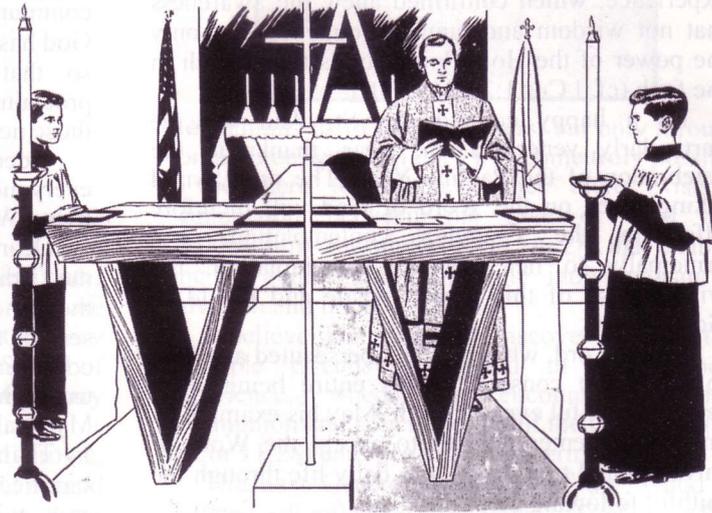


# Praying for the dearly departed



BY

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I TOOK AN EVENING WRITING COURSE MANY years ago as part of my degree program. A few of my classmates and I often went for coffee together on the break. One of the women in the class, named Christina, was very friendly. As the weeks went by, I noticed that she seemed genuinely interested in getting to know and befriend her classmates. My husband and I were transplants from another city so I was open to making new friends.

As we got to know each other, I found out that Christina had grown up in a Catholic family, but went her own way. More disturbingly, I eventually found out that her father was financially successful, but a shadow was cast over his apparent success. It seemed that Christina couldn't really say what her father did for a living, but he was rich.

One day Christina told me a story about her childhood. She related that her father had an explosive temper. When she was nine years old, she broke her arm, and it seemed from what she said that her father may have been instrumental in causing her arm to break. She said that her mother, who was a housewife, had to praise her husband profusely at these times to calm him. When Christina wrote a story about a business man who was involved with a criminal organization, I naturally wondered if it may have been based on her father.

Christina told me that her father would give her anything. In fact, although she was an unmarried woman in her thirties, her father's wealth had provided her with a large home that contained her own quarters and three income-generating apartments. He also provided her with a car. Christina held a full-time position and had a large disposable income that enabled her to enjoy a worldly lifestyle that was lavish compared to that of most people. Christina enjoyed the world, had an expensive hobby, and traveled all over the globe with friends. Her genuine interest in people, and their lives, seemed her only spirituality, as she was no longer a practising Catholic.

My conservative Catholic upbringing, and my practice of my faith seemed to attract my new friend. After the conclusion of the writing course we had taken together, Christina would call me, occasionally, so we could get together to enjoy mutual interests in the arts. I genuinely liked her, and was impressed with the effort she made in friendship. I also prayed for her intensely during this time, but never revealed this to her. I never felt any pressure from her at all to explore her lifestyle, but I was more than a little puzzled with how we had come to cross each other's path in life. I wondered how someone with such a different lifestyle and background, except for the shared Catholic upbringing, could still be such a sweet