


Lessons from a Funeral

March 2009 update on the ministry of Scott & Sharon MacLean serving in Italy with  CrossWorld

The mood was somber as we followed the procession down the street, around the corner and to the Roman Catholic Church. People spoke in hushed whispers that were scarcely louder than the shuffling footsteps of the crowd that followed the flower covered hearse. We could hear the priest leading the procession who was repeating two or three prayers over and over.

Our landlord had died quite suddenly this past Friday. I was on duty at the ambulance house and was part of the squad who raced to scene. We did all we could to revive him, but it was too late. He had moved from this life to eternity.

As we finished our shift a few busy hours later (we had three more calls), I was talking with one of my colleagues about the call. "Part of my job" I explained, "is to help people be ready for death." A good conversation followed as we talked about what it means to be ready.

But I also found myself wondering if we had done all we could to share the Good News with him. I recalled discussions about the Gospel in their kitchen when I went up to pay the rent and the times we had invited them to a Bible Study. Each year we made sure they got a Scripture calendar. Only the Lord knows what decisions may have been made in his heart as a result.

Often in my open air messages, I warn others that none of us know how many days we have

left in this world. But over this past weekend I was struck by the fact that it is also true that none of us know how many more opportunities we will have to help a friend or family member prepare for their death. I had certainly expected to have more time with our friend. And although I trust that we did all we could, it is still a sad reminder of the vital importance, no rather, of the urgency of our task here.

As we walked down the road this morning in the midst of a good sized crowd, the thought came to my mind that everyone, or just about everyone, has people who will come to their funeral. Family members, friends, and acquaintances – people that they know and whose lives they touch. And this circle of people is a powerful tool for the Gospel.

Many of the folks around me had received one of our tracts in their mailbox. Some had doubtlessly seen our book table in the market or been given one of the Scripture calendars. Perhaps some had even been in the plaza when I had preached in the open air. These are all important tools to get the powerful Gospel message into their eyes, ears and hearts.

But the visible witness of a changed life and the power of words from a trusted friend are much more likely, humanly speaking, to bear fruit. I found myself thinking that if the Lord allows us to see one of our landlord's family come to know Christ, it would open a much wider door for the Gospel to enter into the hearts and minds of all these people.

Since family is so important here in Italy, often that is the way that the Gospel spreads. One of our biggest prayer requests is for the testimony of the new believers in front of their families. Remember the teenage girl I mentioned in the last letter who wants to be baptized? For the moment we have delayed her baptism, hoping to have a chance to explain what baptism means to her parents so that they will understand (and accept) this step she is taking. We plan to invite them to observe the baptism of their daughter's friend. Please keep praying!

ITALIAN INFO

Double parking, unfortunately, is quite common here in Italy. Getting a ticket for it is not. An estimated 40,000 cars are double parked a day in Milan. How many, on average, get ticketed for the violation?

A) 61 B) 136 C) 317 D) 584 E) 1,115

Answer to last letter's question:

Italian workers get an extra month's salary (D) as their "tredicesimo" bonus each December.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" - Hebrews 9:27

While we cultivate and nurture these vital relationships, we also continue to plant seeds and proclaim the Gospel message. One exciting way we will be doing that this spring is through a concert by world renowned pianist Sam Rotman. He will give a classical concert and share his testimony here on April 20. The mayor and another town official we talked to about the concert are very supportive and willing to help. Please be in prayer for us now as we plan for the concert and seek to well publicize it. Among other things, we hope to get an article about it in the local paper before the concert.

In June, one of our youth, along with a friend, hope to give a concert at the town fair. The town invites musicians and singers to perform on open air stages around town. This would be a great way to get out the Gospel message. Please pray that we will be able to work out the details to make this happen.

If you can, stop by our website to stay up to date on what the Lord is doing here in Domodossola. Thank you so much for keeping us in your prayers. They are desperately needed!

His Servants,



Scott, Sharon & Karis MacLean

QUICKLY NOTED ...

- ✚ After months of paperwork, office visits and interviews, we are finally on a list as **available adoptive parents**. You can see more details on the "[Prayer Letter Extras](#)" page of our website.
- 🔊 **A new president ...** No, not that President. CrossWorld has a new president – Dale Losch, formerly director of CrossWorld Canada. Please keep him in your prayers.
- 📄 **Visit our website ...** Stop by at www.snsmaclean.net to hear about some of the events that are in the works for this spring and summer. On the "[Life in Italy](#)" page, you can read about some of the traditions that happen here when someone dies.

Prayer & Praise

- ✓ Pray for the family of our friend who died and for us in our interactions with them.
- ✓ Pray for the believers in our church as they reach out to their families, friends and acquaintances with the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Pray for preparations for the Sam Rotman concert on April 20.
- ✓ Praise for the many Scripture calendars given away in December. Please pray that these calendars would be read – and understood.
- ✓ Continue to pray for two evangelistically oriented Bible studies we have each week.
- ✓ Pray for openness on mind and understanding in the parents of the teen who wants to be baptized. We hope to invite them to observe the baptism of another teen in the coming weeks.
- ✓ Praise for good turnouts for both our children's and youth Christmas parties.
- ✓ Praise for good conversations at the book table (there are a few regulars now), and pray that these conversations might bear fruit.
- ✓ Pray that the Lord would give us the words, that we might boldly proclaim the Gospel in a manner worthy of such a great message.
- ✓ Pray for a great working of God in the Ossola Valleys. May He draw many people to Himself and build His church!

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