

## **Traveling Companion: Search and Destroy**

Fr. Michael Tracey

I walked outside a few days ago, not only to sample the fresh Gulf breeze, but also to execute an ongoing mission. My mission was to search and destroy. I was to receive a certain satisfaction and enjoyment from such a mission.

As I walked along, I spotted my first victims. I noticed them rushing purposefully along as they tried to create their own masterpiece. I paused to glance at the still-constructing project. It didn't seem to have any shape or direction. Instead, it seemed disjointed and chaotic. I wondered if the workers were mere neophytes, and if so, their lack of planning could be excusable.

I could not resist testing the strength of its walls and ramparts. My foot imprint made its mark and it aroused suspicion. As I pulled my foot away, the construction site came alive, resembling a traffic jam at rush hour.

I realized that the workers must feel exhausted from their labors in the noonday sun and they must be hungry. Armed with the gospel mandate to feed the hungry, I obliged. I was satisfied that the workers seemed pleased with my generosity. I patted myself on the back for my act of kindness and pressed on in search of other hungry construction workers.

I didn't have to go too far until I came across the next construction site. This site was in its infancy stages. On closer observation, I was not sure of how the finished product might look. It all seemed directionless and unplanned. Then again, maybe I was just looking at the foundation and I tried to understand. Still, I realized the workers must be hungry and so I fed them and they seemed to appreciate it as they carried their food to a more secluded place.

Moving on, I came to the next construction project. This project really impressed me. I stood back and admired the unusual, conical construction. I was impressed with its architectural style, its foundation as well as the construction material. I noticed, in particular, how it was constructed in such a way as to maximize the way the light impacted it. I thought, how interesting of these construction workers to harness solar power to flood their home with light.

I realized the workers had been working overtime in creating their state of the art, solar powered, efficient palace. I knew they must be hungry after such an exhausting build. So, gingerly, I fed food down the middle of their conical dwelling. I knew this was the most efficient way to feed them. They obliged and appreciated my generosity.

As I pondered my invasions into the lives of these construction giants, I began to realize several lessons. First of all, I learned the value of cooperation over competitiveness; the value of doing the specific tasks as hand rather than putting them on the back burner. Secondly, I learned that we can accomplish great things if we are willing to be in a supporting role rather than being top-billed. Thirdly, I learned that life can be fraught with disaster; that "almighty" and "exclusive" belongs, not to the ordinary but to the Higher Power. Fourthly, I learned that, no matter how strong or fortified you build, that the mighty footprint of a hurricane-like giant can destroy it in the twinkling of an eye. Fifthly, I learned that, while the possibility of immanent destruction is always there, there is something within that drives us to rebuild again and again. Finally, I learned that survival is stronger than death or destruction; that it is part of the psyche that drives things; that faith is stronger than doubt; that hope is stronger than despair.

Some days later, I walked around again, only to discover new construction sites. I was impressed by the tenacity of the construction workers who had found other construction sites to begin construction again. I wondered if they realized that, like the grass of the field, that is here today and gone tomorrow, if it might impact their future plans. Obviously not!. Maybe, resurrection is alive and well.