

TURNING HEADS AND HEARTS TO JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

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"For Those Who Hurt"*

An Inspirational Story Involving my own wake-up call -- conversion and dealing with the fear of dying -- saying yes to God and doing God's work on earth.

CHAPTER ONE *My Wake Up Call*

Going into 1992 I didn't think I could be happier. I was in my early 50's, owner of my own successful consulting business, so much in love with Martha, my wife, at that time of 32 years. We had three terrific children, grandchildren, a summer house at the beach in southern New Jersey, a boat, frequent winter trips to Florida. We enjoyed all of this after many years of much struggle to achieve and I thought I was in excellent health.

In other words, my belief was that at age 52, I was on top of the world and about to semi-retire after many long years of work and struggle. Many of you reading this can certainly relate.

Then at a routine annual exam the doctor discovered a large tumor on the right side of my throat. Based on the ultrasound it was the size of an egg and it turned out to be malignant. Then another tumor was found on the left side of my throat. That began the fall from the top of the world to the depths of hell over a period of weeks, months and years. There were five major surgeries, and others not as major and cancer treatments. I experienced significant weight loss and debilitating depression.

At the time I thought I was a pretty good Catholic - periodic confession - Mass and Holy Communion on Sundays and Holy Days. But frankly, my business was number one on my priority list, and God, Who had given me so much, was number ten. Perhaps some day I would get around to giving Him the attention He deserved.

As most do, when I learned of my cancer, I began with the "why me?" "why now?" "pity me"

attitude. I had to work through that over a period of several years. During much of this time (day and night) I was praying that God would take me from this world and from my terrible constant pain and suffering (physical and mental). I wasn't able to cope or deal with each dark day and night, so I came apart and went to pieces. Each day was a little bit of hell and no relief appeared to be close.

At that time it really wasn't the cancer that concerned me as much as the final judgment, and the overwhelming sadness I had because I had not shown God my love over the years after all the graces and blessings He bestowed on me and my family. I had taken Him for granted and it didn't look now as though I would have any time to change. Although it appeared to me that I would have about six months remaining, my crisis did turn around, and it has now been over seven years since then.

So now let's see what happened, and how I was able to find the help, strength and hope to cope. Instead of praying to die I was praying to live and to begin building my close relationship with our good Lord.

At the time our youngest daughter was attending Chestnut Hill College, and she introduced me to a nun, Sister Mary. Sister suggested I visit her convent where they had Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament each afternoon from 3:30 to 5:00. My wife, Martha and I began to visit and spend time with Jesus before the Blessed Sacrament. I was emotional and in despair. I was introduced to another nun, Sister Theresa who was about 80 years old, 4 feet 10 inches tall and weighted about 80 pounds. As she saw me in tears during my visits, she would take me by the hand and say, "Richard, you must have great faith and trust in God. You must work yourself closer to Him. No matter what the future holds for you - good or bad - you need to begin a journey now that will bring you closer to Him. Continually ask Him to give you the help, strength and hope to cope with each day."

After weeks and months of visiting the chapel and listening to Sister Theresa and the other

sisters, I made a big decision. First, I would replace laziness with sacrifice. And secondly, I would begin that day to change my life regardless of how many days I had left and how bad I felt. I began to frequently go to confession, Mass and Holy Communion during the week instead of just Sunday. I tried to be a daily communicant. I made frequent visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament trying to find churches with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. I said the rosary several times daily to our Blessed Mother Mary asking for her help and intercession. And, of course, what is so important on our journey to get closer to God, I began a great effort to stop sinning and to eliminate sin from my life. Sin will prevent you from developing a close relationship with God.

Even though I was still very ill, and dealing with many health problems, I continued doing these things. Our next chapter will reveal what happened to me as I was attempting to work my way close to God.

CHAPTER TWO

Finding Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Saying Yes to Him

Well there I was in 1994, two years or so after finding malignant tumors, cancer treatments, depression, dealing with great pain and suffering. I had let my business go completely, a business I had struggled to build for many years. And what was I doing these days? I was making frequent confessions, attending Mass and Holy Communion during the week as well as on Sunday. Frequently, I would visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament continually asking for His help, strength and hope (which He seemed to be giving me).

One very important thing was that I was still alive, gaining some weight, but still dealing with health problems. I would continue to go before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to just thank Him for giving me each new day. However, I still believed my remaining time on earth was short. So I decided to really say "yes" to Him for my remaining days and begin trying to do work that would help others, especially those suffering. I wanted to help and encourage them to do as I did by replacing laziness with sacrifice and making a

commitment to begin a journey to get closer to God. Go to Him and ask for His help, strength and hope which we all need to cope.

After I said "yes" to Him, many things began to happen.

Writings: Sister Mary, one of the nuns I had mentioned earlier encouraged me to write about what happened to me, and also articles that might help others. So I began. From 1994 to about 1997 I wrote and distributed about ten different brochures and other items. We began to get many requests for those items from all over the world and I enjoyed writing them.

Radio: a Catholic radio ministry "My Jesus Mercy" approached me to be a guest on their program at 3:00 P.M. on Friday. Even though I was still pretty ill, I agreed. I told my story and many listeners called in. It was such an uplifting experience for me that I began my own program on the same station on Friday at 2:30 P.M. called "FOR THOSE WHO HURT".

TV: As a result of my writings and radio program, a producer of a television program in the Boston area called me and invited me to be on their program called FATIMA TODAY. They allowed me to tell my story and of the need to get closer to God while we still have the chance. Over a period of a couple years I was a guest on six separate thirty minute television programs with FATIMA TODAY.

Opportunities began for me to give talks to various groups, churches, prayer groups, etc. and all related to my story and saying yes to God and beginning on your journey that will bring you closer to Him. You can clearly see the Holy Spirit leading me since I said "yes" with my writings, the radio and television programs. As we go to the next chapter it is my strong feeling that you can see very clearly the Holy Spirit's continued involvement.

CHAPTER THREE

The Monstrance Card Inspired by the Holy Spirit

The Monstrance card -- All this time, I continued frequent confession, Mass, and Holy Communion during the week, frequent visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and saying my rosary to Mary for her help and intercession. I was

also making a strong effort to reduce and eliminate sin from my life. What I was really doing each day was thanking our Lord for each additional day He gave me to be able to do more of His work while I remained on earth.

Then one Friday afternoon at 3:00 P.M. while I was at a perpetual adoration chapel near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, thanking our Lord for these extra days I said the following: "Before I arrive at my final judgment, is there something that I can do for You here on earth? What would be pleasing to you?"

With my eyes closed, a very strong feeling came over me, and in my mind I could visualize a beautiful little holy card with a Monstrance on the front, and under the Monstrance were the words:

**"DO YOU REALLY LOVE ME,
THEN COME TO ME, VISIT ME
BEFORE THE BLESSED
SACRAMENT."**

I was very moved and immediately returned home and sketched out the image and the words, including words for the back of the card. I felt the Holy Spirit wanted to use this card, but for what purpose I didn't know. I have the card printed and put our apostolate address and phone number on the back. The original order was for 100 cards. We began giving them out and soon were receiving requests for more of the cards. One day a letter came from Sister Roberta Ochs, President of the World Apostolate of Fatima in Fatima, Portugal. Sister had received one of the Monstrance cards in the mail and wanted to know if we could send her thousands so she could distribute them to all the pilgrims who came to the shrine from all over the world. The cards were ordered and shipped to her.

Then a call came from the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Manchester, New Hampshire. They were also requesting thousands to include in one of their mailings which go all over the world. Soon requests were coming in from all over the country and the world. Martha and I box and ship all the cards without any volunteer help. Our print orders have grown to the tens of thousands; all paid for from my own funds since I decided from the beginning not to ask for donations.

Martha and I now calculate that in the five years since first distributing the card we have

shipped over two million cards all over the United States and to thirty foreign countries, at a rate of 30,000 per month. We now order 400,000 cards at a time.

It is one thing to print and ship the cards, but are they having any effect on souls? I have received and returned over 3,000 phone calls personally. The Holy Spirit has touched many souls through this little card. We have received many calls and letters with wonderful stories.

One letter is especially memorable. A parish priest was given the card by a parishioner. He read it over and over and then began to cry. "I have neglected Jesus in the Eucharist," laments the priest. From that day on he experienced a renewed zeal for Jesus and began distributing the card. The priest said, "It's ironic, I had to get this from a lay person." I said to him, "No father, the Holy Spirit simply wanted to talk to you. He used the card to do it."

I can say there is a wonderful movement going on in the Catholic Church all over the world. Churches are opening up for adoration. Adoration chapels are continuing to open up. People are bringing their fears and anxieties to Jesus. Daily Mass attendance is increasing. As Jesus said, "Come and bring your burdens to Me, and I will refresh you." I feel we must go to Him frequently and constantly and continually, and ask for His help, strength, and hope to help us cope.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary -- What Can You Do? Will You Begin Now?

And so, thanks to getting the help, strength, and hope from Our Lord which enabled me to cope, I have survived at least so far, the malignant tumors, operations, cancer treatments, debilitating depression and the months and years of dealing with terrible mental and physical pain and suffering. I know many reading this story have also survived similar ordeals.

I can say that the fear of dying became my wakeup call, and over a period of time brought me so much closer to God. Today, I often give thanks to God for my ordeal because it woke me up as to just what this life should be all about. It got me on the

proper journey that hopefully will lead me to eternity in heaven. Isn't that what we all want?

Many times we let our laziness hold us back from going to spend more time with Jesus. We have our excuses for not getting up in the mornings for Mass and Communion during the week or for not finding a church open to make a visit. He certainly knows if our excuses are valid or not, and I say most of the time they are not.

When I write to people, speak on the radio or television or at a gathering, I simply attempt to use my experience to encourage others, especially those suffering, to seriously consider beginning their attempt to get closer to God. It is by going to Him and through Mary that we will get the help and strength we need to cope with our daily difficulties.

Begin today before it is too late. Get started now. Get one of the Monstrance cards and place it in the center of your refrigerator, look at it and read it several times each day. Think of what Jesus told us "Come and bring your burdens to Me and I will refresh you." So as you are trying to cope with various difficulties in this life, increase the times you attend Mass and receive Holy Communion by going during the week. Make frequent confessions and go frequently to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Say a rosary daily to our Blessed Mother. Take the Monstrance card to your pastor and see if he will allow every parishioner to receive one without any obligation to him. If he says yes, give me a call and we can discuss the best way to distribute the cards to the parishioners.

Lastly, ask yourself if you have been fair with God. He gives all of us 168 hours every week and what do we give in return? As Catholics, we have a minimum requirement of going to Mass on Sundays and Holy days of obligation. Many do not even do that.

As Catholics, we are required to believe completely in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I often wonder if all Catholics do truly believe in His presence. If they do, then why aren't they excited and anxious to visit with Him frequently to show Him our love and to give thanks to Him. Also, why is there so much talking in Church during the Mass? Why do so many arrive late and leave early? Why do they dress as if going

to a ball game? Why is there so much disrespect and irreverence?

It seems to me the answer is obvious. They do not believe in His real presence, or they wouldn't think of doing these things. And how about you - do you believe in His real presence?

When you see others talking and being disrespectful, do you ask them to show their love for Jesus by being quiet? Or are you also busy talking?

Remember it's later than you think, but hopefully it's not too late for you to begin your journey to get closer to God. Why not make a commitment to begin today?

May God bless you and keep you well.

"FOR THOSE WHO HURT"

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