

## **The Storms of Life – by Lorelei Pepe**

It was October 6, 2016, a Thursday in Miami, Florida, and I was glued to the television set listening to the weatherman predicting another storm – in fact it was called Hurricane Matthew. They were expecting it to be a Category 4 storm which is pretty bad. It had already blasted the Bahamas, Haiti, Cuba and other islands. We weren't in the "cone" as they say, but we were told to prepare for the worst. Hurricanes are totally unpredictable, like life and that made my anxiety worse. Although I had been through a few before I always felt the tight knot in my stomach when one was approaching.

Waiting is the worst...24 hours later I had prepared the house and had gotten supplies, water, flashlights, candles, canned food and made sure I had at least 12 bottles of water in the fridge and lots of ice made. Usually power goes out first and it could be up to 4 days or weeks without it, depending on the severity of the storm. I prayed a lot at this point since due to financial difficulties I had let my homeowners insurance expire and I had no shutters on the windows. I took in all of the lawn furniture that might be tossed around in the wind and my plants. During these times it is hard being alone and I have to fight the anxiety that comes with it. I talk constantly to God and He came through on this storm once again.. The storm went up the coast of Florida to Melbourne, Cocoa Beach, Deerfield and Jacksonville --- leaving thousands of people without power. I was spared in Miami, praise the Lord!

Another near miss I thought and was thankful. It took me years to overcome the horrors of Hurricane Andrew, more than 30 years ago, which was a Category 5 storm that had left me stranded for weeks without power or supplies. I camped out in my place and took baths in the lake. The military came and gave us water and ice because of the excruciating heat and humidity in August. But time fades the bad memories of that one and I don't even like to talk about it.

But during the month of September 2017 Hurricane Irma hit Miami, the longest 12 hours of my life. It took forever to come on shore, although we had pelting winds and rain for hours. The wind squalls were incredible and you could hear the wind whistling. Again, I was watching television until we lost power and then it was my portable radio. I listened carefully to see if any tornadoes were

going to hit, as they are spawned during a lot of hurricanes. As usual, I had my “safespace” all prepared in the hallway. I had my comforter and pillow on the floor with flashlights, and water and snacks! Luckily for me one hit but it was more than 20 miles away in the Everglades. Relief!!

So I continued to pray to God as I watched the winds and water rising. Although I am not near a lake, there was so much rain it made huge pools of water as the sewers got backed up immediately. The winds were over a 100 mph and had already had knocked down my back wooden fence that just slid to the ground. Now the waters were rising as I looked out my sliding glass door and prayed to God to please don't let the waters come into my screened porch and into the house. I had just put the house up for sale and said to God, “this is all I have left, so please save it and me”! The gutters were already torn off the roof and tossed around, dented and flying in the wind! I heard the smashing of people's windows as the wind just ripped through them. I heard the clay roof tiles being torn off and tossed around into people's houses too. Much destruction was going on and I was terrified!

In the middle of the afternoon I thought I would go” nuts.” I paced the floors and felt so anxious I could hardly breathe. I finally told myself to “get a grip” and sit down and pray. So, I sat in the recliner facing the sliding glass doors and looked out, as I had no shutters. In the middle of this crazy storm, I saw a tiny baby bird fly in through my ripped porch screen and huddle on ground. He was seeking refuge, shaking and fluttering his wings but not flying. I watched him and somehow felt comforted. He and I were both alone but I felt like it was a sign from God.\* He knew my fear and just at that moment the huge swirling waters receded and stopped just short of my backyard...a miracle I thought.

By 6 PM it was almost over. It was moving on and I could breathe a sigh of relief. It was then I decided I would fix up the house as quickly as I could and sell it “AS IS”.... A month later it sold and I moved to New Jersey... No more hurricanes for me... Praise the Lord!! Jesus was with me in that storm and He calmed the waters and me. Even when I was panicking and didn't feel His presence He was there. He rescued me and is my Deliverer...and will always be.

**\*Psalm 73:26 “My flesh and my heart fail; but GOD is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”.**

**\*Psalm 34:4 “I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” (King James Version)**