



THE SAND DOLLAR

by MIKE HAINSEY

In October 2005 our son, Chris, a gifted musician, left this world to be with our Lord, his 5½ year battle with brain cancer over. In the time since his death Brenda and I struggled with this terrible loss. Dealing with his death is far more difficult than dealing with his disease because there is no hope to see him again on this earth.

We know the logic--that Chris is with God, perfect once again and free from all earthly ills. But the emotion of missing him is often overpowering. Like most parents who lost a child we would often pray for a sign or signal that once again connects us with our son. We hoped for some sort of reassurance that all would be ok.

In our case, we had been to the ocean dozens of times with Chris, either visiting family or just to walk Sanibel Island looking for shells. So Brenda asked for God to send us a sign in the form of a sand dollar. She wanted to find one on the beach. I grew up on the east coast of Florida, and the surf is too rough to find shells that are intact, especially ones as fragile as a sand dollar. In all my years there I had never seen one intact.

One morning, exactly six months after his death, we found ourselves on the beach in Florida. I went for a walk just before sunrise, hoping for a prayerful time to help get me through this "anniversary". The tide was out, and the beach was littered with pieces of seashells broken by the surf. It was a beautiful morning, and I was on a quiet, deserted section. At that point I stopped, turned toward the rising sun, and said a prayer. In this prayer I told God that I knew we were not worthy, but knew that all things are possible in Him. So I asked him to make Brenda's prayer for a sign come true. I finished my prayer and turned to continue my walk.

I took about ten steps when directly in front of me was, you guessed it, a fully intact sand dollar. At first I just stood there. Then I slowly bent down and gently picked it up, tears swelling inside me. How was this possible?

You know the answer. Now, some will read this with skepticism and conclude that this was merely a coincidence, that two grieving parents want to make it more than it is. That's fine. But Brenda and I believe it is a prayer answered. I can tell you stories from other grieving parents with similar "coincidences". We quit believing in coincidences years ago.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8: 38-39

SPECIAL THANKS to Mike and Brenda for sharing this beautiful story, first featured in our "Songs of Faith" project with the Piano Brothers. [Here](#) is a moving montage set to the soundtrack scored for the story, concluding with a haunting rendition of "Amazing Grace" performed by Chris. Go [here](#) for the "Songs of Faith" album.



MIKE AND BRENDA HAINSEY have been married for 42 years. They live in Columbus, Mississippi and are longtime members of Annunciation Catholic Church. Mike is a retired Air Force pilot and currently the Executive Director at the Golden Triangle Regional Airport in Columbus. Brenda is a retired medical technologist, mother, and wife.

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Our world is pining for good news. God's supply is ***you***. Your short, moving story of "God with us" will make a big difference in someone's life.

Right now you can think of at least one moving moment in your life. An example of "God with us." Please take a moment now to simply email me the possible subject of your story. If you're motivated, sure, write it out (no more than 500 words). We'll help you land it. Many will be blessed. We want to feature a new story every week.

Thank you in advance!

So blessed to be united in building the Kingdom,



Greg and Stephanie Schlueter
Image Trinity | Mass Impact

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Call: (814) 449-8808
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~ Pope St. John Paul II

Marriage and family have always been Satan's most fierce point of attack. Why? Because man and woman image God and exist to make Him, who is love, known. (Gen. 1:27)

It's no longer subtle. Things hidden in darkness are coming to light. (Mark 4:22) It's not just playing out among those who've been deceived into rejecting their Maker, but also under the roofs of many who profess Him. Now more than ever good Catholic families are looking for a solid anchor. Lived encounter. Community enlivened by the Holy Spirit. Remnant.

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