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A MEDITATION: *An Imperfect Faith*



friend's mother died this past Christmas just shy of her 87th birthday. She was a sweetheart.

Small and brisk in her movements, she always had a glint in her eyes and a ready and even mischievous laugh. We were "the boys" to her, even well into our 50s. When we were young — teenagers itching to get in the car and drive, anywhere — she would insist that we have a bite to eat before setting out, and gently chide us for looking thin or tired. She was interested in what we were studying and always asked after our families. Then, piling on coats and hats, a gaggle of limbs and long hair, we would hear her say, "you are good boys, be good boys," as she closed the door behind us.

We hardly knew then what "good" entailed and what its absence forebodes. But she did.

When she was 17 years old, the Nazis invaded Ukraine and forcibly removed her from her home. She never saw any of her family again. She was put

on a transport train to Germany where she became a slave laborer, making armaments for the Wehrmacht: 12 hours a day, seven days a week, every week of the year for two years.

In this infernal region, on Christmas Eve, 1943, she met a fellow prisoner, a young Pole with a gentle way about him. They fell in love and against the odds, both of them survived the war. They married and immigrated to America, worked hard, and raised a family. Much later, when his mind grew feeble, she stayed by his side and nursed him to the end, unwilling to let anyone else do for him what she had pledged to do, "in sickness and in health."

Remarkably there was no trace of bitterness in her, nor any rancor or brooding over the past. Nor did her faith in God ever waver. Indeed, until the least week of her life, she was a daily Communicant.

There was one surprising thing, however: she didn't believe in heaven.

A few years before her death, she confided to her son that she didn't see the need for heaven. She assured



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him that she had a strong faith in God, the Blessed Mother, and the Precious Body and Blood of Christ. It was just heaven that she didn't believe in. She never said why.

Most of us have an imperfect faith...a faith that is tenuous, one that wavers in times of trial, that is mistaken or ill informed, or, as with my friend's mother, one that makes quiet provision for a measure of doubt. Some of us simply believe most of what we should but not all. But perhaps that is enough.

In the ninth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, a woman who has suffered from hemorrhages for many years reaches out to touch the tassel of Jesus' garment, or as another translation puts it, its merest hem. She wants to be healed but cannot imagine approaching Jesus directly, so she does what she can, little though it is. Jesus feels the tug and whirls about, saying, "Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you," and the woman is healed.

ICON COLLECTION

In the fall 2012 edition of LOGOS, a brief mention was made of the Albert G. Lapierre Icon Collection that had recently been entrusted to Providence College by the owner, a friend of the late Mr. Lapierre, who wishes to remain anonymous. That collection is made up of eighteen antique Russian icons and three modern icons "written" or "prayed" by Mr. Lapierre himself. During the late fall, the collection was examined and appraised by Mr. Emmanuel Tiliakos of Winchester, MA, himself a collector of antique Greek and Russian icons. Mr. Tiliakos indicated that the Lapierre antique Russian icons date from the late sixteenth century to the nineteenth century and assigned a value to each icon for insurance purposes. He also noted the appropriate attention each icon required. The icons were just recently entrusted to Anthony Moore Painting Conservation in York, ME, where Mr. Moore and his colleagues, accomplished in this area, will complete the necessary restoration, conservation, and cleaning.

Once the collection is returned to the College by Mr. Moore, the bulk of the antique icons will be displayed for reverencing

Hesitant and slim as her faith was — no stronger than was her grasp of his garment — it was enough. Jesus supplied the rest.

Each of us should pray for greater faith, for we all need it. But we should also trust that what faith as we have now, imperfect though it may be, is enough for Jesus to feel the tug and supply the rest; indeed, all that we need to be saved.

That is why I trust that my friend's mother enjoys the blessings of a heaven she didn't believe in.

Fr. Joseph J. Guido, O.P.
Vice President for Mission and Ministry

in the Chapel of the Word in St. Dominic Chapel, while individual icons may find homes in the Oratory of the Holy Cross in Harkins Hall, the Center for Catholic and Dominican Studies, and the new Ruane Center for the Humanities. Mr. Lapierre's three modern icons will be mounted in the Campus Ministry Center library.

We are most grateful to Mr. Lapierre and to his friend, the donor. We also hope that the surface beauty of these icons will lead the viewer deeper, to the Lord of grace who is the source and summit of everything beautiful, good and true. Indeed, that is what icons are meant to do: to lead one from the image to the imaged, and from the surface to the depths

Fr. Kevin D. Robb, O.P.
Associate Vice President for Mission and Ministry

RIGHT TO LIFE

On Thursday, January 24, I accompanied 54 students to Washington, DC, for the annual March for Life. That night we attended a lecture by Bryan Kemper who is the founder of Stand True Ministries, a Christ-centered, pro-life group focused on youth, and a Rock for Life concert. Following the lecture and concert, we joined the Dominican student brothers at the House of Studies for Compline, or Night Prayer, and then pizza, soft drinks, and conversation.

On Friday morning, we attended the Rally for Life Youth Mass at the Verizon Center in Chinatown, sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington, before joining the March.

We returned to campus on Friday evening, all of us tired but inspired.

We are most grateful to the Dominican Friars at St. Dominic Priory in Washington for hosting our delegation from Providence College.

Fr. Justin Brophy, O.P.
Assistant Chaplain

FAITH ABROAD: *A Smile for Haiti*

“Why are you smiling, Father?” I was standing in front of a class of fifteen high school students and couldn’t suppress the grin that was creeping across my face. The kids saw it and wanted an explanation.

The setting was the Louverture Cleary School (LCS) in Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti. This school is a Catholic boarding school that provides a tuition-free education to Port-au-Prince’s brightest young boys and girls. I was visiting the school just before Christmas to preach a retreat and was asked to teach one of the classes. Towards the end of the period, I asked the students what a person needs to do to be happy. The answer was as profound as it was unexpected.

“If one wishes to be happy, it is necessary to practice the virtues.” I asked her if she could give me an example of some virtues. With growing confidence in her English skills, she replied: “Well, there is faith, hope, and charity. These are called the theological virtues. Then there are others called the moral virtues, namely prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.” And that’s when the uncontrollable smile stretched across my face.

Why was I smiling? I told them that I didn’t know many people their age who could speak about virtue, never mind rattling off their names. And to make the exchange more amazing, these pearls were offered in the young girl’s third language. Soaking up the experience like a sponge, I realized that LCS is no ordinary school and these are no ordinary students.

Of course, there are elements of LCS that one can find in any school. Kids are kids no matter where they are. The boys show off for the girls in the hope of winning their affection. There is marked enthusiasm for the recreation period during the day that magically transforms sleepy-eyed students into fierce competitors on the soccer field. In these and other ways, the students of LCS are indistinguishable from their peers around the world.

But when one looks more closely, you see a singularly wonderful school populated by outstanding young people. LCS students serve their community in after-school programs to promote literacy among their neighbors who might not have the benefit of an education. When garbage



FAITH ABROAD: *A Smile for Haiti* (CONTINUED)

begins to accumulate alongside the roads around the school and threatens to turn the neighborhood into a dump, the school community takes to the street with shovels and trash bags to keep the area clean. In their spare time, LCS students — fluent in four languages — work at a local health clinic translating the Creole of their fellow Haitians into the Spanish of the medical missionaries and vice versa. I could multiply examples, but suffice it to say that God has blessed these students in countless ways, and they respond generously to the grace they have been given. I saw all this and my smile grew wider.

Beyond my experience of the LCS students, I was awestruck by the school's faculty. A quarter of the teachers are recent college graduates from the United States. They have committed to a year or more of living a simple life of service and community at the school. They are teachers and administrators, basketball coaches and ballet teachers. They rise before the sun and begin the day together in prayer. They are men and women of conviction and sincerity. They are full of faith and an inspiration to those of us who are lucky enough to spend some time in their presence. (I note here with some pride that two of the volunteers are Providence College alumnae!). We stayed up late into the evening discussing matters of faith and morals and how their service at the school is part of their worship of God. Edified by their

words and example, I found myself sporting the same grin that I wore when I was with the students earlier in the day.

But for all of these unforgettable experiences, there was yet another reason for my irrepressible smile. This May, we're going to bring a group of Providence College students down to Haiti for a week of service at LCS. They will be in the classroom with the students. They will participate in the daily work projects. They will take part in the extracurricular activities. They will get to know the full-time volunteers. They will learn about a culture radically different from their own and reflect critically on their experiences. And as I spent those wonderful days in Croix-des-Bouquets, I was thinking about our Providence College students who will soon visit Haiti. I was imagining them in the midst of that grace-filled environment and having their own lives transformed by the experience.

I thought of them and smiled broadly, knowing that in a few months' time, they would be there smiling themselves.

Fr. James Cuddy, O.P.

Chaplain and Director of Campus Ministry

NOLA AND MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

Fourteen PC students and I traveled to New Orleans from Saturday, January 12 — Saturday, January 19 for the NOLA Immersion. Our group partnered with various nonprofits and served the NOLA community by installing energy efficient light bulbs for low-income families, volunteering at a day center for homeless men, creating t-shirts for a nonprofit in the Lower Ninth Ward, and rebuilding houses with the St. Bernard Project. Lenny Alsfeld (PC '74) hosted us on two evenings for dinner, and the NOLA team also met with the NOLA Jesuit Volunteers, met with a family who lost their home after Katrina, and visited the new Katrina exhibit at the Louisiana State Museum in the French Quarter.

Five PC students participated in the My Brother's Keeper Urban Plunge from Tuesday, January 8 — Friday, January 11. My Brother's Keeper is a faith-based nonprofit based in Easton, MA that delivers food and furniture to families in need in Southeastern Massachusetts. Students volunteered with this organization and learned about its mission, along with students from the University of Notre Dame and Stonehill College.

Richard Lumley
Campus Minister

