

**32963 article by Rev. Drs. Casey and Robert Baggott  
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***At Wits' End?***

Not long ago we ran across the curious tale of the ship, *Pelicano*. As author Max Lucado tells it, from 1986 to 1988 the *Pelicano* sailed the seas in search of a port, but no one allowed her to dock. Why? The problem lay in the fact that her cargo was fifteen thousand tons of trash. This was the trash which had accumulated in the summer of 1986, when Philadelphia's municipal workers went on strike. The trash piled higher and higher, and all domestic sites refused it. So it was burned and placed in the belly of the *Pelicano*. Though the ship's owners thought they could unload their cargo somewhere, they were turned away from every port. Finally, having exhausted all options, the owners of the *Pelicano* were at wits' end. They simply sunk the ship in the sea.

Now, we may never be ship owners with such undesirable cargo, but many of us probably have experienced the feeling of being overloaded, bogged down, overwhelmed, and encumbered by a mess not even of our own making. We may even feel we have been going from port to port, seeking help to get rid of the mess, but no one is willing or able to relieve us of it. Like the owners of the *Pelicano*, we may find ourselves at wit's end, and fear the only solution is to go down with the cargo of concerns we carry.

Well, before we sink under the stress of the situation, we might consider some of the timeless insights Rev. Raymond Holcomb offers. His advice is deceptively simple, but we think, incredibly wise. He suggests these three faithful remedies to apply in the face of paralyzing circumstances.

First, when you find yourself at wits' end with nowhere else to turn, get back to meaningful work. Life was not created by God to be stagnant. When we humans set to work, every fiber in us, mental, spiritual and physical, stretches, strengthens and grows. But let us become idle, and we begin to decline. A dependable antidote to despair is purposeful activity.

Secondly, when we are wits' end and don't know what to do for ourselves, we can get busy doing something for someone else. The great psychiatrist, Alfred Adler, used to tell his depressed patients that in a short two weeks they might be cured, not by medication, not by therapy, not by any other active intervention on their behalf, but by thinking every day of some way to help someone else. We may feel we have little to offer others, and yet a tiny gift of hope, love, or friendship could make all the difference to someone else. And when we effect such a change for someone's life, our lives are blessed, too.

Finally, when we reach our wits' end, we can embrace faith more fully. True, religious devotion is often called into question in difficult times. But our belief is the clearest way back from wits' end. Or as one patient and trusting believer put it: "If your knees knock, kneel on them!" Remember, even when we think we are at wits' end, no problem of ours is beyond the wisdom and the power and the love of the God. So don't go down with the ship... get to work, help someone else, and trust in the God you know and love to see you through.