



## Chapter 10

*For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. Job 28:24*

*“Near-sighted” describes me in more ways than one. Even in a spiritual sense, I don’t see well beyond my own limited experience. Accompanied by the Lord on this life’s journey, however, I know He sees everything, not just what’s next! He sees and remembers--every tear, every sorrow, every joy, every moment. And once in awhile He reminds me of this in the most tender way...*

### **The God Who Sees (Gen 16:13)**

I am, quite interestingly, writing this from the place where it all began, in that very canyon in Texas where God wounded my heart with love for Him—a wound I received as His child, and from which I have happily never recovered. Many times I have returned to drink the water that flows so freely here from the rocks, and each time He has lovingly met me under the wide arms of the enormous star-filled sky.

It has been more than eleven years since this journey began, if you count the initial inspiration of the Eucharist on the rocky path up where the bluff meets the clouds, up in that very “thin place.” (That is the Celtic expression of where the distance between heaven and earth collapses and one can most easily be transformed into one’s better self.) But in actuality, it has been fifty years... my lifetime thus far, step-by-step, little-by-little, inching along, sometimes feeling as if I were being dragged along by the hand, as the angel of the Lord did for Lot in Genesis 19 to get him to where he needed to be.

I have had time to think and rethink all that has taken place. I believe that, unlike what I was taught as a child, in so many ways mainstream Catholics and Protestants are not so different, in fact, not different at all in what they fundamentally believe. Pope Francis has been very instrumental in pointing out our shared heritage, and helpful in building bridges, in that respect. And, of course, there are deeply rich ministries out there like *Alpha* that take what marks us as Christian, the foundational truths that can be applied to all, and present them in an engaging way so that they become life-giving and truly transformational for anyone. Fr. Cantalamessa, preacher to the Papal household, wholeheartedly believes in *Alpha*. I have been a part of this wonderful ministry for years and, although it originated with the Protestants, delightfully, at present more Catholic Churches are running it worldwide than Protestant churches.

One of the many beautiful things I have learned from *Alpha* and from years of being a part of the Protestant Church and a women's Bible Study is the power of the small group experience. Most Protestant Church cultures excel in this, meeting together for intimate home groups or Bible Studies. This is something that the Catholic Church is beginning to appreciate--the beauty and need for small group study as a powerful tool for evangelization and personal transformation.

My greatest joy is to share my faith experience with others. I believe that God meant for my faith to be *personal*...but never *private*! God is Community—the Trinity. He knows we thrive in community and we are told to “Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...” [Ephesians 5:19] meaning that we are to get together and talk about Him, and share the great and

worthy things He is doing in our lives and to encourage each other in our daily struggles. We are to learn about Him and from Him in the scriptures.

Recently, Pope Francis urged the faithful to read the Gospel every day, to carry it in their pockets, to keep it on their bedside table, “because reading the Gospel is what brings us joy.” We are to embody the old catechism adage of “Discover and Share!” The sharing is what makes my faith come alive, because God loves to speak to me, not only through His Word, the sacraments, His priests, and prayer, but also through *others*. That is why it is so important that “We should not stay away from our assembly, as is the custom of some, but encourage one another...” [Hebrews 10:25]. We must share our life experiences, the ways in which God has touched us and taught us, because we never know how God will speak to us or through us to someone else.

As I mentioned earlier, even though I was taught by some as a child that Catholics were not like us and that the Church was evil, God kept His eye on me. When I was still very young, too young to be taught the difference between “them” and “us”, I watched a movie that turned my heart toward God and prepared me to think of the Church in a different way. The Spirit mysteriously chose to work on my tender little soul through a Hollywood film. I saw *The Trouble with Angels* with Rosalind Russell, and decided that I, too, should become, of all things, a very unlikely “sister” like Hayley Mills. After several days of pondering the call, I mustered up my courage and decided to announce to my family my “scathingly brilliant idea!” as Haley Mills would often say throughout the movie. I chose an odd moment for my declaration. We were leaving for a family vacation to visit my grandparents and, once the station wagon was

tightly packed and we had all found our appointed places among the suitcases, blankets, and travel board games, I boldly blurted out that I felt I was to “take the habit” and become... a nun!

Well, as one can imagine, my deep conviction was met, not with the sort of delight I had hoped for, but with a different kind of delight—side-splitting laughter as my parents and sisters tried to explain to me that we were *Baptists*, not Catholics, and Baptists *don't have nuns!* They told me that I could become a missionary or an evangelist, and that is exactly what I have endeavored to do in my life—to spread His love through the study and teaching of His word. But at that time, I was crushed, and I buried my head in my pillow and wept bitterly in the back seat of the car all the way from Houston to Dallas—the longest five-hour drive of my life. I knew, even then, however, that God saw my childlike faith, and that somehow, if a Baptist could be a nun, I was all His. I was giving myself to Him, and I knew that He would honor my simple, and, what seemed to others to be ridiculous, offering. God collected my tears and, as it says in Psalms 56:8, “Kept them all in a bottle.”

Forty- plus years later, as I sat in my little parish in Georgetown, preparing to pray one of my new and rich Catholic practices, the Stations of the Cross, my pastor came into the Church. He approached and told me that someone had just donated a new set of the stations. He asked my opinion of them and at what height I thought they should be hung. I had noticed that they were different and was curious about them, as they were very beautiful, and I so loved this new practice that was now a part of my Catholic heritage.

He began to tell me about them and then said a very funny thing, “These are not really *new*. They came from the chapel of St. Mary’s Villa in Ambler, Pennsylvania. The estate was once used in a movie set. You might have heard of the movie, though it’s quite old. It was called *The Trouble with Angels*.”

What a tender gesture by my God! Recalling that powerful childhood movement of my soul, I once again welled up with tears. But this time they were tears of joy! My poor pastor, of course, had no idea why I was crying. Something deep, something that had been buried and forgotten about for so many years was, with this one experience, unearthed, polished by His breath of love that had flowed through the words of my pastor, until it shone like a tiny golden nugget, restored to its proper place in my soul. It felt as if my offering of myself to God, which I had thought had been spurned, was now validated. Although my dear pastor could not have grasped what he had said, and why it had such meaning to me, all of the longing that had resided in my heart, the longing that can only be born in the very tender heart of a trusting eight-year-old girl, was finally fulfilled. Some things are just very hard to explain.

As a child, I was unable to go to “take the habit,” but God in all of His miraculous weaving of circumstances through divine providence, allowed a bit of the very “convent” from the movie that so touched my heart, to come to me. The Lord, in this one tiny detail, showed me how much He does see, hear, and care about everything!

Each time I walk into Epiphany Catholic Church, round me rings the stations, and I picture the heavenly Father's arms encircling me there. It is like a Holy Kiss, a confirmation from my loving Father God that I have indeed followed the right path. A path that always seems to lead me right back to the heart of Him.

**Praise:** I thank and praise You God that You see, hear, and care about everything, even down to the tiniest details of our lives.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank You for keeping my tears in Your bottle. Thank You for having been my God since before I was born, and for knowing everything about me, even the bits I have forgotten about...but You do not forget. Thank You for being *that kind of God*, the One who sees, loves, understands, and *remembers*. Help me to never forget that about You. Thank You for Your Word that reassures me that You are even more compassionate than a nursing mother, and that You will never forget...You will *never* forget about me. Help me to grow deeper in my faith based on this wonderful knowledge of You. Amen.

**Promise:** "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to take pity on the child of her womb? But even if she would forget, still I shall never forget you." Isaiah 49:15

**Proof of the Promise:** God longs to heal and restore even the deepest "silly" wounds of our heart. If they hurt us, they hurt Him. He never forgets about us.

**Ponder: Journal here** about any experience that you have had that the Lord “remembered” and answered. Perhaps it was a prayer intention from deep in your past, or a concern that He alleviated unexpectedly, years later. Remember this goodness of the Lord, for it bolsters faith for the future.