

Dec. 4, 2016

## 'The Pilgrims vs. the zombies from outer space'

For as long as I can remember, the celebration of Thanksgiving, while being a wonderful reminder to be thankful for all we have, has also caused me to draw to mind my ancestor, William Bradford, the second governor of the Plymouth colonies.

I'm only one generation away from having had the name Bradford. If not for that one generation, I would be called David Bradford, which, as you know, is the name of another historical great, the eldest son on the 70s television hit series, "Eight is Enough".

Edward Winslow, another passenger on board the Mayflower, became the third governor of the Plymouth colonies, and was a good friend of Bradford (William, not David from "Eight is Enough").

Although it's not attributed, there's a good chance that Winslow was instrumental in helping Bradford pen his book, "Of Plymouth Plantation", highlighting the journey from England and the early days of life in Plymouth. (*This will come up later on the exam.*)

We see proof of their collaboration on this first book in the later publishing of a second book, "The Pilgrims vs. the Zombies from Outer Space," by Bradford and Winslow (1637; Plymouth Rock Press; 436 pp, ISBN 1).

I happen to have one of the few copies still in existence, passed down through generations. In chapter six we read: "Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safely to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven. Then, a bunch of zombies appeared--the origins of which they knew not--and the pilgrims were vexed like they'd never been vexed before.

"The native occupants of the new world then delivered them from all the perils and miseries of the zombies, shooting their arrows and shouting at the zombies to 'git', to which the zombies replied, 'Arrrrggggggg.'

"And then Pastor Carver didst say unto the Lord, 'Yea, let them which have been saved, thank Thee and Thy native children for having hath delivered us from the hand of the oppressor, i.e., the zombies. It was really awesome, and we appreciate it."

Bradford and Winslow collaborated on one more book, "Entertaining Friends on a Budget," in which they share their favorite recipes.

The two eventually disappear into history as their family trees branch off into different directions. We do know that Winslow's family eventually intersected with the Native American population in direct line with Delaware Chief Buckongahelas, who advised both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

And here we step ahead several hundred years to the aforementioned TV show:

The actor who played David Bradford on "Eight is Enough" was named Grant Goodeve. We know that Goodeve didn't always play David Bradford. The man who played the character in the pilot episode of "Eight is Enough" was a little known actor by the name of Mark Hamill, later to play Luke Skywalker in "Star Wars". And if you think that's amazing, just wait!

In 1977, while I was seeing "Star Wars" at a movie theater in Colorado, a direct descendent of Edward Winslow was seeing "Star Wars" in a Houston, Tex. theater.

Her name was Charlene.

Like me, she was a writer, and, like me, was a strong Catholic. *We!!!!*, perhaps not so much like me. My Catholicism took a little fine tuning between my young adulthood and my adult adulthood.

Several years later, she moved to Denver. In a surprising reflection of her 17th Century ancestor's journey, "Denver" is Greek for "The New World." Or not. I really have no idea.

I had also just moved to Denver. We met, fell in love, and eventually married. We had a dog named "Sarah" (it wasn't ours; we adopted), and one day found ourselves moving to another new world, Kansas,

where Charlene would write a book about her Native American ancestry, including her English ancestor, a man named Edward Winslow.

Meanwhile, I would pen a book called "Spearville vs. the Aliens," in which my ancestor, William Bradford, is never once mentioned.

But (this is the amazing part) the plot would revolve around outer-space aliens, which were also a part of "Star Wars", which starred Mark Hamill, who played David Bradford, who had the same surname as my ancestor. (Please take a moment to digest this truly astounding fact.)

But why am I writing about this in a diocesan newspaper? What does all this have to do with our Catholic faith? And why haven't I been fired by now?

1) When I prayed before starting this column, God only said one thing. He said, "Write about anything but politics. Seriously, *anything!* I'm so [darn] sick of politics! Politics are poison for the soul!"

And 2) Life is a grand puzzle. Regardless of how the pieces are strewn about over time and distance, we need only be patient and our loving Father in Heaven will put the pieces of our lives together! It's amazing how the pieces can be in complete chaos one moment, and line up so well the next.

Maybe you're still waiting. Maybe you've been waiting a long time. Be patient! You too will see God's hand at work in your life! If he can bring the descendants of two 400 year old pals together, then be assured that there is no puzzle He can't piece together.

*The Force (of God) is with you, always!*