

## The Falling of Notre Dame

By Kenita Gibbins

Monday tears automatically drip down my face as I watch the steeple of Norte Dame fall during a television news clip. I remember wonderful times. I sit in a pew looking, listening, as I thank God for my being here. I feel my friend's excitement as she realizes she can take communion with her Bishop Chaput from Denver. I want to take communion too, but honor the rule that only Catholics can take the sacred elements. As we leave this slow-moving, worshipful crowd, I think the organist is playing dark and heavy baroque sounding music. Early in the day we visited Victor Hugo's apartment. I look up. Surely the Hunchback of Norte Dame is going to swing down from the bell tower. Where is Quasimodo?

My second thought Monday triggers another time to the grand Gothic Cathedral. I close my eyes and see the gargoyles and lots of pigeons. I remember my walk around the grounds and building. I go through the doors and see a beggar. It feels good just sitting in a pew looking and praying.

I think about the river dinner trip with our family. We absorb everything along the Seine River. All seven of us seemingly hold our breath just looking at the beautiful Norte Dame. The steeple draped in light captures us.

Tuesday I lament that I didn't see more of Norte Dame. I argue with a docent friend who says, "Maybe instead of spending 10 billion dollars to rebuild the money should go to take care of the poor?" I say, "No, it must be rebuilt. This church is a beacon of hope to the world including the poor. Norte Dame must not go away."

I now sit at my computer and wonder why I didn't see more of this place that gives me comfort. I've heard there are catacombs underneath the cathedral. I won't get to find out. The reconstruction may not be finished in my lifetime. I can still read *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. I know my memories won't burn up. I can't change the facts. I can't go back in time. My tears will still drip as we read day after day about the tragedy of Norte Dame.