

On Protection for Those in Harms Way

When visiting a church in Baltimore about twenty-five years ago (I think it was St. Alphonsus), I was struck with curiosity about a flat, glass-covered box on the wall next to a statue of the Blessed Virgin. In the box were row upon row of US Army Air Corps pilot's wings. I can't recall how many there were, it seemed to be about 30-40. While I was standing there, I asked an old gentleman as to the meaning of the wings.

He replied that in World War II, many of the lads in the parish had joined the Air Corps, in bombing and fighter squadrons, and had served in England. He told me that the parish priest had organized a continuous novena to Our Lady of Divine Providence, and the parishioners prayed the novena for the rest of the war. All of the lads of the parish came back. This was no small feat, since one out of every ten men that died in that war served for the 8th or 10th Air Forces.

Out of gratitude, the men (for they left as boys largely, and came back men) all took the wings off their uniforms, and put them in the box, in a ceremony during a Mass of thanksgiving.

We have men (and perhaps women) in the parish who have put themselves in harms way, for our protection. This includes Captain Theodore Born, USAF, who is currently deployed in Afghanistan. It also includes those in law enforcement, such as Detective Shad Watts and Officer Tim Grandy. I'm sure there are others, but I'm a bit too new to the parish to know them all.

So for any who are in harms way for our sake, in your charity, please pray the following prayer for their safety, and place them under the protection of Our Lady of Providence.

*Mary, immaculate Virgin and Mother of divine Providence,
keep their souls with the fullness of thy grace: do thou govern their souls
and direct them in the way of virtue to the fulfillment of the divine will. Obtain
for them the pardon and remission of all their sins;
be thou their refuge, their protection, their defense and their guide
in their pilgrimage through the world; comfort them in the midst of tribulation;
bring them safe through every danger; in the storms of adversity afford them thy
sure protection. Obtain for them, O Mary, the renewal of their hearts within
them, that they may become a holy dwelling place
for thy divine Son Jesus; keep far from them, every kind of sin,
negligence, lukewarmness, cowardice or human respect.
Dear Mother of divine Providence, do thou cover them
with the mantle of thy protection and they shall be safe.
Thou art the Mother of Providence; thou art the Virgin of pardon;
thou art their hope on earth. And grant that they may have thee
as their Mother in the glory of heaven. Amen.*

PS. The old gentleman who told me about the story, pointed to his wings up in the box. He was lighting a candle before Our Lady's shrine, in thanksgiving for being spared, and for his old buddies in that group who have passed on. He has been lighting candles since 1945.