

Christmas Eve 10PM

December 24, 2009

Fr Bill McGinty

“The Saving of Easy Eddie”

When Jesus is born in a stable in Bethlehem, there is no one excluded from the salvation he brings. Lowly shepherds watching their flocks are visited by an angel who brings them the good news. Israel’s long wait is over; the age of the messiah has arrived.

Visit any prison, homeless shelter, tonight, speak with murderers, rapists, thieves and sometimes even good people who have fallen on tragic circumstances and you will learn from them: “Salvation is not for me. I am beyond saving.” So many people will not cross the doorway of a church because they feel unworthy. God, Jesus is too good for the likes of me. They do not know what you and I know. We belong to the upside down church the upside down faith. Where up is down and down is up.

A King is born in a stable; his courtiers are shepherds and lowly animals. His palace is a stable and his mother a poor Jewish girl. In this upside down story Jesus the Savior come to save everyone, especially we who least deserve it. Salvation is never deserved. It is God’s free gift.

In 1931 Al Capone ruled Chicago with an iron fist. He was untouchable, because no charge would ever stick despite the murders, violence, numbers, illegal drink and gambling, robbery and prostitution.

Al Capone was untouchable because of the work and effort of one man; his attorney Edward O’Hare. O’Hare was so good at his job, that Capone rewarded him with a mansion, estate and much wealth. O’Hare lived a fabulous lifestyle and waned for nothing. He knew where all the money came from, murder and crime, but it never seemed to bother him. He even went to church from time to time, but he believed salvation was not for him. He was content to enjoy the rewards of his success in keeping Capone out of jail. for this reason people nicknamed him “Easy Eddie.”

The love of Eddie’s life was his young son Edward Jr. As the boy grew Easy Eddie worried that the boy’s future would be tarnished by his father’s reputation. He wanted the boy to have a better, cleaner life. So in 1932 Easy Eddie, did the unthinkable. He went to the FBI,

turned state's evidence and shopped Capone to the law agency. In time he had to give evidence in a court of law.

Three weeks latter Easy Eddie was shot to pieces, in broad daylight in a Chicago street, and died in a hail of bullets.

You might wonder why I tell you that story. Eddie 'Hare becoming a victim of the wealth he so enjoyed for so long. You might be surprised to know that his name is carried by O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, the second largest and busiest airport in the entire world. It is his name, but the airport is actually named after his son Lieutenant Edward "Butch" O'Hare, Navy Pilot, who in 1942 diverts a squadron of Japanese planes away from the unprotected U.S. fleet, shooting down 5 of them and limping home to his carrier in the South Pacific.

For his action, he was awarded the Navy Cross for valor and the United States Congressional Medal of Honor. Six months later he died in a further engagement. O'Hare Airport is named after him and his statue stands between Terminal One and terminal Two. Not many people today knew of him, or why the airport is called O'Hare and certainly scarcely anyone knows or remembers his father.

To me, the story reminds me, that salvation is for everyone, no matter the past or the sins we may have committed.

"God so love the world, that he sent his only begotten son that all might be saved and inherit eternal life."

As we gather, with those we love, this Christmas, let each of us, look around particularly in the family and make sure that no one is excluded, no one is out in the cold, no one is alone, but all are welcome into the love we share, and the warmth of the salvation that has been brought to us by a little child in a stable in Bethlehem, adored by shepherds.

Amen+

