

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Thursday, August 19, 2005 9:36 PM
Subject: Today's Developments

Thank you all for your expressions of concern and love. Your prayers and well-wishes are greatly appreciated. I am pleased to say that I am today "marked" and ready for the radiation treatments which are to begin on Monday as planned. Tomorrow I return to the clinic to make sure that the markings are in the right place and for x-rays. Monday afternoon it is radiation, followed by chemo through my new port. (It is nice to have new parts, even if they are artificial).

There is a sort of irony that on the day classes begin (usually the most exciting day of the whole academic year) I will be undergoing treatments, while the students start their fall classes for the first time. If I were able to send any message to them it would be to study hard, have fun, and remember that Monday is the first day of their new life — a life of books, peace, and joy.

As I reflect on my own life, and those who have meant so much to me, I am reminded of Scripture when it says: "The Spirit is a friend of man." God is with me now as he has always been. He has been good to me in life; there is no real to fear that he will not be with me in death. His will be done. I just hope he has some good reason for wanting to keep me around for awhile. I am more than willing to stay. I am determined with his help and your prayers to live to see another day. I will not yield up life without a struggle, but I also can say with confidence: "Death where is your victory; Death where is your sting."

I am at the beginning of a long ascent. Keep me in your prayers.

Vale

rml

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Sunday, August 21, 2005 9:09 PM
Subject: Lord bring me down a miracle

My dearest friends.

For the past thirty years, I have offered the attached prayer at our College Convocation. I believed what I said then, and know it true tonight as I prepare for chemo and radiation tomorrow. Each of you is very special to me. Pray for me, as I will pray for you.

Salutem in Domino.
[“Greetings in the Lord”]

In honor of our graduates today, and in memory of all those who have made this day possible — both living and dead — we pause in a moment of thanksgiving and gratitude. We give special thanks to the young women and men who have given their lives so others may live in freedom.

Whether we consider natural reason or revelation, whether we turn to the Arabic texts of Alfarabi, the Hebrew texts of Moses Maimonides, or the Christian texts of Thomas Aquinas, ‘tis very clear, as Scripture says, “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom.”

But that wisdom is more than reason alone: Intellectual virtue in the absence of moral prudence is undirected, unguided, and uninspired. It is in that context, then, that we understand the words of St. John when he said:

“No one should doubt that ‘the Spirit is a Friend of Man.’”

Logos calls us to a life of peace with ourselves, to a life that knows when to probe, when to reflect and when to laugh. Logos calls us to a life of charity towards other human beings of all races and creeds. Logos allows us to recognize the stranger on the road to Emmaus so that we too can say: “*Mane nobiscum, Domine, quoniam advenperascit*” (“Lord, stay with us for the hour is getting late”).

It is in that context, then, that we pray today that we might be bold in our thoughts, moderate in our actions, moderate in our actions, and courageous in our defense of the regime, so that, in the end, we too can share in those immortal words of San Cecilia, which have been repeated every year in this ceremony for the past 30 years:

Domine Salvam Fac Republicam Et Exaudi Nos in Die Qua Invocaverimus Te. [“Lord, make safe our Republic and hear our prayer until that day when we shall be called before thee.”]

I hope the next time you hear me deliver those words at the College Commencement, that they will mean as much to you as they mean to me. As one of the women from the Women's Institute said to me when we were at the funeral of my friend, the giant geographer, John Coffman: "There is something nice to be said for tradition."

Pray for me, my friends, as I will pray for you.

Mane nobiscum, Domine, quoniam advesperascit.
["Lord, stay with us for the hour is getting late."]

rml

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Sunday, August 28, 2005 8:41 PM
Subject: Tomorrow is the beginning of Week II

My friends,

Tomorrow marks the beginning of the second week of chemo and radiation treatments. The weekend has been uneventful, although I continue to gain weight again — Mother's cooking is considerably better than the hospital's.

Each day without complications is a gift from God--as each of you is. I thank you for your continued good wishes and prayers. The doctor's are reserved, but each day I pray out: "Lord send me down a miracle." There is too much work to be done. Too many minds to be educated. Too many souls to be saved from the SMB (Society of Modern Barbarians).

We must never forget the words of Mark 11.23-25:

"Have faith in God. I tell you solemnly, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Get up and throw thyself into the sea,' with no hesitation in his heart but believing that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. I tell you therefore: everything you ask and pray for, believe that have it already, and it will be yours."

Although the technicians do not believe me, I tell you I have felt the tumor pull from its path; I have felt it burn in the fires of the radiation.

Thanks again. Onward to the end of week two.

rml

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Tuesday, August 30, 2005 6:52 PM
Subject: Day 7

Friends,

With all of your good prayers and well-wishes, I am pleased to say that day seven of the chemo and radiation treatments has passed without any noticeable negative consequences. In fact, the doctor today seemed quite perplexed that I have had no change in my eating habits (unless you call eating everything I can get my hands on a change). In the past week, I have gained three pounds back from my hospital stay. My blood count remains largely the same.

Thanks for your prayers. I am certain I will live another day to haunt the students of the University.

And on that note, I spent the early hours of today fishing. Well sort of fishing. Each semester I pick out some students more or less at random who I believe could use some good advising. I called one of them this morning just out of the blue, and I am pleased to say that he accepted my offer to meet with him. Of course, I am reminded of that day a few years ago when I was in my office advising students. One student had just left. I called out for the next student to come in. Then I heard a student say: "It is not your turn. I have been waiting three hours to meet with him." Apologizing for the delay, she said: "No problem. I have been here before." Puffing up with pride, I said: "Well, if you have been here before and have waited this long, the advice must have been good." "Oh, not really," she said. "But you are the only person I have ever met on this campus that when I tell people that I got the information from Professor Lence, they say that will be fine."

Thanks again for your prayers. But do not stop.

rml

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Thursday, September 1, 2005 7:56 PM
Subject: Tomorrow is the end of the second week

Friends,

Just a quick note tonight to say that tomorrow is the end of the second week. I am also pleased to announce that I spoke with Dr. Bharwani (the chemo doctor) and she was most pleased with my progress. Not only have I gained weight, but the liver counts had moved from dangerously high to almost normal in a single week. Your prayers and good wishes are certainly having a very positive effect. To date, thanks be to God, I have suffered no negative side effects.

Thanks for your well-wishes.

rml

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Monday, September 5, 2005 10:27 PM
Subject: Tomorrow is the beginning of the Third Week and the Opening Day at the Women's Institute

Urbi et Orbi

Tomorrow is another big day. Just fifteen more days of chemo and radiation treatments! So far, by the Grace of God and your prayers, all has gone well.

Tomorrow is also the first day of classes again--this time at the Women's Institute. My love to all of the ladies and gentlemen of the Institute. You are an inspiration to me. Thank you for your thoughts, prayers, and messages.

Speaking of messages, I have learned a lot about you--and about me. I will share some of those discoveries later on. You are a most gracious group, however. I salute you.

Gaudeamus,

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Thursday, September 8, 2005 4:55 PM
Subject: Today is "hump" day and all is well

Urbi et Orbi

To my friends and well-wishers

Salutem in Domino

Today is "hump" day--thirteen treatments down; twelve to go. Still things are good. No loss of weight, appetite, etc. Truly a gift from God. I thank you all for your prayers.

The only noticeable side effect is the sleep that I seem to need all day and night--but there are certainly worse things than sleep, as many of you can well attest.

Thanks again for all your good thoughts and wishes, and of course, your prayers.

Gaudeamus,

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Tuesday, September 20, 2005 8:08 AM
Subject: 80% down; 5 treatments to go

Urbi et Orbi,

Just a quick note this morning to say that all is still going well. I have now completed 20 of the 25 treatments, and still no negative side effects other than constant fatigue. Still, if one has to have a side effect, sleeping is the one to have.

The CT scan has now been scheduled (October 25th) to determine if the tumor has shrunk up enough to operate. There is no reason to think that it has not shrunk, given my good health, but there is always some fear. Doubt seems fully consistent with faith. I am encouraged by the example of Peter. Seeing Christ in person, Peter still could not keep awake during Christ's last days before the trial and death. And if Peter can deny Christ three times before the cock crows, there seems to be little reason to fear a little doubt. Please do not stop your prayers, but as we are so often been told: His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your caring and concern. Your enormous expressions of love have been gratefully received, by both me and my Mother. You are all in my own prayers.

Thanks again. Gaudeamus,

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Wednesday, September 21, 2005 4:55 PM
Subject: Hurricane Rita and the last three treatments

Greetings to all those staying, fleeing, and hearing about hurricane Rita,

Mom and I are joining many of our neighbors in staying put for the impending hurricane. This promises to be a real storm and our hearts and prayers go out to all those whose homes are in the lower areas of the Gulf.

Since the clinic has closed, the staff removed the chemo pouch for the weekend today. That means that I will have three additional treatments next week, before ringing the bell to signal the end of my radiation treatments. I spoke with the radiologist today (Dr. Carpenter) and in his words: "You have done very, very well. There will be no reason for you to see me again." He then told me of several cases like mine where people have gained weight during the treatments (13.5 lbs since the treatment began) and that surgery or additional chemo solved the problem--or at least greatly alleviated it. I still believe that the Lord will send me down a miracle.

Peace and love to you all. Pray for those less fortunate than ourselves.

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2005 4:35 PM
Subject: September 28, 2005--Let us Rejoice

Urbi et Orbi

Today marked the end of my chemo and radiation treatments. It is hard to believe twenty-five treatments could pass so slowly and so quickly at the same time. Augustine's notion of time is, I believe, responsible for this strange encounter with the Divine.

Twenty-five treatments and no negative side-effects. Your prayers, letters, well-wishes, cards, food, flowers, books, and prayer Masses have all had their effect. I thank all those who took time off to drive me to the clinic and all those who visited me. I thank God for His graces and for my many friends.

I have an appointment with the surgeon next week, a CT scan on October 25, and then several doctor appointments following the scan. Let us pray that the rest of my recovery goes as smoothly as this first segment.

Special prayers for Nancy Corkill, Elsa Swinbank, Stephanie and Johnny Leech, and any other persons who are ill or who have suffered a loss of loved ones since I began my treatments.

Peace and blessings to all of you.

I realize that not everyone is on my distribution list. If you know of anyone who would (or should) be added, please let me know and I will be most pleased to add them.

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Thursday, October 06, 2005 6:47 PM
Subject: latest update

Urbi et Orbi,

It has now been seven days since the chemo/radiation treatments have ended. Still the only noticeable side effect is fatigue. I spoke with the surgeon Tuesday of this week, but most of the conversation was about statistical information about pancreatic cancer, since there has been no CT-scan since the treatments began. He had spoken with the radiologist, however, who told him that I looked good and that the treatments had gone very well. Dr. Fisher (the surgeon) also noted how good I looked, but he is a cautious man — a good thing in a surgeon.

Today Jim Tyler heard from the chemotherapist who was pleased that my tumor markers have fallen some 60% from the on-set of the disease. This fact, combined with the positive reaction to the treatments, I take to be a very good sign that St. Luke's mountain is moving.

My CT-scan has been moved to October 27th, and I see the doctors on All Saints Day. As the old R & R Brew Bucket for the sick used to say: "May the Saints Preserve You."

My love to all of you. Your prayers and well wishes are not only appreciated, but are obviously working.

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Friday, October 28, 2005 6:51 PM
Subject: CT-scan completed; waiting to meet with the doctors

My dear friends,

In that there seems to be some confusion, I am sending out this e-mail about my health status. I had my latest CT-scan Thursday morning. The tumor board meets on Tuesday morning to discuss my case; and I meet with the surgeon and the oncologist on Tuesday afternoon at 4 p.m. I sincerely hope all is well. There are at least two reasons for believing it is: (1) my overall condition is positive. I continue to eat, drink and be merry. (2) my faith is unshaken. God has been good to me all my life; there is no reason to anticipate that he will abandon me now. St. Luke was right about faith and moving mountains. And, of course, one must never forget another of my favorite Scripture passages: I have seen the Lord face to face and have not died.

Peace to each and everyone of you. Please keep up your prayers for me and for all those suffering from illness of loss, including Andy Achenbaum, Ed Willems, Gerry Osborne, Elsa Swinbank, Ann Jackson, Harrell Rodgers, Nancy Corkill, Terry Hallmark, Stephanie Leech, Monnie Atkinson, and any and all others I may have omitted here because of my faltering memory glands.

Gaudeamus,

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Tuesday, November 01, 2005 7:30 PM
Subject: The Lord has sent me down a miracle

My dear friends,

Jim Tyler and I have just returned from seeing the doctors who reported the findings and recommendations of the tumor board. I am writing tonight with very good news. I am in that very small percentage of the population that the tumor has been shrunk by the chemotherapy and radiation. Dr. Fisher is now willing to proceed with the surgery in approximately two weeks. This is a marvelous turnabout. Just two weeks ago he was still skeptical of my prospects. Both he and Dr. Bharwani were elated by the good news. You can actually see that the tumor has receded on the CT-scan. Your prayers are working.

The surgery is complicated and long, but as Dr. Fisher said today: "I will always remember you as the patient who willed himself back to health." We all know that it is not me, but God who directs the affairs of men. I am eternally grateful for the good news--and for the friendship that each of you has shown to both me and my Mother.

Thanks again for your prayers and well-wishes. Please do not stop now.

Gaudeamus,

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Friday, November 11, 2005 8:21 PM
Subject: November 18, 2005

My dearest friends:

I am writing to you tonight to tell you that my surgery date has been pushed up. The operation is now scheduled for Friday, November 18, 2005. While no surgery is without potential trouble, Dr. Fisher feels comfortable enough that the tumor has receded enough to operate successfully. Dr. Carpenter, the radiologist, spoke of the tumor shrinkage of being nothing short of extraordinary. Dr. Bharwani, the oncologist, could not be more pleased.

My success is nothing short of a miracle. I am thankful to God, to my Mother, and to all of you, whose constant and repeated prayers have been an inspiration to me and to my Mother. As I have so often noted: God has been good to me in life; there is no reason to fear he will be abandon me in the face of death.

I expect a full recovery. Each of you will be invited to the grand party to celebrate the new beginning. Please remember me as I begin the ascent to good health again.

Peace to all of you, especially those who have been ill themselves. I hope you will join me in remembering those friends who also suffer affliction, including Andy Achenbaum, Ed Willems, Gerald Osborne, Harrell Rodgers, Bill Barnes, Elsa Swinbank, Ann Jackson, Nancy Corkill, Richard Martin, Mildred Espree, my cousins Danny Peressini, Carmela Hughes, and Candy Garlitz, and all others who do not immediately come to my failing memory glands.

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Monday, November 14, 2005 5:11 PM
Subject: A note concerning Ann Jackson

My friends,

I am writing today to tell you that Mrs. Ann Jackson, the beloved Mother of the Joanne, Roger, and Michael has passed away. Ann was an incredible soul, a beautiful woman, a loving Mother. But while she leaves this world a sadder place, she is now released from the pain and suffering--and is assuredly is with God in heaven. Your prayers for her are greatly appreciated.

Peace,

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2005 1:32 PM
Subject: My return home and the Whipple surgery

My dear friends,

I am pleased to say that five days after my surgery from the planned Whipple surgery I am back home. It has been three full days without any pain medication, although being operated on for a "double-hippo c-section" is not without discomfort. Dr. Fisher introduced me to his team yesterday as his new poster child for post-surgical operations.

Dr. Fisher likes me I think; I like him for sure. He is very positive about the surgery. Once he had me opened up, he discovered a number of things. One of these things Jim Tyler has already told you: he discovered a tumorous cancer on the liver. That tumor was too small to be picked up by the CT-scan two weeks earlier and was successfully removed. While they were awaiting the results of the biopsy of the tumor, Dr. Fisher said he made plans to proceed with the more radical surgery, and if not that, then, at least remove the stint the doctors had inserted in August. Neither of these things was, however, undertaken--not due to any complications of the liver or pancreas or anything related to the cancer. What Dr. Fisher discovered was something many of you already knew: When God put me together he made me a bit of a separatist. Much to his surprise, my small intestines were all on one side of my body and all the large intestines all on the other. This made even the simple task of removing the stint complicated because of the distance it would have required to stretch the small intestine across the body for reattachment. Dr. Fisher then decided not to proceed in fear of complications developing from the relocation of the bowels.

Given that I have been so successfully in my chemo treatments (including the noted shrinkage of the pancreatic tumor), Dr. Fisher believes that additional chemotherapy should have very positive results in my case. This will mean—much to the dismay of the unionists whom I have fought all my life—they will have me to contend with for a very long time.

Your continued prayers are appreciated. A Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving to all you, my friends.

Ross

23/Novem/05
Anno Domini

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall
Sent: Wednesday, December 21, 2005 9:18 AM
Subject: Christmas 2005

My dearest friends,

As difficult as it is to believe, the Holidays are already here. Mother and I leave this evening with Kelly and Orlando Sanchez for a tour of the Big Bend. We have always wanted to see the Park and now seems like a good time.

All else is well. The latest CT-scan shows no growth in the tumor since the end of chemo some three months ago. When I return I will begin another regime of chemo treatments in an effort to shrink the tumor even more. I did get a second opinion from MD Anderson and they confirmed that treatments that I have had and am going to have are the standard for pancreatic cancer. The chemo will be administered at the Kirby Glen center so I will not have to go to the medical center for my treatments—a gift in and of itself.

I am very optimistic, and the doctors are as perplexed, as they seem pleased. I attribute my good reaction to the disease to the work of God. It is in this same spirit that the 3rd century writer Plotinus noted when he called upon thinkers to "soar aloft above knowledge." Plotinus came to conclude that in spite of his Platonic teachers, God (the Holy One) transcends scientific knowledge and reason. In his quest for "to timiotaton" (what matters most), Plotinus found peace and love. It is in that same spirit that St. Augustine argued: "Hence it certainly follows that he who studies wisdom—that is the philosopher—will be happy when he begins to enjoy God." (The city of God, Bk VIII.8)

During this time of Christmas and the Holiday Season may each of you find peace in your hearts and may your days be blessed and sacred. Join me in enjoying God and beauties of life.

My Mother and I thank you for your kindness all these months. I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

Gaudeamus,

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2006
Subject: A Good Friday Message from Ross

Today is indeed Good Friday. I have now been in the ICU unit of St. Luke's for one solid month. I cannot ever repay the enormous debt I owe so many of you. You have all been so kind, so gracious beyond belief.

I am finally making progress in my recovery. I hope to be reduced to 70% oxygen by tomorrow and there is at last talk about moving me early next week.

May God bless you all richly this Easter.

All I can really say is thank you from the depths of my soul. Mane nobiscum, Domine, quoniam advesperascit. (Still with us, Lord, for the hour is getting late.) A message delivered right after the Resurrection of Christ the King.

Gaudeamus,

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Sunday, April 23, 2006
Subject: Update

Salutem in Domino,

In the sixth week of my lovely visit at St. Lukes, I have moved to colorful, delightful and spacious new digs in the PCU, rather than the more cramped ICU. The nurses are kind and gracious; the doctors -- with the exception of two or three -- could pass for the village idiot. After being awakened at 6:15 a.m. for a chest x-ray, it was encouraging to see them return at 10:15 a.m. for a chest x-ray. Also, after six weeks of having a regular temperature, you would think that they would have concluded that I don't have a fever.

I am making steady and regular progress, and really just wish to go home and rest. I have rejected my cancer physician's recommendation of going to a different cancer drug at this point in favor of finding a quicker solution, particularly given that one of the noted side effects of the different cancer drug is "shortness of breath." Once out of the hospital, I am looking forward to wearing my new t-shirt with the phrase "No S.O.B." across the front. Of course, "S.O.B." stands for "shortness of breath."

As always, your prayers and good thoughts are welcome. God bless you all.

Gaudeamus

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Sunday, April 30, 2006
Subject: Home at Last!

Friends and countrymen, Home at last! My thanks to everyone for their prayers and good wishes. I am still a long way to recovery, but I am pleased to say that in spite of the uncertainty on the part of the doctors, I am still planning on a full recovery. Needless to say, seven weeks in intensive care changes one's perspective on things in general. I am, however, happy to say that I did not catch a disease. Hospitals are among the worst places for such things.

There is so much to tell you all. You have been gracious and kind. You have gone beyond the expectations any person could ask of his friends.

Thanks again.

Ross

From: Ross Lence
To: Tom Kirkendall, et al
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2006
Subject: Update

My friends,

It has now been some time since I have written and many of you have asked individually about my progress. Some of those I have had an occasion to answer, but most have gone unanswered. Either some pressing human activity intervenes, or I just drift back to sleep.

It has now been almost six weeks since my return home, and the amount of oxygen needed goes up and down. Frankly, this is a slower recovery than any of us anticipated. The greatest disappointment comes from the pulmonary doctors, who generally have nothing to say to me--or to anyone else, as far as I can tell.

I continue to move about the house some, eating the great dishes prepared by my angel of life, Mother. I shall never forget her or you in my struggle.

I hope each of you is well.

Peace,

Ross.