



Chapter 4

I sought the LORD, and he answered me, delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:5

Questions, fears, doubts..they are all a part of the journey. God in His loving and patient way, reveals truth to us as we are able to accept it. He began to set me free little by little and it felt so wonderful, I kept longing for more...

The Way

Day after day I would return to the Adoration Chapel. I confess it was addicting. The room was so peaceful and womb-like. The overpowering experience of the first day never repeated itself; I simply went and sat and prayed. Since I had been a baptized Christian from the age of eight, born into a Christian family, I had been taught to have a daily time of prayer from an early age. This time had now become my “quiet time” before the Lord.

In the Adoration chapel, I would simply read and pray and enjoy His presence, and soon would learn He enjoyed mine too! This was a new thought for me, that *I* could actually delight *Him*. I felt I had worked hard to be a “good person” all of my life (well, just about all of my life), and for some reason had always felt like “gold plated poop,” but was never really sure why.

Catholicism, the sacraments, and the mystery of it all were becoming very appealing to me. Jesus had totally engaged my heart. (A friend questioned if I was having an affair.) I was totally in love with Jesus in an entirely new way. But as a Bible teacher, I was feeling that my head needed to catch up to my heart. This prompted me to stay up for hours and hours late at night reading Scott Hahn, Francis Beckwith, Blessed John Henry Newman, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, and a myriad of other Catholic writers, many of whom were converts themselves. My biblical

education up to this point had included the Bible and anything written post-reformation. I had now discovered fifteen hundred years of collective genius from which to learn. I was like a kid in a candy store, delighted beyond all telling.

I studied, read, and drank it all in. Listening to PaulisCatholic.com, I heard the book of Romans taught from an entirely new perspective. Wow! The pieces were all coming together now. My head was buzzing like a beehive with new concepts. Late one night, God's merciful kindness visited me as I lay curled up on a couch under a big blanket, being cyber-fed by Catholic websites, enraptured by all of this new teaching. I was listening to a podcast on "Infused Righteousness/Sanctifying Grace"—a Catholic teaching. When I heard what Catholics believe, I found it so beautiful, loving and transformative. "Infused Righteousness" means that God doesn't just love me because of what Jesus did for me on the cross, as amazing and profound as that is and as undeserving as I am. At Baptism, I am literally *infused* by Him and His Spirit so that I too may be made *holy*! Me! Holy! I, physical me, have a part in it. Me—the human me. God is able to do this because there is something good in me to begin with... because He made me in His image. His righteousness has something to "stick to"—to permeate. Of course, it's all by His grace, as He is always the source of all holiness. Church teaching has always stated this.

When I first heard this concept, it was as if I felt a beautiful injection of love enter my body and soul. For the first time I did not feel shiny on the outside and dirty beneath a holy veneer. I was elated to know that He cleansed *me* from the inside out by permeating both my *physical body* and my *soul* with His presence! And He delighted in doing it! I realized that I could be holy, as

He is holy, and that there were and are holy people. I became very curious about the saints and especially the “incorruptibles,” which, of course, I knew little to nothing about. What little I did know was wrong. I thought that they were wax dummies, not holy people preserved by God to be witnesses to us of His prominence in their lives, which, of course, they are!

It thrills me to this day to realize that God is doing something in me, not just because I am covered by Jesus’ blood that cleanses me from all of my sin, (which I am) but also because He loves me because *I* am His... *all* of me is HIS—the good and the bad, the spiritual and the *flesh*...all His. And He loves me.

The Lord is complete and whole (Shalom) all by Himself-- absolutely complete, lacking in nothing. He does not *need* me to participate in my salvation, but He *allows* me to participate with Him because He knows *I* need it. It is as if God is a complete circle, completely whole. And because of His grace and love for me, He allows this Circle of Him, at His very heart, to be pierced and invites me to enter. He invites me to share in His sufferings and His joys by uniting all of mine with His. He invites me to learn of Him in ways I could never learn of Him unless I was a part of Him. I began to understand the mystery of hiding in the wounds of Christ and the Sacred Heart. They are inviting us in...I never had felt that before. I had never felt accepted and invited in, just as I was.

Because the Lord is *in* me, and I am *in* Him, He is not just *covering* me. I can be *totally* transformed--*all* of me.

The verse Philippians 2:12b,13 now became clear: "...work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purposes, works *in* you both to desire and to work." I am asked to join Him in this good work, to be His partner, His bride. We are ONE...mind, soul, spirit, *and body*. I am not working out my salvation...*We* are! And it is a process and a joy. As I take Jesus in daily in the Eucharist, I join in a wonderful wedding feast of love, The Lamb's great supper, that gives me His strength to enable me to do "...all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13)

All of this new revelation was stirring in my heart a longing for physical contact. Sitting before the Host in Adoration was not enough for me. I wanted to be one with God in this beautiful and intimate way. I longed to touch, hold and be with God. He is real and He is physical. For my entire life, I had felt like He was my best Friend, only we had never actually met face to face. It was more like we had spoken on the phone daily for years. Now I had the chance to be actually, physically one with Him. He was starting to work on me and in me, infusing my soul with His presence, and I wanted to make it complete by taking the Eucharist into my being.

But imagine my heartbreak when I thought of all of the obstacles that stood in my way. I knew what joining the Catholic Church would do to my family relations, friendships, and to the ministry I had started by God's grace and been a part of for twenty years. Those very few who now knew of my journey were starting to ask questions, to look at me differently, and "get worried for me."

I sat in the Adoration Chapel day after day and prayed. I implored Him earnestly to show me my path so that my life could be lived for His Glory. “Lord, which road am I to walk? Show me the way! What do You want me to do? ”

One day, I sat before the Blessed Sacrament, as I had so many times before, and miraculously, He enabled me to have another very real experience with Him. As I sat there, I was given a picture of a beautiful rugged mountain. There were enormous, jagged boulders going up the side of the face, but worn into them was a smooth, deep pathway. Climbing this pathway were pilgrims clothed in coarse white robes. As they climbed, the pilgrims veered off onto slightly smaller paths. At the end of this first “cul de sac,” Mary was there to greet them. She would welcome them with a very warm smile and embrace them in her beautiful mantle. The pilgrims would not want to leave because her arms were so loving and her robes were so warm and soft, but she would kiss them and then point them upward to the top of the mountain where an empty Cross was visible. Being obedient and full of renewed strength, the pilgrims would return to the original path and continue their march upwards. There were several of these side paths and at the end of each was a saint waiting to embrace, strengthen and shoo them back on their way. Each pilgrim was so resolute in his or her mission. And each was climbing upward to the Prize, Christ Himself, waiting at the top.

I was so amazed at what I saw. It was beautifully clear. I could smell the trees and see the sandy grit that was beneath their feet as they shuffled up the path over the stones worn smooth by thousands, perhaps millions, of pilgrim feet. And then I saw the whole vision from a distance

again, as from a bird's eye view. I asked the Lord, "What is this?" and He said, "This is the Ancient Way. You are to walk in it."

Praise: I praise and thank You for: "This is the Ancient Way. You are to walk in it."

Prayer: O Lord, let me never fear one more step that leads me closer to You. Give me strength to persevere and courage to continue on, even in the midst of the unknown. Open my heart and my mind to new things, even things that would change my life forever if only I would but trust in You. Keep me always seeking, always climbing upward, always upward to You.

Promise: "Fear is not in love. Instead, perfect love casts out fear..." 1 John 4:18

Proof of the Promise: I have learned that when I pray for an open heart and mind, Truth is revealed. If it is truly of God, it is good, and there is no need to fear.

Ponder: Journal here about the struggles that prevent you from taking another step toward God. Most struggles are seeded in fear. Fears of family or friend's reactions? Fear of the unknown? Fear of commitment? Along with prayer, what are other things that you can actively do to help alleviate your fears? Talk to God about this...