

When Heaven prays back

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www.denvercatholic.org

BACKGROUND: ARE YOUR PRAYERS HEARD?

KPIH Board Leader and General Manager Deacon Tom Fox has attended the annual priest/deacon/seminarian retreats at Franciscan University for 15 years. During that period, he came to know, to love and to deeply appreciate the President of Franciscan, Fr. Michael Scanlan. Father Scanlan died early in 2017 after a brilliant career that started as a lawyer, followed by a call to the priesthood as a Franciscan Friar, and ultimately to his assuming the reins of authority and completely rebuilding Franciscan University into one of the world's premier Catholic Universities. You can read the authorized autobiography of Fr. Scanlan in his book LET THE FIRE FALL. It's a great read!

Here's what happened. Deacon Tom was sent a link to a short article. As he read it, he said Tom started to experience tears. In short, please read this article which describes an experience associated with the late priest and which happened to Mary Beth Bonocci. Mary Beth is an author, an internationally acclaimed speaker and Catholic evangelist living in the Denver area.

While there is much to look for in seeking to know and enjoy the talents of Mary Beth, look at her on-line article: **An Open Letter To My Future Husband.**

Here is her article which appeared in the Denver Catholic and which made Deacon Tom teary eyed.

Mary Beth Bonacci

November 10, 2017

By the time you read this, All Saints Day will have come and gone. But, just to extend the feast a few more days, I want to share the story of something that happened to me recently — something that helped give me a fuller understanding of what we're celebrating, and what we as Catholics believe about the Communion of Saints.

A few weeks ago, I was working on a talk that I was scheduled to give the following week at a women's conference in Arlington, Virginia. I remembered a quote from Fr. Michael Scanlan that I wanted to incorporate into my remarks. Fr. Mike, who passed away earlier this year, was the President of Franciscan University of Steubenville. He was also a good friend to me and to my ministry.

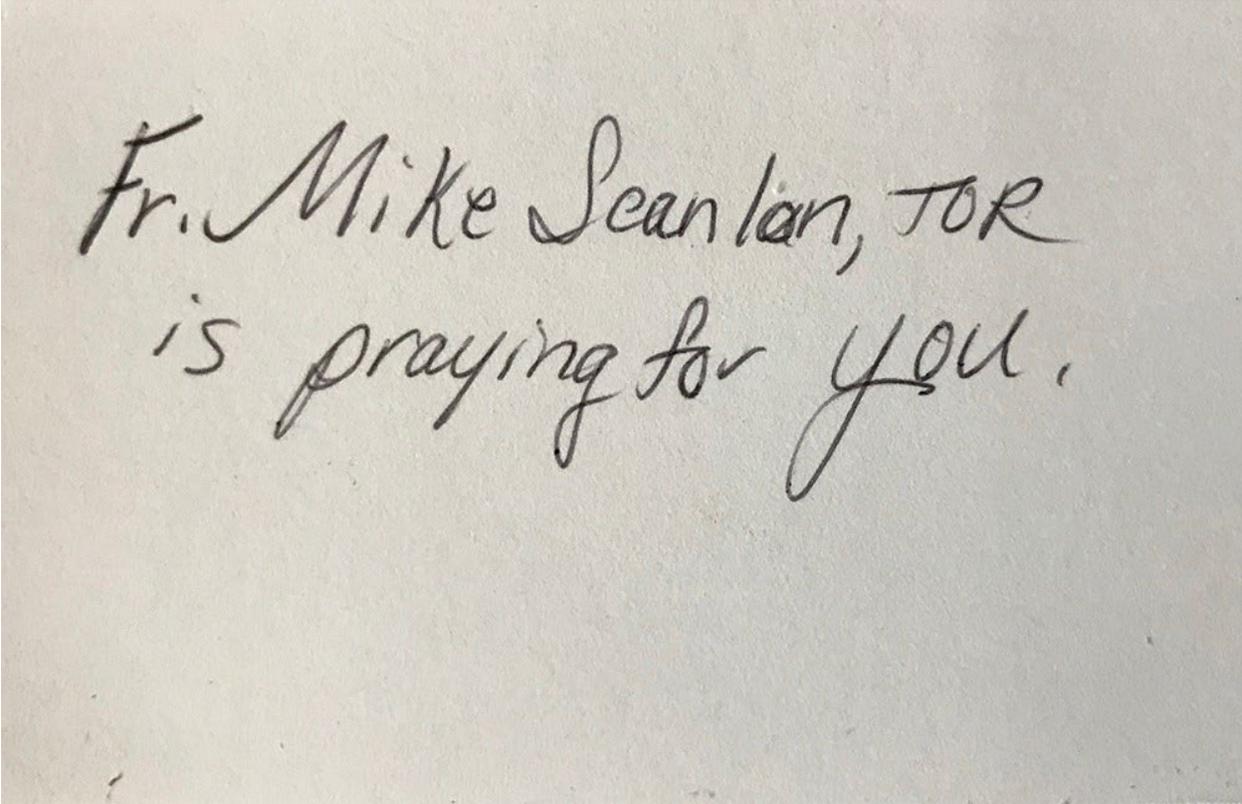
I pulled my copy of his (excellent) autobiography, *Let the Fire Fall*, from the bookshelf, and began thumbing through it, looking for the quote. As I read, it occurred to me that, since Fr. Mike's passing, I had never asked him to pray for me. Of course I have prayed regularly for the repose of his soul. But, as holy a man as Fr. Mike was, I figured it might be a good idea to add a request for his intercession.

So I simply said, "Fr. Mike, please pray for me." And, because he is not (yet) a canonized saint, I added "May

his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen." And then I went back to work.

The next week, I gave the talk. I didn't use the Fr. Mike quote, or talk about him at all, because I had a lot more material than time. But it was a successful talk nonetheless.

After it was over, I returned to my table. There, I had a brief conversation with a religious sister who was attending the conference. The conversation ended when we were interrupted by others. A few minutes later, she got up and walked around the table to me. She said somewhat hesitantly, "I hate to bother you, and I'm not stalking you or anything. But I was praying for you during your talk. And I felt the Lord asking me to deliver a message to you. Here it is." She handed me her business card, on the back of which she had written this message. It said:

A photograph of a handwritten note on a piece of light-colored paper. The text is written in cursive and reads: "Fr. Mike Scanlon, TOR is praying for you." The note is centered on the page and occupies the upper half of the image.

Fr. Mike Scanlon, TOR
is praying for you.

I immediately burst into tears. I hadn't mentioned Fr. Mike to her. Nor Steubenville. Nor anything else related. I had given no further thought to my brief prayer since I made it. And I certainly hadn't told anyone about it.

What an incredible gift! Like many people, I frequently struggle with the thought that my prayers aren't heard; that in order to be effective I need to say them a special way, or drag them out for a prolonged period of time, or say them with an air of piety that I can never get right. But, sitting here at my desk, almost as an aside, I asked for his prayers. And the Lord let me know know that my prayer was heard, and that I indeed have at least one friend praying for me in the very presence of God.

I tend to keep the personal aspects of my life personal. But I also felt early on that this particular favor was intended not just for me. It seemed clear that God wanted others to know that their prayers are being heard. And that the Communion of Saints is real, that we are indeed surrounded by a “great cloud of witnesses” who intercede for us.

Your prayers — even the brief ones — are heard by the God who loves you. And your requests for prayers are heard by the saints in Heaven, who do intercede for you.

Notice that the message said that Fr. Mike is praying for me. It didn't say that Fr. Mike is fixing things for me, or making my life better. This is a common misconception — that we Catholics believe that the saints are some kind of minor deities who scurry around organizing our lives and making good things happen.

This is not what we believe. The saints aren't gods. They're people like us. But they're people who have run the race successfully, and now enjoy the Beatific Vision. And they pray. And their prayers, being the prayers of pure, sanctified souls, are powerful before God.

Ask them to pray for you.

Mary Beth