

IMPRINT

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Reclaiming Wonder

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The God of Wonder is here, in our midst.

Dear Friends,

The God of Wonder and Beauty

The God of wonders who created the universe deeply desires to live in us – so much so that He not only gave Himself in the crib and on the cross, but in the Eucharist (cf. Mark 14:22-26). Our extraordinary God is present in the disguise of an ordinary, round piece of bread – the host. In the Eucharist, He reveals the beautiful truth of who He is and who we are. Jesus Christ “is the infinite beauty which alone can fully satisfy the human heart” (*Vita Consecrata* 16). Each of our lives finds its fullness to the extent that we let this Beauty be beautiful in us.

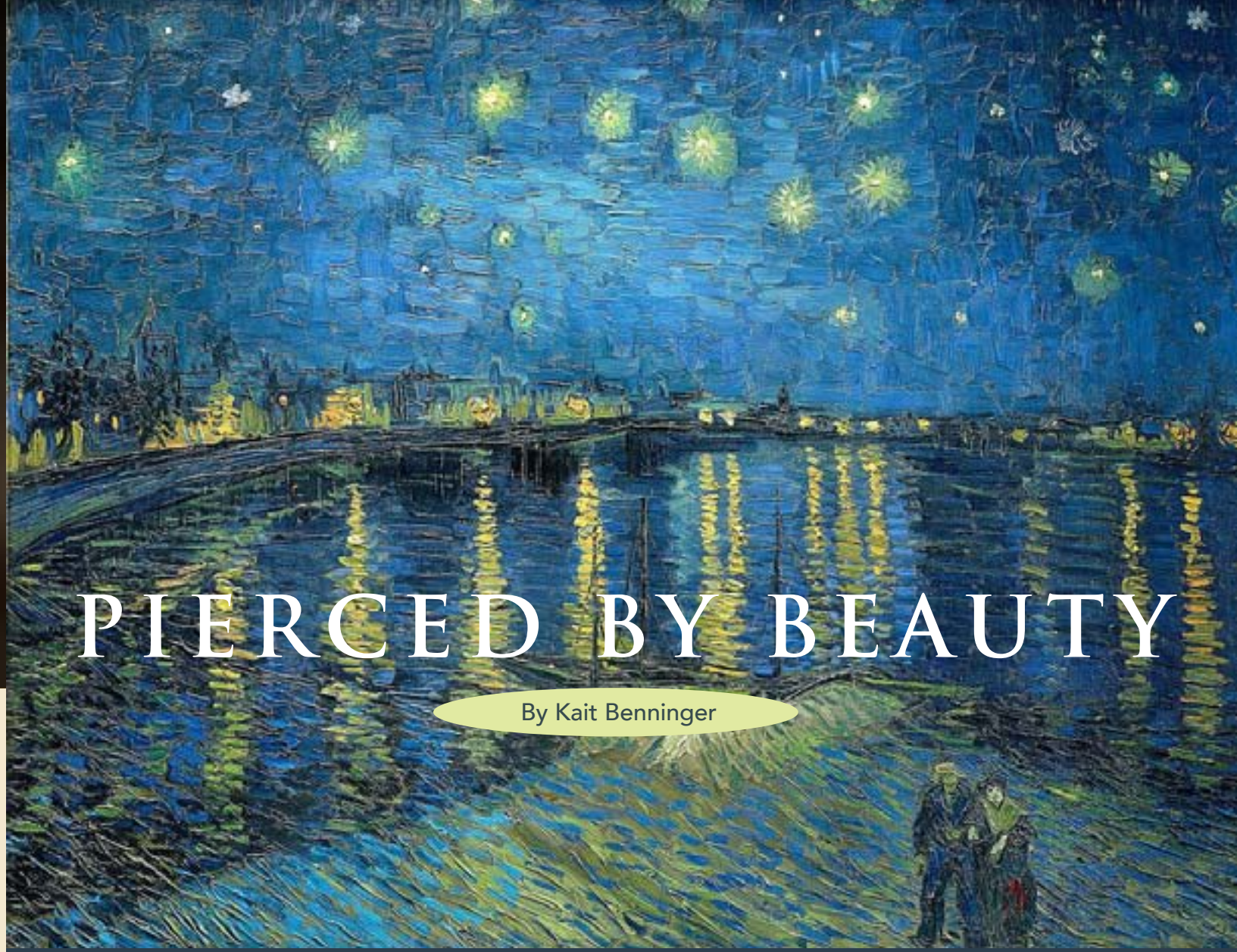
The more time we spend in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord, the more we begin to hear His voice, experience His loving gaze, and see His face. As He speaks to us, heals us, and restores our hearts, we begin to become aware of the beautiful, wonderful, awe-inspiring reality that lies hidden underneath the veil of each day.

The Lord calls us to go deeper – to look again and discover the Divine Beauty in the people we meet and the circumstances we find ourselves. In all the seemingly ordinary, poor, broken, vulnerable, small experiences of our day, we begin to see our Eucharistic Lord – the One who was born in a poor family, helpless and vulnerable; the One who hung broken and disfigured on the cross; the One who stood a wonder to behold in His Resurrection. He is here with us. And as we consume Him and allow Him to fill us, He only asks that we carry Him with us throughout our day, calling on Him, and resting in Him – He, the Beautiful One, who rests in the deepest recesses of our hearts. Let us all live in His resurrected life.

In Christ, Our Life,
Mother Agnes Mary, SV
Mother Agnes Mary, SV

*THIS is the Eucharistic Christ here.
This is the Christ of Mary’s womb.
This is the Christ of Calvary.
This is the Christ of the Garden of the Resurrection.
This is Christ, the Son of God.
This is Christ, the King of Kings. This is Christ enthroned in this magnificent monstrance fit for a king.
But no one asked Him if He wanted to be enthroned in that monstrance.
He emptied Himself. He made Himself completely vulnerable. He placed Himself entirely in our hands...
All He asks is that we empty ourselves, to let Him fill us with His Being, with His Living Body, with Him.*

-John Cardinal O’Connor
Founder of the Sisters of Life



PIERCED BY BEAUTY

By Kait Benninger

A journey through mystical landscapes

My 20’s were a turbulent and chaotic era. In my thrill-seeking adventures, I was like an explorer lost in the wilderness. I wandered far away from the faith I was raised in. I suppose I fit into the “spiritual but not religious” category. I was continually searching for deep meaning in my life but had abandoned all thoughts of finding it within the Catholic Church. I turned to art. I began painting several years ago as an escape from the burdens of my life.

It eventually turned into a disciplined study (and discipline was not – and still is not – a natural trait of mine). I didn’t learn so much how to paint as how to see. It was the study of light. It was the study of beauty. In one relatively dark period in my life, I began making regular pilgrimages to the Art Gallery of On-

tario, where for a few short hours I would have no responsibilities except to stand in front of artwork. On one fateful journey to my sanctuary, my art teacher told me there was a new exhibit in town: *Mystical Landscapes* – Gauguin, van Gogh, Monet, Carr, O’Keefe. I was not one to take lightly the recommendations of the art teacher I revered. So I went.

Enter *Mystical Landscapes*. “Mystical”: transcending human understanding, concerned with the soul or spirit, directed towards communion with God. Here, I found the paintings of artists who, like me, were “wrestling with angels.” Their landscapes spoke straight to the heart. To realize that I was not alone in my turbulent journey of faith and that I was in good company, came as a relief to me. I was not the only one who had big questions and no answers. But what the artists ultimately sought were not answers but beauty –



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When I left the little room I was in a bit of a daze. I did my very best to act normal while I continued to walk through the exhibit, but something had shifted inside me.

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the mountains and the seas, the rising sun, the dancing trees, brought by the human hand to the canvas with a brush and some paint. How could I not be filled with awe? But there was one small room, tucked to the side within the exhibit, that would do more than take my breath away – it would change my entire life.

In this small room were the lithographs of Charles-Marie Dulac, a young artist who died of lead poisoning caused by his paints. His story intrigued me. Dying, he went to a Franciscan friary where, in the nature around him, he encountered the Divine. He spent the rest of his life creating devotional works of art. While examining Dulac’s delicate style, and his impressive ability to portray light on thin woven paper, I turned on the personal audio headset that was provided with the tour. Instead of a verbal description of the artist and his methods, I found myself listening to a choir of voices singing a hymn by St. Hildegard von Bingen. Tears began to roll down my face as I found myself in the midst of so much beauty. When I left the little room I was in a bit of a daze. I did my very best to act normal while I continued to walk through the exhibit, but something had shifted inside me.

It was in the middle of that art gallery that several of my worlds collided: nature, art, and the Catholic faith I was running from. The Divine was in nature, and the artists were trying with all their might to reveal the beauty they were looking upon. Those illustrations, produced by Dulac for *The Canticle of Creatures* (by St. Francis of Assisi) were so beautiful that whatever source that young, dying artist was drawing from, I needed to seek out myself. On that day, I did one small thing after I left the art gallery. I turned my eyes back towards the Church of Charles-Marie Dulac, the Church I had once abandoned. I then took the leap of faith and asked God to reveal to me the beauty that exists

within the Catholic Church. And He has, over and over and over again. “It is in one’s soul that one must find the true landscapes” (Maurice Denis). ✨

Kait Benninger is the blood sister of Sr. Cara Marie, SV. She lives, works, and paints in her hometown of Durham, ON.

What moves us to wonder? **Beauty.**

An essential function of genuine beauty... is that it gives man a healthy “shock.” It draws him out of himself, wrenches him away from resignation and from being content with the humdrum – it even makes him suffer, piercing him like a dart, but in so doing it reawakens him, opening afresh the eye of his heart and mind, giving him wings, carrying him aloft.

- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

WE ALL HAVE that longing to delight again.

By Sr. Mary Margaret Hope, SV

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Press **PAUSE** Then, take time to wonder.

I was on a plane recently and happened to glance over at the woman sitting next to me. She was scrolling through her Instagram feed, and I saw a dizzying sequence of images and words flash across the screen – a new baby, a sunset, an inspiring quote, an odd snowbank, and an enticing meal – all in the space of about ten seconds. I was overwhelmed and turned back to my seat wondering, “What has become of wonder?”

Living in a virtual world, have we lost the capacity to wonder? Beautiful scenes and images that would have captivated our ancestors are devoured and discarded in rapid succession. Our culture tells us that if we find something good, true, or beautiful, we should snap a photo and “share” it online. Perhaps some part of us believes that which we post on the internet will last forever in perpetual

cyberspace. Instead, it becomes a nebulous, unreal thing, which passes through our consciousness without leaving an impact, without revealing anything genuine. It does not fulfill the longing in our hearts for the eternal, nor respond to the innate sense that our constantly shifting world is not enough, that we are pursuing an endless forever in God.

God is constantly revealing Himself in creation. Can we see? At times, there are experiences that arrest our hearts, spectacular scenes that break through the clamor of our lives: blackouts that reveal the stars, fierce thunderstorms, snowcapped mountains, and sunrises over the ocean. Yet it is not only in exceptional moments that we can touch the mystery of the Divine. God is revealing Himself constantly to us through creation. George MacDonald said, “If it were not for the outside world, we should have no inside world to understand things by. Least of all could we understand God without these millions of sights and sounds and scents and motions, weaving their endless harmonies. They come out from his heart to let us know a little of what is in it!”



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Unlock your heart to receive beauty.

The Contemplative Outlook:

If you want to see and know God, FOSTER WONDER.

We desire to know the heart of God; in response to our desire, God invites us to foster a sense of wonder – what St. John Paul II called the “contemplative outlook.” This is when we do not take “possession of reality but instead accept it as a gift, discovering in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person his living image” (*Evangelium Vitae* 83). It counteracts the effect of what Pope Francis has called our “throw-away culture,” for by shutting out the external and internal noise that fills our lives, we can come to be aware of God declaring Himself through His works. Even in the city, it is possible to experience sunlight glinting on an urban river or cherry blossoms fluttering in the wind. It can be found in the sub-creations of man as well, through beautiful music, art, or literature. In the words of C.S. Lewis, “shut your mouth; open your eyes and ears.”

Adjusting our attitudes: **Let’s shift from quick selfies to reverently awaiting the deeper realities**

We can change the way we approach reality. In his memoir *Wind, Sands, and Stars*, Antoine de Saint-Exupery tells the story of three desert tribesmen in the early 20th century who were brought for the first time before a waterfall in the Alps. “Mute, solemn, they had stood gazing at the unfolding of a ceremonial mystery. That which came roaring out of the belly of the mountain was life itself, was the life-blood of man. ... Here God was manifesting Himself: it would not do to turn one’s back on Him. ... ‘That is all there is to see,’ their guide had said. ‘Come.’ ‘We must wait.’ ‘Wait for what?’ ‘The end.’ They were awaiting the moment when God would grow weary of His madness.” Compare this to the typical modern tourist, moving quickly from site to site snapping selfies.

The capacity to see life in its deeper meaning rests in the virtue of reverence. Instead of creating our own online world, where we are at the center and consume as much information and noise as possible, let us allow reality – being – to reveal itself to us. Only reverence “leaves to being the possibility of unveiling its essence and makes man capable of grasping values. To whom will the sublime beauty of a sunset or the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven reveal itself, but to him who approaches it reverently and unlocks his heart to it? To whom will the mystery which lies in life and which manifests itself in every plant reveal itself in its full splendor, but to the person who contemplates it reverently?” (Dietrich and Alice Von Hildebrand, *The Art of Living*). ✨

PRACTICAL TIPS: Be Open to WONDER

- 1. Let your heart capture the moment, not your cell phone:** Fully receive and experience with your ears, eyes, heart, and mind. Risk it – turn off your phone every now and then and just live the moment!
- 2. Get beyond yourself:** Look, be attentive and delight in the people and events around you. See the bigger picture. Don’t miss the moments.
- 3. Live in the present moment:** Relax. Be present. Don’t bring work and other activities into time with your loved ones.
- 4. Be receptive:** Get up early, when it is still dark, go outside and watch the sunrise. Listen to the birds sing. Open your heart to receive and be nourished by the beauty.



By Sr. Pia Jude and Sr. Lucia Christi, SV



St. Marianne Cope

St. Marianne Cope grew up in Utica, New York, in the mid-1800s. She entered the Sisters of St. Francis in Syracuse at the age of 24. Twenty-one years later, while she was serving as Superior General of her community, she responded to a plea from Fr. Damien of Molokai for help in caring for those suffering from leprosy. Soon after, Mother Marianne and six of her Sisters sailed to Hawaii to begin a new mission.

The conditions on Molokai were dire. The people lived in abject poverty. They suffered immensely with the disease and had no one to clean and dress their wounds or help them with the tasks of daily life. The loneliness of isolation and despair of any improvement in their condition caused many to turn to alcohol and promiscuity.

But everything about the Sisters’ mission was wrapped in reverence: they set to work immediately, establishing a home for girls and bringing cleanliness and beauty to the island. Fruit-bearing trees and flowers were planted, and the Sisters made music, art, fun, and games a part of the daily life of the community. Mother Marianne recognized the importance of beauty as a way to bring new life to the people and uphold their dignity, even and especially in the midst of their suffering. She planted fragrant flowers in the window boxes so that the girls in the home would be relieved of

In a society of efficiency and convenience, love that costs a lot but doesn’t “produce” anything seems to be a waste. Yet, it is in the ordinary events of daily life, in the little touches of love that we put into our work and our relationships, that we glimpse eternal beauty and help others to find this treasure as well.

Like the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet with costly perfumed oil, self-giving, sacrificial love is a precious gift that points to the immeasurable value of life and its end: the joy of eternally gazing upon the face of Beauty Himself.

The following four stories reveal how ordinary people allowed God to do extraordinary things by saying yes to His invitation to committed love.



the stench of their sores, and she sewed fashionable, brightly-colored dresses and scarves for them to wear. Her gift of love to those whom she served was so powerful that when she died, her spiritual children spelled out one word in flower petals on her grave: MOTHER. ✨

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remedy to the Armshaws that relieved their suffering little one. Nate learned how to walk with assistance and could communicate to Jim and Sabina – and he had the best laugh for his angels that seemed to entertain him above his crib. The only medical answer for Nate’s extra years on earth was love.

Nathaniel, meaning God’s gift, became a witness to all that a little life – insignificant in the eyes of the world – is a gift that breaks open the heart. Through their vulnerability, the Armshaw’s love multiplied, and in their care for Nate (and other medically-fragile children), they truly experienced the beauty of making oneself vulnerable to the will of God. The lives of each of these children were truly something beautiful for God. ✨



2.

Jim and Sabina Armshaw

At age 37, on a bus on his way to work, Jim Armshaw rather suddenly experienced the merciful love of Jesus, which set in motion a family “fiat” that opened their hearts and home to the unexpected. Signing up to be foster parents in the early 1990s, the Armshaws were asked to care for Nate, a medically-fragile child dying of AIDS. They took Nate, given only a few months to live, into their home to accompany him in death.

Then, something beautiful happened. The reverence and care that the Armshaws showered upon Nate caused a mystifying experience for the doctors: Nate did not go home to die, but to live. Over the next five years, Jim and Sabina would witness miracle upon miracle as they called on Jesus to help them care for Nate. Whenever inexplicable pain afflicted Nate, God whispered the

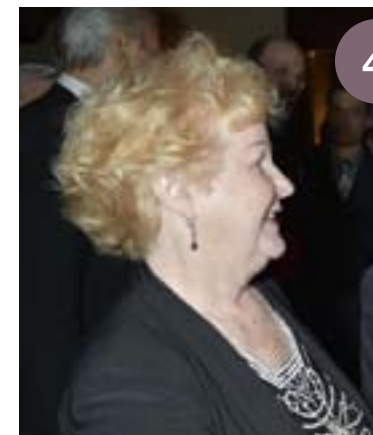
3.



Tina and Ayo

The Armshaws have helped numerous women by being Co-workers of Life. Most recently our Sisters connected them with Tina and Ayo.

Tina: We had just given birth to twin boys after a pregnancy fraught with crises. The Sisters of Life introduced us to Jim and Sabina who made it possible for me to get a specialized degree from a school in Baltimore. Every weekend for nearly five months, I would commute to the Armshaws from New York City. Jim would pick me up at the bus station and take me to their home. Sabina would have dinner waiting for me and a packed lunch. I would spend the night, and then Jim would drive me to class in the morn-



4.

Midge Landry

Luella Harriet Cluff was born in 1900. At the age of 2, she was paralyzed and remained bedridden for the next 70 years. Midge’s parents invited Luella into their home from the time they were married, and they cared for her with loving attentiveness and generosity. They raised their children to do the same. Midge used to plant flowers in the alley outside Aunt Lu’s window so that she could see their beauty from her bed with a mirror.

When Midge got married, she did so on one condition: that she could continue to care for Aunt Lu. She and Roger moved five minutes down the street, and time spent with Aunt Lu was a cherished part of daily life until she entered her eternal rest on April 4, 1972.

The Landrys raised their children to love all people, especially those most vulnerable, with this type of extravagance. “I remember as a little child,” Fr. Landry said, “when I would visit the house where my mother grew up, she would always point out Aunt Lu’s old room and speak about her with great reverence, appreciation, and love, as if Aunt Lu had been one of the most important people in the world. I learned that one could be great even if, in the eyes of the world, one couldn’t leave one’s own small room.

“My mother would regularly bring us to give concerts at nursing homes. As children we sometimes resisted, and when we would ask my mother how we were related to all of these great ‘Aunts’ and ‘Uncles,’ she would tell us that we weren’t really related to them but that they used to live on her street, or knew one of my grandparents, or couldn’t come to church any more, and that we just needed to visit them so that they knew that God and we still loved them.” ✨

Midge is the mother of Fr. Roger Landry, who serves in the Holy See’s mission to the United Nations and is a chaplain to our Sisters.



A BEAUTY THAT RUNS DEEP

THE TREASURE of our SOULS

The tremendous privilege of walking with another



ACCOMPANIMENT

GAZING WITH THE HEART By Sr. Maris Stella, SV

“Assignment: draw the most wonderful thing that could happen to you this next year.” This sign hung in a collection of children’s artwork in a home I visited for children who suffer with severe emotional and behavioral challenges. I was attracted to the drawing of a 7-year-old boy: a self-portrait. Drawn as disproportioned stick figures with big smiley faces, it depicted him with someone on either side of him holding his hands. The drawing was just what you might expect from a 7-year-old, but I was astonished by the four-word response written in his wobbly penmanship: “I will be loved.”

To be loved – this is the most wonderful thing that could happen to any of us. The longing, the hope of being loved, of belonging to others: these are basic needs and desires of the human heart. Written into our human nature is the need to be seen, to be noticed as special, to be appreciated and loved. Every human being is created as a gift, to be given and received in love. Yet so often, there is not one who will receive that gift. This void can create a weariness and an emptiness in our hearts and we can find ourselves wondering, “Do I have something worthy of offering?”

In our work with women, we have tried to learn the great art of being with others, which we call accompaniment. It’s a way of receiving another – looking at the person before me, not as a project or a problem to be solved, but as a gift, a unique masterpiece of God’s love. It’s developing the habit of gazing at this person with the heart, seeing the things that are hidden beneath the surface. It’s a way of listening for precisely the things that are not said out loud. Perhaps after much tending, a heart can be awakened and come alive in a new way. A new beauty is revealed. In this exchange, a hidden treasure is discovered; something that was limping can move more freely; buried reservoirs of strength can be uncovered; new areas of the heart are brought to life.

Nature images this process. Consider a rose bud. At its first signs of life, it is tightly closed up, with an interior realm

of hidden beauty. There is great potential, yet the bud cannot open on its own. It needs the warmth of the sun, water, and soil to grow. In the right conditions, it opens up and unfolds to show its inner beauty and fragrance.

Bearing new life in hearts and souls is a delicate process. It takes time and attention. It might seem like nothing is happening when growth is silent and hidden. Yet, in a world that is so fractured and fragmented, I need to continue to bring the whole of myself to the other and remain present so that the warmth of Jesus’ love can penetrate, heal, and nourish.

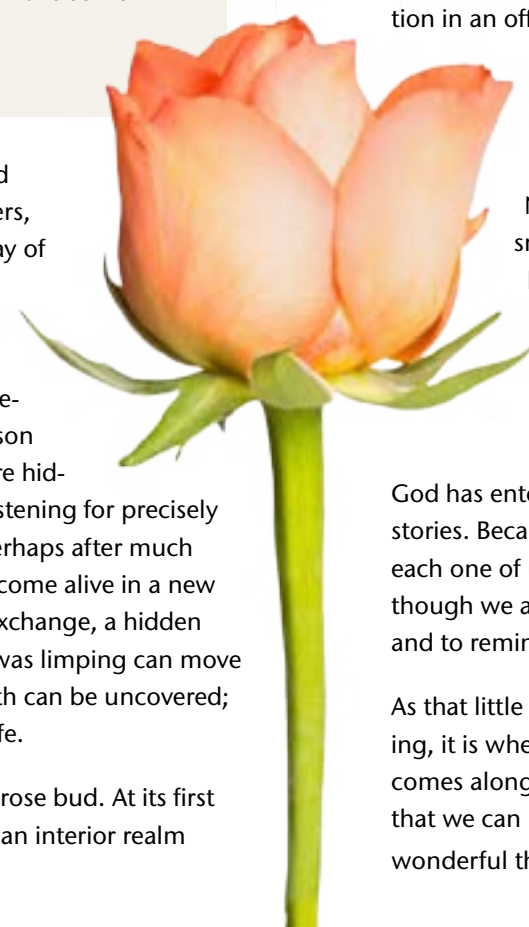
Feeling our worth

Not too long ago, I was sitting with a college student whom I have gotten to know over the past couple years. She had a conversion early on in college, after being away from the faith and becoming involved in unhealthy relationships throughout high school. Our regular conversations have become a source of growth and integration for her. It’s a joy to affirm God’s work in her soul as He restores her innocence and renews her beauty.

Around Christmas time, we got together for a conversation in an office at the campus church. About half way through our meeting, the choir began a rehearsal in the room next to us. After a while, I asked her, “What’s your favorite Christmas carol?” She responded, “O Holy Night.” I asked, “Why do you like it?” She smiled and said, “You know the line, ‘long lay the world in sin and error pining, ‘til he appeared and the soul felt its worth’? That’s how I feel. I am beginning to feel my worth. Every time I come here, I sense that I have dignity.”

God has entered human history. He transforms our stories. Because of the Incarnation, God is present in each one of us. He desires to live in us, weak instruments though we are, to reveal His warmth, love, and kindness, and to remind others of their worth.

As that little 7-year-old boy captured in his wobbly drawing, it is when someone sees the truth of who we are, comes along side of us, receives us, and grasps our hand, that we can know: we will be loved. And it’s the most wonderful thing. ☀



Hope and healing *after abortion*

An Interview with Yalixa and Rob

By Sr. Maria Frassati, SV

Her first encounter with her future husband inspired Yalixa to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation to confess the two abortions she had as a teenager. Through our Hope and Healing mission, combined with the gentle affirmation of her husband who simply stood back and allowed God's work to unfold in her, Yalixa came to a place of profound healing. Experiences with an Endow women's group helped her discover a newfound strength in her femininity, leading her to a deeper understanding of the beauty of her role as a wife and mother. We sat down with Yalixa and her husband, Rob, and asked them to share their journey.

Can you share your story?

Yalixa: I was 16 years old, and I found myself pregnant. I didn't know what to do. I was so afraid. I remember hearing other girls saying how easy an abortion was, and how you didn't have to be pregnant if you didn't want to. So I remember thinking, "Oh, it's that easy. I don't have to be pregnant anymore." I went through with the procedure, and I didn't tell anyone. I basically just forced myself to forget about it. A year later, I found myself pregnant again. I thought, "I have no other choice but to do what I did last time. I want to go to college. I have my whole life ahead of me." So, I had my second abortion at 17. Again, I decided to completely forget about it and just move on with my life. At 27, I met Rob.

What was special about Rob?

Yalixa: I was drawn to Rob because he was a man of faith, and I really admired and respected that. I had left the church

a long time ago, but meeting Rob made me think about my faith. I hadn't told him about my past, yet something about one of our first encounters made me want to go confession – for the first time after 16 years – to confess those two abortions. Yet, even after my confession, I still didn't feel completely healed. There was still something missing. After we were married, I started to experience a lot of guilt and regret about what had happened. I opened up to Rob and asked him to tell me everything he was thinking and feeling. Reading and talking to Rob about my experience really helped me to pursue deeper healing.

Rob, what was your experience when Yalixa shared her past abortions with you?

Rob: Anyone who knows me knows three things: I love God, I love music, and I'm super pro-life. When Yalixa shared with me her past, I felt like, here I am, the 'super pro-life' guy; I've read a billion books, I have all these pro-life arguments, and here I am being told by God to shut up and just love her. You know? Just love her. Be there for her. I definitely didn't want to overstep and get in God's way. And there's no greater example of this than Jesus, of just sacrificing everything you are, and your life, and the things that you wanted to do for the good of someone else.

How did Jesus lead you to a deeper experience of healing?

Yalixa: When I went on a Sisters of Life retreat, I met Sr. Mary Teresa, who told me about the Hope and Healing mission. At my first Day of Prayer and Healing, when I started to share my story for the very first time, I completely broke down. It was finally being able to speak about it that made me come to the realization that I needed to forgive myself in order to heal and to move on. That was the piece that was missing. Once I started going to the monthly Gatherings, the weight started to lift, and I became more liberated. God brought me there, through others. There's something so powerful and beautiful about being surrounded by women who have gone through the same thing. I love the sense of sisterhood that we have there. We've all been through it; we all get it.

You have experienced a lot of healing by being in communion with others. How has your experience in Endow encouraged you on your journey of healing?

Yalixa: Sr. Veronica invited me to join an Endow women's group. She was like, "It would be a perfect place for you!" This group is about women empowering and uplifting each other. We all love the Lord. It feels so good to feel like you belong

there. There's something there that brings out your strength and the beauty. I remember reading about St. Edith Stein; she had this beautiful strength about her. It's almost like I found a little bit of myself in her, and I experienced a solidifying of my own strength as a woman in learning about her.

Rob: If there's one thing that's prevalent in this world it's that women in particular don't know their own worth. They don't know how much God loves them, how precious they are, or how precious is the ability to give life. That's something so unique, so powerful, and so beautiful.

Since you were married, you and Rob have been blessed with children. Can you speak on how you have grown in your identity as mother?

Yalixa: I find a lot of healing in just being with my kids. Just being with them, you know? And it can be anything. Like, the other day, I was home all day with them, and we colored, we did art, we did music, we prayed ... in little moments like that, I find healing. I find my strength in being a mom. Seeing how my kids look at me, no matter what I'm wearing, even if I don't have any make-up on, they just

see Mom. It doesn't matter. It's like I'm seeing another layer of meaning to marriage, to motherhood. God has revealed to me what kind of a woman He wants me to be, and I try to live my life as the best wife and the best mom that I can be. I've learned to appreciate myself, and I know that He made me beautiful. I am reminded of the goodness in life when I look at my children and when I see the world through their eyes. It keeps the hope and love alive. It keeps me going. ✨



Our Sisters in the Hope and Healing Mission walk with women seeking healing after abortion.

Call us at 866.575.0075
or email: hopeandhealing@sistersoflife.org

When we let God in

HEALING BEGINS

The real purpose of life is not to acquire, see, or do more...

OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of life
is to give and receive
love and beauty—
tenderly, slowly,
and with intention.

—Rev. Brian Bransfield

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How do we stay focused on what really matters? *By Sr. Maris Stella, SV*

It's simple. Just simplify.

In our busy world of multitasking, the age-old wisdom of the saints is needed more than ever. Now sure, St. Thomas Aquinas didn't have to battle rush hour traffic and hundreds of emails a day. St. Thérèse didn't have the challenges of social media or the demands of a full-time job and a family. Yet, the saints found ways to keep life beautifully simple and focused. That's why many people are finding refuge in St. Thérèse's little way of doing small things with great love and in St. Thomas Aquinas' pledge that peace is the tranquility of order.

In his book, *The Human Person*, Fr. Brian Bransfield outlines how the sudden availability of modern conveniences have led people to believe that the purpose of life is to acquire things and pleasure quickly. Yet, all around us, there is a longing for simplicity. While we are made for infinite love, we can only cherish a limited number of things at any given time. In fact, possessions have a way inhibiting our freedom and of creating caverns of emptiness in hearts. Fr. Bransfield says that the real purpose of life is not to acquire, see, or do more. The purpose of life is to give and receive love and beauty tenderly, slowly, and with intention.

Are we missing the Divine Guest?

St. Martha had Jesus Christ Himself at her dinner table, yet she managed to get caught up in the responsibilities of her work, missing the Divine Guest for the details of the meal. Bringing order to our lives and our hearts helps us to receive and give the infinite beauty and love that He is offering at every moment.



So, how do we return to the simplicity that our hearts crave and our bodies need?

Try these tips:

1. Do little things with great love

Gather the scattered pieces of your mind and heart and focus on one small task. Put love into it, and make it an offering to God. Perhaps you might slow down and make eye contact with the cashier at the checkout line, take the time to write a hand-written note, or make your bed neatly. Little things done with great love have the power to change the world, and perhaps more importantly, our own hearts.

2. Find rest in order

Life is messy ... but your desk, your house, and your purse do not have to be. Your hope to de-clutter and organize your life might seem overwhelming. For practical strategies, many have turned to the book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, by Marie Kondo. She instructs her readers to keep only the things that “spark joy” — everything else should be sent on its way.

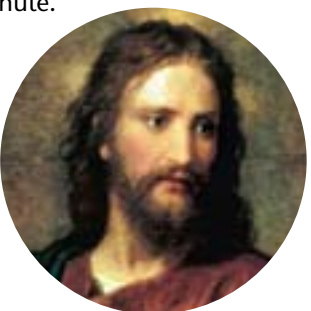
St. Ignatius of Loyola similarly instructed his followers, saying, “God created human beings to praise, reverence, and serve God, and by doing this, to save their souls. God created all other things on the face of the earth to help fulfill this purpose. From this it follows that we are to use the things of this world only to the extent that they help us to this end, and we ought to rid ourselves of the things of this world to the extent that they get in the way of this end.”

3. Enjoy the power of a miracle minute

If you find yourself frenzied, pushed and pulled from one thing to the next, take a miracle minute.

Stop, close your eyes, and pray, “Jesus I welcome You into this moment. I am going to simply be still for the next minute. I ask You to be with me. I won't do anything. I will just be with You.” Take a deep breath and focus on Jesus present with you.

This creates an opportunity for grace to enter, because Jesus always comes when invited.



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