

*LILACS
AND
LAUGHTER*

BY

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ALLELUIA! A GOSPEL DIARY

Books by Janis Walker

ALLELUIA! A GOSPEL DIARY

FIRST READING: A DIARY

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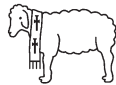
TO SEE THE KING

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for

Lydia and Laura,

my grandmothers

and

for Ara,

my granddaughter

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I love you all so much.

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Thank you to “The Eleven,” without whom

A.M.D.G.

March 25, 2022

The Annunciation of the Lord
to
the Blessed Virgin Mary

ST. LUKE, LILACS, AND LAMBETH

This goes back to 1988, a very big year.

In March, my father died, so there was a trip to San Angelo, Texas. There was a wonderful Methodist minister, a military chaplain, who officiated at this brief service. Later, I wrote to the chaplain and he answered with so much care and understanding.

In the summer, Terry and I traveled with a small group to England to attend the opening Sung Eucharist of the Lambeth Conference at Canterbury Cathedral. As I recall, a Roman Catholic Cardinal was also in attendance.

Later in the summer, Terry and Christopher and I traveled to Halifax, Nova Scotia, for me to attend an Order of St. Luke the Physician Conference. Terry and Christopher explored Halifax while I attended the conference. This is where I first encountered LILACS. They were in full bloom and were glorious!

Then we three flew to Prince Edward Island to see the Anne of Green Gables house. Our inn was right across the meadow, so I could go back and forth a few wonderful times. So grateful to the Canadian Park Service for keeping Anne's house so lovingly maintained. More LILACS in bloom on P.E.I.!

After being in Canada and enjoying LILACS everywhere, we went to Grafton, the village in Vermont we had visited in past years. Near our inn, there is a really cold pond where I love to swim. It was great to have Christopher, then age thirteen, with us. In past years, we had gone to Grafton while Christopher was at Boy Scout camp.

From Vermont we went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and then on to Madison, Wisconsin, and finally back to California. Back to work for Terry. Back to school for Christopher and back to seminary for me.

BACK FROM THE SEA

Some years ago, Terry and I had several wonderful days to spend at the ocean at Pajaro Dunes.

Even though it was a crisp November week-end, I still couldn't wait to run down to the beach.

Leaving the suitcases, instead of giving in to my usual mode of first unpacking, I headed down the steps, across the sand, and into the wet part of the beach, where the waves were just brushing the sand.

WHAT?!

I was startled to experience the rush of waves. Backing back, I felt a little disoriented.

Even scarier, I looked down and noticed my right water sandal was missing.

This was really scary, since I needed both special sandals to make it back to our week-end retreat home.

Praying quickly, I asked God to send the right sandal back.

Whoosh!

There it was.

Quickly, I sprang forward and grabbed it from the wet sand. Considerably shaken, I put it back on.

In all the previous visits to the ocean, I had never encountered the intensity of the winds and waves. Still, I was safe.

THANK GOD!

My husband jokingly said, "God isn't ready for you yet. Even

your sandal came back.”

CIRCUITS AND SOUL

For many years, Terry attended the ISSCC (International Solid State Circuits Conference) in San Francisco. It was over a period of a few days, usually in January. It was truly international, with scientists and engineers attending from all over the world.

Occasionally, on one of the days, I went with Terry and did other things during his time at the conference. The meetings were in the Marriot near Union Square.

Usually, I would carry along Valentines to send to “the aunts.” Terry’s mother, Doris, was one of six sisters, so it was a lot of fun for me to have aunts, even if they were in Texas.

Terry would take the long, long escalator to the conference area and I would head for the little coffee stand in the lobby. Armed with a nice, strong coffee, I would then go to the (at that time) lovely area upstairs with an indoor fountain and murals. Then I spread out the Valentines and had fun writing little notes, addressing and stamping them.

There were a few places of interest near the hotel, such as a lovely, old-fashioned hardware store and a Container Store which I liked to visit.

Then, I walked to the noon Mass around the corner at St. Patrick’s Church. Oh, my, was there ever a SURPRISE one time at that Mass!

At the prayers of the people, the woman leading the prayers calmly stated, “At this Mass, we have been asked to pray for the soul of King Henry VIII of England.”

Even now, decades later, I marvel at that particular prayer at that particular time. God’s timing is always perfect and often, to us, mysterious.

After Mass, Terry and I met for a small lunch in the hotel. Then Terry went back to the conference.

In the afternoon, I walked a bit, sometimes to Union Square, and then went to the pool in the hotel. For a nominal fee, I enjoyed a refreshing lap swim.

Before heading back home, Terry and I would have a lovely dinner, usually in or near the hotel.

A day away.

Circuits and soul.

A WEEK OF HEALING

Some years ago, on a Sunday, we had dinner with a friend from Stanford graduate school days in the 1970's. He was here on business from Chicago.

There were four couples who had met for weekly Bible study and prayer. We met in each other's homes in Escondido Village on campus.

This particular friend, Jim, had graduated and moved back to the Midwest with his wife and two sons. Shortly after returning, their third son was born with Down's Syndrome.

Then Jim went to the doctor and was diagnosed with a very serious disease. The doctors did exploratory surgery and found that the disease had spread. There was no hope.

Really? What happened then?

Leaders from Jim's church came to pray for him. Just like in the Bible.

"Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the

church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective (James 5, 14-16).”

Jim was healed!

That was over thirty years ago.

Yesterday, Saturday, there was Mass with Anointing at our parish. Having had an ultrasound test on Friday and being scheduled to see a surgeon soon, I was thankful for this service. I believe that many times God heals us when we don't even know what is wrong.

A mystery.

Healing has always been a mystery.

Stories like Jim's give us hope to believe that God is the God of the impossible.

Now, 25 years after that ultrasound test and surgery, I am still alive.

ALLELUIA!

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT WE KNOW

A couple of weeks ago, Kay did what is usually called dying.

She was almost 100 years old and just as glamorous as always. Her hair was beautiful and she had lovely manicured, polished nails.

We met in a prayer group, which, at one time, included women from their thirties to their nineties.

Kay had been a faithful intercessor for a young medical student who had been in a coma for a long time.

Chris, Kay's daughter, told us of something wonderful that happened before Kay left.

Kay apparently was receiving glimpses into heaven and was so happy.

She was talking with friends she knew who had gone before her.

Then, referring to the people standing near her in her hospital room, she spoke to her friends who were already "there," saying, "They don't know what we know!"

Indeed, we don't. But, hearing this story gave us all such joy and anticipation. We don't know now, but we shall know.

WAITING

Decades ago, a wise, older Episcopal priest told me he had a word of the Lord for me.

Very curious, I waited for this word.

It was from Psalm 37.

Those who "... wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth (Psalm 37, 9 KJV)."

The fulfillment of this particular promise has not yet come to pass.

I still wait.

Until that time, what do I do?

Continue to work and to trust.

“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him (Psalm 37, 7 KJV).”

THANK GOD FOR THE PAIN

The pain I was experiencing led me to seek medical help.

Because of two quick-witted nurses, I am still alive. The doctor was out of town, but the nurses decided the doctor would have wanted me to go immediately for an ultrasound.

The ultrasound, while showing that the source of the pain was temporary, also showed a cyst that was not temporary. Yes, there will be more surgery, but yes, I will be alive.

DISCOUNTS AT DRAEGER'S

Once in a while, I still enjoy shopping at Draeger's, even if it is pricey.

We were living in Escondido Village on the Stanford campus when I first heard of Draeger's. A British friend from the Bible study, Freda, told me about Draeger's Supermarket. She particularly liked their huge cheese selection.

This day at Draeger's, however, was different.

It seemed that nearly everything on my short list was on sale!

This was one of the many ways the Lord cared for me tenderly before, during, and after my surgery.

Little signs of love and understanding.

RECOGNIZE AND RISE ABOVE

Just because something is obvious doesn't mean I have to dwell on it.

God can help me rise above whatever it is.

SPEECH OR SILENCE?

There was something I had a lot of trouble keeping quiet about.

It went back many years and I still felt agitated.

Having done all that was possible for me to do in the way of releasing, forgiving, etc. I was still bothered if I thought about it.

Today, Ann, my wise friend and one of my two sponsors when I was received into the Catholic Church, phoned me.

After hearing her news, I found myself again referring, obliquely, to this old situation.

The Lord is asking me again and again to keep silent about this matter.

It does no good to refer to it.

In the silence, the Lord will meet me.

In the silence, the Lord will heal me.

In silence the Lord is healing me.

IS MY COMPUTER JEWISH?

Every time I wrote the word "sabbath," the computer would

automatically change it to “Sabbath.”

I am a Catholic with Jewish ancestry, having a Cohen great-grandmother, on Mother’s side, in my family tree.

I never met Marie Cohen Meier. She was only thirty-three when she died.

Still, I look at her photograph and think of her.

We cherish our Jewish friends.

The computer seems to know this!

BELIEVE!

If you are praying and feeling discouraged, take heart!

BELIEVE (because it’s true) that the Lord is listening to your prayers and is acting on your behalf and on the behalf of those for whom you are praying.

This morning, I was returning from Mass, the grocery store, the doughnut shop (hey, I don’t go there very often), the garden center, a coffee house (where I enjoyed the previously mentioned doughnut), and then headed home.

As I drove by a drug store, I decided to stop for a quick purchase.

The store was out of this product, but what happened next was clearly the reason I had stopped.

Out of the sound system came the following words of a song, “I believe in redemption. There is hope for every soul.”

That was it.

Silence.

I left, without my intended purchase, but very happy.

How precise is God's timing!

I was in that store at the exact time that song was being played.

When we pray for people, we have NO idea how and when and where God will speak to them.

God is infinitely creative and may even speak through the lyrics of piped in music in a pharmacy.

A PHONE CALL AND A PROMISE

It was still early morning when the phone rang.

It was a friend from out of state who had a verse of Scripture to share with me.

The verse was Leviticus 26, 13, about the Lord's promise of freedom! "... I have broken the bonds of your yoke, and made you go upright (Leviticus 26, 13b KJV)"

This verse energized me to meet the day. It has been gray and humid for quite a while following all the fires in California. As I drove away, singing, the sky cleared and became blue again. The sun shone!

INTERIOR MISTRAL

What is happening?

Everything is blowing around and shaking up my little world.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are still in control of the winds

and the waves and that you will lead me safely Home.

RESTORATION

Drilling and filling!

Our former dentist, now retired, had a whimsical way of describing the upcoming dental procedure. “We’re going to restore the area.”

God restores many areas in our lives. Yes, there is drilling and filling.

God drills out what is decayed and fill in the empty spaces with “gold.”

THIRD BLOOMING

We’ve become excited about the second blooming of the wisteria on the fence.. If, after the first blooming, it is carefully pruned, it will actually bloom again. The second blooms are even more purply than the first.

A third blooming, however, had not occurred until this year. This year, the Lord knew I need extra reassurance.

So, a third blooming.

CHERRY AMES AND THE CHURCH

As a child and teenager, I loved to read the Cherry Ames nurse stories. I did not know then that the Lord would call me to another kind of healing.

The Lord would call me to a kind of healing in HIS BODY.

The CHURCH.

Jesus is the head of the Church. We are members of his Body.

We need healing.

A POWERFUL PRAYER

Although I was not a Catholic at the time, I prayed a particular prayer which is so powerful. One time, I was to drive some Catholic ladies to a pro-life meeting in San Francisco.

I felt sick and decided to pray this prayer. It was truly amazing! I recovered quickly and drove the ladies to a wonderful meeting we all enjoyed.

The prayer is,

“In obedience to the Immaculate Conception, I command you, every unclean spirit to depart: cease your attacks on us, our family, business, surroundings, and on those for whom we pray. In the Name of Jesus, I command you into the deep pit.”

Now, make the sign of the cross three times. This prayer has ecclesiastical approval. There are prayer cards with this prayer available from Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey, Lafayette, Oregon 97127.

AN ADVENT SURPRISE

Years ago, there were television ads about a store that was collecting Christmas toys for children who are in foster care. So, on the way to the fish market, I stopped to buy for a few things for these children. I bought a huge box of crayons, a coloring book about botanical gardens, and an adorable soft stuffed toy cat.

At the cash register, I was surprised when the clerk named an

amount obviously under the amount I owed. He said he had heard about the collection for the foster children and he wanted to contribute the toy cat!

And, if that weren't enough, the lady behind me in line had a stuffed toy dog she was giving to the children. The clerk paid for that too and put in my sack to deliver to the store!

I was stunned by this kindness. This area can be so competitive and cynical. And yet, today, Jesus touched the hearts of strangers to give to the children.

FITTED AND FILLED

Psalm 71.

Look it up.

Read it prayerfully, very, very slowly.

You will understand.

ALREADY DONE!

Many years ago, we had a lot of boxes outside in a PODS (Portable on Demand Storage). This was a great help while we were having some work done inside the house.

Then, I began to fret about a file cabinet that had been in my study. Useful, but not pretty. Really didn't want it back, but did not want to throw away the contents.

Lo and behold, when I mentioned this dilemma to Terry, he made my day by saying that he had already placed the contents of that cabinet in another larger file cabinet in another room.