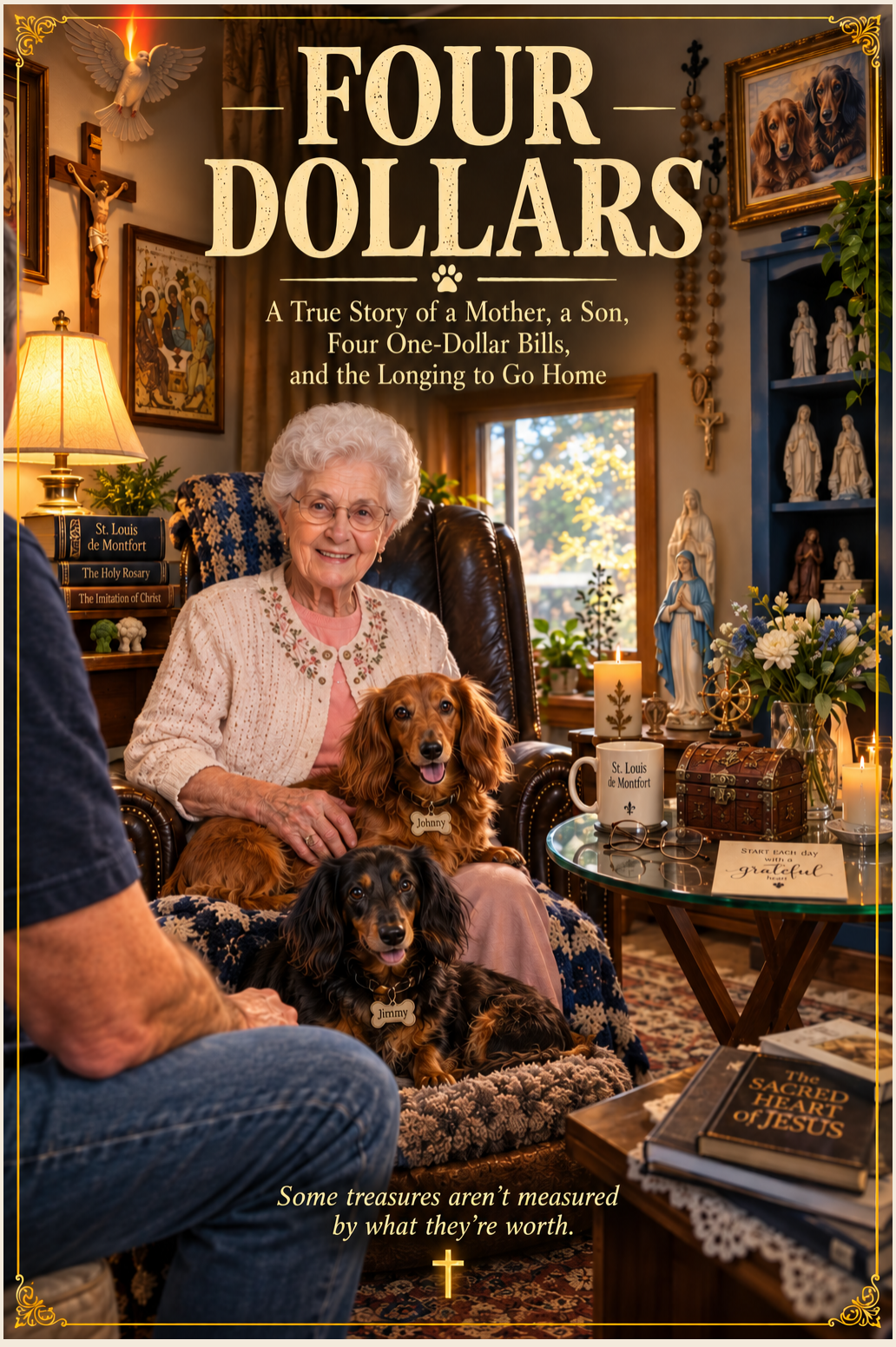

FOUR DOLLARS
A True Story of a Mother, a Son, Four One-Dollar Bills, and the Longing to Go Home
St. Louis de Montfort
The Holy Rosary
The Imitation of Christ
Johnny
Jimmy
St. Louis de Montfort
START EACH day with a grateful heart
The SACRED HEART of JESUS
Some treasures aren't measured by what they're worth.

Big Cauliflower was trying to destroy my broccoli empire.

At least that’s what I was discussing with ChatGPT.

Apparently Big Cauliflower had sensed weakness and decided this was the perfect opportunity to strike.

I know.

To someone outside the world of cruciferous vegetables, this probably sounds strange.

But the rivalry between broccoli and cauliflower is older than Pepsi versus Coke, USA versus the Soviet Union, or Walmart versus Kmart—

and almost as old as St. Michael versus Lucifer.

Big Cauliflower—as I like to call it—is powerful.

Big Oil.

Big Pharma.

Big Cauliflower.

You underestimate them at your own peril.

Somewhere in the middle of all this nonsense, I learned something.

Broccoli and cauliflower are both cruciferous vegetables—

cousins in a family feud sort of way.

**Cruciferous.**

From the Latin.

**Cross-bearing.**

Now that got my attention.

My next doctor’s appointment is September 15.

Which happens to be the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

It also happens to be the thirty-third anniversary of my consecration to Jesus through Mary according to St. Louis de Montfort.

Thirty-three years.

The same number of years Catholic tradition holds that Jesus lived.

I like looking for God’s fingerprints in my life.

Not as predictions of what God is going to do next.

Just little reminders that He is present.

That He has been present.

That He is keeping an eye on things.

And apparently sometimes I find them on cauliflower.

**Cross-bearing.**

That word took my thinking somewhere else.

St. Louis de Montfort.

The Cross stood at the heart of his spirituality. To belong completely to Jesus through Mary also meant learning to follow Him beneath the Cross.

And that took me to St. Michael Church in Fryburg.

Above the altar is the Crucifix.

Lately I cannot take my eyes off that scene at Calvary.

Jesus on the Cross.

His mother.

The beloved disciple, the Apostle John.

Mary Magdalene.

Jesus looks down at His mother and John.

“Mulier, ecce filius tuus.”

Woman, behold your son.

Then to John:

“Ecce mater tua.”

Behold your mother.

Mother.

Son.

That scene beneath the Cross took me to my mother.

To Mom.

And to one word.

**Home.**



“I want to go home.”

For the last seven years of Mom’s life, she lived with dementia.

A couple of years before she died, Mom went through a short, strange period when she became terribly confused and disoriented.

And she wanted to go home.

Not the house she was sitting in.

**Home.**

To her mom and dad.

Then, almost as mysteriously as it appeared, it seemed to resolve itself.

The dementia remained.

But Home went away.

For a while.

Then, in early 2023, Mom had a medical episode.

After that, her dementia didn’t seem to take another step.

It stepped off a cliff.

And Home came back.

This time it stayed.

For nearly a year, Mom asked me to take her Home.

Morning, maybe.

Afternoon, maybe.

If not, evening—definitely.

“I want to go home.”

There didn’t have to be a reason.

We could be having a good day.

Then those words.

And once Home got hold of the day, it could be very hard to get it back.

I began to dread hearing those words.

The hardest part was that Mom was already home.

She simply didn’t recognize it anymore—

at least not for that part of the day.

The Home she wanted was somewhere else.

She wanted her mother.

She wanted her father.

Both had died when Mom was young.

They had been gone for most of her life.

Yet there they were.

Dementia could make the familiar unfamiliar.

But the love she had for her mom and dad was still there.

And she wanted to go Home to them.

So we tried everything.

Fold some towels.

Let’s eat.

Look at the pups—her babies, Jimmy and Johnny.

Want to watch television?

Want to go for a ride?

Pictures.

Music.

Puzzles.

Her swing.

Food.

Trips.

Family.

Friends.

Hobbies she had lived and loved.

We found a television channel called Memory Lane, created especially for people with dementia.

Memory Lane even produced a movie for Mom.

Photographs.

Film.

Music.

Food.

Trips.

Her hobbies.

Her family and friends.

Pieces of her own life brought back to her.

Sometimes something worked.

For a while.

Then Mom would tire of it.

**Home.**

Car rides could work especially well.

For a while.

But every car ride eventually had to end.

We would pull back into the driveway.

Mom would look around.

She knew.

We had brought her right back to the place she didn’t believe was home.

Sometimes she wouldn’t get out of the car.

Sometimes she wouldn’t eat.

Sometimes she wouldn’t go to bed.

Or stay in bed.

Sometimes she wanted another family member.

Come get me.

Help me leave.

Take me home.

Eventually she caught on to us.

She knew we were trying to distract her.

There was still plenty of Mom in there.

Enough to know when her family was trying to pull a fast one.

And right back we'd go.

"I want to go home."

I would tell her:

"Mom, I can take you for a car ride, but I can't take you home. Only God can."

Sometimes things got nasty.

Sometimes Mom got nasty.

Sometimes I did too.

I knew it was the dementia.

But knowing something and living it every day are two very different things.

The better me did not always win out.

There were arguments.

Tears.

Discouragement.

I loved Mom.

I wanted to make her happy.

I tried.

And sometimes I failed.

The thing she wanted most was the one thing I could not give her.

**Home.**

Then one day Mom figured out the problem.

Or at least I think she did.

She motioned with her finger for me to come closer, as if she had a secret.

She had something.

Money.

Four one-dollar bills she had found in her purse.

It was all she had.

She offered the four dollars to me if I would take her home.

And if it wasn’t enough, maybe her mom and dad could give me some more when we got there.

I cried.

There was something almost childlike in her reasoning.

My son won’t take me home.

Maybe it costs money.

I have four dollars.

I’ll give him everything I have.

If it isn’t enough, Mom and Dad can give him more when we get there.

Problem solved.

At least in Mom’s mind.

Except there was no address.

No road I could drive.

No destination I could put into the GPS.

I couldn’t take Mom Home.

Only God could.

I kept those four dollars.

The exact four bills.

They’re still in a little treasure chest in my prayer room.

**Four dollars.**

To anyone else, practically nothing.

To me, priceless.



Those four dollars remind me of another woman.

The widow Jesus watched at the treasury.

Others gave much more.

She gave two small coins.

The number isn’t the connection.

Mom had four bills.

The widow had two coins.

Everything is the connection.

The widow gave everything she had.

So did Mom.

Mom wasn’t trying to make a biblical statement.

She wasn’t making an offering.

She wasn’t teaching her son anything.

She wanted to go Home.

And she put everything she had into the hands of someone she trusted to take her there.

There’s another Gospel image.

Treasure.

The treasure hidden in a field.

The pearl worth everything.

And here in my prayer room sits a little treasure chest containing four one-dollar bills.

Worth four dollars.

Priceless.



After Mom died, I wrote the lyrics to Pray for Me, Mom.

*“I tried my best, but I know I failed,*
*Broken promises, my heart still aches.*
*Lonely nights, I cried out loud,*
*Begging God to lift this cloud.”*

I meant them.

And there was that word again.

**Home.**

*“Heaven’s light will guide you home,*
*Where the angels sing and no more you’ll roam.*
*Pray for me when you see His face,*
*So one day I’ll find you in that holy place.”*

For nearly a year Mom had asked me to take her Home.

I couldn’t.

Now I was praying that God had.

Then cancer came into my life.

The rewritten song became Whisper My Name.

*“Oh, Mom, I miss you every day,*
*But heaven’s light will lead me home.*
*I know you’re walking streets of gold,*
*And I’ll be there when God says, ‘Come.’”*

Home again.

But reversed.

For nearly a year:

Mom asking her son.

Take me Home.

Now the son was thinking about his own journey Home.

And asking something of his mother.

*“I pray you see the Savior’s face,*
*And hear the angels sing.*
*And when you kneel before His throne,*
*Please whisper my name to the King.”*

Mom, pray for me.

Whisper my name to the King.



And somehow that brings me back to where all this thinking began.

**Cruciferous.**

**Cross-bearing.**

The Cross.

De Montfort.

Our Lady of Sorrows.

Calvary.

Jesus.

His mother.

John.

Mary Magdalene.

“Mulier, ecce filius tuus.”

“Ecce mater tua.”

Mother and son.

And Mom.

I don’t look at these connections as predictions.

To me, they are God’s fingerprints.

Reminders that He is here.

That He has been here all along.

A ridiculous conversation about cauliflower led to the Cross.

The Cross led to Mary and John.

Mary and John led to Mom.

Mom led to Home.

And Home led back to four dollars in a little treasure chest.

Mom didn’t know the road Home.

She couldn’t explain where it was.

She had four dollars.

But Heaven cannot be bought.

It has already been purchased for us—

at the Cross.

Mom had someone she trusted.

So she gave him everything she had.

For nearly a year I told her:

“Mom, I can’t take you Home.

Only God can.”

Four one-dollar bills remain in a little treasure chest in my prayer room.

**Four dollars.**

**Everything she had.**

## To Him be the honor and the glory.

## The End



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