

## A briefcase or life

The collision of the ships "Stockholm" and "Andrea Doria" occurred on the high seas on July 25, 1956, has been recognized as one of the worst tragedies in maritime history. Both ships were spotted on their radar screens while they were still 25 kilometers away, but despite all the maneuvers and precautions, they collided causing the loss of many lives and the sinking of the "Andrea Doria".



The author Alvin Moscow, in a book about this maritime tragedy, shares in detail some of the dramatic rescues of the disaster.

Among others, it mentions the story of a group of passengers who were trapped, and who in order to get to the exit and save themselves had to go through a corridor that was filling quickly with water. Some crossed it, but three ladies, too terrified to take chances after trying a few times and having fallen into the oily mixture, hesitated while their only chance of salvation was closing.

When it was time of one of the ladies, she entered the water, but she had difficulties because she was carrying a briefcase with her. This left her with only one free hand to take hold of the rope, and therefore prevented her from crawling to salvation. "Throw away the briefcase!" shouted one of the crew. She refused and continued to flail about in vain. "Throw it!" repeated the sailor, "You will lose your life because of the briefcase!" With agony painted on her face, she finally threw the briefcase away and seconds later was safe and sound.

We do not know what that briefcase contained; perhaps some personal items, which seemed necessary to the lady. Normally it would have been acceptable and worthy of applause to be so far sighted. But situations change, and values do, too. When it comes to life or death, what does a little gold matter? If she was going to die in that flooded corridor, what did a comb, mirror or a second pair of shoes in the valise matter?

Every day we have to choose between different values, and often it is possible that we are in the desperate situation of trying to save something small, of relative value. But by saving it, we lose everything. For example, a woman, trying to save her dignity or personal importance, can refuse to apologize for a minor offense and because of it lose a dear friendship. A man can



insist on exercising his rights over his time and friendships, and thus lose his wife and family. Or perhaps you can sacrifice your most valuable possession, your soul, simply by occupying yourself in obtaining material possessions.

Jesus taught that sometimes to achieve the best we have to give up something good. He asked a rethoric question that does not need an answer, but it is enough to make us think: "*What will it profit a man, if he wins the whole world, and loses his soul? Or what reward will a man give for his soul?*" (Matthew 16:26)

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# The silent language



**T**he human being has an advantage over animals in that he can communicate through words, but words are at times a means of hiding or falsifying thoughts.

Professors and students who have researched this area often look at the position of hands and legs during a conversation. Conversing with arms or legs crossed, for example, indicates a desire to keep the other person at a distance or to protect oneself against their ideas. Something as innocent as scratching oneself or running one's hand through hair can signal embarrassment or tension over something that happens.

Experts say that some movements are learned and vary according to culture, family or group, while others are instinctive. This means that one can say something with words while saying the opposite with the body.

According to these researchers, the silent language of the body promises to be of great help in correcting character defects and in treating patients with mental disorders who frequently lose the ability to communicate their emotions and thoughts with words.

Whatever the future of this new science may be, it teaches us something very important: only man has the capacity to lie because he has a spoken language. But as much as he wants to hide his true state of mind, he is continually revealing it because the body reacts to anything other than absolute truth.

Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the words of Jesus: *"There is no secret that remains undiscovered, and there is nothing hidden that does not come to be known"* (Luke 12: 2). It will not be necessary for God to one day show us a videotape or the movie of our lives to convince us that we have lived outside of His plan. The act has been recorded in our mind and body, and it is we who will reveal it.

This fact should lead us to absolute sincerity here and now because every false detail harms us in the body and in the spirit. Falsehood and efforts to cover it aggravate things, but the openness and transparency of character which have originated in our relationship with God through Jesus Christ lead us to the truth and to cleanliness of the soul. □

# Oh God, help me!

Who has never asked for God's help? And who has never asked himself, in a hurry, why God stopped responding?

Most of us are proud and independent; we like to work on our own as long as we can. We prefer to suffer failure in some things before consulting the wisdom of others. As for God's help, our situa-



tion has to be desperate in order for us to ask for His intervention. However, almost all of us at some point find ourselves in emergencies in which we ask God for help.

We ask for His help to do what? To help us triumph in the plans and projects to which we have committed ourselves without ascertaining the real purpose of our existence? To help us be happy while we follow a path that excludes Him? To help us escape from the logical consequences of a stupid and rebellious action? To save us from loss of prestige when people are about to discover our crimes? To provide money for us to live on when

we have wasted ours in bad habits? Can we expect His help in these things?

What son who rebels and leaves home has the audacity to hope that his father will continue to provide all the comfort of home? What employer continues to pay the salary to the employee who has gone to work for the competitor? All of this is absurd, but it is more or less what we expect when we ask for God's help.

He has not put us in life so we can look for luck as best we can, nor is He the errand boy who immediately comes to our call to find out our desires or whims.

If He created us, our main duty is to find out what He has in mind. Then, if we ask for the wisdom and the means to fulfill, He is completely willing to help us. As someone has said: When people say a prayer, they usually ask that two plus two may not be four.

We will triumph in life only if we adjust ourselves to the plan of the Creator. Then His love is shown, not in giving us anything we ask for, but only in giving us that which leads us to triumph. The first step to success must be a change of attitude and direction, and when that happens our requests will receive the necessary attention.

*"We have confidence in God, because we know that if we ask Him something according to His will, He hears us."* (1 John 5: 14) □

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# What does salvation mean?



**S**ome people believe that the meaning of the message of salvation is that, after all, sin is not so bad. If God can deliver a guilty sinner from punishment, they deduce that the offense must not be so terrible.

On the contrary, if the sin were not "so bad", and if the judgment for all eternity was simply a disgrace without too much importance, God would not have bothered to provide a salvation. This cost Jesus Christ His life on the cross. That is how bad God considers sin to be.

The fact that God has made salvation available to everyone does not mean that it is not the most important thing. It's free, but it's not because it has not cost anything, but because it has cost so much that you would never be able to pay for it. Jesus had to pay for you.



Have you accepted Him and His salvation?