

# 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)**