

With Al Kresta, the word “friend” falls short when speaking of our forty+ year association. Soldiers in the trenches are not just friends, they are comrades— fathers raising children together under the Lordship of Christ are not just friends, they are brothers. And so it was with Janet and I in our long and rich relationship with Al and Sally Kresta. Al was a loyal and devoted companion who would drop everything to listen, share and encourage. He was always honest. Janet and I have lost a dear friend and he will be profoundly missed.

My wife, Janet and I first met Al Kresta and his wife Sally in the fall of 1983. We had just returned from Switzerland after studying a year with Dr. Francis Schaeffer, who was a favorite theologian of both Al and I. Within a week of our return we attended a Christian theater — I saw Dr. Schaeffer on the stage. In my amazement I looked twice and realized it was an actor— Al Kresta was dramatically presenting Schaeffer’s theology on Genesis with all the proper dress and gestures, facial expressions and theological astuteness. Our families struck up a friendship that lasted over 40 years.

Al and Sally’s theology was not merely theoretical. I remember all the Sunday afternoons we spent together. He was always inspiring, always deeply passionate about the Faith and his unreserved commitment to Christ and the Scriptures. His later motto on the air always applied, “Talking about the things that matter most!”

We spent years homeschooling and raising our families together. Though quick to joke around and have fun, our discussions would quickly move toward theology and practice of the Lordship of Christ in our every moment. We enjoyed his family’s musical talent. We will never forget their rendition of an oldie that they sang “Dogs in the night, dogs in the night” that left us all howling with laughter (and still does).

The depth of his mind and memory was unmatched— he could discuss any topic with reasoned clarity which is why his radio shows were always so loved and important. Everything he said and did was Christ-centered. I remember in the early 1980's, when our first children were in diapers, as Evangelical Protestants we decided together to do something radical. We embarked on a very countercultural lifestyle with the goal of raising our families and living every day as though Christianity was really true, to practice the Lordship of Christ in every aspect and moment of our lives. All these years later we now combined have 41 believing grandchildren. Two months ago we had dinner together and recalled our earlier resolve. The four of us rejoiced and thanked God that our plan had worked!

After years of weekend gatherings as families, I remember the Sunday in 1992 when, without any warning, Al Kresta dropped an unexpected bomb which I was not prepared for. He told Janet and I that he and Sally had decided to return to the Catholic Church. My first comment was, "Al, that is a stupidest thing I've ever heard. You are way too smart to be a Catholic!"

Over the months we wrestled with their decision and due in great part to Al's tremendous influence, a year later Janet and I were received into the Catholic Church with Al and Sally as our sponsors. I never stopped thanking him, often with tears in my eyes, telling him we were eternally grateful. Our conversion story *Crossing the Tiber* begins with this Dedication,

To Al and Sally Kresta, who with great love and patience helped us find our way through the parched desert to a magnificent oasis. With their courage, excitement, and example they gently led the way home to the Catholic Church.

Twenty years ago Al lost his left leg due to a deadly bacteria. We remember visits to the hospital and hearing the terrible prognosis. I remember thinking, "Today I am losing my friend." But Christians around the world rallied in prayer and like the crippled man lowered through the roof to Jesus below, we all brought him into the presence of the Lord and he was healed. From then on he was limited to a wheelchair but at least he was alive and back to his quick-witted self.

As Janet and I sat with him and his family less the 24 hours before he went home to his Lord, I could not get this verse out of my mind as I envisioned him tossing the wheelchair aside,

"And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God." (Acts 3:8)

One of my most profound memories is when Al and Sally joined us on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I'll never forget the images seared in my mind. At the Holy Sepulchre, with great difficulty and determination Al crawled out of his wheelchair and struggled up the steep steps to the top of Calvary. For over an hour he and Sally sat entranced, staring at the place where Jesus had shed his blood making it possible for Al to stand before God's throne today. Al said that was one of the most important moments in his life.

Our lives, and the lives of innumerable others, have been deeply effected by the life and spirituality of our dear friend, brother and comrade. God rest his soul. Al, pray for us!