

GOD'S TAPESTRY IN TIME – Anna Rae-Kelly, OCDS



INTRODUCTION

If ever I were to be asked, "What is your plan in writing a book?" I would borrow the words of the quite recently elected Bishop of Galloway from Bonny Scotland. At his Episcopal Ordination, a journalist asked Bishop William Nolan about his plan for his new diocese. He responded with the humble answer, "I don't come with a plan. I come with a purpose".

Neither do I come with a plan, only with a purpose.....to write, for the greater honor and glory of God.

Often, when I read something most profound from Sacred Scripture or a thought filled with wisdom and expressed by someone whose life and sufferings have taken him or her into the Beauty of God, I close the book and I ponder, "How I long to be so close to God that I too might understand such splendors, that I too might taste such sweetness of God."

One day, sitting in a crowded train trundling to the city of Boston, I was reading, "Ecclesia de Eucharistia", (2003) that last and mystical encyclical written by our dear Saint Pope St. John Paul II. The beauty and depth of his teachings in those pages held me transfixed. One of his insights in particular however leaped from the pages into my seeking mind and caused exactly that longing to know our awesome God as our saint did but it was also accompanied by a mighty torrent of thoughts, questions, answers.

His insight sent my world of faith into a new and astonishing domain that day; and for the past decade, the wonder has never diminished because through new and life-changing events of every year since then, each one becoming a delicate thread of wisdom from heaven, an intricate tapestry of God's design in time has slowly been woven, thread by thread before my astonished eyes. Each sublime teaching of our great Pope has gradually lifted veils of my limited understanding to reveal the splendor and Beauty of God's Hand at work in my life's tapestry in most unexpected and utterly humbling ways.

What was that statement? How did and how does it still unfold the Mighty Majesty of God in life's events? Could it reveal the awesome longing of God for an intimate relationship in the life of all others too? This little book is offered to say, "Yes! Absolutely!" because there is..."one God and Father Who is **over all**, and **in all** and **through all**" (Ephesians 4:6) and for Whom, "...one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day." (2 Peter 3:8)

In God, Divine time and His human time meet and gradually the mysterious tapestry of our lives in, through and with Him is interwoven. The patterns of our seemingly ordinary days begin to emerge as moments which hold eternal value as we behold the touch of the Master Weaver. And we can do nothing but stand in grateful awe to give Him glory.

TAPESTRIES ARE USED TO TELL STORIES...

HERE BEGINS THE FIRST TAPESTRY.

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TAPESTRY ONE

As I go about doing the small tasks of my days, I usually ponder on how it could ever be possible that God would reveal His eternal secrets to such a one as myself, sinful and depleted in the ability to love and limited in faith as I am. The following little true story reveals just how deep is God's desire to share everything about Himself that our limited humanity can take: and then He stretches our hearts and minds to His ever-deeper revelations. We begin to discover that every event in our lives holds a key which, when turned with a heart of faith, unlocks a door to a magnificent light of understanding. And we can only stand in total silence and wonder. This first of three stories that follow contains a tiny measure of the mystery and deep love which I believe that God has for us and wishes to share with us as we seek Him. I found something of this measure in Saint Pope John Paul II's life-altering words in his encyclical, "**Ecclesia de Eucharistia**"¹.

In this encyclical, our saint teaches us that while the Church was born at Pentecost and when she was "set upon the pathways of the world, a decisive moment in her taking shape was certainly the institution of the Eucharist in the Upper Room. Her foundation and wellspring is the whole Triduum paschal, but it is, as it were, gathered up, foreshadowed and 'concentrated' forever in the Gift of the Eucharist. In this Gift, Jesus Christ entrusted to His Church, the **perennial making present of the paschal mystery. With it, He brought about a mysterious 'oneness in time'** between the Triduum and the passage of the centuries."

As I tried to absorb these profound words of our Pope, I felt like I was suddenly holding a multi-faceted diamond. Brilliant shafts of light were darting from each facet and my limited understanding tried to grasp each one, tried to snatch at even the surface meaning of the depths which I knew they held.

All the same, I knew that these mysteries were far beyond my understanding. I believed firmly however that the Holy Spirit would not be inspiring my soul to seek clarity on such depths if He did not intend to fulfil that desire. I asked God to help me, to give me a glimpse of light which would allow me to give Him glory if He enlightened my soul to His Wisdom.

And in the days that followed, clarity dawned. The Holy Spirit touched my memory of times past and something of the magnitude of "oneness in time" opened up to me. All that was revealed to me would leave my soul in a place of humbled love and wonder for such a God Who would bring such beauty from the fear and pain which was to grip me.

It was early 1983. I had been married to my husband John for just over one year and was teaching high school in the stunning city of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The splendor of the snow-peaked, rugged tips of the foothills of the Cascade Mountains in the shadow of the majestic Mount Rainier (which means Mountain of God) all towered over the glistening waters of the Pacific Ocean. Tucked between these giants of God's creative Hand is the city itself.

1. John Paul II, P. (2003). *Encyclical letter, Ecclesia de Eucharistia, of his Holiness Pope John Paul II: To the bishops, priests and deacons, men and women in the consecrated life and all the lay faithful on the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church*. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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I had begun to feel very ill each morning and my husband and I shortly discovered the reason for my ailment....we were pregnant with our first child. My body was thrown into that dreadful sickness which few women suffer...hyperemesis gravidarum. It is a sickness which is now well known because Britain's Duchess of Cambridge has suffered from it during all three of her pregnancies in the last decade. Sadly, all those decades ago, doctors' reactions to my severe morning sickness ranged from confusion to irritation to anger. Try as hard as I could to eat, from simple scrambled eggs to McDonald's milk shakes to plain water, nothing could be digested and I began to suffer serious weight loss. My husband admitted me to hospital and after two weeks of IV infusions, he was advised that I had only a few weeks left to live, that there were ketones in my system and that the "fetus" was also severely undernourished and was failing because of my lack of nutritional health. John was advised to insist that I agree to take a particular medication which would stop the sickness. Under this frightening pressure, he finally agreed. I began the medication. I was slowly able to eat and I finally left the hospital. I was told by my doctor that I was carrying a "bad baby" and that "it" would eventually disengage itself from the uterus wall and out of my body. He advised that I should do hard exercises to speed along that process.

I returned to teaching. It was a lovely Friday evening and John and I were eating supper. A news alert flashed across the television screen.....any woman who was taking this particular medication during her pregnancy was being advised to see a gynecologist immediately because it had been found to cause major deformities in the unborn. It was my medication which I had been taking three times each day for two months.

That week-end filled with fear stretched us like a rubber band, tensed to its limit and set to snap when we finally walked into the hospital that Monday morning. The doctor ordered that an ultrasound be taken. He would not let John and I see what he saw on the screen but I will never forget the expression on his face when he turned to me and said those shocking words:

"You have no right to impose on society what you are carrying. You must have an abortion today".

We refused.

At the very least, he urged me to have an amniocentesis to identify the full extent of the physical damage to the "fetus".

Again, we refused.

John asked him the name of my medication. The doctor named it: Bendectin. It was a derivative of the thalidomide drug, brought into Canada a few years previously under a different name. The thalidomide drug, renamed Bendectin had caused such terrible deformities in unborn babies in Germany and Britain. It resulted in the limbs of a developing, unborn child to be stunted at the shoulders and hips.

John and I left the hospital in complete and devastated silence. I immediately stopped taking the medication. Within 3 days, I was once more very ill and not able to get up from bed or eat, let alone work.

And so it was that I heard of and met St Therese of Lisieux for the first time in my Catholic life.

END OF EXTRACT...

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