

THE RENEWAL EXAM

By Erika Blečić

A series of traumatic losses had left me angry at God. Alone, without any means of support, and with no hope in sight, I had tried to end my life. I regained consciousness in a hospital, where I spent the next few days recovering.

It was Valentine's Day, the first without my husband, and as I sat alone in a hospital lounge, I cried the only tears left in me.

A man and a woman walked past, and then stopped. "Wait here for a minute," I heard the man say. Then he walked back and with one finger lifted my tear-stained face ... and he kissed me on the cheek.

The man was a fellow patient whom I had met the night before, when he had asked me for a cigarette. But why would this near-stranger give me a kiss? Obviously he didn't have ulterior motives since another woman, presumably his wife or girlfriend, was watching. What had compelled him to reach out to lift me from my darkness? What had I done to deserve that?

After a few minutes I began to come to my senses. *I have received a wonderful gift, the gift of hope, and I need to share it with others.* With that thought I took the first small step to climb out of the deep pit into which I had fallen.

A few days later, after being released from the hospital, I looked at all that remained of my savings—just a few coins. The last food in my cupboard was a box of polenta and a can of tomato sauce. *It looks like it's going to be polenta with tomato sauce for the next three days, so I might as well cook it all at once,* I reasoned.

I had just finished cooking and was about to sit down to eat when the doorbell rang. When I opened the door, there stood a young woman

who looked to be on the brink of starvation. Beside her was a girl of five or six and just as malnourished. The woman said that she was a refugee and couldn't find work.

She asked if I had some change I could spare, and my thoughts went to those few coins I had left. *How much good could they do her—or me?*

"Some change is all the money I have myself," I said, "so I know what it's like to be without. I just made some polenta with tomato sauce. Would you like to join me?"

The mother and daughter timidly accepted, and we ate at my kitchen table. How I wished I could have offered them an enormous steak, grilled to perfection, instead of that polenta! Then I remembered that someone had given me a chocolate bar a few days earlier, which I had tucked away for even harder times. I gave it to the little girl, and she thanked me with a hug I will never forget.

When I found out that they lived nearby, I invited them to return. I couldn't promise full-course meals, I explained, but we would share whatever I had at the moment. With a smile and a handshake, they left. I haven't seen them since.

Three days later I saw a job offer in the newspaper and applied, even though I didn't have any credentials or prior experience for that job. Only a few minutes into the interview, I was asked one question I hadn't prepared myself for. "Would you like to start tomorrow?" Before I could answer, a thought struck me like a lightning bolt. *Had those two strangers at my door been angels on a mission?*

I felt like I had not just passed a job interview, but an exam. First God had sent that man to show me that He loved and hadn't forgotten me, and then He had sent the mother and child to see if I would keep my promise to pass on that love and hope. When I did, He opened the floodgates of His blessings.

Continued...

Today Erika is happy and fulfilled in her work as a newspaper reporter, and just as happy in her "other work" of helping to spread God's love. She began by sewing clown costumes for Family International volunteers, and now sometimes goes with them to give "clown therapy" to children at a local hospital. "It fills my heart with joy to see a small child, sick and separated from family and home, be lifted above the suffering and loneliness," she says. "All it takes is someone being willing to put on a red nose and sing a song or two." And those children aren't the only ones who have felt God's love through Erika. Seniors in the retirement homes she visits appreciate her friendship, concern, and listening ear.

What everybody needs is love!

By David Brandt Berg

People are hungry for love—love they have never known before, true love, sincere love, genuine love, the truly great love of their life, the love of all loves from the Lover of all lovers who alone can satisfy that deepest yearning of every human soul for total love and complete understanding.

People's hearts are the same the world over. Their longings for love and joy and happiness and peace of mind, as well as their hunger for God and His truth, are God-created and universal. People can never be happy with a heavy heart, a troubled mind, a discouraged spirit, and an unsaved soul. The human soul can never be completely satisfied with anything but utter union with the great and loving Spirit that created it.

Do you want the key to every heart? Try love! It never fails, because God is love and it's impossible for Him to fail!

R345 GP—June 2006

Topics: God's love, love for others

Reflections © 2006 The Family International

Visit our Web site at www.thefamily.org.

Erika Blečić is an active member of the Family International in Croatia.

If you'd like more inspirational reading, subscribe to *Activated!*
Contact the address on this sheet or visit www.activated.org.