

# A Marvellous True Story of a Priest Rescued by Friends

MARVELLOUS TRUE STORY as told by Dr. Scott Hahn

This is what Scott Hahn (a converted Protestant - now a professor at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio) told us at a recent conference in Denver on Confession:

A priest was in Rome and had a scheduled audience with Pope John Paul II. The meeting was scheduled for late afternoon and having some time on his hands, he went to a nearby church to pray. There were some steep steps leading up to the church and as he climbed the steps he noticed a number of beggars sitting on the steps. This isn't unusual because there are a lot of beggars in Rome. As he passed, a man looked familiar, but he continued on into the church and prayed. While praying it dawned on him who the beggar he saw was it was a former classmate from the seminary who had been ordained a priest with him.

Shocked by this knowledge, he returned to the steps and found the fellow and said, "Are you Father Jim." "Yes", replied the beggar. "What has happened that you are in this condition now?" "None of your business so bug off and leave me alone." It was almost time, so he left and went to Vatican. As the audience progressed, the Pope's secretary gave each participant a rosary and each person was allowed to approach the Holy Father for his blessing. Most people were just blessed without speaking to the Holy Father.

When it came his turn, he said to Pope John Paul, "Holy Father, I just had a shock. I encountered a former classmate who was ordained with me, now sitting as a beggar on the steps of St. Mary's here in Rome. Will you please pray for him?" The Holy Father nodded and the priest moved on. Before he left the audience, he was approached by the Pope's secretary who gave him two tickets to have dinner with the Holy Father that night at Vatican. He told the priest to bring his friend with him.

The priest hurried back to St. Mary's and found his friend was still there. He approached him and said, "Jim, we've been invited to dine with the Pope tonight." Jim answered angrily, "Are you crazy? I'm a beggar look at me I am dirty and haven't a decent garment to wear bug off!" "Listen", said the priest. "You've got to go with me. You are my ticket to this dinner! My hotel room is across the street. I'll take you there and you can shower and shave and some of my clothes will fit you you'll be fine." He almost dragged the poor beggar to the hotel room. He got him all cleaned up and they returned to Vatican for dinner. They were ushered into a room with a long table.

The Holy Father was at the head of the table. After three courses of delicious food, the Pope's secretary approached Father Jim and asked him to step into the hall. He then left with the Secretary. Some time later, people asked, "When will they return for the dinner?" "This Pope, we never know with him," replied Pope's secretary.

After dinner, the priest asked Father Jim, "What went on there and what happened?" With tears in his eyes, Father Jim said, "Well, the secretary took me into the hall with the Pope. Holy Father said to me, 'Father Jim, will you hear my confession?' I exclaimed, 'Holy Father, I'm just a beggar!' 'So am I,' replied the Holy Father.' 'But,' I replied, 'I'm not a priest in good standing.' The Holy Father answered, 'Once a priest, always a priest.'

Then Pope John Paul II knelt down and I heard his confession. When he had received absolution, I knelt before him and asked him to hear my confession too, which he did. Then the Pope had reinstated my priestly faculties and assigned me to St. Mary's parish where my ministry will be to the beggars there," Father Jim said.