



WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

With next weekend being Labor Day, it looks like summer is slowly coming to an end. That also means for many getting in their vacation time before school reopens and we return to our normal routines. This is a story from one of those August vacations that has been preserved in our family's Hall of Fame of memories! Our vacation of choice was camping. This fated trip took place at one of our regular destinations, Stokes State Forest in northwest New Jersey. The only thing that "dampened" this vacation (pardon the pun) was that, unbeknownst to us, we were in the middle of a hurricane! We naively enjoyed a break in the weather, a break that turned out to be the eye of the storm. Without a radio, we didn't find this out until after we returned home. In case you forgot, when you're in the middle of a hurricane, it's raining! A lot! We couldn't enjoy the usual highlights of camping, like a campfire. Besides, being cooped up in a tent limits fun, especially for kids.

Of itself, this makes it a memorable vacation, although in a negative way. However, something more was required for it to be placed in our "hall of fame." If you have never been camping, you might not fully understand, but one of the features of Stokes is that in some campsites they provide platforms. These are made of planks of wood with railings on the outside. These provide the opportunity to be off the ground and dry, in theory. Instead of stakes in the ground, the tent is secured with nails in the platform and tent poles are secured by tying the pole ropes to the railings. To fully grasp the reason for this trip to be entered into the annals of Tuzeneu folklore, you have to understand one scientific fact. What happens to wood when it gets wet? It becomes slippery. At some point, our dad made the official announcement that it was time to pack up and leave, a welcomed decision. It had stopped raining and we went about the chores needed to be done such as taking down a wet tent and folding our damp sleeping bags. And, then it happened. As our father was taking down the tent, he performed a move that is usually only attempted by female gymnasts! It wasn't a perfect 10 split, but close enough to prompt another announcement. I will translate: "Gosh, I guess we might as well finish up and leave." Even if you're not fluent in angry outbursts, I'm sure you can come pretty close to what was actually said. Poor dad. Fortunately, he wasn't hurt badly, but I certainly would not want to imitate his stunt.

Isn't it amazing that vacations like that, which at the time, aren't the best, but in retrospect become a precious memory that can gleefully be repeated (not in our father's presence!). Besides, even with all the rain, it wasn't that bad. We still had fun. So, you have two weeks left. Get out there and have a great vacation that can be shared for years to come, and of course, with no one being injured!

"Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance." (James 1:2)