming that the blessings from it would be for me, for my benefit. And I probably even found some; I can't remember now. But it never occurred to me that the true blessing might be for someone else - maybe to give him an opportunity to do one last truly, genuinely selfless act before he had to face judgment. The realization of how limited my sight is, and how self-seeking I can be, even in my spirituality and good works.....of how far I need to go in losing the selfish focus I have on my own little world..... left me completely humbled and ashamed. I fail to leave myself open and empty, for him to use me however he sees fit.....trusting that there may be a purpose outside of my vision. I try to make God in my own image, anticipating what I think he wants to accomplish in me. There are no limits to God and how he works, there is no way to second guess him.

Since then I have begun asking God to show me where I am self-seeking, especially the hidden areas that may not be so obvious. It's been difficult, because He has been showing me, and it's not very pretty. While it is uncomfortable to say the least to examine my life, my thoughts, my motives.....it has ignited in me a desire to lose myself, to take the focus off of me and live for Him.

One of the inspirations that came from this journey of self-discovery originated with a quote from a book I was reading by a woman named Madeline Delbrel. She said "There is not one moment that we have the right to let the word of God lie dormant in us." That made so much sense to me and started me on a quest to delve deeper into scripture so that I could live it better.

One of the ways I was inspired to do that was to not only slow down when praying the Our Father, but to dissect each line and really pray on what it means. It's the prayer Jesus himself told us to pray. It's a prayer we know too well and have said too many times, so that it loses its meaning and it's reduced to the mindless words.....at least it was for me. Now, it takes me a good 15 minutes to pray the Our Father in the morning, as I spend time reflecting on each line.

The first line alone sets the tone for the rest of the prayer... "Our Father," not "My Father." "OUR Father," all of us, as brothers and sisters....everyone is my brother or sister, from the people I encounter in my daily life and whom I love dearly, to the stranger who annoys me by taking too long in the check-out line at Publix, to politicians who have opposing views to mine, to the most hated, despised, deviant criminals that ever lived. All are my brothers and sisters, and with that in mind, the rest of my prayer time is for them as much as it is for myself ... which in turn helps to shift my focus throughout the rest of the day to others instead of myself.

We only see what is right in front of us, in our own little world. But there is a much bigger picture that God alone can see, which is why we need blind trust in Him. I could have looked high and low, near and far within my own little world for the blessing that would come out of my broken down a/c, but never in a million years would I have seen THAT coming. I thank Frank for allowing God to use him by being part of that story and for sharing it with me. I thank God for opening my eyes to all the ways I need to grow.

And as for Rob, my saintly a/c guy....I have begun a daily habit of praying for his soul, with sincere hope that he is in heaven.