



## **Those next-door neighbors**

### **False accusations, lost peace, apology and reconciliation**

*By Rose Mary C- South Carolina.*

I went to South Carolina to visit my brother Frank, who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. As I was leaving his house to buy groceries, Ann, the neighbor from next door, called me. She asked how Frank was doing and seemed upset learning he was in his last days. Suddenly, Frank's wife, Nina, came out of her house and shouted, "Rose Mary, come over here!" When I went over to her, she told me not to talk to her neighbor Ann because Ann's husband, John, had angrily and wrongly accused Frank of manipulating the management at their new community to gain an advantage in getting some work done.

The community was having a problem with the ground settling and sinking under some of the foundations. Both my brother's and the neighbor's home were affected. When the construction crew first went to correct the problem at my brother's home, John concluded that somehow Frank had manipulated the management to repair his property without regard for John's concerns. He phoned Frank and said some hurtful things, labeling him a "pushy New Yorker."

My sister-in-law, knowing that his judgment was wrong and feeling that his action was extremely insensitive at a time when Frank was suffering the trial of his last days, went next door and blasted John, telling him to never talk to them again. To add to the division, Frank's son told John to stay off his father's property.

When Nina told me all this, I felt the sadness of the loss of peace my brother and she were feeling. It also occurred to me that John and his wife, Ann, would surely feel a strong sense of guilt and sorrow after Frank passed, knowing that they lost the chance to restore their friendship.

It's written in the Scripture, "Justice will bring about peace; right will produce calm and security" (Is 32:17) and, "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Mt 7:12).

I spoke to Frank about the situation. He clearly was saddened by the loss of his friendship with John and was concerned about his wife, Nina, living next door to neighbors she was angry with.

The following day, while outside, I saw Ann at her mailbox. She looked very sad. I walked over to her and told her that I heard about the sad falling out between Frank and John. I told her I felt badly for John, as well as my brother, knowing that they were both suffering. As we spoke, the idea that perhaps John would like to write a note to Frank came to me. When I suggested that she ask John to write a note to Frank, she said she would mention it to John. I left it in God's hands.

The following day, Frank received John's note, apologizing for his harsh remarks and asking to be forgiven. He wrote that he never meant to be so judgmental but that he may have had too much wine that night. Frank told me that he had called John and thanked him. I felt at peace in my heart, knowing that my brother, on his deathbed, was able to forgive his enemy and perform an act of love.

When I asked if I could see the note, Nina said that she had thrown it out in the recycle bin. I went into the garage and recovered the note, but it was obvious that Nina was having difficulty forgiving.

Two weeks later, Frank left for heaven and, although we were all saddened, we knew he left in peace and was surrounded by love.

The first day of Frank's wake, I saw John and Ann walk in, and I was not sure how Nina would respond to their presence. So I went to greet them and escorted them to the casket. As we approached the front row where Nina was sitting, she looked over and saw John and Ann. She rose and walked over to John, thanked him for visiting and gave him a sincere hug. Unity was restored, and they now live in peace as neighbors.

— *R. M. C.*