

# Woman shows courage in face of husband's death

We all believe in life after death. But many of us still struggle with doubts. My favorite prayer from the Gospels is: "I do believe, Lord. Help my unbelief!"

When I hear stories of faith that help my sometimes lack of faith, I love to share those stories. Dottie Ruppert kept the following journal while her husband, Fran, was dying at Gilchrist. I'll let the excerpts speak for themselves:

April 4, 2007 - Fran asked me, "Who is standing behind me?" I had to tell him I didn't see anyone.

April 6 - While I was sitting on the bed with Fran, I told him that I had been praying that Our Lord would bring the four children we lost with him to take Fran home. He asked me their names and while I was saying their names, he told me he saw three of the four children kind of floating behind me. He said he saw a child of about 5 or 6 right behind where I was sitting.

April 6 - Fran asked me to look up April 16 in his Liturgy of the Hours prayer book to see if April 16 was a saint's day. I checked the book but there wasn't a saint mentioned. Several hours later he asked me again to check what was special about April 16. I told him as far as I knew there wasn't anything special about this date. As time went on I realized April 16 was the day he was buried.

In March I prayed to St. Therese of the Little Flower asking her to send me a rose when Fran was in heaven. The only person I shared this with was Jean. On Tuesday, April 17, while Rick (my son), Jean and I were sitting at the kitchen table, Rick said: "Do you smell roses?" Neither Jean nor I smelled them. He went on to say the smell lasted 15-20 seconds. It was after this that we shared with Rick my prayer to St. Therese.

My daughter, Terry, lives a half-hour past Annapolis. When we called to tell her that her dad may not last until she would arrive, she was very upset and started to pray. She wanted God to tell her what to do. She wanted to be with us but wasn't sure

she'd get to Gilchrist on time. During this time she said that she kept crying, praying and waiting for an answer. At about 3:15 a.m. she fell asleep and in a dream she saw a long hall with empty beds except for the last one. Fran was in this bed. When he saw her, he moved to the end of the bed where she was standing, gave her a hug, told her he loved her, and said goodbye. When she woke and looked at the clock it was 3:35 a.m. – the exact time Fran left us to go to the Lord.”

Amazing incidents, aren't they? Too many “coincidences” to be just coincidental. As someone wisely said, “Coincidence is when God remains anonymous.” I thank Dottie for allowing me to make public her private journal. Dottie wanted her story to help others to face the death of their loved ones, and their own deaths, with renewed faith.

One final comment from the eminent theologian, preacher and pastor of St. Bernardine Parish (currently celebrating its 80th anniversary). Here are some of Father Edward Miller's thoughts from a recent Pastor's Page:

“Mary's assumption into heaven is a feast that can stir the imagination. What will heaven be like? What will the heavenly banquet table be stocked with? How will we know one another? Will there be unlimited steamed crabs? What can we 'do' all day, especially if there is no such thing as time? (I remember seeing a cartoon where a guy is sitting on a cloud, in his long white robe and halo, and saying to himself, 'I should have brought a magazine.') I can only imagine what heaven will be like, but I do know two things for sure: it will definitely beat the alternative, and it will surely beat work.”