

Fake ISIS Attack Spreads Widespread Panic

Today's news takes us from the momentous to the mundane.

This morning's *New York Times* reports that a fake ISIS attack in Prague, intended to protest the threat of Islam, caused widespread panic in the streets instead. The suicide attack in Turkey has now claimed 54 lives, 22 of whom were under 14 years of age. Students beginning school in Miami yesterday were coated in bug spray to prevent the Zika virus. And Speedo USA has dropped Ryan Lochte's sponsorship after the Rio scandal.

Meanwhile, the highest and longest glass-bottomed bridge in the world has just opened. It stretches 1,410 feet (nearly five football fields) over a valley that is nearly 1,000 feet deep. It will feature the world's highest bungee jump (count me out).

Closer to home, St. Dominic's Catholic Church in San Francisco has been the custodian of a fragment believed to be part of the True Cross of Jesus Christ. According to its priest, "The True Cross is a relic that goes back 2,000 years to the very cross of Christ Himself." The fragment was stolen from the church last week. A sign has been placed on the case asking for the thief to return the relic, no questions asked.

Here's what the bridge in China and the relic in San Francisco have in common: They serve as parables for the greatest privilege in life. This privilege is relevant to terrorism and disease and every human frailty.

The Chinese bridge is the highest on Earth, but it cannot compare to the bridge between you and heaven. The True Cross relic is historic, but as St. Dominic's members know, we don't need the physical cross to pray to the one who died on it.

Before Good Friday, the High Priest was the only person on Earth permitted into the presence of the Holy God, and that only on the Day of Atonement. Since our Great High Priest died for us (Heb. 4:14), we can “come with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (v. 16).

Here’s the problem: Only 31 percent of evangelicals say they set aside a substantial period of time each day to pray. One reason why is that if we do anything less than connecting consciously and intimately with God almighty in our prayers, we’re not really praying. As Shakespeare observed, “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go.”

We all have times when our prayers are more rote and ritual than heartfelt and passionate. But the needs of our day are so urgent that our prayers should be equally urgent. So let’s adopt this practice: When you see a crisis in the news, pray.

For instance, pray now for the survivors of the tragedy in Turkey, asking God to use the horrific attack to reveal His love and gospel to many. Pray for those affected by Zika and those who are at risk of being infected. Pray for Ryan Lochte and the next person whose personal failures make the news. Bring them intentionally and passionately to God. Ask Him to infuse them with His omnipotent strength and redeem all He allows.

Charles Spurgeon observed, “I know of no better thermometer to your spiritual temperature than this, the measure of the intensity of your prayer.” How warm is your soul today?