

My Own Experience of Clarity
By Mary Sue Eck

We went to the Abbey the day before the Eucharistic Day of Renewal and gathered in the Divine Mercy Chapel. Father Darragh exposed the Blessed Sacrament in the Monstrance. When our turn came, the two of us were ushered to two chairs in front of the Blessed Sacra-ment. Father Darragh put one hand on my shoulder and one hand on Larry's shoulder. Anne put one hand on my other shoulder and one on Larry's other shoulder. It was very quiet. Others there were praying for us and for each person who came forward.

I hadn't expected anything to be made clear to me because I have more than enough to do in my life now. However, within seconds, before my eyes flashed a time in our lives that I remember as the happiest, except for our wedding day and the birth of our children and grandchildren.

I was 38 years old. We had recently made a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend and were preparing to become a team couple on future weekends. We had been asked to set up housing for Executive Couples and Priests coming in from all over the country for a leadership conference. We knew they would be planning future expansion of the movement throughout the United States and the world. Bishops from countries all over the world were asking for the weekend. It was a big job to find housing among encountered couples for all these people arriving in Chicago that Friday night. But we did it. Now we were at the airport, picking up our own four couples and two priests who were being housed with us.

In those days you could go all the way to a particular gate to meet someone at the airport. As we stood outside the first gate, other couples arrived to pick up those they were housing. Someone suggested we begin to sing what had become the Encounter song, as the arriving couples walked through the airport door. The song was one that had been popular in the 1960's, I believe, entitled, There's A New World Somewhere. The words of the chorus are:

"There's a new world somewhere we call the Promised Land. And I'll be there someday if you will hold my hand. I still need you there beside me, no matter what I do. For I know I'll never find another you."

As we sang, and the couples walked through the terminal door, they burst into tears as they heard us. We hugged them and they began to sing with us. I yelled to everyone, "Let's all go to the next gate together." Thus the group became larger and larger as we sang to couple after couple and priest after priest. Then, as we started to sing at the second gate, each one of us no longer embarrassed and now singing at the top of our lungs, I was struck with such joy that I thought my heart would burst. I was back in the Church, right up in the front seat these days, and Larry and I were RENEWING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, couple by couple. This conference would lay the foundation for the Encounter to go around the world. I knew that, and glory be to God, we were part of it!

In those days, that was the mission of Worldwide Marriage Encounter, to renew the Catholic Church by renewing the Sacrament of Matrimony. The joy that entered my heart at that moment was so profound that I believed I was having a glimpse of Heavenly joy one day.

Now I was 73, sitting before the Blessed Sacrament in Ireland, and the remembrance, the actual flashback of that day filled my heart with the exact same joy. I said to the Lord, "My 73 year old heart is going to explode, Lord." He told me, "See what I gave you?" I started to cry in gratitude.

I wasn't given the clarity to understand the significance of this flashback for several weeks. Then one day, logically, I understood. No Heavenly insight here, it just made sense that what we have spoken to couples at Marian Conferences through the years was my answer. Larry and I compare the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious mysteries of the rosary to the stages of love in our married life and in all marriages. We live the joyful times in our dating years and early marriage. Then disillusionment comes and we live the sorrowful times. If we hang in there, these are always followed by special times that are our glorious moments. Sometimes, all three stages can happen in one day, but usually each takes a period of time.

I understood that those early days in the Encounter were our joyful days in ministry. The grace of that moment in the airport covered the trials ahead that always come in serving the Lord. Over the years, in whatever ministry we were in, we suffered disillusionment of various kinds. I remember the difficult days before each Marian Conference when the hard work was almost too much and everyone was grumpy and complaining. Then the conference would happen and the calls of conversion would come in and the glorious times would fill our hearts.

At our age, with various illnesses slowing us down, especially with Larry's diabetes beginning to wipe out his memory as well as his kidneys, it seems to be a long stretch of the sorrowful times. But I realized that what is coming for us are the Glorious Days, and this time they won't end. Purgatory may come first but we'll be on our way to the Glorious, which will be beyond our comprehension. Jesus gave me that quick experience of joy again to remind me He is with us; that this, too, shall pass as we die and are born again into eternity. In the meantime, this magazine remains our constant joy and comfort. I must admit that I was very happy to hear Anne say that you didn't have to be at the Abbey to receive the gift of clarity from the Lord. It is just as in Medjugorje. Going there is wonderful, but for those who can never afford it, living her monthly messages brings Our Lady to you.

I want to end with a few lines of a letter from Anne, written on February 7, 2008. It's a lovely meditation for this Christmas:

"This year, as I looked at Baby Jesus in the manger, I thought of the feelings a mother has when someone places her newly born child in her arms. The very breath goes out of a

mother at that moment. One has to admit to the awesome power of God when one looks into the face of a new baby.

As I contemplated Jesus in the manger, I thought of what it would be like to pick Him up and hold Him in my arms. Imagine. How would you lift Him? And hold Him? Well, I think you would be reverent in the extreme, filled with awe, filled with wonder at what God intended to do with this little Infant in His lifetime.

It came to me so powerfully that this is what He, the Lord Jesus Christ, asks of each one of us. He longs for this kind of reverent, awed, and tender treatment for each of His children on earth. Most likely, we have not been treated like this by others, or at least not all the time. But surely it is God's plan that we go out into our days and treat everyone we meet like this, with the same wonder at what God desires to do for and through each person in the world."