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## Sunday, March 21, 2021 – Fifth Sunday of Lent

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Greetings!

Have you ever had the barrel of a snub nose .38 caliber pistol pressed against your temple? I have. I got robbed at gunpoint when I was working a summer job as a taxi driver during college – and it's **not an experience I'd like to repeat.**

I don't think I've ever told the full story to anyone because it doesn't put me in the best light. But I'm older now and have better judgement...allegedly...than I did when the incident took place.

In those halcyon days of **youthful invulnerability**, it didn't quite dawn on me that the terms "taxi driver" and "getting robbed" were synonymous. It's a professional liability, and I'm told it happens to every taxi driver at least once. It's just a matter of time.

**When you're young, you don't really pay attention to things like that.**

*Until you do.*

### The Robbery

"So, where ya going?" I asked the young man as he got into the back of the taxi. I caught a quick glimpse of him, kind of a half-impression but little more. It seemed that he was about my age, slightly taller, perhaps a little older but definitely a young guy.

"Take me to such-and-such a neighborhood", he said. The neighborhood in question was in a remote section of town.

"Any place in particular?"

"No, I just want to go there, and you can drop me off on the corner of X and Y streets."

"Okay," I said as I put the car in gear.

*Mistake #1: I didn't get a specific address...or call it into the dispatcher for accountability.*

Our conversation during the drive was minimal. As I was to discover, that was deliberate on this part. He didn't want the sound of his voice to become too recognizable to me.

He also sat directly behind me rather than in the place where I might be able to turn my head and see him. Hmm. Red flags went up as I drove, but I told myself everything would be fine. Right.

*Mistake #2: I didn't trust my intuition as those flags went up.*

We finally arrived at an empty neighborhood, and he told me I could let him off at the corner.

*Mistake #3: **not calling it in right there*** or pulling within sight of someone who would see us.

I stopped and put the car in park, but before I asked for the man's fare, I felt the muzzle of a .38 Special pushed against my right temple.

As if he were reciting a line from a B movie, the man said to me, "**Gimme all your money. Slow like.**"

Dutifully, slowly, I pulled out my cash, gripping the bills with two fingers – because that's the way they do it in the movies, right? – and handed the man my meager haul for the day: about forty dollars in fives and tens.

No sudden moves. I knew the drill.

The thought flashed into my mind at that moment that forty bucks wouldn't buy much happiness.

**"All of it!" he demanded.**

"That's everything. It's been a bad day," I said, which was kind of the *understatement of the year*. I slowly turned my pockets inside out and pulled out my empty wallet just to show him there was no more – **slow like.**

Then he ordered me: "Get down on the seat – face down! Count to 100 slowly, and if you raise your head and look out this window before that, I will *blow you away*."

I'll give him this much, the man was an unambiguous communicator.

Just to be safe, I counted to 150. Face down.

After that, I reported it to my dispatcher, spent some time filling out an incident report with the cops, and went home a poorer man. I didn't tell my folks because I didn't want to alarm them (*Mistake 4?*). Plus, I needed the job.

Okay, now you know why I said this was not my best performance.

All things considered, I'm grateful the guy only wanted my money. Had he been a real psychopath I might not be alive today to tell this story. And that brings me to the second part of the story.

## The Taco Bell Awakening

As I've noted in several [earlier newsletters](#), I'm always having unusual experiences in restaurants (I'm not sure why, but it seems to be a pattern!) This is one from my earlier life.

About a week after the robbery, I was out with a college buddy who had done an officer training program in the Marines and was out on leave for the rest of the summer. We decided to get some fast food. I think we went to Taco Bell, but the memory of the place is kind of hazy.

The memory of *who I saw there*, however, is not. It's clear as a *bell*, pardon the pun.

My friend and I walked up to the front counter to order, and in my peripheral vision I noticed a group of guys sitting at a side table.

One of the guys drew my attention because he was **pounding his fist into his palm**, acting like a tough guy (from a B movie of course). And he was laughing as he looked at me. He said something to his friends who all turned to look at me.

All of a sudden I was the center of attention. What was going on? Then it hit me like a ton of bricks:

**It was the thief.**

Even though I hadn't gotten a very good look at him the week before, for some reason I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt: it was him, violence and all.

I was offended that he was spending *my hard-earned cash* on a burrito!

While his friends gawked at me, the dude kept mocking me and **hammering his fist into his hand**. I wouldn't have been surprised if he had pounded his chest and done a Tarzan yell.

My Marine friend was looking at me with wide eyes, as if to say, "What's going on?"

"Let's just get outta here," I told him as I turned to go. I could think of nothing else to say or do at that moment.

**Snickers and taunts followed us out.**

These were the days before cell phones, which is why I couldn't just call the cops on the guy or get a picture of him.

As we drove off, my buddy asked me what that strange incident was all about, and I recounted the humiliating story of the robbery the week before.

My friend had just been through boot camp, so, of course, his instinctive response was virile and righteous:

**"Let's go back and kill those guys!!!"**

(I'm sure he was being metaphorical...then again, he was a Marine.)

Believe me, every fiber of my being wanted to turn the car around and go crusading with my Marine bodyguard back into the store and beat the living daylights out of those three clowns.

But something stopped me, and **it wasn't fear**. I was full of righteous fury at that moment, and I was in good shape. It was something much greater.

## The Message

The **very second** my buddy said, "Let's go back and kill those guys," a familiar Beatles song came on the radio and caught my attention.

*When I find myself in times of trouble / mother Mary comes to me / speaking words of wisdom / "Let it be, let it be."*

We all know the rest of the song.

**The timing of the message was supernatural.** In the heat of my revenge fury, the message I heard was simply, *"Let it be, let it be."*

That's something a mother would say, isn't it?

I took it as the Blessed Mother herself speaking directly to me at a crucial moment. Paul McCartney said he didn't write *Let It Be* as a religious song, but the original intent of the song was irrelevant at that point. To me, the song had a crystal clear – religious – message.

No revenge, no violence, no mayhem. **You're done here.**

Our Lady too is an unambiguous communicator. She was asking me to be fully Christian in a time of testing.

**The message had power in itself.** It felt like some toxic balloon had just burst in mid-air and all the toxins were dissipated into the ether. I let go of my hatred and kept driving. I followed her word.

Of course my Marine friend was totally frustrated. He wanted action and just really didn't understand why we weren't going back. One part of me wanted it too, but **after Mother Mary spoke**, the urge for revenge had completely disappeared.

A week before that, the thief put a gun to my head. Who knows what terrible things might have happened if we had gone back for revenge?

**Mary knew.**

I let it be, and I'm still here to tell the story.

Only now, after telling the story, am I reminded that I have never prayed for the man. That's going to be my prayer for the rest of Lent.

### This Journey

The Virgin Mary makes few appearances in the public life of Jesus, but she shows up at the **one crucial moment of Christ's life: Calvary**.

Mary is the Mother of Mercy. She's always a presence in our lives and meets us especially at our crucial moments. "Crucial" comes from the Latin word "crux" which means "Cross". Fitting.

*Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. (John 19:25-27)*

Our first feature article today highlights the classic Latin hymn known as the *Stabat Mater*, which is a meditation on this very passage about Mary **standing by the Cross of Christ**. Our second feature is a glorious musical meditation on what it would have been like to be *right there at Calvary* with her.

Let us take Mary with us on our Lenten Journey. In fact, let's learn to "take her into our homes" (our hearts) and trust her to get us through life's crucial moments.

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## Our Feature Articles

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### The Majestic "Stabat Mater" Guides Us Through Lent



### Jessye Norman's Amazing Rendition of "Were You There"



[Visit the Newsletter Archives](#)

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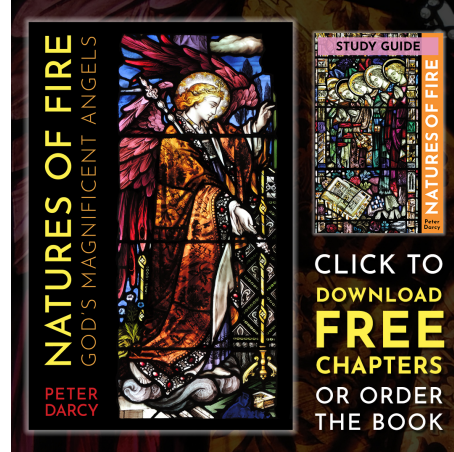
~ The only book on angels you'll ever need ~

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### The books have arrived!

The books arrived this week, and I'm very happy at how they turned out. Take a moment to download a couple of sample chapters (see right panel).

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



[Download Sample Chapters](#)

As you may notice in the image above (top right corner) *Natures of Fire* has an accompanying Study Guide for deeper reflection and for discussion groups and book clubs. The Study Guide is also available on my website.

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**God bless you and your loved ones this Lent!**

*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 – Please forward this email to any friends, colleagues, or family members who may be interested in an ongoing discussion about Beauty, Truth, and Goodness.*



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