

## “A RAY OF HOPE”

January 8, 2015, brought another beautiful sunny day to Marco Island, Florida. Life is good! spent the day at the pool with friends. That evening, I watched a little television with my husband, Brian. I was sleepy and I prepared for bed around ten o'clock. Brian shrieked and called out to me. a breaking news alert startled him. A man seen throwing a child over the Skyway Bridge into the cold dark waters of Tampa, Florida. This news chilled us to the bone. Shaken we both explored our feelings. Why did this happen? Who is responsible? What went wrong? Where were the parents?

I felt sick to my stomach and spoke out “We need a ray of hope in this World. How can this happen?” I went to bed and prayed to God for healing, comfort, and support for the family, then I cried myself to sleep.

Brought up Roman Catholic, I later grew to think of myself as a more spiritual person than religious. Jesus is my Savior. When religion concentrates more on the church than the people in it or Jesus I lose interest. I began a deeper Spiritual quest.

I eventually found a Spiritualist Church. It was a stone church with beautiful stained-glass windows. It was modestly decorated. There were no gold objects, ornate decorations, or fancy vestments.

Spiritualism believes in the teachings of Christ. The Declaration of Spiritualism is remarkably like the Commandments in the Catholic Church. There was a genuine spiritual feeling among the members.

I attended this church for a few years before I became a member.

In my early forties I became a Spiritualist Reverend. Spiritualism taught me to sit quietly and communicate with God. Different than any other church I had visited in the sense that it encourages you to humbly pray directly to God and meditate. I learned that when you pray to God you are doing the talking. When you meditate you are doing the listening and God is talking. Spiritualism's main purpose is to prove that life after death exists.

Since a small child I had a fascination with the mysticism of Christ, apparitions of the Blessed Mother and the invisible World. I was hooked! The practice of Spiritualism encourages us to contact the spirit within you. This is done by consistently sitting quietly a few times a

week. Eventually you will open your psychic ability and develop mediumship, healing power, prophecy, dream interpretation and all the divine gifts that are spoken of in the Bible. I credit Spiritualism for my close relationship with Jesus and the Blessed Mother. I continued my research with Pilgrimages abroad in Fatima Portugal, St. Peter's Basilica, Herzegovinia, Bosnia, New Mexico, and other areas in the United States. These sacred sites were known for thousands of miracles and messages from the Blessed Mother of Jesus. It is this background and my life experiences that I credit for my strong belief in God. I am a believer in Jesus. Jesus Christ is my salvation, hope and comfort.

In the days that followed, Brian and I searched for news of what went drastically wrong. What led to this tragedy? We found out that the little girl's name was Phoebe, only five years old. A police officer saw the father, John Johnchuck get out of the car, unbuckles Phoebe, and drop her off the bridge, falling sixty-two feet into the water.

John was apprehended and a long trial took place. John could be insane, a cold-blooded murderer, or a victim that was abused as a child who fell through the cracks. There are good people, bad people, evil people, and insane people in the World. What were the facts of this case and how would this investigation end? We may never know the truth or the whole story.

To stop obsessing about this incident, Brian suggested that we go to Naples and browse antique and consignment shops. Brian loved art and would always drift into the art section. I enjoyed the thrill of finding an unusual and rare accessory for the house. Brian came toward me and asked me to go with him to see a special piece of art by an artist that we both knew. This work of art was a lovely original painting of the St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City in Rome. Considered one of the Catholic church's holiest temples and an important pilgrimage site. Brian and I have visited the Basilica three times. The first time we visited with friends. We were allowed to visit the Vatican Grottoes which are a complex of Papal tombs that lie below St. Peter Basilica. The other two times were with our daughter and our three grandchildren, and we were no longer able to visit this part of the Church. We were all in awe of this massive structure.

The painting was of the entrance of the Basilica with a ray of light streaming through the top of the dome and it illuminated a tiny, bright figure entering the church. This figure represented Jesus Christ. The name of the artist was David Tutwiler and we had carried a few of his giclee pieces of art to sell in our Tea Room in Rockport, Massachusetts.

We were curious to know more about this painting because it was not the type of painting this artist was known for. David was famous for his landscapes, railroads, and harbor paintings. We had no interest in buying this painting even though Brian and I liked it.

We were more interested in knowing why he painted it. The salesperson came over to us and we started to ask him many questions. We asked him how he obtained this painting, and what he knew about the artist. He had purchased the entire art collection in an estate sale in Naples, Florida. Sadly, the heirs had no interest in keeping any of the pieces. The salesman told us that the piece was a commissioned by the owner and not typical of the artist's work.

Brian and I shared with him what we knew about David Tutwiler's background. David is a member of the Steam Railway Historical Society, the

American Society of Marine Artist, and a member of the Oil Painters of America. He maintained a gallery in Rockport, Massachusetts as well as a winter studio at their home in Northern Indiana. We met them at our Tea Room in Rockport.

We thanked him for his time, and we started to walk away. The man beckoned us back and looked me in the eye and said, “Do you know the name of this painting”? I said No. He turned the painting over to the backside and said, “It is called A Ray of Hope.” My husband looked at me and said, “We have to buy this painting.” Not prepared to buy an original painting, I said that I would have to think about it. On the way home my husband said that if I did not buy the painting that he would go back the next day and buy it. I told him to let me sleep on it. The next morning, I knew that the painting was meant for us, and we just had to purchase it.

Since we were not not aware of any spiritual paintings that David Tutwiler made, we believed this was a sign that Jesus heard my words and felt my sadness. The words that came out of my mouth “We need a ray of hope” was not a coincidence. I’ve had too many spiritual experiences and miracles that happened in my life to dismiss this incident as a fluke. I believe that my

humble prayers, desire to be comforted, wanting to have hope and trust in God led me this painting.

A ray of hope still exists in this World. This painting “A Ray of Hope” is my favorite painting and will always remain special to me, and a testament to all believers that God hears our prayers. It is my pleasure to be able to tell this story and to spread the word to both believers and non-believers of Jesus. I will continue to share this story of “A Ray of Hope” with anyone who is interested in hearing it. Have a Blessed Day!