A very present help

*Psalm 46:1-3 - God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.*

If they stop to think about it, the first verse of Psalm 46 should have special meaning for Jan and John Pascoe. Let me explain.

When 65-year-old Jan and her 70-year-old husband, John, went to bed in their mountain home overlooking Santa Rosa, California, nothing was amiss. Everything they had heard about the wildfires said the blaze was 11 miles away. A call from their concerned daughter had them agree: tomorrow morning they would consider evacuation.

When they woke up at midnight there was a bright red glow all around them.

They made their break for an escape, but found the road was impassable. They had to turn around. Back at their home they evaluated all possibilities. The only real chance for survival they saw was their neighbor's unheated swimming pool. Laboriously they made it to the side of the pool.

With burning ash and embers all around them, Jan wanted to jump in right away. John said, "Wait."

When the neighbor's house caught fire, it got hot; when the trees around the pool lit up, it was unbearable. Finally, the railroad ties which served as steps to the pool ignited. Together Jan and John went into the murky water. And there they stayed for the next six hours.

They heard explosions; they watched the neighbor's house burn. It all seemed to last forever.

In the morning John and Jan got out of the pool. Their clothes had blown away; their hair was blackened by soot; their house with a lifetime's worth of possessions was gone. Jan's cell phone, which had been set down at poolside, had melted -- but they were alive.

That murky, mucky pool had been their only refuge. That heaven-sent body of brackish water had been a very present help in time of trouble. It would not have been their first choice; it would not have made their list, but it served and saved the lives of Jan and John.

Now the reason I have gone to such lengths to tell you their story is simple. This world is a sinful place, and wildfires can sweep down upon us when we are not expecting them. It is then that we need to remember that the Lord who gave His Son to rescue us from the world's arch-enemies has not forgotten you. He, Himself, may be your refuge and strength.

Or He may send a neighbor's cold, dirty pool to do the job. Either way, He who loves you so completely can be counted on to be there. And because He is there, you need not fear, even though the earth gives way, even though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, even though the ocean's waters roar and foam, even though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

Even then, you need not fear. The Lord is your refuge and strength.

**THE PRAYER**: Dear Lord, grant that we may, especially at the most difficult times of life, trust in Your love. Send the Holy Spirit to quiet our minds and hearts and turn our eyes to the living Savior who promised to be with us always. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.