

September 15, 2006

Have You Ever Heard of Al Braca?

Just this week, our nation remembered the terrible events of September 11, 2001. In many ways, 5 years seems like such a long time. In other ways, it seems so short. Many perspectives changed on that day, even among we who bear the name of Christ. My generation had never experienced something on the scale of Pearl Harbor, and for many, the events of 9/11 created a crisis of faith.

However, the events of 9/11 also created an opportunity for true faith to shine. A perfect example of how one man was used by God in these terrible events is the man mentioned in the title of this article: Alfred J. Braca. Al worked as a bond broker for Cantor Fitzgerald on the upper floors of the World Trade Center. He was 54 years old; he lived in New Jersey; he was faithfully married to his wife, Jean, for 33 years; and he had 4 children and several grandchildren. Around his office, he was affectionately known as "The Rev" because he publicly declared and lived his faith in a loving manner before his co-workers.

When the planes struck the twin towers, Al and his co-workers were cut-off from escape. They were on the upper floors and the stairwells that would have allowed them to descend and escape had been crushed by the impact of the jets. So what happened in that office in the minutes before the towers fell? Al gathered his frightened co-workers into one of the offices and began to tell them the message of the gospel. One of the young men gathered there was miraculously able to get through to his wife on a cell phone. He told his wife that he loved her, and he told her not to worry. He told her that "The Rev" had everybody together and was telling them about Jesus Christ. He also told her that he and many others had believed and been saved in those precious preceding moments. Before he was cut off, he asked his wife to call Jean (Al's wife) and to tell her what was happening and what Al had done.

In late September of 2001, Al Braca's funeral service was held in the same church where just one month before, he had walked one of his daughters down the aisle. His wife, children and grandchildren continue to be strong Christians who are faithfully involved in their church. They continue to live their lives according to the legacy handed down to them by their father and grandfather.

Al's story is one of many that involve real expressions of the Christian faith in the midst of the national tragedy now known simply as 9/11. Such stories serve to remind us that every day is an opportunity to live for the glory of Christ. Al's faith was not hidden, it was lovingly expressed. So when tragedy struck, he was prepared to be God's instrument in leading people to the only hope we have in this life: Jesus Christ.

What is your testimony? How are you living your faith. Is Christ kept in the closet when you are out in the world, or do you live and speak and share so that others may behold the glory of Christ in you? 1 Peter 3:15 says, "*But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always {being} ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.*"