

## Sunday, February 21, 2021 - Lent



*"The prosperity of a nation is everyone's responsibility." ~Chinese proverb*

Greetings!

This world does not lack inspiring examples of human goodness, but sometimes you have to look for them. Those who give themselves over to the grace of *goodness itself* often have **an enormously positive impact on the world**, even if they receive nothing in return for their work.

One man in China has done just that. His name is **Chen Si** (Chinese surnames are placed first), but he is known by other titles that illustrate his selfless spirit: the Angel of Nanjing, the Suicide Catcher, the Lifeline at the Bridge of Despair, the Voice of Reason on the Yangtze Bridge.

Every weekend for over twenty years, Mr. Chen has traveled twelve miles from his home in the outskirts of Nanjing to the largest bridge in China, the **Yangtze River Bridge**, for the sole purpose of preventing people from jumping off it!

He well merits the title "Suicide Catcher" because **he has stopped hundreds of people from throwing themselves over the 197-foot precipice** and committing suicide in the icy water below.

### The city's ominous past

On a historical note, Nanjing is the former capital of China and used to be called Nanking. It was the site of one of the worst massacres in history. During a six week period in 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army is alleged to have killed as many as 300,000 innocent Chinese civilians and destroyed the entire city in its retreat.

***Do the math: that total amounts to over 7000 murders a day.***

Given this sad history, perhaps the spirit of death still hangs over the city and draws people to the bridge of despair.

People contemplate suicide, Chen says, because of the **five major stressors** that apply across cultural boundaries: domestic violence, terminal illness, debt, emotional trauma, and mental illness. A high percentage of the jumpers are immigrants from within China itself who sought a better life in the big city only to fall into the many destructive traps and pitfalls of urban life.

**The Christian virtue of Hope** sustains people through the rigors of this life and leads them to the afterlife. China has never been a Christian society, so it's easy to see how Hope's opposite vice – despair – could become an epidemic in China.

One unassuming hero stands at Nanjing's doorway of death and offers hope to the hopeless.

## What you have received freely give freely

In reading Chen's story, I learned that he had been an immigrant to Nanjing himself in the nineties. He denies ever having considered suicide himself, but he benefited from the goodness of a friend who helped him through an extremely difficult period of his life when he had just moved to the big city. **A feeling of natural sympathy with other suffering souls drives him to go to the bridge every weekend.**

I doubt that Chen is a Christian, but his spirit of goodness and ethic of compassion for the desperate is the very expression of our Christian Hope.

When the Lord Jesus Christ sent His disciples out to evangelize, He told them, "What you have received freely give freely" (Matthew 10:8), a principle that Chen embraces with extreme generosity. Despite his wife's objections, he even rents an apartment near the bridge to give people down on their luck a chance and a place to get their lives together again.

He is **the Good Samaritan of eastern China**, and he exemplifies the Chinese proverb: "*The prosperity of a nation is everyone's responsibility.*" Would that we all had such concern for our fellow man!

## Heroes of goodness in our own lives

Because good people don't generally draw attention to themselves, **goodness like Mr. Chen's comes in many humble packages.** It might be hidden in the so-called normal events and relationships of life.

I have fond memories of a very kind man who taught me music when I was a kid. As a tribute to his kindness, *my utter lack of talent for music* didn't discourage him in the slightest!

My teacher treated his hours standing next to the piano, while his hapless student struggled through the lessons, as **an opportunity for human formation and culture.** From him I gained my deepest appreciation for the talent that can create great music (as you may have noticed from some of the pieces I've posted on *Sacred Windows*.) I will be forever grateful for his generous care for my soul.

In my adult life I have met certain selfless individuals who have sacrificed themselves for the well-being of others without asking the slightest return for their outlay of time or resources.

I often think of the retired doctor in Seattle named Doc Hite who lived to be 100 years old. He spent virtually **every single day of the last thirty years of his life** praying in front of an abortion center, speaking kindly to all who would go there, and witnessing to the intrinsic value of human life. He was a life-catcher in every sense of the word.

When my own mother passed away a few years ago, I recounted to others how much I admired her eternal selfless spirit poured out in service of her family and others. One small measure of her goodness was that she cooked for us, as all mothers do. Such a seemingly "normal" act of service.

Yet, by the time she passed away, my mom had *cooked meals day-in and day-out for sixty years* without the slightest complaint or desire to be thanked.

**Does such human goodness receive some reward in the end?**

Yes, but not usually in this life.

The reward of goodness is on the other side of a *greater bridge*.

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## Our Feature Articles

If you'd like to see **the trailer of a documentary** created about the life and work of Mr. Chen (as well as links to other articles about him), visit the [Sacred Windows](#) website for "The Suicide Catcher of Nanjing" and learn more about this incredible man.

## The Suicide Catcher of Nanjing

It is followed by the "Soul Work" section which I attach at the end of most articles.

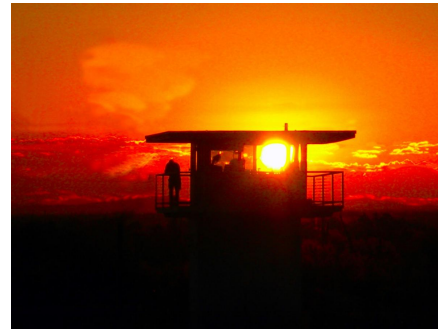
China seems to be very much in the news these days, and not always in the best light. Yet, every culture has its bright spots and heroes. Our second featured article, "The Extraordinary Heroism of a Chinese Mother" is about one of the most selfless women you'll ever hear of.

Please don't forget to **forward our newsletter** to anyone you think may benefit from a burst of Beauty-Truth-Goodness inspiration, and keep praying.

[Visit the Newsletter Archives](#)



## The Extraordinary Heroism of a Chinese Mother



With deepest gratitude!

Peter Darcy

*PS-1 – Remember: I post one article a week on the Sacred Windows website and send out this newsletter every two weeks – both on Sundays.*

*PS-2 – **ALSO**, you don't want to miss my new book coming out at Easter 2021 (Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>)! Here's a synopsis:*

### Natures of Fire: God's Magnificent Angels



### Natures of Fire will teach you:

- Nine myths about angels that you should stop believing right now;
- That angels were not created to save you from car accidents (although they do that at times);
- The reason why there are no female angels;
- The two classes of angels that have wings (and the seven that don't);
- Why you must avoid *one type of angel* if you value your life;
- Angel art throughout history: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Available from:  
[Strength of Soul Books](#)



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