

FROM WHERE I SIT

JOHN COONEY

God Bless The Animals

One of the more pleasant duties I get to perform as a grandfather is praying with my grandkids. And those prayers are usually peaceful, bedtime affairs – a few choice words sent heavenward as a prelude to sleep.

Prayers aren't supposed to be arguments – right? But you try telling my four-year-old granddaughter! Praying with Paris is *always* an argument. Because the gorgeous little know-it-all can't help herself. She has to correct me, challenge me and put me right.

She has (as you'll gather) lots of pets. And she lives alongside farmer-friends who have lots *more* pets. Anyway, here's how our prayer-meeting went the other night:

(Me:) How about we say a prayer, eh? Would you like that?

(She:) *Yep! This is my bed, not yours ...*

I know. But we're not talking about beds. We're going to pray. What should we pray about?

Umm ... animals!

That's a good idea. Okay, here we go. Dear Lord, we pray for all Paris' animals ...

No, Granddad, not "all" – you've got to say their names.

Well, you'll have to help me then. We pray for Paris' dogs – for Tyler and Van and Kewpie ...

You don't have to pray for the white dog, 'cause he's dead.

Oh, that's right. Well, have we done all the dogs?

No, there's Jackson and Holly ...

Of course. And what's the big black one called?

Levi. And there's the two little puppies ...

Two puppies? What they called?

Umm, I can't remember.

Okay, it doesn't matter. That's enough dogs. How about cats?

Lord, we pray for Miss Plum ...

have you got any other cats?

Uhuh, Silvester. And Fleur's got eight.

Your friends have got eight cats? You're kidding! What are they called?

I don't know.

So that's it?

No, Granddad – wait! There's Princess Cinderella ...

Oh yes, your axolotl (an ugly Mexican walking fish that gives me the creeps) ...

And don't forget the tadpoles! She ate two of them (giggle, giggle) ...

Okay, we pray for Princess Cinderella. And the surviving tadpoles. And what about your mouse?

It's not a mouse – it's a rat!



So what's its name?

Mrs Eyebright.

Okay, and we pray for Mrs Eyebright.

Now, is that all the animals?

(She nods ...)

(Thank goodness she's forgotten the horses!)

Well, we'd better pray for your cousins, eh?

(She agrees – and I start working through the list.) Lord, we pray for ... (I only get halfway when she interrupts).

Trae doesn't want to marry Maya!

No, that'd be right.

How do you know? Did Trae tell you?

No, but little boys don't marry their sisters, do they. (She shakes her head, and I continue.)

Lord, we pray for Rosie and Taylor ...

You don't say Rosie first – you say Taylor, then Rosie.

Okay, Taylor and Rosie ...

And Henry.

Oh yeah, Henry. And we pray for Nana Julie and Gramps ...

Wait! It's Donny.

What?

He's not Gramps – he's Donny.

Oh, that's right, I forgot.

And don't forget Soltakeep ...

Who?

Soltakeep!

Who's that? I don't understand? (But suddenly I recall the little prayer her Daddy taught her:) Ah, I get it ... soul-to-keep! Okay, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep ..."

(She yawns and turns over ...)

So are we done? Have you had enough prayer?

(She nods ...)

All right. So Lord, please watch over Paris and help her to have a good night's sleep.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

No, you don't do that.

Do what?

(She turns back to face me.) You don't say Amen – I do!

Okay, here we go: in Jesus' name ...

Amen! Now you ...

Me what?

You say Amen after me.

Okay: Amen.

She smiles at me, snuggles down, and closes her beautiful eyes. I kiss her and leave the bedroom, hoping that God can make more sense of that particular prayer than I can ...



JOHN (GRAPEVINE'S FOUNDER & EDITOR) WAS RECENTLY HEARD TO SAY, "YOU CAN'T SCARE ME – I'VE GOT 12 GRANDKIDS!"

THORT



Many people never stop to realise that a tree is a living thing, not that different from a tall, leafy dog that has roots and is very quiet.

(Jack Handey)