

A Short Teaching on Children
by Deacon Gerry Palermo

This Friday past 7/12/13 was a blessed day.

Note: still processing, until I get further, relate as a narrative (one page per the standard).

I went to Mom's condo to meet a contractor who was going to fix tile. She cannot engage in commerce as she once could. Since later I had an appointment at the Church that would benefit from my wearing clerics I was in my reverend deacon attire.

We spoke for a bit about Mom. Then, quickly, the contractor, Ofer (אֹפֶר), began to share the story of his Mother's experience during the war. As we engaged the transformation of Ofer was beautiful to behold. Joy, pride, and depths of love came out in their fullness. Son, as child, recalling the story of Mother with such enthusiasm! One story in particular stuck with force. When the German soldiers asked among the women of the camp who was a seamstress another woman whispered to his Mom, a young girl, 'Even if you do not know how to sew, say you do, and go with them. You do not want to go on the other train'. Ofer's Mother survived the war as a girl seamstress sewing uniforms.

For my appointment I was going to share some Jewish theological points of interest with a professor at FAU. I wanted to be sure the orthodoxy as I understood it wasn't offensive. When I met Pierre, instead immediately the story of Ofer came pouring out. Pierre announced he too would tell the story of his Mother. Pierre's Mother survived the Camps as a seamstress as well. Further, Pierre, being a child survivor of the camps, related that a Catholic priest was denounced to the Germans for hiding Pierre and the priest was shot for his efforts.

Pierre, Ofer and Gerry sharing the story of their Mothers with each other. Deacon and priest sharing in the life of the Holocaust survivors and their children. So simple, yet so profound.

Pierre's war experience was intense. Too much to relate here except to say Pierre publish a book 'We remember the Children' IGI Publishing, MN. I recommend it.

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While Pierre was in hiding the priest hide him in the church choir. Pierre learned the outward signs of Catholic faith so as to avoid capture by the Gestapo. But more substantial was the singing:

'What I loved most was the singing... At least when I was singing, hope awakened in my heart. It was a way of begging a God to listen. Our voices harmonized and I did not feel alone or scared' page 31.

The teaching? More of a prayer.

May we learn to sing as children of Abraham, in harmony and not alone. May we learn to allow hope to awaken in our hearts. And, together, beg God to listen. Amen.

Pierre, Ofer – Men, Sons, Child. Thank you for giving a part of your life to me.

Peace be with you.

Deacon Gerry