

My Walk With God



Ch VII

A Wedding Feast

It was springtime in 1963. The Vatican Ecumenical Council had been called a few month ago and the world has been waiting to find out what that would mean for the Church. I had 8 weeks of schooling left when I arrived back in San Diego. I don't think that the average person knew what a Church Counsel was for or why such a gathering was needed. We all seemed at peace with our relationship with God and His Church.



To be back with my friends was a greatly welcomed benefit to finishing school in San Diego. I was able to seek out daily Mass at St. Agnes Church on Point Loma at 7:00am on most mornings on the way to the FADTC for school. St. Agnes was a small neighborhood parish whose church provided a very intimate setting. The Vigil Light on the altar, proclaiming Jesus presence, was always a comfort to me as I entered the church. I was now a Chief Petty Officer so my living arrangements gave me more leeway in my schedule. In the morning, St. Agnes was filled with little old ladies from the Portuguese fishing community of Point Loma. Mass was very quiet and gave me time to reflect on my life with God and with my neighbors. What would I do with my future? Confession on Saturdays was followed by Mass at the NTC Chapel on Sunday.

My friends were still stations at the ASW School and we got together quite often after the days duties were complete. At my friend's house, I was reunited with the girl I was enthralled with prior to going to San Francisco. We had gone out a few times prior to my transfer to school at San Francisco and we had become friends. Now we started dating regularly. After a couple of weeks, I told her of my Love for her and proposed

marriage, with no response. Even though she was brought up in the Methodist Church, she expressed a desire to attend Mass with me on Sunday mornings. She especially liked going to Mass at The Immaculata, at University of San Diego. Prayer wasn't working to my advantage, There was still no response to my proposal of marriage, but then, maybe I didn't have a proper understanding of the nature of prayer. Six weeks were left in my schooling at FADTC when my new assignment came with orders to the destroyer fleet in Newport, RI. This was received with great anxiety by my girl friend. Finally she wanted to see me and contacted me through our mutual friend Gerry. At our meeting, to my amazement, she agreed to marriage with me. I was thrilled, God found a way to answer my prayers.

We only had 4 weeks preparation prior to the wedding because of my pending orders. During this time, my fiancée and I attended daily mass at noon with the NTC Chaplain at the Base Catholic Chapel. It was wonderful to be at Mass regularly with her. God is truly good. Our twice weekly meeting with the chaplain was a sobering reflection on LOVE. All of the dictionary definitions are incorrect. If they were so, *an intense feeling of affection*, can be tempered in time and soon abate. Love therefore would not be eternal. If Love is God's domain, it must be eternal. In reality St. Paul tells us about love. It is Patient, Kind, does not Envy, is not Ambitious or Proud or Selfish, has no Anger, seeks no Evil, always seeks Truth, Endures and always seeks the Good. Of course this is only a brief observation of St. Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians. The bar is set quite high but we must strive to love each other as God Loves us. It is not to seek my own desires but to seek the good for my spouse.



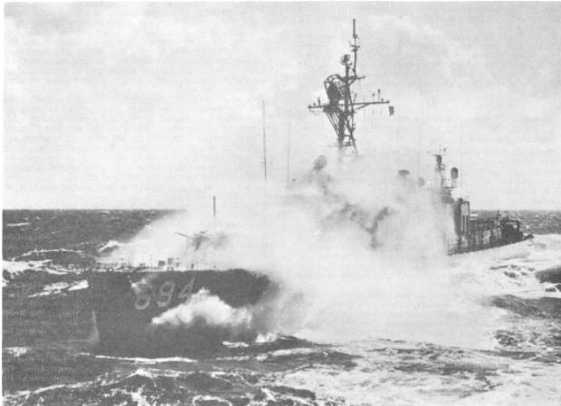
It is now time. On July 20th 1963, we were married in the sight of God and our family in the Naval Training Center Chapel, San Diego, in a Catholic Ceremony for life. Off we were for our new life to Newport, RI and the USS Ingraham DD-694.

We settled into a very small duplex about ½ mile from our local parish church. St Mary's Church in Newport is an impressive structure. It is an old stone church from pre-civil war days, with beautiful stained glass windows. The interior is of white sandstone in contrast to the dark mahogany of the pews ceiling and altar. The main altar was backed by an over-sized stained

glass window depicting symbols of time and eternity with Jesus. The Baptismal Font was, according to standards of the day, in the entrance foyer symbolizing Baptism as the entry into life as a child of God. It reminded me of St. Mary's in my boyhood in Pawtucket, but of a smaller scale. 9:00am Mass on Sundays was our standard.



My ship was due to deploy to the Middle East with the rest of our ASW Squadron in two weeks. That came as a shock for my new wife who knew nothing of sea duty for a husband. No amount of discussion before our wedding prepared her for the shock of being left alone in Newport for 2 months. With prayer at Mass the Sunday before leaving, she was resolved to make the best of it. Luckily Glenna made a friend from church who encouraged her to attend some classes at the Catholic Information Center. And as a surprise to me, she sought out Baptism and became Catholic before the ship returned to Newport for Christmas. She was conditionally Baptized at St. Mary's, Newport on a weekday morning in December '63.



This was a very difficult time for our country. While my ship was in port at Karachi, Pakistan, President Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas. News of the happenings at home was very sketchy in '63. We relied on official navy reports and sometimes a teletype news feed from the AP. No one was allowed ashore after we received the first reports of Kennedy's

assassination and our entire destroyer squadron departed Karachi for home the next day. It was a somber trip. No one knew what was going on at home in the States and as we transited the Suez Canal the crew was on alert for possible confrontation by Soviet or other not so friendly neighbors in the area. Many of the crew prayed for the well being of our country and we all felt a little more at ease as we approached Gibraltar. We were not allowed to enter port in the Mediterranean so all re provisioning and refueling were accomplished underway. As we entered the Atlantic, home seemed to be just over the horizon. I thanked God for our safety thus far.

We arrived back in Newport a week before Christmas and my new beautiful and wonderful wife Glenna met me on the pier. Her ordeal of

separation while I was away must have been even more traumatic. Being alone in a strange new town must have been very difficult for a new 20 year old bride. After growing up in San Diego, the entire East of the US was like a foreign land to her, never mind having no support from family or friends. Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas, I hoped would now bring her some sense of comfort.



We needed to find a Christmas Tree. The tree lots were all empty but finally one nursery close to our house had the last one. Now for ornaments. Again everything had been picked over but this same nursery had a little left what we finally put on the tree. So with one string of lights, a few decorations, an angel topper and the last tree, we had our reminders of the joy of Christ's birth. Glenna told me of her Baptism at St. Mary's while I was gone, and that made my return home even more joyous. We went to 9:00 am Mass on Christmas morning and it was just as wonderful an experience as I had remembered as a child in Pawtucket, as we prayed together that Christmas morning. God is so good!

The next few weeks, while the Ingraham was in port, life returned to normal and we were able to finally feel like a married couple. I'm sorry to say that I didn't always live up to the ideal. In my youth I was still self centered. I wanted to let God do his saving work in me but I was somewhat resistant. Thanks to the patience within my wife, little by little I became a little bit better at being a good husband. Following a series of short underway training cruises, the Ingraham is about to deploy, this time to the Mediterranean Sea.



During the last deployment it had been difficult for Glenna so we decided that she spend this deployment in San Diego with her family. After Mass on the Sunday before the deployment, off we were to visit my parents, and then, to the airport in Newark, NJ. On my way back to Newport, I thanked God for such a helpful and understanding wife. We would be gone for just 2 months.

Everywhere in the Mediterranean, I was reminded of Catholic Europe. Avignon, Montserrat, and the Church of The Holy Family in Barcelona were some of my most memorable examples. Seven popes resided in



Avignon until 1377. It is possible that St. Catherine of Sienna had a great hand in the popes return to Rome. It is to her constant prayer and letters that we attribute the successful return of the Papacy to Rome. One day, I attended Mass at the Abby in Montserrat, Spain. It is great monastery, high in the mountains and accessible by cable car from the outskirts of Barcelona. At first this Mass was confusing because I couldn't understand what language was being spoken. The Mass was a traditional High Mass in the Latin Rite but they were not speaking Latin. At least it wasn't the Latin that I had become accustomed to at Mass. Finally it dawned to me, they were speaking Spanish. Yes the mass was in Spanish. The vernacular. I had never heard Mass in the vernacular in any language and didn't know that it was allowed. What was going on with the church in Spain?

Prior to our departure from Europe the ship pulled into Rota, Spain, on the Atlantic coast for refueling. We spent the weekend there and the opportunity presented itself to attend Mass on the US Navy hospital ship that was tied up at the same pier with us. The ship had a dedicated chapel that could hold about 30 men in a congregation for Mass. Prior to Mass beginning, the chaplain told us that there had been some modifications to the Mass authorized by the Vatican during the Counsel. Generally Latin was still the language for the celebration with a couple modifications. The Epistle and the Gospel would be read from the altar in English during the Mass and at the Lord's Prayer, the entire congregation would recite it together in English. At the time this seemed quite unusual but, then I realized what was going on at Montserrat. When we arrived back in Newport, this Mass form seemed to become the rule. Latin was still the primary language with responses, while the Priest and people still faced the front of the altar together.



Glenna had returned from San Diego and we settled again into our lives together, but this time in Navy housing. We had changed parishes to St Lucy's because it was just across West Main Road from our house. It was a more contemporary building that lent itself to a more

social atmosphere at Mass. Sunday Mass was still in Latin, and at the time it gave me more of a sense of connection to my experience with God and His saving presence here on Earth at Mass.

In the fall of 1965, my destroyer squadron was notified that we would be reassigned to the Pacific Fleet for about 6 months. That meant we would probably be headed for The South China Sea in support of the Vietnam war effort. Because of the length of this deployment Glenna returned to San Diego for the duration. We didn't know at the time but she was with our first child. All of our belongings went into storage and off she went.

My time at sea was, at first, uneventful. I had fallen away from my regular prayer and readings in the past few months and even lost the beautiful rosary that Glenna had given to me when the ship had returned after the last deployment. One evening after a days watch in the Combat Information Center, I was called to the Executive Officer's state room. What had I done now? No Chief Petty Officer, or for that matter, no enlisted man of any rank would be called to his state room unless there was a problem. With trepidation, I knocked on his door. He gave me a telegram from the Red Cross. Now I was really worried and opened it with a prayer for protection and good news. All it said was "I've been sick, send money." It was signed with Love, Glenna. Now, with my heart beating a million miles an hour, I couldn't figure out how I was going to do that. We were at sea in the South China Sea following an attach carrier task force. What to do! I prayed "God forgive me for not keeping in touch with you these past weeks, but I need your help now. Isn't it curious when we go to God whenever we need something from Him? I knew that God isn't a vending machine, where you put in a quarter and out pops the goody of your desire. How was I to handle this crisis, I prayed.



The next day, mail was delivered to our ship for the first time in weeks. There was a letter from home. Now was the good news. Glenna was pregnant and was suffering morning sickness. It didn't make



her feel any better but it surely calmed my thoughts. I was able to get the Red Cross to advance some money to her until her allotment check arrived. I know God didn't give her money but He surely know how to help me

process the situation. God dis always good and I remembered my daily thanksgiving to Him after that.

During this deployment there was no chaplain assigned to any ship in our squadron. Our assignments were varied, from supporting ground troops in Vietnam with naval artillery support to supporting the aircraft carriers in the Tonkin Gulf. While in support of the carriers we sometimes were able to have a Catholic Chaplain come aboard for Mass,. It would not be on Sundays because they were otherwise occupied with Mass aboard the carriers at that time. No opportunity for Confession was provided because of the short time available. The Priest usually arrived by helo and let down on the fantail in a sling. Thanksgiving for his safe arrival and just for the fact that Mass was to be offered aboard Ingraham. God repeatedly showed His goodness and care for us throughout this deployment.



In April, the squadron returned to Newport and I was joined with Glenna Who was, by this time, 6 ½ months pregnant. What a homecoming, I was overjoyed. Three weeks later, I received orders to a new ship that was still under construction in Bay City, Michigan. Now came the commute. Four days in Bay City then 3 days in Newport. We were living in navy housing during this time in Newport. What was God thinking?

My new ship, the USS Voge DE-1047, would be home ported in Newport, so a predominant change of our residence would not be called for by the Navy. Even with our separation during most of my wife's pregnancy, we finally were together again right after our daughter was born on July 23rd, 1966.



During my commuting days to Bay City, there was plenty of lax time available. I took advantage of some of it as I tried to dedicate myself again to daily prayer with the Rosary. Periodically, if I awakened early, I would stop into St. Boniface Church for daily Mass on my way to our Navy office, near the shipyard downtown. It was always a good way to start the day, in keeping my eyes on the goal of our ultimate purpose in life. (To know God, to love Him and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.) I recognized the miracle taking place within my



wife as her pregnancy developed, when I remembered the Joyful Mysteries.

With the Sorrowful Mysteries, I recognized my need to put aside my selfishness for the good of my new family life. All things will be accomplished for the good of the kingdom of God according to His plan, as acknowledged in the Glorious Mysteries.

Time was approaching, it was now 2 weeks before Glenna was to give birth. I was scheduled for a permanent transfer to Newport, on Saturday, along with the nucleus crew of the Voge, who were in training while awaiting completion of the ship's construction. Much to our surprise, God's providence had a different plan. Glenna gave birth 2 weeks early and I arrived home that afternoon. Our beautiful daughter, has been a great gift from God and we scheduled her Baptism two weeks later. God came into her life on the last day of July in 1966. God keeps touching us.

NOTES

from the future

The birth of my daughter brought into light the variety of attitudes in society that promote policies and philosophies that are the antithesis of humanity. To be human is to be one with the Creator, to want for other humans what the Creator wants. People call it the Age of Aquarius, what does that mean? Is it like the 3 Musketeers or like the age of the self made man who prides himself in the control of his own destiny? The US Supreme Court said that we can control our own destiny when they approved the idea that a woman had the right to control her own body. What they really meant was that a woman had the right to kill another human being for her own benefit or the benefit of her family. Who else has that right? Society has since seen good as bad and harmful things as good if for the conceived greater good.

Morality has been turned upside-down. At least what the world now calls morality. Pontius Pilate said "What is truth?". There is only one truth, that is the truth in the natural law created In The Beginning by God Himself.

God sees the world differently. He will come one day to make right what is right. I hope to be ready.