

## Mercy Story Four – April

*“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!”*

The Jesus Prayer (*cf. Luke 18:13,38*)

He and his dog followed the sun. Every morning at the very first greys of dawn, come rain or come shine, in blizzards, arctic cold, and summer warmth, they set out on their accustomed trail – past the church, behind the school, around the hospital, alongside the tracks, into shantytown, down Main Street, along the highway, back to the church, home again. In June they headed out at 3:00 a.m., in December at 8:30 a.m. The only leash the dog needed was the man’s soft voice.

Truth be told, both dog and man counted on this routine, each for his own reasons.

In his left hand he held what he considered the best and most useful gift he had ever received – a Prayer Rope. It was black and had 100 cross-shaped knots, each group of 10 knots separated by a wooden bead. It made a circle that began and ended at a rope Cross. Each knot was one Jesus Prayer, each bead was an Our Father, and the Cross was the Creed.

Only, he had his own way of praying it. Each Jesus Prayer was a petition for a different cause or person. The first ones were for the needs of people around the world suffering in various ways. (*“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on the earthquake victims in ....., sinners!”*) The next ones were for close family members and long-time friends. (*“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on Joe, a sinner!” etc.*) Then came newer friends, and then people he knew of with special needs of all kinds. Lastly came the souls of deceased loved ones in case they needed help getting through their Purgatory, starting with his wife of 53 years. Sometimes he would slip in a special *“Lord Jesus...”* for the residents of a house they were passing, or a place of business.

He prayed each Jesus Prayer in time with his slow pace, while forming a picture of each person in his mind. If it was someone sick, he visualized him as healthy. If it was someone spiritually dying or dead, he pictured her as radiantly alive to God in Jesus and Mary. Sometimes he had to go around the rope twice. If he wasn’t done by the time they got back home, he and the dog would walk in circles in the sanctuary of his back yard until he had prayed for them all.

Then man and dog enjoyed a hearty breakfast.

He wasn’t one to attend a lot of meetings, but he did go to the weekly Rosary Prayer Group which met at church right after the Thursday evening Mass with Adoration and Benediction. It was in this congenial setting that his next door neighbour finally had the courage to ask him about his daily early morning walks with his dog. Timidly, in his soft voice, he told them.

“That’s so beautiful,” one woman said. “But wouldn’t it be more complimentary if you dropped the last two words? Why call everyone ‘a sinner’?”

“Oh, but that’s the beauty of it. Mercy for sinners! That’s who we are, and that’s what we need.”