



**Mary Carol's Musings**  
 Hopeful Thoughts from Mary Carol Wall

**SITTING ON A LAP - CLINGING TO AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND**

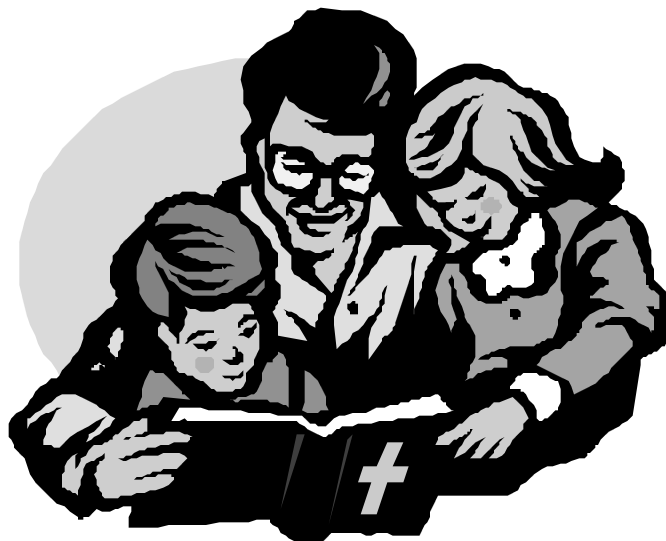
Laps are scarce if you are growing up in a large family and are not one of the younger kids. I was the oldest, and by the time I was seven and a half years old, there were six of us. Two more came five and then four years later, respectively.

There was plenty of affection, but there's a heck of a lot of work for Mom and Dad to do when there are that many kids. Mom got most of the work revolving around the youngest ones and the management of the household (no small task with eight youngsters!), though Dad was truly ahead of his time with how involved he got with us and how much he helped out at home. Still, he did most of the attention-stuff with us older ones. And that was in addition to the multitude of jobs he worked on top of his regular one, and the remodeling of the house to accommodate a growing family, and the nurturing of his beloved garden (I'm afraid we kids were not as enamored by it, because we had to help weed... we believed we were much abused!)

But still, sometimes, Dad would take a break and settle down to watch a little TV with us. He loved to watch John Wayne westerns, or Gunsmoke... and sometimes we even coaxed him into watching a few Saturday morning cartoons. The favorite family time was every Sunday night. If I recall correctly, we watched Marty Stauffer's Wild America, first, and then all settled in for the best show of all... Walt Disney, introduced by Uncle Walt, himself! He was our favorite person. I was in fourth grade when he died, on a school day. We heard the news on the morning radio, and we were floored! And we were even more shocked that there would actually be school on such a grief-ridden day! Still, the bus came, anyway. But, I digress.

One of the neat things about Dad watching TV with us was that we got a shot at being held on his lap. I remember leaning back against him, watching the show, with his arms wrapped around me. I can remember hearing him breathe, and feeling his heart beat. It was a wonderful place to be.

Have you ever just sat back and watched little kids, say, ages 3-8, or so, when they are out and about with their folks? If all is going well, they kind of orbit around their parents, going off to do whatever they want to do, but circling back periodically to make sure Mom or Dad are still where they left them. When a child begins to get tired, or cranky, or if they are nervous or shy, they begin to touch a parent, often clinging to a hand. Watch a little one, and you'll see how they often hold the



hand with both of their own hands, maybe hanging on to two fingers, or holding onto that big hand with one of theirs and running their other hand up and down their parent's hand and forearm. If they become more stressed or tired or shy, they dispense with the hand-

holding and just climb right up into a lap, or demand to be picked up and held. They generally don't stay there too long, though.

Do you remember holding on to a big person's hand and being swung over the mud puddles, or just swung through the air for fun? Usually it is done with

two big people holding onto the little one's hands, and they count, "One, two, three... swing!" and up in the air and over the mud puddle (or sidewalk pavement, etc.) the child sails. I think I remember it more as being one of the big people, swinging a younger brother, or one of my many babysitting kids, or one of my own children. But it is a strong image in my mind whether or which.

People have been surprised that I have been so upbeat during this encounter with cancer. Well, I confess to sometimes being scared and uncertain. And sometimes I worried, especially for my family. But every time the clouds would begin to gather, I would remember Jesus encouraging us to come to the Father like little children. It is a technique I had used once in awhile before this adventure which began this winter, but now I have a lot of practice in it!



**“When the cancer announced itself, sometimes just holding hands was not enough . . . I pictured myself climbing up into God's lap, and he wraps his arms around me and protects me from whatever is out there.”**

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As I have walked through my day to day activities, I would often picture God walking alongside of me (or, is it the other way around?), but in my mind, I am as a young child (it helps to keep me humble, and helps me to remember I am NOT in control!). Sometimes I am holding His hand, and just sharing my day with Him, thanking him for letting me see a meadowlark for the first time, or one of my rare sightings of a heron. I chatter along, telling Him my prayers for my kids and husband and other family members and friends. When I am worried, sometimes I am holding on with two hands, and I picture Him helping me swing over the rough, muddy spots, or helping me navigate around them.

When the cancer announced itself, sometimes just holding hands was not enough. I wanted major comfort and protection! Like the little ones I mentioned before, and like the young child that I pictured myself as being, I just imagined climbing up into God's lap, and he wraps his arms around me and protects me from whatever is out there. Sometimes, that is how I would fall asleep, listening to the heartbeat of God, feeling the breath of the Spirit. Does it make reality go away? No... but it is a wonderful respite, a peaceful time that helps me catch my breath, remember what I have to worry about, and what is not mine to worry about. And I know that whatever happens, God is walking every bit of that journey with me.

One of the things I do not have to worry about is whether or not the cancer will be cured. That is not my job. I have no control over how it responds to treatment, or whether it will recur, or anything else. All I have to do is what is on **my** to-do list: decide as wisely as possible what treatment and what doctors to use, do my best to keep my health up and to eat well, be as proactive as possible with my family and friends and all the wonderful folks who are so beautifully supporting and uplifting us, and do what I can for my employment responsibilities. Oh, yes... and stay connected to God.

So, where are we at? Well, life is marching on. The third chemo is scheduled for tomorrow, after I get a check up from Dr. Welt. I have a ride with my friend Donna. We recently learned that Sara was accepted into the Univ. of Buffalo Law School for next year, and was also hired as a resident director assistant, which gives her an apartment on campus, a food allowance, a small salary, and a bit off of her tuition. We are thrilled. Jaimie is getting ready to head for his first prom, on the 13th of May, which is also when Sara graduates. Mom and Dad are arriving for a visit on the 9th (also the date of my fourth chemo, and hopefully the last of the adriamycin... then I switch to Taxol), and Pat will come home for awhile on the 10th, which is Jim's birthday. We are hoping to see a bit of Heather in there, too. Caitie returns from college on the 12th, and

Liam's fort is finally a huge step ahead because of John and Vivian and their children, along with Ken... so... life is good!

Meanwhile, my quality of life, especially because of each of you, is very wonderful. I am a very blessed person living in a very blessed family, surrounded by a blessed and blessing community of people that stretches across oceans and continents. May all of you have a wonderful week. Much love,

*Mary Carol*



**YOUR MEMORIES WANTED FOR NEW VIDEO**

The Stewardship Development and Communications Office of the Diocese of Rochester is seeking families and individuals who wish to share memories, family film, video and photographs of special events in their life involving Church - baptisms, weddings, Easter Sunday, Catholic School, Christmas Eve - all the many events in which our lives and families are enriched by our faith. To find out more, call toll free 800-388-7177, ext. 1297.



**Building Peace with Justice**

By Fr. Brian Cool  
Diocesan Public Policy Committee

In his recent encyclical, Deus Caritas Est, Pope Benedict writes about the church's role in fighting for justice:

"Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which every generation must take up anew. ....The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper." (#28)

**Reflection:** Are we "remaining on the sidelines in the fight for justice"? Or are we tapping into the "spiritual energy" of God to create a more just and peaceful society?