

October 1, 2009

“Bearing The One Who Bore Us Into The World, Into

Eternity...”

Dear Friends & Family,

(9/21) I returned home this past Saturday night from Florida, as a week before, I received a call from my oldest sister that mother only had 24-48 hours to live. I was scheduled to preach at a church in NJ that next morning. When I called the pastor, who is a father-figure to me, the night before, he said, “Get down there”. I will be forever grateful for his fatherly counsel & mandate, as, if he had not advised me so, I would have missed so very much family “history”. Just a few hours would have made a considerable difference. When I arrived at the Hospice Center, my four sisters, Dad, & I surrounded & lavished mom with love, prayers, tears, caresses, songs, & kisses. My mother in her earlier years was a very beautiful, articulate, intelligent & quick-witted humorous woman. Now, lying before us, was another person, both in appearance & demeanor. She had Alzheimer’s Disease for the past twelve years. This same wretched disease killed her father & her only sibling years ago. I am the 3rd of six children. (Mom also had three miscarriages, one before me, one after me). She had borne six of us into the world decades before; now, five of us & Dad were “bearing” her out of the world. We all surrounded her bed & held hands, singing songs we had sung that we had learned at Mass as children. We would pray, then cry, then pray, then joke, & laugh. All of us would take turns lying on her bed beside her, just holding her, stroking her face. Her eyes, so very slightly opened, would reveal whether she was conscious or not. If I had waited to go down to FL after I had preached at that church in NJ, I would have missed that short period of time when Mom was most likely, if at all, to be aware of our communications to her. God is good. God is sovereign. Because Mom’s demise came so suddenly, & so unexpectedly by all of us, our oldest sibling, James, was in England, visiting his oldest son. We were all relieved & believe it was our God’s will re: this, as Jimmy, the firstborn, the one-time hippie from the 60’s, is now one of the most emotional & tender-hearted of all of us. We do not believe he could have handled the drawn-out, longer-than-expected dying process that Mom went through. We all considered it a miracle that, the last night she was on earth, at 2 a.m., England-time, our brother called Dad’s cell phone, which he never carries with him, but he had this night. Dad held the phone up to Mom’s ear while Jimmy spoke his last words to her. **“SAYING GOOD-BYE”**

Two of the most difficult aspects of this event were, that one, Mom was slowly starving to death before our eyes, & there was nothing any of us could do about it. Patients like her stop eating near the end for lack of desire. She had asked in her living-will not to have her life prolonged re: feeding tubes. The 2nd aspect that was so incredibly difficult was leaving her for the last time late at night, while she was still alive, struggling for each breath. My emotions were so very deeply telling me we were “abandoning” her. I wanted to stay until she died. We left that decision up to Dad (who turned 84 on the very day Mom died). Dad at first said he wanted to stay the night until she passed. I have to admit I was relieved when he changed his mind. He was so exhausted, & he himself has Parkinson’s Disease. The hospice personnel told us it would surely be that night that mom would pass. I have never seen my Dad cry so much. I have never heard him pray so fervently. He felt it best to go home to rest & begin making all of the funeral preparations necessary, even though he & mom had already done so much already in that area. After he decided, I told him that that was probably the wisest decision, as, when Mom passed in the middle of the night, Dad would be awakened, & only be able to see her for a few minutes, before they took her body away. Plus, I told him maybe it was best for all of us that we saw her last “alive”. Mom finally did enter eternity that following morning at 6:20 a.m. All of us had continually committed her into the hands of Jesus.

“WITNESSING TO THE LIVING IN THE MIDST OF ONE DYING”

Phone calls began flooding in to Dad as many of our relatives around the country learned of Mom's death. Each time Dad picked up the phone & learned another relative was coming to be there for him, he'd begin to cry again. And pour in, they did. For as long as I can remember, our family has been comprised of many drinkers, & heavy at that. This event was no exception. I have never known anything but this in our family gatherings since I was a boy. And yet, God filled me with such a love & compassion for them. I was amazed as He used me to glow for Him, despite the sadness of the occasion. I was apprehended by the Lord sovereignly in a convent in Missouri at a Catholic-sponsored retreat for high school junior & senior boys. My family, which is predominantly Catholic, just heard rumors that Michael had gotten "religious" or had "gone-Protestant". While standing in my dad's kitchen, one of my close cousins asked me about it. To my left was another cousin, with Martini in hand, who listened closely as I shared my testimony. On another night, another cousin of mine asked me to share with him first-hand my conversion experience, out of the blue (!), as we were talking about computers before that! He wanted to hear "my" version! He also wanted his 15 year-old daughter, who attends Catholic school to hear it! I poured out my story again. While doing so, my cousin kept interrupting (in a good way!) to elaborate to his daughter, who was listening very attentively, that "it's not about 'different religions', but it's all about *Jesus!*" I'm not even sure this cousin is saved, but he was helping me share Jesus with his daughter! He then had her sit down in front of me, whereupon I took her hands in mine & prayed for her. I was on cloud nine when we left that room & joined the other relatives!

“BRUISED...FOR A CRUISE SHIP”

My youngest sister & I went to the beach one day in the midst of all of this. While she sunbathed, I was out in the surf & saw a massive cruise ship leaving the channel, heading out to sea. It was loaded with thousands of people. I know. I was on one once—this very cruise line. I know what most of the cruisers do. Unless it was a "Christian" cruise, given Jesus' words in Mt.7:13,14, I assume most of its passengers were lost. I couldn't help but think of my mother, & her oh, so recent death. I began to mourn as I stood there in the vast ocean, which I love, but which I also fear, just like our God. With my mother's horrible end & all it entailed, I ached for these cruisers, laughing, drinking, partying, eating, dancing, playing, gambling, etc. with eternity within a breath's lapse. I saw in my mind a scene from the movie "Pinnocchio", where the boys were taken to "Pleasure Island", only to be deceived while indulging in those very pleasures, & taken captive by the evil "Coachman". Oh, if only more of us lived our lives in the light of our deaths! We would live so very differently! I began to moan & entreat the Father from deep within my spirit as I stood there, asking Him for mercy for the ship's inhabitants. If they had seen my mom, who had been on many cruises with my dad, & how her life ended, perhaps they would have gotten wisdom, & lived in a more holy manner, & for the glory of the Lord. "Teach us to number our days, that we might become wise" (Ps.90:12). As always, Kim & I are so very grateful that you'd take the time to read this, & for your prayerful support.

Michael

Michael & Kim Guertin 3 Windsor Rd., Wilmington, DE 19809 (302) 764-0490 guerty@juno.com

Name: _____ Address: _____ Email: _____

[Please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: **Elim Fellowship**, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485. Thanks!]

[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant home missionary, endorsed by his local church. He makes his living & supports his family through faith in the Lord & His provision through His people.]

Ministry/events for October and those not listed in last month's newsletter:

Sept. 9: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Tabernacle of David worship leader

Sept. 13-19: Merritt Island, FL: Hospice & funeral for my mother, Mary Ann Reid Guertin

Sept. 25-27: Haymarket, VA: Family wedding service: sermon

Oct. 3: Scott/Porter wedding, West Nottingham, PA: attendee

Oct. 5: Annual Elim Fellowship Regional Meeting, Lancaster, PA

Oct. 6: Hopewell Christ. Fellow., Elverson, PA: HNC Board mtg//PCF: New Holland, PA: pastors' mtg.

Oct. 16, 23, 24: Michael's bd, Michael & Kim's 32nd anniversary, & Kim's bd, respectively