

My Walk With God

Freedom



Ch XII

Home at last. This Thanksgiving was, somewhat of a celebration of homecoming, but it was tinged with sadness over my mother-in-law's news of her cancer diagnosis. God had taken her husband just 18 months before and now, her time was coming. The cancer was seen as potentially terminal by her doctors, but she was clinging to life. It was painful to see that she was unsure of her situation concerning her place in the afterlife. Organic foods and vitamin supplements were, to her, her only hope, that is, to extend her life here on earth. This consumed her existence, along with her concern for her family, after her death. It appeared that she saw, no comfort in prayer but, still, she sought our advice when any spiritual question might arise in the news or the family.

We settled back into our routine at St. Catherine Laboure Parish in San Diego. Many of our old friends were still active in the parish. Mark was busy with the high school teenagers, and invited me to help out. Glenna became busy caring for her mother, so she had not returned to the church religious education program. I had found that freedom, in navy retirement was not all that it was cracked up to be. With my income cut in half and with no more subsidies for housing from the military, I needed to find a job. Don't get me wrong, I had not given up the freedom to do God's will. Just how I might do that, was the question. Job hunting was an enlightening experience. God always has an open door into new adventures, it's just up to us to take the step and find them. I wasn't good at that. I suppose that I tried to force the opportunities that I wanted, to appear before me, so that I might just seize them. Preparing a resume was extremely difficult for me, because I was not good at embellishing my qualifications. It seemed a little dishonest to me. The economy was floundering a bit in 1976 and I felt that I wanted to pursue another career path, away from the electronics path that I had in the navy.

Every time that I had interviewed in the electronics field, I didn't meet the experience or affirmative action requirements.

After about 4 months, Glenna and I decided to start all over again. We sold our house and moved to the small town of Ramona, in the hills above San Diego. I had finally acquired a minimum wage job at a country club there. We settled into our new home and our new church parish of “The



Immaculate Heart of Mary.” It was a small parish with some of the families of the original Spanish Settlers of the area. We were very much in the country, but close enough to San Diego to make a visit to my mother-in-law's, a regular occasion. Our pastor was quite elderly and had been a professor at San Diego University prior to this assignment at The Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, proceeding his retirement. Glenna, again

volunteered in their religious education program and was very much at home there. I worked overnight at the country club, getting things in order for the next day, as the night janitor. This gave me some time to reflect on my life with God in prayer, for I was alone for most of the night.

The church was a small adobe and stucco structure, holding about 100 people at a time. The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph took their place on the left and right of the altar, in the front of the church. The Stations of the Cross, in the Spanish style, lined the walls between rustic stained glass windows. A small electric organ was at the rear of the church, with no organist except on special occasions. Father, had a calling for teaching and now after his time at the San Diego University, he was recalling his passion for teaching. He had been presenting a series of adult instruction classes on the patroness of our parish. One evening someone asked for clarification on the doctrine of The Immaculate Conception, the Virgin Birth and, infant Baptism. His response started with infant Baptism, and how the Church looks at newborn babies who do not survive long enough to have the opportunity for Baptism. This, he explained, was in God's Providence and we look to the proposition of Baptism of Desire, as one option to answer this question. God does not hold innocent newborn children guilty, but He does hold parents guilty for refusing Baptism, when it is offered, when they knowingly reject the salvation of Jesus. That looked

like a reasonable explanation. Next, he tackled the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth of Jesus.



We were approaching critical and mysterious topics. I had always looked at the Immaculate Conception of Mary as God's grace imparted upon Mary at her conception, thereby, insulating her from Original Sin. God in His infinite wisdom in eternity, is always aware of the decisions we make, and will make, in our lifetime, within the bounds of our free will. He knew that Mary would say yes before she was conceived, and therefore, it was time and, He knew that the world was ready for His Son. He provided that, from her conception in the womb of St. Ann, His mother would be always free from sin. We know this is true because Gabriel addressed her as Full Of Grace. If anything is full, there is no room for anything else. To be full of grace, leaves no room for sin in one's soul; hence The Immaculate Conception. Fathers explanation strongly supported all that I had learned and believed.

In the Old Testament, when the Arc Of The Covenant was stolen by the Philistines, and then returned to Israel, while it was in procession during the return, it started to tip and someone reached out to steady it. That person was struck dead. If a ritually impure person could be struck dead for touching the container of the presence of God, How much more important need be, the woman who carries God himself, within her, to be completely pure and free from sin.

The Virgin Birth of Jesus, on the other hand, was presented by Father with a little more difficulty. The question concerned the 'Dogma', that Mary was Ever Virgin, that is, a virgin before conception, a virgin after conception, and a virgin after the birth of Jesus. She remained a virgin throughout her life on earth, until her Assumption. The questioner disputed the possibility of her virginity after birth. He believed that, the process of giving birth would have destroyed her virginity. I never worried about such things. If God wanted to do something, it could be accomplished. No matter what. Father's explanation seemed to me, to ignore the fact that Jesus was a man like us, in EVERYTHING except sin. He came into the world through a woman, like we all did. Father hinted that Mary, at the time of the birth of Jesus was 9 months pregnant, then in

a moment, Jesus appeared beside her and she was no longer pregnant. His contention was that due to her Immaculate Conception, she could not suffer the pains of child birth. I felt that she could give birth without pain. If God could travel from her womb to her side without going through the birth process, He could also travel through the birth process without pain and without physical disruption. I figured that Father had not thought the answer through, but, the next Sunday, he devoted his homily at Mass to that particular position where Jesus just appeared beside her, outside her womb, and that in order to preserve her virginity, Mary did not give birth in the natural way. Whether these particular things are important or not, I became confused, but decided that what was important, was Mary's Immaculate Conception and her virginity, no matter how it was achieved.

Now that our family was settled in Ramona, Glenna and I decided to reapply for adoption again with California Child Social Services. With my time spent in prayer during my lonely night shifts at the country club, I felt that, with Glenna's concurrence, it was time to ask God for another child in our family. We proceeded with all the paperwork and two meetings with case workers for the Northern San Diego County area. Everything was going well and we got our hopes up that we might have a child within a year. Then came the letter from California Child Social Services. We were not considered by them to be satisfactory adoptive parents. Their decision was based on our first interview before our move to Australia. We described to them, the attitude of the original case worker considering our position on birth control, and asked if they would reconsider that case workers comments. It was to no avail; even though Glenna's first pregnancy was not without difficulty. It began with difficulty achieving a pregnancy in the first place. Then when our daughter was born, achieving a second pregnancy was also difficult. Finally after 4 years, we were successful, but the pregnancy terminated with a miscarriage in the 4th month. After that there were more difficulties and surgery in Perth, while we were in Western Australia, and we never achieved conception again. Adoption was out of reach for us in California.

A sadness came over us as we prayed to God for consolation. It was at this time that we received a phone call from friends that we met while we were in Australia. They knew of Glenna's desire for children and her difficulties in becoming pregnant. They said that they knew of a woman who was having a baby within the next 6 months, and would not be able to take care of it. Would we be interested in adopting this baby, even though

the child would have indian blood? We looked at this news as an answer from God, to our prayer. We knew that God did not cause events to take place, within this girls life, in order to provide a child for us. He does



however, allow for our free will to enable us to seek out situations that result in good, or difficulty. We answered with a resounding yes.

Our new daughter arrived in the first week of December. We rushed to Eugene Oregon to bring our new adoptive daughter home. Prior to her arrival, we had

contacted a lawyer concerning private adoptions, and to our good fortune, the lawyer we found was suggested to us, and had just completed a private adoption for his own family. God had truly given us His grace and the entire process was an answer to prayer. Now, even though this was a private adoption, the state required us to submit to their investigations by a Department of Social Services Case Worker for the adoption to be legal in California. The process took 6 months from birth. After our original interview with our lawyer before the birth of our new daughter, the process went very smoothly, even though we approached it with great anxiety. In January, we received a letter from the Dept. of Social Services, accusing us of trafficking in children for profit. The doctor who delivered our daughter in Eugene was dis-satisfied with his fee for services from the Welfare Dept. in Oregon, and filed a lawsuit in California for payment from us. In turn the state of California had accused us of buying a child. This was overly distressing to us and I contacted our lawyer to find out how I should proceed. His opinion was that the state did not like private adoptions and they were trying every trick to remove our new daughter from us. He took all of our records and told us not to worry, he would solve the problem. With God's help, he did.

During this time, we had been making arrangements for Baptism. We had a new pastor at church, who was a very prayerful man. His previous assignment in the Diocese of San Diego was, during a sabbatical, with a local indian community in the mountainous eastern part of San Diego County, where he had a great love for the local people, and longed to return there. He had explained that in an emergency he would Baptize our new daughter, but, the normal rule was that the child's legal adoption must be completed

prior to the adoptive parents seeking Baptism. Finally, when 6 months had passed, we petitioned the court in San Diego to complete the adoption. Now we felt a little more secure and proceeded with Baptism for Jessica. It was exceptional. When Father finished the Baptism at Mass, he presented Jessica to God at the Tabernacle, and she reached out her hand as if to seek Jesus presence in the Tabernacle.

Our older daughter had turned 12 years old during the past summer and she was as excited about Jessica's arrival and her Baptism as we were. Our friends who originally contacted us about the possible adoption were her God Parents and came to San Diego for the Baptism. Jeanine, our 1st daughter had shown some talent and ability with her guitar and piano lessons, and provided accompaniment at the Mass. She learned and performed a special selection of "Let Them Come To The Water", for Jessica's Baptism.

It was almost 4 months hence, that my mother-in-law's time came for her departure from this life. Needless to say that it was a very sad time. Glenna's sisters also had a difficult time reconciling why. My mother-in-law, I'll call her Tiny was not yet even 60 years old and her youngest daughter had not yet finished high school. Just 10 months earlier, Jessica came into our lives and Tiny became quite attached to her. Then Glenna's next oldest sister died from a long illness with cancer. I think that took a heavy toll on Tiny. This time of change had to be left, with prayer, completely in God's hands.

When Glenna's sister died, her memorial was in a Mormon ceremony. She had gone to the Mormon Church after marrying into that faith. I was taken back at some of the expressed beliefs of those in that congregation. They referred to her as an Angel on earth. At first it sounded nice but then I realized, that was their literal belief. In their eyes, she was the embodiment of an angelic being, sent to earth to enhance their church. It was then that I became interested in what Mormons actually believed.

Prior to our time in Australia, the US Supreme Court, had found in favor of the human abortion principles in "Roe vs Wade". This finding, even though astounding at the time, seemed not to change everyday life in the country. Jeanine had been attending a new Catholic School in Poway, Calif. since we moved to Ramona. St Michael The Archangel parish and school was about 18 miles from our home at the bottom of the mountain valley where Ramona was located. We had a notification from the school about a meeting in the parish concerning the status of the Roe vs. Wade

Supreme Court ruling. The Federal Government was now considering financially supporting abortion for anyone who claimed a need. In the local Poway area, the Baptist, Pentecostal and Catholic churches were considering methods by which we might stop this support. We held a meeting one night in the parish hall and invited the Mormon community, that was about ¼ mile down the road and across the street from St. Michael's. The Mormons denied that the abortion issue was a problem at the time, and refused to get involved. This had also made me question their sincerity when it came to Christian Principles.



This was a time of recollection; the time in our lives when Jesus and all of His promises would become paramount in our lives. There was one time, as we were returning home from Australia, we rode the train from Canberra to Sydney, in order to catch our flight home, that comes to mind. We met two young boys on that train ride, who were Mormon missionaries from the States. They told us of their experiences in, what they referred to as their mission territory. They were impressed at the welcome that they had received by most of the people. The description of their mission was mostly materially oriented. They spoke of tithing as a pillar of the good life. The benefits of all good works in this life will secure their position in the next, for a successful life to come on their own planet, in the way that that they saw Jesus, as the God of this Earth. This belief of the Mormons, in my experience, was associated with the original sin of Adam and Eve, and I have prayed for their conversion to accept the Salvation of Jesus suffering and death on the cross, to gain life everlasting with God in Heaven, in place of gaining their own planet to rule. To them, the Crucifix and the cross itself was a symbol of evil, to be avoided.

I had learned during my Cursillo weekend, that, time and things that are most important to me in this life will be the measure by which I will be judged in the next. In other words, the way I live my life now will be the template for my eternity; ie. "You get what you ask for."

When Glenna's mother died, she had asked to be buried in Kingman, Arizona, with her parents. We went to Kingman for the memorial service and had time there with all Glenna's Aunts, Uncles, Cousins and Sisters for a grand reunion. Even with the sadness of her mother's death, it was an excellent time for family renewal and forgiveness for Glenna.

Upon returning home, I found that during my absence from work, the country club had acquired a new management firm, that was one of our prior customers, who took a liking to the service we provided for the company during their stay at our resort. This company, therefore took over management of the country club.

Under the original General Manager, I had been advanced to a management position for club facility maintenance, in charge of 2 clubhouses, three swimming pools and a variety of club resort accommodations, including the entire janitorial and housekeeping staff. Now under new general management, the emphasis had shifted from customer service to the increase of profit margins. This was distressing for me because, people who had been a great benefit to the success of the club, were being let go in favor of new management personnel. Funds for general maintenance of the facility were much more sparse. As the condition of the facility began to suffer, I felt it necessary to resign. After discussing the situation with my wife, we thought it would be a good idea to seek a new beginning in Arizona.



In the late fall of '78 we made the move and purchased a new home in the northern Arizona town of Taylor. I can't say for sure but after a couple of years it seemed that God had not brought us here. It was my own plan executed without consulting Him. Perhaps so but, even though I had gone out on my own, God had not left us. Our parish church, 'Our Lady of the Snow', was unique in this Mormon town. The Snowflake – Taylor communities that we had become a part of was 95% Mormon while the rest of us were either Catholic or Baptist. Our little church was situated between the two communities and, at that time, had a congregation of about 110 people in all. On a good Sunday, it was sad to see, there were only about 50 people attending Mass. I suppose that percentage was better than average across the country, if you are counting numbers. On the other hand, it was sad to see, that in such a religious Mormon community, Catholics did not display more faith in their own true belief in Jesus Christ, and His ability to affect their lives today.

Fr. Quintana, our pastor, was a descendant of Spanish settlers of this area of the country. The Spanish Missionaries carried the Faith of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church into the new world. The South Western US is sprinkled with the saving history of their presence. It was good to have a member of this tradition as our pastor. He was a prayerful man who displayed a great concern for his parish people. Northeastern Arizona is in the diocese of Gallup, New Mexico, which might seem unusual but due to the difficulty in travel during Spanish Colonial days, this corner of Arizona was easily accessible, mostly, from New Mexico and the Arch Diocese of Santa Fe. Access from the south and the Tucson area was extremely difficult due to the extreme mountainous terrain. The Bishop of Gallup assigned Fr. Quintana to us, I think, because Our Lady of The Snow Parish had a satellite parish in Heber. There was no church there at the time so the people met in a local house for Sunday Mass. Fr. Quintana had access to financial resources where funds could be obtained for a church to be built there.

Our pastor did not seek assistance from the parishioners, whom he thought were over worked trying to make ends meet in this very poor community of non-Mormons. Even though we were initially invited to be come a part of the larger community, when we moved to Taylor, it soon became apparent, that we were not to be converts to their Mormon Church. As with the rest of the small Christian community we became isolated from many of the local activities. We selected the Snowflake-Taylor area to settle in because it was a family oriented town with no radical outside influences. There, we could raise our family in safety. That part of our experience was very positive and valuable. The small Catholic Parish community provided a welcomed retreat from the town's strained relations with their non-Mormon neighbors.

Our Lady of The Snow Church reflected the austerity of the parish community, but it was by no means shabby. Upon entering the church, I found myself in a fair sized hall with a kitchen to the right, where parish dinner functions could be held. Directly ahead the entrance doors to the church proper were flanked by two large viewing windows, through which the Liturgical Celebrations could be viewed by an overflow crowd, of which there never was. There were pews for about 120 people on either side of the center isle and an electric organ in the rear. The organ was never used at Mass in the 7 years that we were there. There was a large Crucifix in the alcove above a shelf holding a "Golden Tabernacle" flanked by a large red

Vigil light, signifying the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, was in residence. The altar, covered by a plain white Altar Cloth, supported two candles for use during the celebration of Mass. The windows on either side of the church were of standard residential sliding sash type, of plane glass, that was foie painted with symbols of significance in Scripture. A small shrine to 'Our Lady of The Snow' stood to the right side of the church, with pictures of 'The Stations of The Cross' surrounding the congregation.

First Communion time was approaching and Fr. Quintana finally looked to the congregation for help in preparing the children. There were only about 8 of them and Glenna volunteered her services. Following this success, we volunteered to help with regular CCD instruction for all the children. With initial apprehension, Fr. Agreed. Community involvement was surprising at first.

After this success in the CCD program, we, along with another couple in the parish volunteered to lead music for Mass. Fr. agreed and purchased paperback copies of The Glory & Praise Hymnals. His only request was that we use all of the music in the hymnal throughout the year, whether we liked it or not. I began to set guitar chords to the music and the other family provided piano accompaniment and sang. Our daughter Jeanine, who was now 14 played guitar in our group with Glenna and I singing. Outward signs showed all was well.

Freedom had given us the opportunity to make choices, and it looked like our choices were producing good fruit. But all was not well. All of our choices were not always good and now we would suffer the consequences of our choices. It is a hard lesson to learn, responsibility and freedom are two sides of the same coin.

