



Ardere et Lucere

Let us use the
Light of **Faith**
to climb
higher and higher.

- Blessed Elisabetta Renzi

FALL



2019



Hoping Without Seeing

Dear Friends,

“Faith has to do with things that are not seen and hope with things that are not at hand.”

- Thomas Aquinas

How beautiful it is to see a child laughing out of sheer joy as his daddy throws him up in the air to then catch him into his arms! It is the utmost expression of trust, an unshakable trust in an adult who loves him and will not harm him. Trust, in fact, is the fruit of a relationship of love between two people, and when there is trust, there is full surrender.

No wonder Jesus invited his followers, and all adults who were asking for signs in order to believe in Him, to become like children who do not question their Father’s word, but live it with joy.

How difficult it is today for us to trust one another! We are more inclined not to trust in someone’s word than to honor it. We often do not trust the words of the Church, forgetting that the Church, though stained by sin and weakness, was Jesus’ gift to us before His ascension into heaven. We even have a hard time trusting God himself, and His message contained in the Word of God, in creation, and in one another, because we want to see, we want to touch, we want proof. With this mindset, we lose hope, and God’s promises become empty words to us. If we can create our own world and happiness, if we can determine our present and our future, if we can be self-sufficient in everything, then we come to believe that we do not need God in our lives, and we do not seek a relationship with Him. However, without that loving relationship, we cannot understand the Scriptures, and we live as though Salvation has not occurred. Without a loving relationship with God, we remain orphans and disconnected, and we settle for much less than God has promised and wants to give us.

As daughters of Blessed Elisabetta, we are called to live abandoned into the arms of a loving Father, who will provide all that we need and fulfill his promises. *“When everything was becoming complicated, when the present was so painful, and it appeared that the future would be even darker, I closed my eyes and abandoned myself like a little child to the arms of my heavenly Father.”* (Elisabetta Renzi)

In situations which seemed hopeless, when she was unable to see a solution to a problem or an end in sight, she believed that Jesus’ promise was stronger than any darkness or evil she was experiencing. She stayed, like Mary under the Cross, in every situation, without trying to escape or fight, without falling into a logic so human that it would convince her to do without the Lord’s help. This was true when she was asked to take on a struggling boarding school after the director had been removed; when the community was suffering hunger and she did not have enough food to feed her sisters; when she did not have the finances to support the school and struggled to stay afloat; when the bishop of Rimini canceled the scheduled first profession of Mother Elisabetta and her 11 companions without giving an explanation; when she was ill and could not give of herself to others as she wanted. Yes, she stayed under the cross, she waited, she endured, and she hoped. Her ultimate desire was to be one with the Lord in this life and in the next one, and everything was designed to lead her there. *“We acquire great merit through believing by faith[...], and while we are in this world, we have to live by faith.”* (Elisabetta Renzi)

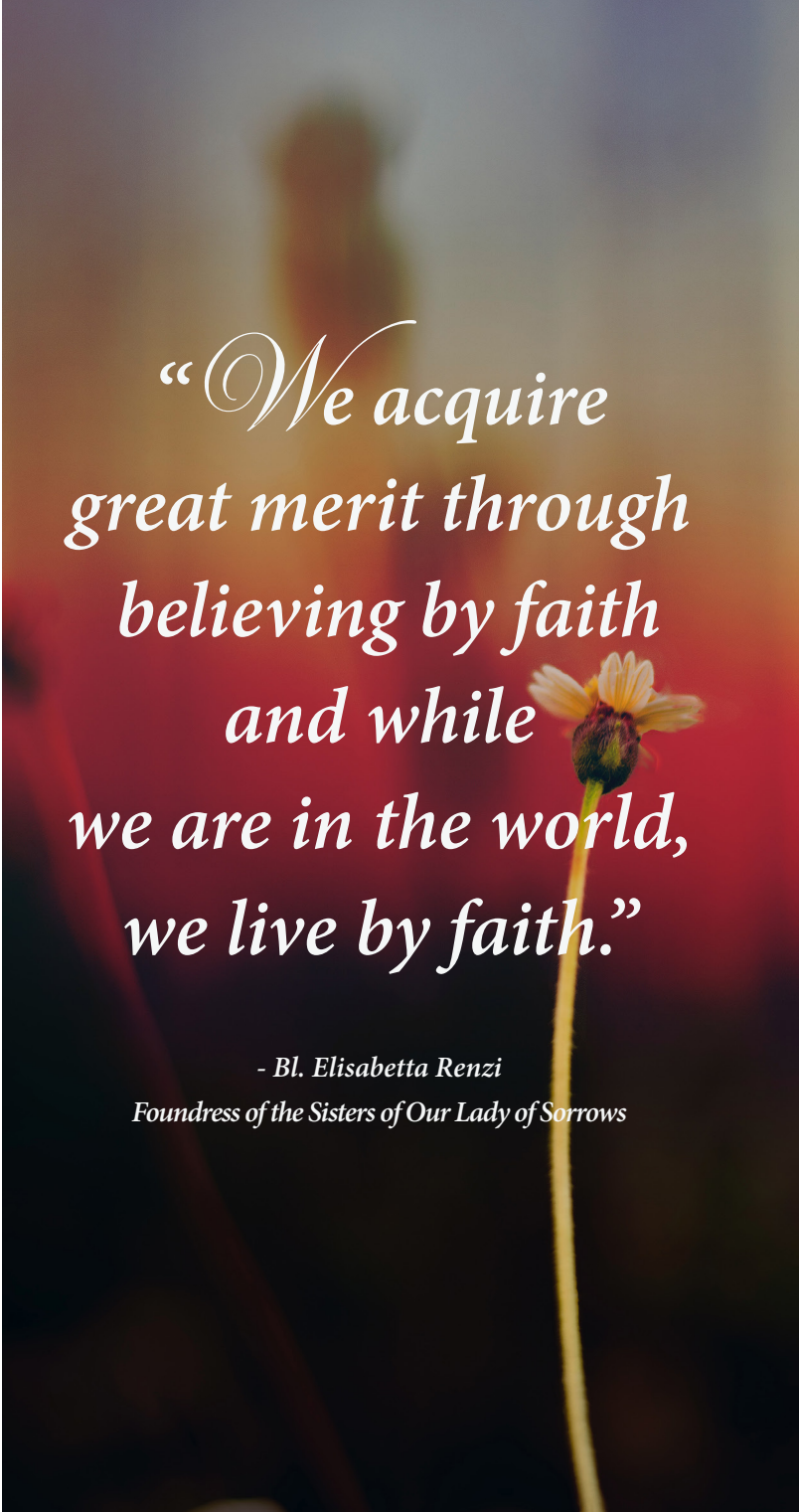
We have all been given the gift of faith, which enables us to believe in God, who has made the world and who created us; this is a faith which generates hope. Our faith is in Jesus Christ, and our hope is in Him alone.

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:1-5)

With prayers for a blessed, happy Christmas,

Sister Carla Bertani


Mother Carla Bertani, OLS



*“We acquire
great merit through
believing by faith
and while
we are in the world,
we live by faith.”*

- Bl. Elisabetta Renzi

Foundress of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows



Anchored in FAITH

By Jane Debleaux

Growing up on a cotton farm in north Louisiana, life was pretty simple. Surrounded by the beauty of nature and plenty of God's creatures, I experienced first-hand the simplicity of life. I was the youngest of 3 children. My father and my two siblings were very outgoing. Mama and I were both the quiet ones in a household bustling with activity, family, and many guests. I was raised Methodist, but did not attend church on a regular basis. My mother attended services every Sunday, but it wasn't until after I was married and joined the Catholic Church that I came to appreciate her Catholic upbringing and her rock solid faith as playing an important role in my own faith life.

My mother spent two years in formation to become a nun only to withdraw due to her own mother's health issues. This led to her decision to pursue the vocation of marriage, which was monumental for me. She was the role model for my faith and my "measuring stick" when it came to personal character.

Every morning her routine was the same--read Scripture and pray. This was her time with God, and she made sure that nothing interfered with that. She was naturally calm and quiet...but I realized later that she was a very contemplative woman who embraced stillness, knowing God waited there. I didn't begin to

appreciate who she was as a mother until I had my first child, and, even then, didn't fully acknowledge the gifts she possessed and so freely gave.

Hindsight has afforded me the appreciation of my faith and God's hand in my life. Growing up, I had no relationship with God and was clueless when it came to spiritual growth. I said prayers each morning and night, and I felt that was sufficient. Years later, when Mama was dying of pancreatic cancer, I began to consider the mystery of life. The one question that I kept asking myself was, "Do I really even know my own mother?" She was always a mystery. As she lay dying, I commented that she would have made a wonderful nun, and her doctor responded that she had made a *better mother*. Something stung when I heard her words....the fact that my own mother, whom I had spent 42 years with, was leaving me, and I didn't know what made her happy or sad. I suddenly felt an urgency to know more about herwhat her life struggles were, her favorite movie, her favorite color...but it all felt too late. A lightbulb moment of sorts happened as my sense of loss became a heavy realization that I had missed many opportunities to connect with her.

Jesus was all about "connection"...he most certainly was the Master when it came to knowing people and drawing them close. I began to ponder that maybe

this profound loss was opening my eyes to how much God was actually trying to connect with me “through” the people in my life. It was probably the first time I ever thought about God living within another person and loving “through them.”

Mama’s graceful acceptance of what lay ahead and her eventual death played an instrumental role in my spiritual life. I no longer felt comfortable standing on the threshold wondering who God was or what my purpose was...so I took one step forward and began asking God to speak to me. I felt a shift, subtle as it may have been...a movement toward the growth of my soul. As difficult as it is to remain still enough to do the necessary “soul work” needed for growth, I began to trust that God would not abandon me on my journey.

Although the love of my husband, children, and family were powerful channels of God’s love... it wasn’t until my late 40’s that I met someone who opened “another door,” nudging me further across the threshold. I believe that, at that moment in time, this new friend became the catalyst God used to open my world to Him in a way I had never experienced. I began to “go inside” and really seek and question who He created me to be. What happened next can only be described as my soul being booted off my threshold! My friend died suddenly in a tragic accident. No more comfortable familiarity - now was the time to trust God like never before. Could my faith withstand this test?

Six weeks after her funeral, I sat at her grave and my tears finally came. For the first time in my life, I felt angry and I questioned God as to why she was no longer in my life...but I also sat in profound gratitude that He had brought us together. Over time, I began to realize that the love I received from my mother, my husband, my children, and even this special friend was actually God’s love. He had loved me through everyone in my life and was actually seeking and longing for me. Maybe my blind desire and yearning for a connection on a spiritual level my whole life made the losses in my life an avenue for God to finally reach me.

This realization anchored my faith like never before, but it still did not squelch my desire to feel “known.” I remember lying in bed one night, picking up the Bible and randomly opening to a passage. The scripture I was led to was Psalm 139, which began *O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.* To see these words and have them resonate within my heart what I had actually longed for meant so much to me. As time passed, if ever I began to drift...God’s powerful love always...always anchored my faith.


Each joyful moment of my life, along with each sorrowful one, have only served to draw me closer to the One who loves me the most.

My life today can best be described as one that, to some extent, is still filled with longing and a seeking for connection with God, but with a more profound peace, knowing that He is faithful to me...he knows me...the REAL me and always has. I cherish my quiet time alone knowing that his breath is my breath. What power knowing that the Divine lives within me... is my friend and protector and will always love me.

The highest compliment I can receive is when someone says I remind them of my mother. Although she “would” have made an amazing nun, I am so thankful she was my mother, the perfect channel for God’s love. The seeds of my faith were planted years ago experiencing God’s love through her. Each joyful moment of my life, along with each sorrowful one, have only served to draw me closer to the One who loves me the most.



Jane Debleaux



**Faith is like a bright ray
of sun light.
It enables us to see God
in all things as well as
all things in God.**

- St. Francis de Sale

Witnessing Sister's love and devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist as she prepared us for our First Communion helped to continue building my faith at an early age. Her faith continued to be an inspiration to me for the remainder of her life. When she was asked to go work in the missions, she trusted that it was what God wanted her to do and she stepped out in faith, went and gave it her all. Later in her life when she was diagnosed with a terminal illness, I was touched by how she faced it with total faith and without complaint.

The next major step in my faith journey came as I was preparing for the sacrament of confirmation. Our preparation for the sacrament was led by the Sisters. It was during this preparation that my understanding of faith deepened beyond the simple understanding I had as a child. This is fitting, since the first gift of the Holy Spirit is wisdom, which is the perfection of the virtue of faith. One of the sisters who

Over the years, whenever I hear certain hymns at Mass, it brings me back to places or events that I have come to associate with the tune. In the case of "Faith of Our Fathers," it is the church parish where my parents grew up and where my grandparents lived all of their adult years. It is only fitting, since my earliest memories of faith are of attending Mass, praying the rosary and saying prayers with my parents and my grandparents. In my early years, my faith developed by listening to the words and witnessing the actions of my parents, grandparents and close relatives. They were always faithful in their worship and kind and helpful to others.

One of my earliest witnesses to faith came in the second grade. The first day started off with me in tears, upset about having to go to school. But then, I met Sr. Marisa, a Sister of Our Lady of Sorrows. When she saw I was upset, she immediately gave me a big hug. I definitely felt God's love at that moment. It certainly helped build a sense of God's faithfulness that stayed with me to this day. During that same year, I made my First Communion.

taught us could be tough at times, but she had an innate ability to impart wisdom to me, which lasts to this day. I remember being upset once because I had not done well on one of her math tests. She pulled me aside and reminded me that life is not always a bed of roses. This truly taught me the value of perseverance and faith, understanding that the immediate result may not be what we desire, but the long-term result will always be what is best for us if we have faith in God's providence. As St. Francis de Sales tells us, "Faith is like a bright ray of sunlight. It enables us to see God in all things as well as all things in God," whatever the outcome.

Throughout my life, God has sent me signs that remind me that He is always with me and present in everything. Many years ago, I was having a particularly bad day at work. There was a church just down the road from the office that had daily Mass, which I sometimes attended.

I thought it would be a good idea to go to Mass that day for a spiritual boost. Before Mass started, the organist would play various hymns. As I was sitting there that day, I recognized the tune of *Maria zu Lieben*, a particularly special tune to all of the German families descended from Roberts Cove, Louisiana, that is used as a pilgrimage song for those families. The title translates into English as “Mary I Love You.” This song was a favorite of my grandmother, with whom I was especially close. What was very unusual is that I had not, and have not since then, heard that song anywhere outside of Roberts Cove! I knew at that moment, that God was allowing my grandmother to speak to me and let me know that everything was going to be alright. It was especially poignant, since the last time I saw my grandmother I knew that her time was short. I was in tears as I was leaving her bedside, and I remember the last words she spoke to me, “Everything is going to be alright.” When we place our trust in the Good Lord, everything is truly going to be alright.

About ten years ago, I was considering taking a job in another state. It was a very difficult decision for me, since it involved moving far away from my family and loved ones and leaving a job I had only been at for six months. While I had told my employer during the interview that this was something I might want to consider in the future, I definitely wanted to leave on good terms and not leave them in a bind. As it turned out, one of the executives who had been in my role previously and had recently dealt with a serious health issue, decided she wanted to step back from her current role and would move back into the position that I was leaving. Then that same week, one of the airlines announced that it would be adding direct service to the city I was considering moving to, making trips home much easier. This is just another example for me that if we have faith, God will lead us in the right direction and everything will work out because he has a plan for us.

When I think about faith, I am reminded of a joke I heard

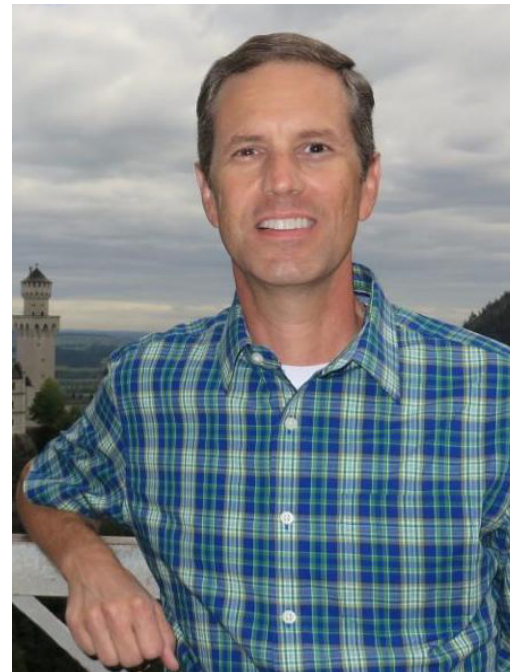
once. It goes that an individual would always pray that he would win the lottery. After this had gone on for some time, God finally spoke to him and said, “My child, if only you would buy a ticket.” This reminds us that we must walk by faith, our faith must be accompanied by action. For, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works” (James 2:14).

For me, faith is the foundation of my life, laid by my family, the witness of many holy people around me, and built upon by the experiences of life where God has always

been with me. I have learned to trust that God is always walking with me on my journey, even when life is difficult or confusing. It is like the story of the footprints in the sand where there is only one set of footprints during times of tribulation and God replied, “My child, it was then that I was carrying you.” Life experience has shown me time and again in so many different circumstances that faith is the sunlight that overcomes the darkness because we have God with us.

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By Kirk Thevis





By Erin Thomas

"the assurance of things hoped for, *the conviction of things not seen.*"

Most everyone has heard the beginning line of Hebrews 11, which describes faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, *the conviction of things not seen.*” If you read the rest of Hebrews 11, you see that the author goes on to write about the many historical figures in salvation history that moved forward in obedience as a result of their conviction of the unseen. It becomes evident in the lives he speaks of – specifically that of Abraham’s – that it is for the things unseen that God prepares us. In most of these stories that are referenced, these individuals exhibited great obedience to a God they had never seen, for a plan they could not have understood, in the hope of a Messiah they would never meet in their lifetime.

Looking back, in Genesis 22, we see Abraham’s long trek up the mountain to a sacrifice I know he was not emotionally prepared to give, but was choosing to give to God anyway. I think we can confidently assume that

he did not want to sacrifice Isaac, but was doing so out of sheer obedience and conviction for the One who sees all. I imagine he had many reservations about why God would request such a difficult offering, but he prepared the altar anyway. In ancient Israelite culture, the very structure of the sacrificial altar communicated a message of union with God. Making these altars from heaps of stones and rocks was probably hard work – a sweaty and rigorous job. The effort alone served as a prayer of communion between God and the Chosen People. Once the altar was completed, they approached it with great anticipation to offer themselves to God. Abraham’s labor of love was truly an act of conviction, that God’s unseen promise was enough.

As an artist, I am an incredibly visual person. I often envision myself, sweaty and tired, carrying all of these heavy stones to Mass and laying them all down at the

foot of the altar. With as much reservation as Abraham, I approach the altar with my own anticipation. It is on that structure that I present myself – my fears, my shortcomings, my losses, my joys, my victories, my desires – to Him who matters most. It is certainly my hope that if God rushed to Abraham to rescue Isaac, He will rescue me, too.

I could have never seen the tragedies that were coming in my life – the cancer diagnosis and death of my mom at the end of 2013; my uncle's suicide a few short months before her death; the loss of my aunt and cousin in that same year to cancer; the miscarriage of our third baby during that very same season; and, only two short years later, the fatal car accident that would change my life forever. Even the everyday obstacles of employment and job changes, financial challenges, and raising three young children in today's world have been an unpredictable part of my life. Still, the reasons beyond these obstacles are unknown to me. However, all of these experiences have demanded extraordinary conviction on my part, to continue to believe and hope in a God that I cannot see, and to continue to return to the altar with these heavy burdens. I often feel like Abraham. I feel like I am always having to choose to live my life open handed in trusting obedience to God. Sometimes it would be much easier to clench my fists, turn inward and away, and to avoid. It would have been so much easier for Abraham to just tell God, "Not this time!" and to cling to Isaac. It would have been so much easier to doubt God's promises on the simple basis that he could not see them.

*"Faith enables me
to make another trek
up that mountain.
Faith allows me
to talk myself into
placing my heart on
that altar once more."*

Though suffering and loss is not of God, life seems to take what I am not always ready to give. Expectations, desires, and people have all gone before I felt ready to give them up. It seems as though I often come to the end of myself. Like Abraham, I, too, am tested. Doubt creeps in, fear abounds, and real confusion enters. Faith gives me the power to act, to choose conviction, even though I cannot see what the result will be. Faith enables me to make another trek up that mountain. Faith allows me to talk myself into placing my heart on that altar once more.



How has faith impacted

"For nothing is impossible with God"

-Luke 1: 37



Kim Swat

Alexandria, Louisiana



Miracles happen every day, but we often miss them. My youngest child's very existence IS a total miracle from God, one that I am grateful for every day.

My husband and I began trying to have children shortly after we were married. We were faced with some difficulties, but were blessed to become pregnant with twins and had two beautiful baby girls with no complications. Two years later, our third little girl was born in perfect health after another fairly easy pregnancy.

In March 2018...another baby was on the way! I was sicker this time around and suffered a small hemorrhage early on, but it was not threatening to the baby and was gone within a month. At 20 weeks, we learned it was a boy and were thrilled! Oh how we prayed for this little boy, and he was finally on his way!

One week later, I woke up during the night bleeding. I was losing so much blood so quickly that I was in and out of consciousness. We rushed to the hospital, and it was found that the cause of the bleeding was a chronic placental abruption. The placenta was, for no reason, ripping away from the wall of my uterus. Babies do not survive chronic placental abruptions, so, that day, we were waiting and preparing our hearts for our baby to have his last heart beats. We thought we were losing our baby boy. At 21 weeks, a baby's chance of survival outside the womb is 1%.

After we received the news, heaven was stormed with prayers for baby Kooper. Saints were called upon, rosaries were prayed, children pleaded for "Mrs. Kim's baby." Our Good Lord, in His infinite love and mercy, heard every one of them.

After more tests were run, the abruption seemed to have stopped. Doctors were baffled. How did this happen? This was IMPOSSIBLE. At that time, I knew in my heart that everything would be okay. Although I was afraid, I somehow had peace. After monitoring our condition closely in the hospital, they sent us home on

strict bedrest. So, I sat and waited.

Every new week we progressed during the pregnancy, I would proclaim the miracle that God had already performed. The placenta was tearing, and when that happens, it doesn't stop. BUT SOMEHOW IT STOPPED. Every week was a miracle. Finally, at 37 weeks, my doctor decided that it was time for Kooper to enter the world.

Kooper was delivered via C-section, and his cry was the best sound I have ever heard. Then my doctor began to remove the placenta and quickly realized that this organ had been dead for some time. A healthy placenta is a red vibrant color that gives life and nutrition to the child within the womb. The placenta from my womb was gray and brown; parts were calcified and rock hard, while other parts fell apart in my doctor's hands. This organ was dead, and the umbilical cord was very thin. It is IMPOSSIBLE for a baby to grow and thrive and live without a living placenta and healthy umbilical cord. Medicine and science had no answer, but my baby boy LIVED and GREW within me, and suffered NO DEFICITS. It was IMPOSSIBLE. After the delivery, I realized just how much of a miracle we had received.

My faith has always been strong. But now, I have the amazing opportunity to help others build up their faith, for truly, nothing is impossible with God. I believed that I would hold my living child in my arms. For God was holding me, and I believed every word He spoke to me.

Today, my beautiful red-haired, blue-eyed miracle is crawling around speaking baby gibberish. He hears the angels whisper into his ear every time he meets one of his prayer warriors, and he smiles the sweetest, most precious smile at them. He is joy. He is a miracle because NOTHING will be impossible with God. My baby boy is living proof. Praise God for Kooper's impossible life!

ected your life?



Karen Guillot

Moreauville, Louisiana

My path in life began 57 years ago. From as early as I can remember, the words of God were taught to me. Those words have carried me through all of my life experiences -- growing up, getting married, having children, and becoming a teacher. My faith assured me that through all the rough waters I encountered along the way, as well as during the great times, I was never alone.

However, I came to realize many years ago that my heart always felt like something was missing and not completely fulfilled. It is one thing to know and accept on the surface that we are never alone because God is with us; it's another to truly experience it deep within our being. Then, one day when I thought that there was no light in my future, I cried out to God and told Him thank you for every difficult time I had in my life, and at that moment I felt the burning in my heart, and my heart felt like it was going to burst. My surrender to God led to my truly feeling His presence in the depths of my soul. It was then that I believed the words of Luke 1:37, "For nothing will be impossible with God." I know without God in my life, everyday would feel endless and meaningless. That experience strengthened my faith and is a constant reminder that God is always with me, and having been touched by His love, my heart loves and yearns to help others



Erik Anderson

Las Cruces, New Mexico

When I reflect on my life, I see that every time I made good choices, it was because I put my faith in God. When I was a child, my mother taught me to turn to God and His Blessed Mother for comfort when bad things happened. But as a young man, I learned through many hard experiences that it was not enough to seek God for comfort; I needed to seek out and follow His will.

Once I committed myself to this, I found my way. Shortly before my father fell seriously ill and entered into his final suffering over the course of four difficult months, an old friend from childhood came back into my life through an extremely unlikely circumstance. She was on a faith journey that was leading her to seek more solid ground than her Methodist upbringing provided. As she supported me through the hardest part of my life, she felt inspired to investigate the faith that was holding me steady. When she eventually entered the Church, we felt that God was calling us to marry, but I was hesitant because of the major change our marriage would mean for my life. Due to complicated reasons, her life was inextricably bound to New Mexico. I have always been deeply attached to the green hills of central Maryland, and I felt tremendous heartache at the thought of leaving them.

But in my prayer, God helped me hear my vocation and helped me to see that my love for my homeland was becoming selfishness, so I stepped out in faith. When I arrived in Las Cruces, I was overcome with unease. But when I attended Mass at the Basilica of San Albino, I found the same Christ in the tabernacle there as I knew at home, and suddenly I had the comfort I needed to fulfill my vocation.

Within a few months, God sent another gift: The Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows. The burdens that my wife and I carry during the week are always made lighter when we pray the rosary with the sisters on Wednesday evenings.

I no longer have my green hills, but following my faith has brought me even greater purpose and joy.

A young girl with brown hair and green eyes, wearing a white dress and a crown of large pink and white flowers, looking directly at the camera with a gentle expression.

Ask, Seek, Knock

By Erin Boudreaux



Knock and the door will be opened; the words were heavy on my heart, and I knocked even louder than before. It was a warm July morning, and I stood at the door of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows Convent desperately hoping someone would answer the door. I needed to ask for prayers, and the Holy Spirit had sent me here. I knocked yet again, no one answered. How hard can I knock on the door of a convent and still be reverent? No one was home. It was clear at this point, and then my call for desperation was answered. One of the Sisters opened the door with a smile. I asked for prayers and blessings for my unborn baby. She invited me in, and I began to tell her how our lives were turned upside down. Five days prior, a routine ultrasound turned into the darkest moment of my life. The intensity with which she listened gave me great comfort, and I knew the Lord intended for me to knock that day, He intended for me to knock very loud...

My husband and I had been excitedly chatting in the waiting room. I was 34 weeks pregnant with our second child and having a normal pregnancy. However, due to slight complications with my older son, my doctor ordered more ultrasounds towards the end of my

pregnancy. As far as my husband and I were concerned, this was just a good way to sneak an extra peek at our little girl, Julie. We sat in the dark and cool room and the nurse began the ultrasound. We were chatting about Julie's hands and legs, and then she stopped talking. When she quickly excused herself from the room, we knew something was terribly wrong and we both became frozen with fear. The doctor told us it appeared Julie had Spina Bifida, and we would need to see a specialist first thing in the morning to confirm. Spina bifida is a birth defect in which the baby's spinal cord fails to develop properly. We walked out of the office in complete silence and decided to go to the Carmelite Monastery to pray. It was our only desire at that moment. Our only hope was to ask for help in what was going to be the greatest journey of faith either one of us had ever been on.

The evening was full of worry, silence, and prayer. Our parents gathered around us and vowed their love and support. The next morning it was confirmed Julie had Spina Bifida, and we were told to prepare for a life of

medical issues and a child who would likely never walk. Overwhelmed by the diagnosis, I felt as if I were wearing a thousand pound vest. We decided that we would seek medical care at Texas Children's Hospital, and we needed to be there very soon in order to assess the severity of Julie's lesion and make a plan for her birth. While my husband took on the role of organizing and making plans, I began to seek comfort and healing in our Lord. We met with our priest, and I remember asking if it was ok for me to pray for a miracle. Can I ask God to heal our child? I was unsure if it would seem like I was rejecting the gift God had given us. While Father understood my concerns, he began to recount the many miracles of the Bible and the boldness of their prayers. So we began to pray with great zeal and boldness. We begged for healing.

Julie needed as many prayers and blessings as possible. This was now my mission. Never underestimate the power of a worried mother. During this time, anyone who would reference my ever-growing belly would get more than they bargained for as I would ask for prayers for Julie. Only five days had passed since our world was shaken; they were the worst and yet the most beautiful of my life. It was the day before we were to leave for Houston that I felt a stirring in my heart to ask for more prayers for Julie. So, I decided to go to the OLS Convent, again not knowing how this would change the story so greatly. The sisters prayed with me before the Blessed Sacrament - truly one of the most holy moments of my life. After prayer, they gave me a prayer card for Blessed Elisabetta Renzi. I truly felt God sent me there, and knowing I was able to ask for healing with such confidence, I felt a bit of those thousand pounds leave my soul that day. I shared the experience with my family, and we began our daily devotion to Blessed Elisabetta Renzi.

On August 22, 2012, my family and I nervously walked into Texas Children's Hospital. We met with a priest moments before I was wheeled down the hall. There I was, feeling as though I was being rolled into battle. For the first time in my life, I felt like I might have a nervous breakdown. The Holy Spirit gave me breath and courage. I envisioned Jesus, our Blessed Mother, and the Saints lined up in the hallways. They were ready to go into battle with me, and standing closest to the delivery room door was Blessed Elisabetta Renzi

Julie was born via C-Section. She had a head of beautiful black hair and a cry that immediately made her presence known. The moment I looked into her eyes,



the weight of worry and despair was completely gone. She was the most amazing little creature, and at only three hours old, survived a five-hour procedure to close the open lesion on her back that she was born with. There were moments in the journey when I thought she might be born perfectly healthy, and it would be an absolute miracle that she was cured in the womb, but God gently let me know that would not be the case. He had a plan for her. Julie would be some of His greatest handiwork, and she would wear scars, just as his Son does.

Julie is now seven years old. She actively participates in dancing and horse riding and loves playing outside. Although she is not the fastest kid on the playground, you will never hear her complain about it. She has worked very hard to be as active as she is and we have been blessed with many amazing therapists and doctors. Remarkably, the only surgery she's ever had was the closure surgery.

Faith is what kept my family and me afloat during a very difficult time. We boldly asked the Lord for a miracle, and He answered in His way and gave us grace to accept the blessing that was given to us. If we seek, we will find more than we can ever imagine He has planned for us.

"I am grateful that the Lord called me to this life"

By Sr. Anahi, OLS



When I was 18 years old, I went through an existential crisis. It was that time in life for me when young people consider where they are going in life. I started to ask myself what I wanted to do with my life. What direction was I going to take? I was certain that I had everything I needed to be successful in life, but inside myself there was a gaping hole. Little by little, everything that surrounded me, things that should have made me happy, didn't interest me anymore. They left me feeling empty. I was active in my local parish and participated in ministries and activities, and yet I still felt empty. I found this difficult to understand. One of my friends then invited me to participate in a choir competition that used vocation related songs. I accepted the invitation and went to the event. That was the first time I was exposed to religious life. What stuck out to me was that the religious sisters were so happy!! From that encounter, I was invited to visit the Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament and serve with them in their mission during Holy Week. I became very excited as I prepared myself for the experience. I had to leave work to attend the mission and went with little money. But spiritually, I was open to whatever the Lord had in store for me.

During this week of mission, I started to hear the Lord's call. All the emptiness that I had felt in the past dissipated, because in the mission, I found the simplicity of God. God showed me a new way to love and serve. It was weird, because I went to serve them, but they served me more by teaching me about God's love and solidarity, which come from living as His disciples.

That week, I said "yes" to God on Holy Saturday. We were all outside of the church that evening, lighting the fire to begin the Easter Vigil Mass. I remember the Sisters gave us each a brown wooden cross. I held the cross in my hands, and I responded to Him, "I know that you are calling me, I don't know what my next step is, but I entrust myself to you."

When I came back from the mission, I was different. My family started noticing that I was spending more time at the church. They didn't understand when I expressed my desire to become a religious sister. They were confused as to why I wanted to give up school, work, everything that the world deems successful. Luke 9:23-25 states, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?" This Scripture accompanied me during my process of discernment. For me, it was insightful because everything that the world and my family was offering to me would lead to my gaining "the world" but losing myself and the person God created me to be.

During the time of my discernment, my pastor told me that I needed to meet more Congregations and different styles of religious life. I met the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows at work one day. I asked them where they lived, and if I could go and visit them one day. I started to visit regularly when I didn't have work. After spending time with the sisters, I knew that they were the right Congregation for me; this is where God was calling me to be. Their diversity of ministries, including the missions outside of Mexico, is what drew me to the Order.

Ever since my first mission with the Missionary Sisters so many years ago, I became attracted to missionary work. With the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows, that desire to be a missionary has been fostered and has led me to serving here in the United States. I am grateful that I have been able to give my life to Jesus through the missions of our religious family. Every day I wake up and dream with Jesus of sharing the love of God with others through living the simplicity of the Gospel. And I am able to do so through the charisma that God first gave to our Foundress, Blessed Elisabetta Renzi. Like her, I am grateful that God has called me to this life.

25 Years of Fidelity



“At your command I will lower the nets.”

-Luke 5:5

We thank the Lord for these 25 years of faithfulness with which He has accompanied us on our journey of consecrated life. At His command, we have lowered our nets and His Word has fulfilled all our expectations. The Lord has asked us through the years to trust Him in faith, and our journey has continued to grace us with His presence, the certainty that guides and sustains us still today.

As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has said, "Faith is a confident entrustment to a "You", who is God [...] it is an act with which I entrust myself freely to a God who is Father and who loves me; it is adherence to a "You" who gives me hope and trust. Having faith, then, is meeting this "You", God, who supports me and grants me the promise of an indestructible love that not only aspires to eternity but gives it."

Our 25 years of fidelity are summed up by Mother Elisabetta's words, *"Other than God, nothing is important, nothing in the world!"* (Blessed Elisabetta Renzi) If the Lord is with us, whom shall we fear? It is not necessary that we feel His presence, for we know that He is with us always, and being with Him gives us peace and security, even in the midst of labor, difficulty, or trial. We know that regardless of what life has brought or brings in the future, we can rest assured that the Lord is with us on this great adventure through it all. Since all we desire it to be with Him; to be surrounded by His love is enough for us. For this reason, today and every day of our lives, we want to renew our "Yes" to the Lord.



On August 27, 2019, Sr. Angela Hurtado Gámez, Sr. Eduwigis Valdivia Camarena, Sr. Soledad León Frías, Sr. Serena Pinotti, Sr. Teresa Sanchez Navarro, and Sr. María de Jesús Padilla Castor celebrated 25 years of fidelity to the Lord. We thank the Lord for their yes and many years of faithful service to God and His people.



International Formator's Meeting



This summer all the formators travelled to Rome for an International Formators' Meeting. The meeting began with a pilgrimage to Assisi, the birthplace of St. Francis.

After the pilgrimage, the formators participated in a two-week intensive workshop on interculturality, which included study, discussion, and reflection. The workshop was open to other communities as well.

Following the workshop, the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows continued with conferences that focused on formation in our own Congregation.



Final Vows



On August 4, 2019, Sr. Porimolla, Sr. Liza, Sr. Eustine, and Sr. Champa, made perpetual vows in Italy.



Postulancy Entrance



To fall in love with God is the
greatest romance;
to seek him the
greatest adventure;
to find him, the
greatest human achievement.

– St. Augustine



On September 15, 2019, we welcomed three young women, Lydia, Angela and Justine into our postulancy program.



World Youth Day, Panama City, Panama 2019

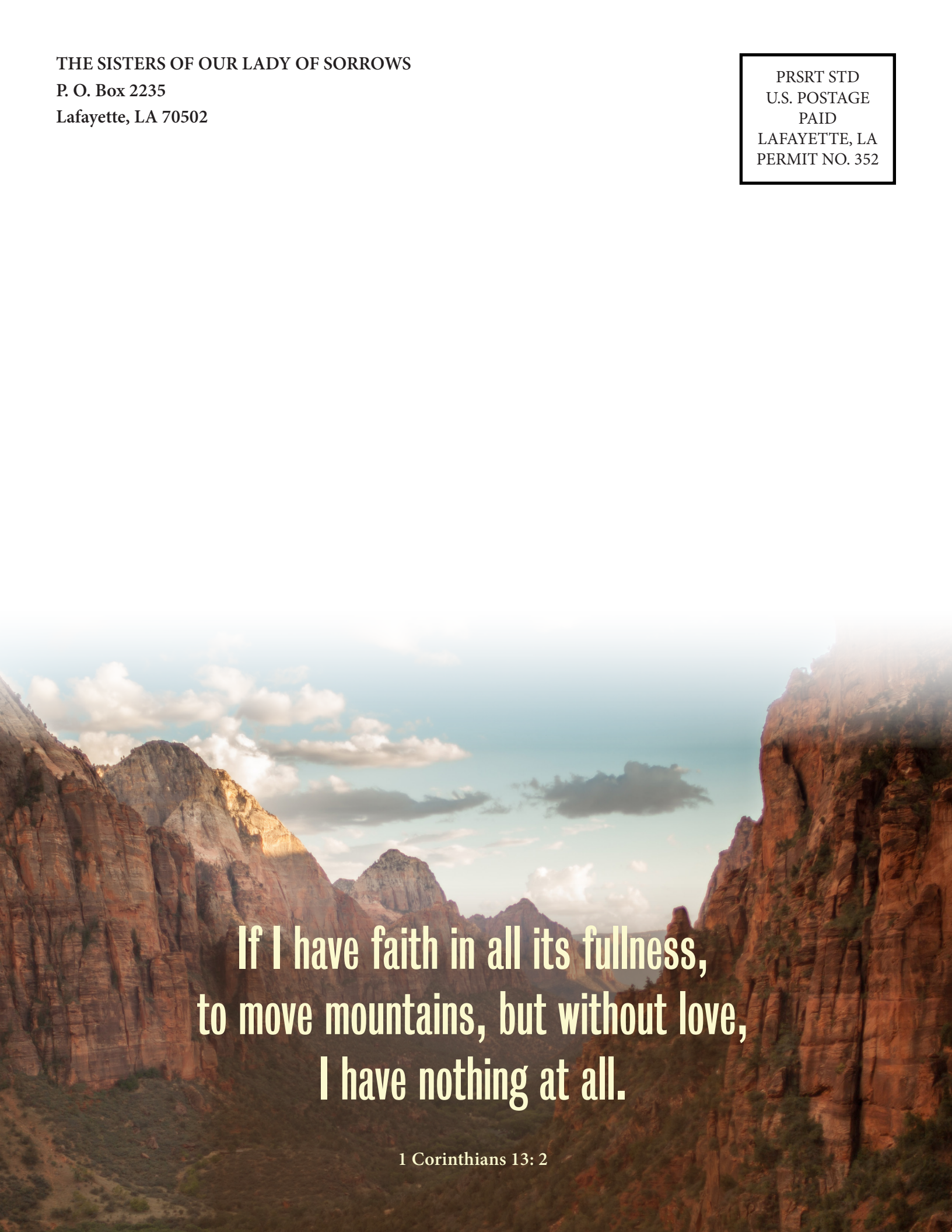


The Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows led a group of young men and women on a pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Panama in January 2019. The pilgrimage offered the youth an opportunity to experience the culture of Latin America and the universality of the Church, learning that we are all united as the body of Christ, regardless of who we are or where we come from.

During World Youth Day, Pope Francis reminded young people, *“we may possess everything, but if we lack the passion of love, we will have nothing.”* He also challenged the youth against thinking that, *“your mission, your vocation, even your life itself, is a promise far off in the future, having nothing to do with the present. As if being young were a kind of waiting room, where we sit around until we are called.”*

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If I have faith in all its fullness,
to move mountains, but without love,
I have nothing at all.

1 Corinthians 13: 2