

Thought for the Day

November 21 – November 25, 2011

November 21, 2011

COURAGE UNDER FIRE

Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was an early Christian leader. At that time the Roman Empire ruled most of the known world. In order to be a loyal member of the Empire, citizens had to say, “Caesar is Lord.” Most early Christians refused to make that affirmation. By the time Polycarp was 86 years of age, the Empire had begun to persecute Christians who refused to call Caesar their lord. A captain, backed up by troops, knocked on Polycarp’s door. The old bishop was so respected that the captain begged him to say that Caesar is lord. “You don’t even have to mean it,” said the captain. “Just say it. We don’t want to harm you.”

Polycarp replied, “Jesus has been my God for 86 years, and he has never betrayed me yet. How can I now betray my Lord and my Savior Jesus Christ?”

They tried him to a stake and set it on fire. Unwaveringly, he would not deny his Lord.

November 22, 2011

WHEN YOU REFUSE TO GIVE UP

Rocky Bleier was drafted as a running back by the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1968. After a brief stint in professional football, he joined the Army and was sent to Vietnam. There he had part of his right foot blown away by a grenade. The doctors said he would be lucky if he ever walked again.

Crippled and underweight, Rocky began a comeback effort, using running, weight lifting, yoga and any other exercise that seemed to help. He worked at it until he could run up and down the fire escape of his eight-story apartment building eight times in a row.

It took four years, but eventually he could run the forty-yard dash faster than when he was a rookie with the Steelers. Not only did Rocky play football again; he helped the Pittsburgh Steelers win a Super Bowl.

Dear Lord, please put a little bit of the stuff you made Rocky Bleier out of in all of us.

November 23, 2011

*T*HE KEY TO SUCCESS

During a Monday night football game between the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants, one of the announcers observed that Walter Payton, the Bears' All-Star running back, had accumulated over nine miles in career rushing yards. The other announcer remarked, "Yeah, and that's with somebody knocking him down every 4.6 years!"

Walter Payton, the most successful running back ever, knows that everyone, even the very best, gets knocked down. The key to success is to get up and run again just as hard.

November 24, 2011

*T*HE COURAGE TO PERSERVE

William Wilberforce was a British parliamentarian, a Christian, and an abolitionist. The turning point in his life came at the age of 28, after having served in Parliament for seven years. He wrote in his diary: "Almighty God has set before me two great objectives- the abolition of the slave trade and the reformation of manners."

When Wilberforce began his crusade against slavery, the prospects could not have been worse. The slave trade was a boon to England's economy. Hundreds of parliamentarians were in the

pockets of the slavers, and the public was indifferent to suffering slaves in the distant Caribbean. However, Wilberforce introduced bills against the slave trade every year. For 20 consecutive years Parliament voted down all but the mildest reforms. Yet Wilberforce refused to allow political setbacks or chronic ill health to discourage him. He persevered, and in 1807, Parliament finally abolished the slave trade. In 1833, as Wilberforce lay dying, slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire, 46 years after the battle was joined.

November 25, 2011

UR AWESOME POTENTIAL

Michelangelo's "David" can be viewed in the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, Italy. This statue, over 17 feet tall, is the world's most perfect rendering of a man. It shows us King David in his youth, going forth to meet the giant Goliath on the field of battle. The marble from which this masterpiece was sculpted had actually been used before. The Italian sculptor Agostino d'Antonio had worked diligently on it, but lamented, "I can do nothing with it." He claimed that the marble was inferior in quality and unsuited for high-quality artistic work. But in the hands of Michelangelo, it became a masterpiece for the ages.

Many people may look at us and decide that we are inferior in quality. But when we place ourselves in the hands of the Master, he can make us more than we or they ever thought possible.