

June 17 & 18, 2017
Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ

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My dear Brothers and Sisters. To understand my story one has to go back to one's childhood and see the world through the eyes of a 14 years old.

The Lord Jesus gives us life. War does the opposite, it destroys life.

Early in 1944, air raids became a regular part of our lives. Mom and dad seemed to know what was happening because they started to prepare things. Dad, together with a friend at the post office, bought a pig. We had half a pig. Mom cooked all the fat and roasted all the meat, made sausages and all sorts of things. Some of these she got smoked, other portions she put away in deep layers of fat in stone jars. She also bought a lot of bread which she sliced and toasted, and hung up in cheese cloth bags. Somebody at the post office decided to move his family to Germany hoping that it will be safer there. They had an orchard with about fifty peach trees in it. It was late summer and the trees were loaded with fruit. The guy told dad that he could have the peaches if he wanted them. We did go and picked peaches all day. So we had a great deal of food stashed away, meat, shortening, bread, and peach preserves.

In the Fall of 1944 the school started but by the beginning of November it closed down. There were too many air raids and they totally disrupted the normal routine.

Then it happened. Some German soldiers were killing a pig right under our window in the street. I heard the noise they made, opened the window and looked out onto the street below. Suddenly, there was a muffled explosion and all the windows of the factory across the street shattered into million pieces. The soldiers vanished with the pig instantly. As I closed the window and stepped back I heard a second explosion. The windows of our apartment exploded out into the street. What happened was that two mortars hit the roof of our building. I ran out to mom in the kitchen and she grabbed me and we both went down to an empty first floor apartment. My dad and my brother joined us later. It was quiet then and mom and dad went upstairs and got our winter overcoats, some sheets and towels, and all the food we had. During the night the mortar fire started up

again, and this time quite earnestly. Every hit sent a shower of broken tiles from the roof down to the courtyard. We counted up to one hundred hits and then gave up counting. All this was very frightening. We all were in bed and I held onto my mom and she was holding me. The mortars kept coming on and on. It went on like this for two weeks.

Then a German soldier came and told us that we cannot stay in the apartment on the first floor any more, but we must go down into the shelter. All the people in the building had to do the same. The shelter was the cellar under the front of the building. We took what we had on and our winter coats, and the food we had. The reason for this change was that the Russians made a move and occupied the factory on the other side of the street. The Germans were in the apartment houses on our side. In other words, our street, became the front line. Just a few German soldiers were in the building and they walked up and down the stairs and went to a window and sent a burst of machined guns bullets across the street. I guess that the Russians may have thought that the building was heavily occupied by Germans because they made no move to come across the street for the whole month of January. Meanwhile we were in the cellar without any facility to wash ourselves and our clothes.

It was all very strange. We have exhausted all our adrenaline long ago. We were living in a state of stupor as nights and days blended into the same "I do not know what is going to happen to us" feeling. Sometimes we ate but there was no regularity in it. Sometimes we slept but it was all the same. I know that mom prayed a lot and I also know that she prayed for our safety asking that the good Lord will keep the family together and save us from harm. She did not care what may happen to our possessions as long as we were all right.

Food was getting short. We were the best supplied and mom did give some food to people who had nothing. All these things became for me like a dream, dark and unreal.

By the end of the month suddenly things began to happen. The corner building next to us, number two, was burning. We could feel the heat through the metal door that separated our shelter from the cellar on the other side. A couple of young women (prostitutes) came to us and told us that we have to leave immediately because the Germans put a large quantity of dynamite into the coal cellars on the other side of the apartment building and their plan was to blast our

building to stop the fire spreading down the street.

There was no access to the cellar of the building next to us. There were two sledge hammers in the shelter, and the men started to open the wall between our building and number six next to us. It took us nearly an hour to break through the couple of yards thick foundation, but finally we succeeded. Everybody crawled through and kept going through a number of adjacent cellars away from number four. Then came a tremendous jolt and I knew that our apartment building was no more.

After that there was silence. We were on no man's land, filled with apprehension and fear. And then the metal door of the shelter cautiously opened and a Russian soldier looked at us. Then he started to grin and wave to us. We waved back. The front passed us over. The next thing that happened was that the Russians picked up all the young girls and took them away. They looked at mom but passed her by. I learnt later that they raped the girls. After that they came again and took all the men, my dad, my brother and me too. They took us way up north and frisked us for jewels, watches, rings. I had a watch which uncle Steve gave me when I was confirmed. They took that. After that they let my dad and myself go but they kept my brother for labor. They needed people to build a bridge across the Danube because all the bridges were down.

Meanwhile, as I heard later, mom was crying and looking for us. She went over to the factory across the street, part of which was still burning, and was searching for us. And then dad and I arrived back. She hugged us and kissed us and then asked: "Where is Ferkó?". We told her, he is all right but was kept there to do some work. By the evening my brother was back with us carrying a bucket. They gave him a bucket and told him to get some water from a well. He went to the well, and kept going until he got back to us.

We had no home. In fact we had nothing, not even food any more except one stone jar of cooking fat from that pig long ago and the bucket my brother was still holding in his hand. But mom's prayers were heard because the family was all there together. We found a sled, put the bucket and the jar of fat on it, put on our winter coats on top of the dirty clothes we were in, and began to look for a home. We walked in the direction of north, and we passed many dead German soldiers left there frozen on the street. One of them was just a young kid who could have been no older than 17 or 18. He was lying on his back frozen, with his head lifted up from the

ground and his hands clutched together in prayer. If there were any dead Russians, they have been removed from the streets. In about half an hour we reached a short street and found an empty house under number 11. We went in. In the cellar, which we had to break open, we found a big pile of fire wood.

There were some people, whom my dad knew, living at the end of the street. They gave us soup, the first meal I had in the last three days. Then we went back to our new home and dad made a nice fire in the fire place and we went to sleep.

The next day we woke up into a post war world. Fighting was still going on in the mountains around the royal palace where the last remaining Germans dug themselves in. But that lasted only a few more days. Then we heard that the Germans surrendered and for Hungary the war was over.

My dear Sisters and brothers, there is nothing more that is against any love and respect for life than war. It leaves a deep and permanent trauma in one's heart and mind and soul, and it is the worst form of child abuse for sure. My story is a story of God's miraculous love and mercy, and it was carried on through my Mom's prayers. But there is no life in a war, only abuse and death. I can still see that young German soldier lying on the street with hands frozen in prayer, and I ask: Who is the enemy?