

Too Good To Be True
3-4-2012 by Harry Zirkelbach



One recent morning I excused myself, left a meeting early to attend a 10:00 am funeral. This service was being held at my Parish, Queen of Peace in Aurora, where I knew the deceased's family had been founding members.

I would learn more in that next hour.

Her body was blessed just outside the Church proper, brought in by a small army of family pall bearers, followed by some 60 survivors, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, their wives and families. Then the ordinary wooden casket was covered in white cloth to which a crucifix was added.

The celebrant priest Father Morrell, OMI, had come to the founding of the parish some 40 years earlier. A Seminarian, in his years here became a family friend. He now lived in San Antonio, is a Priest whose Missions are in Zambia, Africa.

His sermon after the Gospel, related one Africa moment years ago. He stood on a height above the great Zambezi River admiring the scene. He had watched a canoe approach from a distance, beach below where he stood. The four native men from the canoe walk up to him. One announced "We have come to be baptized Father," and Father directed them to an office, agreeing to meet them in a moment.

One man remained. His hesitation, "I cannot yet believe". In explanation, he recited all the wonders of the Catholic Church's, the scriptures, life of Christ, his teachings, miracles, death and resurrection. Ask why he had not accepted, the reply "Tis too good to be true Father",

And that was the introduction to a Father's brief recount of the life of Ethel Ritter.

Ethel was born in 1925, became a convert, wed to Bill Ritter in 1950. They had 12 children. When the last was born in 1967, the oldest was 16. In 1969 Bill left.

The family received welfare, then Ethel found worked as book-keeper until retiring. She continued preparing meals, the household tasks for the family and their friends. Son Danny disabled from birth, was cared for at home until he died

in 1970. The Ritter home, on a farm, manager of one, thrived, later moved to eastern Aurora. On retirement she moved to Strasburg, Colorado, continued volunteer work for the Red Cross.

She died 4 days after her 85th birthday, on Ash Wednesday, a good day to die, in an Aurora Hospital, surrounded by family. She was of clear mind. On the day she died, chatted with family. With one she remarked, "Hasn't this been fun!". Her final words are said to be "What Next."

At the end of Mass, her son Governor Bill Ritter spoke, included all other children's memories of their Matriarch,, one of which is repeated here.

When Bill and his wife Jean returned from a two year Mission in Zambia Africa, Bill joined the Assistant Denver District Attorney staff. It happened that the District Attorney position became vacant and the Governor interviewed applicants.

In choosing Bill Ritter, Governor Roy Romer mentioned there were many qualified, but none with a mother like Ethel Ritter, who seemed involved in every inquiry he had made of Bill. Then on being installed as DA, Ethel explained to her son, "I can't attend, Thursdays I volunteers for the Red Cross. Besides, there will be Press there and I can watch you on Television."

This sketch of Ethel Ritter is repeated to honor Mothers for the moments they blessed with their strength, diligence, wisdom, forcefulness, love given, in all they do and say. Here's a salute to those who have lead lives "Too good to be True".



Ethel Ritter