

I PRAYED FOR A BIKE

Three years ago, I was asked if I'd give a talk about PRAYING to the young people in our parish who were to be CONFIRMED. I agreed but soon realised that I didn't know how to do this.

I wondered how I could interest 13 and 14-year-olds in prayer. That's when I prayed and prayed. I believe my prayers were answered because I suddenly remembered what had happened to me when I was eight years old. I decided to tell my story to the children.

THE STORY

I was born on April 11, 1939, the year World War 11 broke out. We were a Catholic family, and my father was a South Yorkshire coal miner. During those war years, our parents had to make toys for Christmas because all the manufacturing companies had to make things to help the war effort. After the war, going back to peacetime manufacturing, especially of toys, was very slow.

Two years after the war had ended, in 1947, when I was eight years old, I became an altar boy at church. One Sunday in early October, our Old Priest, as we children called him, was giving his sermon during mass and for once, I found myself listening. He said that God always answers our prayers if we pray to Him in an honest manner. This interested me as I'd heard that a company somewhere in England had started making bikes.

In all my seven years, I'd never seen a bike, only pictures of them. From that day on, I prayed honestly every night, asking God, in my innocence, for a bike at Christmas. I didn't miss one day.

I looked at my audience and told them that on the morning of Christmas Day, I went quickly downstairs to see my bike. What do you think I found, I asked. They all answered, "A BIKE." I said, "You're wrong," and went on to explain that there wasn't one. I was devastated. I'd honestly prayed every night, so where was my bike?

MY AUDIENCE WAS NOW LISTENING TO MY STORY.

I told them that on the following Sunday after mass, the old priest asked us Alter Boys if we'd had a good Christmas. The others all said yes, but he could see that something was bothering me and asked if something was wrong. I decided to tell him everything. I asked how he could be right about God always answering our honest prayers.

He looked me straight in the eyes and said, "But God did answer you." He went on to say, "What happens when you ask your parents for anything? Do they always give you what you ask for?" I said, "Not always."

He said, "God doesn't either, and in your case, he said NO". He then went on to say, "God always answers our honest prayers, but his answer can be YES or NO, and whatever answer he gives, if you've prayed honestly, it will always be in your best interest".

I told my audience, "**I WASN'T CONVINCED,**" and I could see in their faces that they were now listening to my story.

I went on to say that I was playing with my friends a few days later. One of them had been given a bike for Christmas, and I was jealous. He was also an altar boy at our church and knew of my desire for a bike.

He approached me and asked if I'd like to try his new bike. I was overjoyed. The road we were on was steep, and having never ridden a bike, I practised by going up the incline.

In no time at all,, I was pedalling up the road. At the top, I turned around and came speeding down the incline. To me, it was very thrilling.

When I reached my friend, I put on the brakes, but having no experience with bikes, I only put on the front brake. The front wheel stopped dead. The rest of the bike and I didn't. Over the top we went, and of course, in those days, there were no Elbow or Knee Pads or any protective gear at all. I recovered consciousness in my bed, luckily with no broken bones, but covered in bandages and plasters and very sore all over.

THE CONFIRMATION CHILDREN WERE NOW ALL SMILING

I was off school for just over a week. One day, while I was lying there feeling sorry for myself, I remembered what the Old Priest had said about God always answering our honest prayers. Whatever His answer is, YES or NO, it will always be in our best interest. I now knew that I'd found that out in a very painful way.

Everything the Old Priest had told us was correct. If we pray honestly, asking for God's help, He'll always give it. However, we must remember that His answer may not always be what we've asked for, but it will be in our best interest.

I told the children to be confirmed that I've always remembered that advice, still say my prayers honestly and often, and never doubt how powerful they are. I finished by thanking them for listening.

I'll never forget that day. I'd not thought of that episode in my life for over 70 years. Why had I done so now? I did not doubt that God had answered my prayers.

NEVER DOUBT THE POWER OF PRAYER.