

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

Canceled

I knew, when the flight disappeared from the departure board we were in trouble.

My wife and I had just spent twenty-four hours in Fairfax, Virginia for the wedding of our nephew, and we were eager to get home. We'd booked a late flight Saturday night, around 10 P.M., so we could be back in time for me to preach at the Masses the next day, Trinity Sunday.

And there I was, standing before the departure board at Dulles International Airport. Our United Airlines flight had been delayed for twenty minutes. Then thirty minutes. And now it had vanished. It wasn't listed. At all.

Sure enough, around 10:20, they announced that the flight was cancelled, and that we should talk with someone at customer service. I looked up and down the concourse for the customer service counter. It was easy to spot: It was the one with a long and winding line of tired and unhappy passengers. Siobhain and I got at the end of the line.

I pulled out our cell phone and called the rectory and got the recording. Then I called the emergency number. Fr. Antonín picked up. I told him what had happened and that I didn't know when I'd be arriving back in New York. I probably would miss the first Mass. He told me he'd spread the word—beginning with a call to Fr. Simon, who had the 8:30 Mass the next morning. We hung up and I thought: I have just ruined Fr. Simon's Saturday night.

We crept forward. During our time in line, we heard different versions of why the flight was canceled. First, it was weather. Someone else was told it was mechanical trouble. I told my wife we should think about someplace to stay. "Maybe," she said, "we should just stay here." "Here," meaning at the airport terminal. I looked at the vinyl seats and the staff that was beginning to lower the gates over the Starbucks and the maintenance crew with their large plastic trash cans they were rolling down the concourse and then I looked at Siobhain and said, "I don't think so." I called a hotel.

We made it to the front of the counter around 11:30, and got a boarding pass for the first flight out, at 7:00 A.M.. We took the shuttle to the main terminal, and hopped a second shuttle, to the hotel, around midnight. A few minutes later, Siobhain woke me up. Incredibly, it was a little after 4 A.M. We had to get ready to get back to the airport.

Our morning flight took off on time—the first of many miracles that morning. We landed at eight, found a cab quickly, and—with luck or grace or the intercession of a heavenly winged intercessor—I pulled up outside Our Lady Queen of Martyrs at 8:25. I ran into the sacristy, as Fr. Simon was about to walk out. "Want me to do it?" I panted. "Go right ahead!" he grinned. "But take a deep breath!" I did. A few minutes later, still dizzy from the ten-hour whirlwind that had carried me to the church, I was carrying the Book of the Gospels down the aisle to begin Mass.

During my time in line at Dulles, my mind flashed to a prayer of Thomas Merton: "My Lord," he wrote, "I do not know where I am going...but I believe the desire to please you does in fact please you... and I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it..."

In my case, I knew where I was going, but I had no idea how I'd get there, or when. And that is how it is with so many things in life: the destination may be clear, but the route isn't. We are on flight paths we can't discern, hoping and praying that somehow, somehow, we will end up where we hope to be.

I think that sometimes you just have to concede that God is *everybody's* co-pilot, and that He has to keep track of a lot of air traffic—and a lot of turbulence.

But give Him a little patience, and a little trust.

One way or another, He usually gets us where we belong.

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