

A Small Child's Prayer

I am a child in the hand of God, a husband for 24 years, and a father of 5 great children all in the hands of God. Additionally, I am a Deacon in the Roman Catholic Church. The latter being much more what I am than who I am. With that context, the story below exemplifies how completely we are all in the hands of God.

On October 4, 2001 while driving with my family toward home in the evening, both my wife and I heard something amazing. We were planning to take a family trip to Dallas for a short visit to our son who is attending college there. Our other children would be going with us so we would all be together for a family weekend. Our youngest, Christopher, who is 3 years old knew this and had been planning and anticipating seeing his older brother whom he has missed greatly. What we heard was the completely spontaneous prayer from Christopher; "Dear Jesus, please let us have a safe trip to Dallas to see Bryan and back home." Both of us remarked that this was really unusual for a 3 year old to pray in this way. We have always said night prayers together with him and often prayed for special things but this was the only time that we have ever heard him pray spontaneously on his own and with such clear purpose and pure trust in God. The prayer happened only once, lasted only a few seconds and was over. After briefly remarking about this event to each other, we went on with things and did not give the event much more thought.

Saturday morning came soon enough and we all piled into our Yukon XL for the ride from Alvin, just south of Houston, to Dallas. It has been a general Saturday practice for my wife and I to attend morning Mass at our parish church, Annunciation, in Houston. Since the church was essentially on the way and our timing was favorable, we stopped to attend morning Mass as usual but with the rest of the family with us this time. Afterwards, we headed off for an uneventful drive to Dallas. We had a good time there visiting and after Sunday Mass at Holy Trinity Seminary and lunch, we headed for home hoping to arrive around 5:30 pm before dark.

The trip home went almost fine and was fine until approaching the North side of the freeway loop around Houston. I was driving in the center of my three-lane side at approximately 70 mph, the legal limit. I had just glanced at my speed since I was approaching an interchange ramp to transition to the loop. I have an old practice that I conduct almost habitually. That is, recognizing that traffic seems to congregate in "wolf packs", I try to position myself between these "wolf packs" and stay there. That is where I was. I perceived our position as separated from adjacent traffic both fore and aft. I hadn't checked my rear view in the last few seconds since I was adjusting attention and speed etc. for entering the transition ramp mentioned earlier. It was at this time that all of us heard a rapidly increasing, high pitch roar that became very, very loud. It was so loud that I perceived it to be coming from my left side. I now understand this to be a reflected sound from the concrete barriers along the outer edge of the left shoulder of this freeway section. My wife, perceived the sound to be coming from the right side of our vehicle. Both of us looked in opposite directions for the source not recognizing what it could be. The sound source then seemed to move to the right and slightly behind whereupon we heard a loud crash of something hitting an immovable object. I instantly recognized that sound having heard the same sound before. That is when I looked in my rear view mirror and the rest of my family turned around to look out the rear and side windows toward the

crash. What we saw was almost unbelievable. We all saw a very new Chevy pickup truck several feet off the ground and nose down. We saw it hit on the front end, flip end over end and hit on the rear end and then roll coming to rest on its side in the center of our side of the freeway. We were the only ones who actually saw the dynamics of this event. Other traffic in front of us was never aware. Other traffic behind us was just out of view of the event due to fact that the event took place just on the down side of an elevated area with a slight right curve. The traffic behind us saw only a truck on its side in the middle of the freeway.

This event, of course, brought the whole freeway to a halt. We stopped, backed up and simultaneously called 911 on our cell phone assuming that someone had been injured and we were correct in that assumption. There were three passengers, two with apparently minor injuries. The third however was lying partially under the cab on the concrete with the most serious head injuries that I have ever seen. I thought, on first sight that he was dead. However, he was still breathing through blood with great difficulty. This is where what I am kicked in. I asked one of the other, in shock, crying, victims, if the seriously injured man was Catholic. I had assumed that he might be Catholic due to the fact that all three were Hispanic looking men and I know that many Hispanic people are Catholic. I received no answer. I asked if the victim was baptized and received no answer. I asked if they spoke English and received a nod affirmative. I told this person to pray for his friend because he may die. I gave the man a blessing and after thinking that he may be able to hear me in some way, I told this presumably near death man to ask God to forgive him his sins before he died so that he could be with God in heaven. There was absolutely nothing else that I could do except lay my hand on him and try to be of some comfort even though I knew that it would not be enough. I was shocked also and probably not focusing well on the other details of what was happening. Later, I thought of the blood on my hands, not a lot but still there, and was able to find some water from a camper trailer to wash it off while rationalizing that I probably wouldn't catch any disease and if I did, it would be God's will anyway. The ambulance came, carried the victims off and to date, I have not heard if the man lived or died, not finding any mention of the event in the news presented on television or in the newspaper. After giving my name and number to the officer present, we left and went on our way home discussing the strange event.

After a time, I remembered Christopher's prayer of four days ago. I told my wife that there was every possibility that that prayer was just what invoked God to protect us. We were stunned.

As it happened, I was scheduled to take a business trip the next day. This necessitated going back on the same road to the North side of Houston to the airport. Subsequently, my wife had to return along the very same path that we had traveled before. We talked before and I asked her to look at the skid marks on the road. The information she saw is even more amazing when added to what we already knew and heard. The skid marks begin in the left lane, the one that we were traveling in. They then veer to the right toward concrete barriers along the far side of the right shoulder where there is a definite impact mark. There are also skid and impact marks along the concrete toward the final resting place of the vehicle in the center of the freeway. Being an engineer by education, I have pieced together a very plausible accident reconstruction scenario. That scenario says that this vehicle was evidently traveling much faster than

ours (my speed was 70 mph). Evidently, the driver started to brake hard then steered to our right to avoid a rear end collision with us. This is consistent with the direction of the sound that we heard and our reaction to it. That was evidently when control of the vehicle was apparently lost and I surmise that, owing to the intensity and volume of the sound, that the vehicle was somewhat beside our own although slightly aft when control was lost. This is when I realized that I had not been looking in the mirror prior to hearing the sound. If I had seen the approaching vehicle at a high speed, I believe I might have tried to avoid it by moving to the center lane, given enough time and distance. I did nothing being unaware. If the vehicle had clipped the rear corner of ours, we would have been pushed sideways and entered a roll at 70mph that would have killed all of us except perhaps Christopher who was strapped in the child car seat. He might have survived only if the car did not burn. I further surmise that, in consideration of the intensity and/or volume of the sound heard, that the vehicle must have been very near ours and may have only missed ours by a few inches or at most a very few feet.

Back to Christopher's prayer. Since I could not possibly hope to say such a pure and honest prayer and I am not aware of any other prayers said for our safety, and even if there were others, I doubt that they could have been better said or more heard that Christopher's prayer I am left with attributing our safety to his request from God that was heard and answered in favor of our safety. I envision all of our Guardian Angels surrounding our family vehicle and ensuring that nothing would happen to us to prevent God's will from being accomplished. I firmly believe that everything that happens is by the Will of God. Thus, He is not done with us yet. We have other details of our mission for God yet to fulfill. My son who is 18 said that the whole thing was pretty scary. My response is, Why be scared? Be ready! When we have accomplished what He created us for, He will call us back. I am just another Lazarus. We, Baptized, born dead and brought to life, are all other Lazarus' who have been given new life to accomplish the will of God. If we are willing, that Will of the Lord will be done and no evil can stop it. So, on we go children in God's hand, thankful for a small child's prayer.

Robert G. Alexander, Deacon
10-10-01