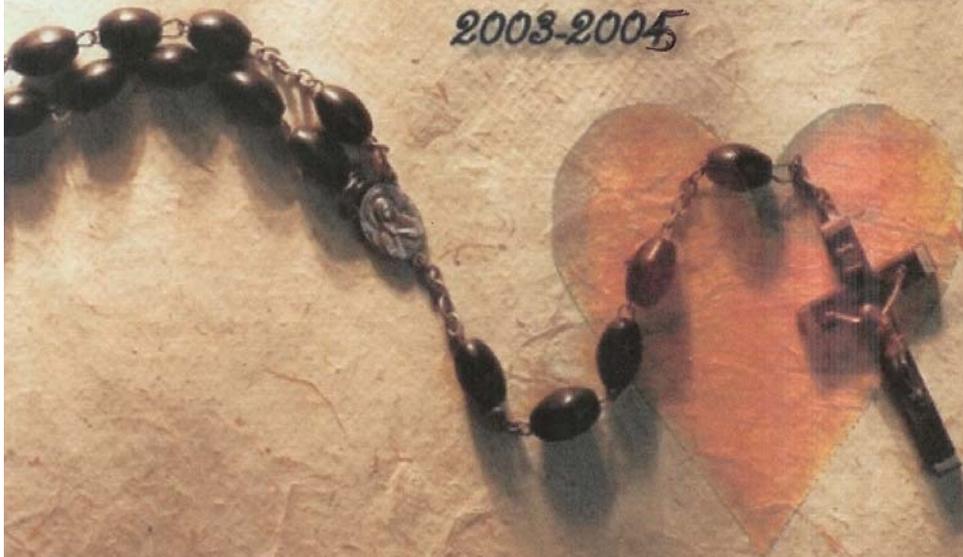


Heart to Heart

from the spiritual journals of

Ronda Cherwin

2003-2005



Heart to Heart is a sequel to *Face to Face*, excerpts from my spiritual journal that ended with May 10, 2003. I cut off that book because I had reached the turning point of moving from the college I was working at to living fully at the retreat center I had been visiting on long weekends. Let me begin this part of my journal with this quotation from St. Therese of Lisieux:

*“I think that the Heart of my Spouse is mine alone,
just as mine is His alone,
and I speak to Him then in the solitude
of this delightful heart to heart,
while waiting to contemplate Him one day
face to face.”*

[Fr. Bro, *St. Therese of Lisieux* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003) p. 79-80]

May 18, 2003

A lovely poem by my daughter, Carla:

Laudate

My trees are huddled tightly in their groups –
They’re listening. They wait for the chirroo
Of this last sunrise. Every trunk is full
But they are not departing. They have roots.

The first slight golden drops begin to fall
Like floating carpets. When the wrecking ball
Smacks thicker waters from this praying sky,
This bleeding sky, this cracking sky, then I

Will have to lift my feet. Because I can,
I cross myself and mumble my amens
Just as the egg breaks. I can almost hear
The willing barks receive the dawn. “No fear:

We’ll follow,” whisper leaves so I might know
Their promise to remember when I go.

May 20, 2003

Today I had a thirst to just live with Jesus as an anchorite, to stay in my hut as much as possible for the year and not leave except when necessary. I was thinking of a real anchor-hold walled into the church here. It turned out that this was not possible, for interesting reasons. One is that it would cost more than I have to build such a self-contained hut mostly because of the cost of putting in a plumbing line

and electricity. However, I think that dreaming about such an enclosure was a symbol of wanting to be more and more alone with God. This I can accomplish just by moving to a more outlying hut farther from the main roads.

June 1, 2003 (letter from a trip elsewhere)

Hail Fr. P.,

Travel makes the mind grow narrower, I find. Now I don't want to be a hermit, I want to be an anchorite, I am so horrified by the noise of worldly life. Mama mia! My heart yearns for Jesus in the monstrance in my oratory and for your Mass. Also your wisdom. Even though I have gotten along very well with my daughter – who is writing more and more Catholic imagery poems – and her friend, and the kids, I can hardly bear the noise and also that there's no one I can talk Catholic with.

Working on *Taming the Lion Within: 6 Steps from Anger to Peace* has been cathartic and enlightening – especially the research. Most of the Christian psychotherapists I read think that anger is a cover for vulnerability. I have finished the 99 page first draft of it and am eager to share it for teaching and input. (Since then it has come out as a shorter book. For information see the new releases button on www.rondachervin.com.)

I want to be small and silent. It seems clearer to me how my exaggerated humor and nervous chatter is a defense mechanism and how only absorbing the love of God for me in contemplative prayer can make me feel safe enough to be smaller and quieter so that my energies can go into being a blessing to others and not to “the defense fund....”

See you soon, Shalom,

Ronda

June 16, 2003 – for Daniel from Ronda, Holy Fool

(This ditty is related to a young friend of mine left for Italy and his clothing being scheduled there instead of here where I was expected to enjoy watching it.)

Alas, for my sin?
I shall not see my brother/son's clothing day
Aye, the fellowship of solitudes
needs be less visible, n'c'est pas?

Yet, I trow
By dint of bearing a wee bit of thy sufferings

**Still, shall I be deemed worthy
to be thy anchor-hold**

**That, one day thee shalt be
The priest of me!**

June 10, 2003

On an unbearably long journey with 3 airplane changes and 6 hours of waiting in airports between flights I decided to cancel all further trips. I felt that I would die right in the airport I was so exhausted. Between osteoporosis and hemorrhoids, I just can't deal with travel. When I called to cancel my speaking dates for a long enough time in the future so they could find someone else, most of the people said they felt the same way now about travel, and they understood.

When I got back to the retreat center, I felt drawn into the Mass and the Sacred Host. Jesus, you seemed to say, "Now, just rest in me. No more rushing around. I will do great things in *you*, not so much in *your works*." St. Edith Stein, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Therese of Lisieux, dear Sisters, make me worthy. I realized that I want to be here even when some of my best friends leave for studies elsewhere because of You, You, You, dear Jesus.

June 16, 2003

Fr. P. said that I should try to be free of spirit and not push communal work. Since I am a workaholic, I need to just ease into my new life and not get myself scheduled up.

June 18, 2003

Now that I am not going anywhere, as if to show that I am not really cut off, more and more people are coming or calling me for some kind of consultation. Thank you, Holy Spirit for showing me so soon that withdrawing from active life doesn't mean I will be totally cut off.

Our piest mentor is involved in a project of restoring an old Church in Mexico that had been abandoned and then desecrated with graffiti. He contributed a small amount to fix it up and have a janitorial person around at night to protect it. It turns out the Bishop was glad – they have no money for such works. There was a Mass with 150 people to celebrate the restoration.

June 22, 2003

The phrase "hibernate in My heart" came to me today. Fr. P. said that I am trying to get security desperately by making it depend on moving into a smaller hut, vs. realizing that the insecurity must have become in earliest babyhood, maybe even

in the womb, for me to be so wounded and agitated. There is no security except in God interiorly.

June 25, 2003

Busy and troubled about all sorts of trifles, Jesus asked me, “Do you want to be a fuss-budget or a mystic?” Tears. Yes, I so fussy because I am trying to get security from ordering externals – how pathetic: rows and rows of knitted wool, sorted out books, completed projects, always wanting closure. Instead of closure, I should enclose my heart in your Sacred and Immaculate hearts, Jesus and Mary.

June 30, 2003

There was a rare meeting. Among other things, Fr. said that there should be no random socializing and chatting except at lunch and no one should ever bother anyone in their huts unless for something really urgent. I had been saying I wanted to be small and silent. Well, this is it! At first I felt desolate at this prospect since I am such a social chatterer, but then I felt peace.

I am getting a lot of peace also from having turned back the door of the mirrors on my bathroom cabinets. In this environment I don't need to check my appearance. I do my hair automatically. The result of having the inside wooden panel showing instead of the mirror is that I am not having this periodic dialogue with my face, trying to see how ugly I have become, or improving that ugly image by my smile. I am amazed what a difference it makes not to have those little dialogues. Much more seeing myself only in the loving eyes of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Thank you Holy Spirit for this inspiration.

July 3, 2003

Dear Fr. P.,

I loved what you said in your talk about how the one day old spontaneously aborted babies are really persons beloved of God, since I had 6 miscarriages. But also, every fertile woman, immediately if she thinks she might have conceived, will be thinking of the being of that eeny little one, awaiting each month proof of whether it was conceived or not, and even thinking of names, so we are very close to that mystery.

Since I realize I may have questions, foolish or otherwise, that no one else seems to have I will write them down and you can see which ones you might want to address when we meet for direction.

I am still confused about the relationship between the monastic or cloistered tradition and the hermit tradition. And I should get this right for my research. (I am working on a book about Hermits). Of course I understand what interior touch of

God is, but as to everything being interior rather than having an exterior correlative or incarnate form is unclear. For example, when did the position you and the others take at adoration prayer folded over in a very infant like position vs. prostration flat on the floor, start gaining ground? Is it French? (I found out it comes from Ven. Charles de Foucauld)

Now, hermits don't sit in monastic hard wooden choir stalls like monks who could never crouch like that unless in their own cells. Should I be thinking that when we pray folded over, interiorly we are folded over? Or that this is only cultural or individualistic? I am working on trying the new position for me, blocked slightly, to be blunt, by it feeling "funny" – slightly immodest? - as a woman to have my rear end elevated in the face of the man behind me. It is easier to do this if I am in the back row.

With your fine logical mind you will unravel this to my satisfaction.

PAX Ronda

July 4, 2003

I feel so close to my twin-sister who is in the hospital with undiagnosed pain. Please Padre Pio, help her.

Great joy in the move to the little hut. I had been in a guest house with several rooms. Now I have a tiny foyer with a hot plate and small fridge and one big room divided into all-purpose space and an oratory blocked off by the divider of books. To have all I own in the world in one room! Well, that's closer to St. Francis than hitherto. Alleluia. I have no car and the walk is about 5-10 minutes on the dirt road to any other places here. I feel better with the exercise. Out of laziness I used to drive the car even to go one minute away!

It actually feels good that no one will come to my hut. Private. No need to arrange anything with the views of guests in mind. The silence is like a swim in a cool lake. Never without your grace, dear God, could such a one as I ever come to love solitude and silence!

I used to hate the shaved heads of the males members of the community. It reminded me of prisoners or concentration camp residents. Suddenly I had a different image. Their heads are like baby's heads – you can see the hard outlines but there is the soft fuzz in contrast. I used to love that texture of my baby's hard heads but soft covering of hair. Are shaved heads an unconscious symbol of the monk or hermit as being like a child with no public role?

July 10, 2003

To have the Eucharist in a monstrance in our own individual hermitage (this is allowed in the Church because it is a tradition of Eucharistic hermits even if they are lay.) is like winning the prize in the Catholic lottery – nothing less than A SYMBOLIC FORM OF FINDING THE HOLY GRAIL!

Stunned by this thought in the night I wrote this poorly written but ardently felt poem to the priest who is head of the hermitage referring to how he prayed some of us out of the snares some of us were in before coming here and brought us the “Grail.”

Ode to a Contemporary Starets (Russian word of holy hermit mentor)

**Deliverance prayer,
Was the torch aflame
You brought with you
To open the snares
In which we rabbits
Were caught in our pride
Thinking with paltry strategies
To overcome the oldest enemy
Of mankind.**

**You scooped us up
And opened wide the doors
Of a village of peace
And tucked us into beds
Protected by guardian angels.
And, then, when we were
Healed enough to see the dawn
You brought the Holy Grail
Right into our rustic cabins.**

**Still battle-weary
We nodded thanks
And slept some more
With haunting nightmares
Dragging us back into the pit
We ourselves had dug.
But now we know enough
To shout, Amen, Amen, Amen!**

June 10, 2003

I have been enraged and hysterical about telephone company glitches concerning putting in my line in the new hut. Finally at Adoration in tears I realized that the real cause of the tears are that I feel “cut off” because no one in my family are real Catholics. Jesus seemed to say that he inspired me to read the book on purgatory because I can see that I can help save them, even if not now, later, through prayer. I should offer the pain of the separation for their souls. I need to start saying the Jesus Prayer constantly when I feel so upset. He is allowing the exterior being cut off so I will get constant with that saving prayer of his holy name.

Concerning having a dislike and distaste for my own body, Fr. P. said that if one didn't feel loved enough as a child, or loved in a wrong way – too physically based – then one sometimes has a deep inadequacy reflected in a sense of the body being ugly.

July 11, 2003

Going to confession for harsh judgments and rage about the 9 day telephone company glitches, I was afraid Fr. P. would say I needed to leave here if I had to shame a religious community by making scenes with strangers at the telephone company. Instead he laughed and said I should get a medal rather than a penance for insisting on my rights. I realized that being afraid of being sent away from here comes from the devil trying to work on my fear of rejection.

Long, long prayer of quiet after the tumult of worrying about my sister Carla's undiagnosed illness. I was able to give it all over to you, Jesus.

July 12, 2003

Dear little Jenny (my oldest grandchild),

I am thinking of you as very little because I am remembering the day of your baptism!

But first, as a college teacher, I congratulate you on your fine SAT scores which will help you throughout life. Even though as a Christian, having a big heart is even better than having a big head, still it is a gift to be bright. Someone said to me recently whenever you can do something easily it proves it is a gift from God...

July 14, 2003

More problems with the phone company getting in long distance from my new smaller hut. I can get calls but can't call out. I wondered if you, Jesus, are

trying to tell me not to call out so much, just answer the calls of those who call in. Symbolic? You seemed to smile and say, “You have a direct long distance line to me!”

Today is the feast of St. Bonaventure and the beautiful reading from him about knowing God through love not the mind. Great graces of fire in the heart.

Thinking about Fr. P. saying that we don’t have to do penances, life is so hard nowadays. To just take each day as it comes is enough. For me it would be paradoxically penitential to shoo away chronic worry about the future!

July 16, 2003

Dearest Diana (daughter in Los Angeles)

Of course I realize it is out of love for me that I have only to mention some frustration like the phone-line glitch and you are already imagining that I am miserable and this latest adventure in living at a retreat center will not work.

I am thinking that it is because I am not a poet like all the rest of the family that I can’t describe what I love about it here beautifully enough for you to see it. So I woke up praying for an hour long poet’s gift to describe it better, especially since it is unlikely you will come soon.

First – dawn. From my windows I can see nothing but the short mesquite trees and the sky. The sky is huge. It seems even larger than in Arizona because it is less colorful – a whole scape of space as a backdrop for life. So exotic for a NYC gal who was hemmed in by the backs of filthy tenement houses as a child.

The weather is so real here, especially now that I gave up my car. This morning at 6 AM after the non-storm I could see the black clouds of night scudding across the horizon and a damp freshness in the usually torrid summer air. It is only five minutes walk to the chapels and the main house. As these are fully air-conditioned, this serves as a fierce contrast between the blazing heat and then the blissful cool. I walk around with a tall thin pilgrim stick – picturesque and a little theatrical, but actually a stick does help older bones to promenade.

My house is made of white stucco, which reminds me of the bright white of the casitas in Capistrano (where we lived when my twin daughters were 4-5 years old). The inside is like a cabin. It is all white stucco with wooden window frames and an A-line ceiling of wooden planks. It feels cozy, enclosed, safe.

My dislike of crowds – when did it start? Not as a child. I found NYC crowds full of interest and fun. The first time I remember disliking a crowd was at a conference where I was a speaker. There was a slight feeling of agoraphobia after the talk was over, of not wanting to be surrounded by even friendly strangers. It has

grown and grown. I loved the college when there were just about 20 of us, all well-known. When we reached 40 and then 60 I started hating eating in the cafeteria with 60 people around me, many of whom I knew only by face and casual greetings, not in a really intimate way.

If you walked in the door to my tiny foyer you would see on the wall your painting of the cat in front of the orange rug, always a favorite. It doesn't feel like a picture of a cat. It feels like it's you as a cat. Then there is an old print of Greenwich Village in one my father's unique speckled frames. And the collage of photos of all the grandchildren at all stages. The foyer has a 3 by 3 foot fridge and a hot plate. I cook a variety of tasty foods, expanding as I go along because I prefer these to the less meaty meals the others have for lunch. The one communal meal at the retreat center is optional. At first I loved going to it, and I still I love being with the others and listening to them, but have tired of listening to my own voice, always needing, it seems, to dominate the conversation in the same way my mother used to do with spicy but not particularly edifying anecdotes.

Enter the main room, I guess about 15x15 square with wooden bookcases blocking off the oratory. Unlike in the past, the bookcases are not stuffed. I have greatly diminished my holdings, donating them to the college and the retreat library. Some shelves have pictures in them instead. It's a bright room with 3 windows. The short trees I see from the windows have delicate leaves that blow in the slight breeze coming all the way from the Gulf.

The oratory has in it a wonderful Mexican crucifix – about 4 feet tall, the wood about 6 inches wide thick ridged dark wood, hand-carved. The face of Christ looks older than usual – easier to identify with not only the pain but the fatigue in the face. There is a Hispanic wooden tabernacle with metal nails in a design. I sit on the floor on a mat to pray. How the words of the Psalm “like a dry weary land, my soul longs for you, O God” resonate in this dry weary desert like land that surrounds me. I spend about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour here in the morning after breakfast and before Mass, another period after siesta, and different times run in to talk to Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and the angels as my day proceeds. In the evening 7-8 we pray together before the Blessed Sacrament, but in silence.

It is fantastic not to have the pressure of any work or other schedule. I do about 1-2 hours of helping – cooking which I'm getting to like again after the long hiatus after becoming a widow, sorting the library books, shopping in town. In the late afternoon I work on writing projects, but none have deadlines. Once a week I have a long conference with Fr. P., the moderator of the center. Since I am well formed in quiet prayer of the heart already we mostly talk about externals but also about the underlying anxiety he sees as coming from deep childhood insecurities. He is convinced that no one gets security from anything external. That is all a detour. Only in deep absorption of God's absolute love, experienced in the depth of our hearts can we find peace. Since I do experience this blissful love oftener here than any time since the period of mystical prayer I had in the 70's, I am easily

convinced he is right. I also pray a lot for the family – those who have gone on to eternal life and those living.

Fr. P. is not sure I am suited to be a total hermit. Another option would be to live on the property as a lay member of the community, coming and going as the Spirit moves me – this would be compatible with giving very occasional talks around the country as I used to. At present I have no desire to go anywhere, but this could change. This year will tell.

July 19, 2003

Reading about St. Seraphim of Sarov and how his monastery was being restored since the end of communist rule, I had a wish to see it. Then, in prayer I had a sense that I don't have to go anywhere because everything is in me since I am in God now. Then it seemed all the places of the world converged in my heart.

July 21, 2003

This morning, of a sudden, I felt a fire in my throat and coming out of my mouth with a smell of toxic fumes, such as burning chemicals might omit. It lasted for about 2 minutes and frightened me. I thought it was demonic. I jumped into my tan dress, to match the color of the regular members of the community, and went to Fr. P. who thought it was a demon of anger and did a deliverance prayer over me.

July 23, 2003

Dear Father,

How happy to have so much money again to give to our village. This amount will vary month to month this year but is still possible to give a lot even with giving some to feeding the poorest ones, future dental bills, and holding out a lump sum for travel should my family want to come. So far no takers due to sister being so sick still (bile duct blockage they now say) and daughters being otherwise engaged for vacation time.

It feels like what used to be called “earnest money” - for my sanctification, i.e. clinging to the hope that God will let me stay in this place where that is the only goal in the milieu of a starets who not only seems willing to tolerate me but even to confirm my place here in oblique ways that one with such long antenna for insecurity picks up gratefully. Or, I suppose, you pick up my reasons for insecurity and then think of a way to make me feel more secure.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, Ronda

July 24, 2003

As I start to read John of the Ladder, the great ascetic, I think, what about me? So weak. You, Jesus, seem to say “but Mary was the greatest of saints and you don’t read about her fasting or flagellating herself. For you, right now, just to take one day at a time without all the fretting and worry is enough. Fast from fretting and worry. Be carefree and joyful and when you are not do your Jesus prayer.”

St. Elizabeth of the Trinity wrote “A soul that indulges in useless thoughts and desires scatters it forces. It is not completely under God’s sway. It’s lyre is not in tune, so that when the Master strikes it, it cannot draw forth Divine harmonies; it is too human and discordant.”

July 26, 2003

Today I had a sense of how Fr. P. is configured to my soul just because we are so different. Perhaps I would never grow if surrounded only by people who thought I was fine just as I am. I had a dream where I was adopting 4 boys. When I woke I thought they were the four seminarians to be who live here, and that I am called to pray very much for each of them.

July 28, 2003

My daughter Carla wrote that soon I will think solitude is my spouse. I thought she was being sarcastic, but she said, no, she just thought it was true and I needed to hear it.

July 30, 2003

After a minor spat in the midst of an optional project, I had a strong feeling of being pulled away from projects. I had read in an article about discerning the hermit life that being too much excited about projects is a counter-sign.

In the night a word came to me that everything only exists because of love. Only love counts. Like in John of the Cross, who says at the end of our lives the only thing that counts will be love. So even though projects can be an expression of love, I don’t need to give them so much weight, as if they were the end rather than the means. I thought that when we are young we have to try to make things as good as they can be, but when we fail nonetheless, the residue is love, mostly forgiveness love.

This concept expanded today as I thought about how the contemplative life is about direct if obscure love in the heart. The other things such as books, meals, building houses, politics, should all be expressions of or forms of love. When I write a book that expresses my love of truth in a particular area, the real purpose should be that my readers may be benefited by that truth. Or, a fiction work expresses love

of life, love of particular characters, desire to set a mirror before unloving ways of being. A poem? The beauty of life in the midst of all the pain?

Contemplatives, being much slowed down, have more time to understand such realities.

Sermon of Fr. P., August 4, 2003

The scripture was where Jesus says that he is the bread of life and that all who come to him with never hunger or thirst. Father said this requires some explanation. Most of us still feel that we hunger and thirst even though we come to Jesus. Father P. gave an analogy to little babies who are deeply anguished if their food and drink is delayed. We need to see that we need Jesus every moment that same way. I, Ronda, thought about breastfed on demand babies in tribes who lives on their mother's breast and also breastfeeding at night in our times vs. old way of letting baby cry itself to misery and finally give up on night feeding. Also I thought, why would I want to do anything without Jesus.

Fr. P. says when we feel bad it is because we don't feel loved and then we seek compensations of all sorts. Instead we should be like a baby who knows it needs its mother all the time. Like a babe in the womb who gets everything from the mother's blood. If we don't understand this, then Jesus' words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood are shocking and not understandable. In obscure faith we need to eat and drink of him and he of us in a certain way, too.

I thought of how the constant Jesus prayer expresses this.

More August 4th – I am feeling more feminine because I am cooking more for the village. Sense of since it is voluntary, it is not like in so many families where no one thanks the cook but only criticize her. Is it part of the hermit village non-community feature vs. communities more formal where each has a job to be criticized for, that since all is more voluntary we are so happy if anyone does anything?

August 9, 2003 (After Fr. P. left for Europe for 6 weeks)

Dear Father,

I thought I'd do a running letter of God's graces and inspirations since surely you are praying for your little remnant here.

Listening to your tapes on continuous prayer and the Holy Name reminded me that I was baptized at 21 in the Church of the Holy Name in NYC and January 4th, the date, was then the Feast of the Holy Name!

Unexpected problems here. Sudden physical fears about someone who didn't come to Mass – maybe he's had a stroke and is lying helpless in his hermitage, etc. Br. Thomas pointed out that it goes with being a hermit that something bad might happen and we are not organized to take care of it. I felt ashamed of being so fearful, and lay down to take a nap. As if to make sure these fears wouldn't become a major problem in the next 6 weeks, God put me into a 2 hour trance of peace and reassurance of his love and that nothing else mattered but that love. This seemed like a proof that God wants me here.

I read an excerpt about hermits that said Pius XI said the hermit life was the highest vocation as such, of course, if one is called to it.

Listening to your tapes about the history of spirituality of the heart going from Helene through Pere Thomas' uncle priest, etc., I am wishing that if we get the grant for the sound studio or even if we don't, you would consent to have someone make up a tape series just on this subject out of the old tapes plus occasional clarifications, referring to Pere Thomas' masterly foundational understanding of it. I think your lectures that I am listening to on old tapes have terrific focus and intensity. The only thing I would wish for is more examples – for instance if you say spirit in Pere Thomas means seeing the part in the whole, to give 3 examples from daily life to match since the concept is new. If you were willing I could easily indicate where such examples are needed with some voice such as Br. Michael's reading into the tape what is necessary for sequence and splice.

I also thought maybe I should write a separate book with the theme: *The Captivated Heart: from Co-dependency to the Embrace of God*. I like the main title, not the sub-title, but I'm just getting across the idea for you. Please let me know what you think of both these ideas.

I told you I was reading this manuscript about the unborn Jesus in the womb of Mary. Here is a fantastically beautiful image relative to what you were saying about interior touch. The author writes about how "Jesus in the amniotic sac could have been straining forward and reaching out His tiny finger towards the inner heart of Mary his mother – as God touches each human heart from deep within."

I have been listening to more tapes. I don't know how, but for me it was totally new to think of the purpose of the dark nights being to die to the ego, not the true self. This puts it so clearly. I am wondering if having gone through quite a lot of dark nights already, the last dark night is the detachment from my "professional self." People seem to think I am more humble than most in terms at least of not being arrogant professionally as a teacher, speaker, writer, but there is still plenty of love of fame and applause, as you have detected and occasionally make fun of in a gentle way. I had the feeling that God allowed me to fall on my face in personal sin many years ago to get rid of the vanity of thinking I was on the road to holiness vs. just wanting mercy. We can talk of this more when you return if you think it is worthwhile.

It looks as if Sophia will take *Taming the Lion Within* on a conditional basis of different changes they want. I am very glad because I think it can help many Catholics who are stuck in this area. I mean to expand the section on contemplative prayer.

You used the word “schmuck” in one of your tapes of a few years ago. I laughed. You see, being refined atheistic Jews, we never used Yiddishkeit in our house, but my husband was steeped in it and I loved the earthy humor of it and took it on, to the horror of my very refined sophisticated mother.

You often use the word modest to describe our little efforts and that word is one I seldom use though I hope I am literally modest enough, but schmuck – to think of myself as just a schmuck would be very helpful, especially in contrast to being in my mind some sort of heroine in the melodrama of each day.

In case you would like to know what my usual schedule is like nowadays, here it is:

6 AM arise – eat breakfast

6:30 Pray in my oratory in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament including Morning Prayer and readings from Office of Readings

7:45 Mass and Thanksgiving – I’m doing this longer now

9-11:30 AM errands for community or answering personal mail or phone calls

Lunch in hermitage

Siesta

After Siesta – which usually leads to waking up truly joyful and peaceful

One hour: Prayer in oratory including Mid-Afternoon prayer, spiritual reading on hermits or listening to tapes – Evening prayer

One hour: recreation – summer swim, winter maybe skip

Work on manuscripts

Light dinner

7 PM – Community Adoration – including Rosary and Mercy Chaplet

8 PM Night prayer followed by any counseling phone calls

Reading of a lighter Christian book – lives of the saints, Christian or noble type or humorous fiction.

10 PM sleep

Trying to say the Jesus Prayer of the Heart during the day.

If you have any suggestions on this, let me know when you return.

I am finding the set of tapes that consist in your answering questions, mainly of one of the brothers, very helpful. Most of the time in spiritual direction in the past I have had such seemingly catastrophic problems in family and work that I never focused on the interior life as such. Most of the interior part came from the

friendship with Charlie Rich, but that was more exchange of illuminations rather than spiritual direction. Lots of what you say fits my experience but I didn't have a theory for it, such as not dwelling too heavily on the problems of others so as to be cast down by them, but confiding them to God and suffering with the person but trying not to get caught up in the details of advice. I am happy to say that now when people confide in me I am more inclined to tell them to go to Jesus in Adoration and that I will do that also for them and then see what God might be saying vs. only coming out with a stream of analytic advice. I think the Holy Spirit is trying to refine me in this area.

One of the tapes mentions contacts with the poor. Some "friends from Central America" arrived last week. Because there were so few of us around I spent much more time with them than ever before, cooking, trying to speak in their language haltingly, also since I am now so old it was easy to give them encouraging hugs in the crisis of their pilgrimage to come. It felt very good, very feminine, God opening my heart with compassion for all those people in their circumstances. So it seems it was a prophecy fulfilled that in that tape of several years ago you hoped we would have more contact with the poor – also now in our La Mina project for some of us.

In one of the tapes you mention that it is sad but true that very few really want to be close to God. I was pondering that when God seemed to ask me, "Don't you want to be with me alone? I am so beautiful, more beautiful than the ocean or Niagara Falls or a horse, or music." Ah, yes, of course.

Enough for now. Shalom, Arrivederci, etc. Ronda

August 15, 2003

An interesting fact is that, according to Pere Thomas Philippe, St. Thomas and St. Bernard were uncertain about the Immaculate Conception before it was proclaimed, because that would be ensoulment at conception which contradicted the philosophy based on Aristotle that ensoulment came after the body was more greatly developed. The Gospel of Life encyclical, of course, confirms immediate ensoulment.

From a letter of a contemplative co-author, Mary Neill, O.P.:

"My meditation daily is Jesus' answer to Teresa of Avila when she asked, what do you want of me, and he said, ENJOY ME. How relentlessly I must put aside my ego's inflated worries to let that enjoyment flood in." She wrote me about a workshop she went to where someone said that worry comes from an inflation of the ego – as if I could save the world if only I worried enough?

28 Agosto 2003

Carissimi fratelli, (the brothers getting ready for seminary in Italy)

I thought it would be fun when I send your other forwarded mail to send a running letter I could write in “fractured,” Italian, Spanish, mostly italiano con notizie comical de sui vera casa Solitudine, eh? La gran parte stupidaggini – that is a slang word in Italian meaning trivia.

By this time you have time to miss your albatross and think of me again as a Holy Fool, speriamo!

Well, you missed some choice moments: the tone of Fratello R.’s voce cuando he speaks of the remaining huge ham (he is vegetarian) ; Fratello A. finding out that the owner of the place that is “fixing” his car no longer even answers the phone! Io, stupida, looking at the 1 quart can of Algae-cide and trying to figure out its relationship to my written instructions “pour ½ gallon of Algae-cide into the pool!”

Happier moments so far: A look of sweet joy on the face of Fr. C. at the parish when I thanked him profusely for having an evening Mass that we could come to. Fr. I. telling Fratello R. that he was amazed at the carita shown him by us in his crisis. My happiness listening to a tape of Padrecito P. on forgiveness, transcendence and mercy. The gist, in case you’ve dimenticato is that, whereas on a rational plane we can justify non-forgiveness, people are so miserable that we have to forgive them.

Of course, I am now addicted to making rosarios. Fratello T., sui rosaries de colores son stupendo. No ho visto loro prima. Con esta calor e molto pui facile fare rosarios che knit blankets.

Oggi la festa de San Agostino, uno dei santi pui vicino mi cuore. Come appassionata!

A propos I am working on a day of recollection for Ottobre e dopo, possibilmente, un piccolo libro sul tema I quattri amore de C.S. Lewis e preghiera del cuore – por ejemplo:

Storge – affection love – and preghiere come bambino, semplice, dolce, anche Tongues.

Philia – friendship – sharing with Jesus, tutti il tempo, mostly in prayer and gratitudine, tutti cose de giornate che io amo and Il ama insieme – amicizia depende di valore simili.

Eros – passion – longing da profundita por Amore de Iddio

Agape – neighbor love – sempre con Lui – da Su Amore ai poveri ma con la poverta su stessa di aver bisogno da Lui.

Le piace?

Any ideas for me?

Di mi tutto! Come sta sui pensione? Il grotto? Sui animi? I por praticare italiano, uno di voi potete correct this lettera con ink rosa, eh, i rimandere.

Dopo pregheira da notte – io prego por mi fratribus absentibus!

Pax vobiscum, Rondanella

September 2, 2003

Dear Fr. P.,

The first letter I wrote that I sent with Brother M. had mostly good. After that all sorts of imps seemed to come to get me agitated about trivial stuff. Watching my interior state under different circumstances, it seems to me now that the best for me here at the hermitage is to be like the old pensioners who lived around the monastery and helped when they could but didn't have any kind of juridical status. This corresponds to your intuition that maybe some day we'd have a kind of widow village off to the side.

Between my need to “improve” daily ways of doing things, my scrupulous tendencies, and my analytic mind, any kind of situation where I have to deal with others about all kinds of trivial matters seems to be agitating. Being agitated is the last thing I need at this contemplative time of my life. Classroom teaching was always good for me in structure, because I was the head and could use my analytic skills to improve, not other peers, but my own skills and those of students where my role was clear.

As an old pensioner hermit I can live in simplicity of life and dress, join the others for Mass and prayer, receive spiritual direction, and help on a volunteer basis with shopping, post office, library, Sunday dinner, and whatever comes up on an emergency basis, but all on an easy-going schedule with no need to discuss matters with others much. Of course I will love to donate as much as possible for the welfare of my beloved hermits.

Thinking about this, I felt more peace and Jesus seemed to say that this fit with his word to me so long ago not to belong to anything, which I now interpret as meaning not to belong to something in a way where I am part of the inner workings of it day by day.

We can talk about it more when you come back. PAX Shalom, Ronda

August 30, 2003

For two days now much deeper trance like prayer where I feel that I disappear or die, but come to not as if I slept but deeply rested. I feel more drawn to Jesus in the oratory at all different times, rather than going there “on schedule.” This seems related to not having any work I have to do that would be “on my mind.”

This trance-like prayer is not like ecstasy which is much more emotional and full. It is more metaphysical, “on top of the mountain, nothing,” as St. John of the Cross puts it.

September 4, 2003

I was talking to a friend who says the minute she walks into the presence of the Eucharist she goes into prayer of quiet, or even deeper trance, but she didn't know that this was good.

All sorts of trivial glitches here. I felt overwhelmed and tempted to try something else. I kept feeling, though, the pull of Jesus in the Eucharist wanting me to be here for him and nothing else. Finally through the ministry and prayers of one of the more reclusive brothers I got out of my knot and into peace and joy and happiness again.

September 5, 2003

I am anticipating a celebration of a wedding by the Justice of the Peace of a woman and man, neither ever married in the Church, coming after a painful divorce. I turned to Daytime Prayer, 2nd Week Thursday and found “May God's love console me,” and you seemed to say, there was wrong, but I bring good out of evil. You can rejoice in the good I am bringing out of it.

September 6, 2003

I got into a royal snit over various frustrations. In the end I said without humor “even the simple is impossible.” Then I laughed. What a remedy laughter is for defeat in trivial and maybe even in deeper concerns!

Later, praying frantically Jesus, help me. You seemed to reply “I want you here. Just stop initiating anything. Don't get into anything you don't have to. Apply “love and do what you will,” unless someone else needs you to do something, not something you think they might need. Stop being helpful and just withdraw until I can saturate you with My peace.”

I spoke to Fr. P. on the phone from Italy. He said my motherliness makes me want to help all the time, but I can't help, because I'm too nervous, so I should stop helping!

September 6, 2003

Carissimi fratelli,

**Grazie Iddio por la notizie che voi avete adesso una casa rustica vicino il grotto!
Auguri, Auguri.**

The weather is getting piu fresca, alleluia.

Grazie tanto Fratello D. por la cartelina bella con su sentimenti dolci, i por Ancrene Wisse (Rule for Anchorites) which I love reading. I wish I knew how to pronounce the title. If you ever call here or set up your e-mail give me a phonetic pronunciation.

Fratello T., io posso fare la cruce por i rosarios, probabilmente la Virgina Maria me mostra come farla. Io ho finito la fila por fare rosarios – 22 adesso finito.

Ciao, auguri, Shalom, etc. Ronda

September 9th

My daughter Diana wrote a poem about people in the family. Some lines I loved

**“We are teardrops in the sand,
we are splinters in the cross,
we imagine we are choosing,
we are on our way to loss.**

...

**We are everything, and nothing
But the memories we leave,
We imagine we are choosing
We are choosing to believe....**

**We are splinters of the cross
And the man who said, forsaken,
That the Father who had left him
Would return for what was taken.**

**We have not that long to go
There are mountains shouting “Leap”,
there are rosaries we cling to
When the monsters haunt our sleep**

September 10 – 13, 2003

I got a letter rejecting Taming the Lion Within after the contract was signed, on the basis that the writing is sub-standard even after I did the required revisions. Due to the victory of Recovery, Inc. techniques plus quiet prayer even though I got terrible tense and angry I didn't yell, get sarcastic or threaten them with lawsuits or expose articles. You, Jesus, seem to be telling me that I did do better if not perfectly and not to be so hard on myself for being upset – at least I didn't get nasty about it with them, even if I did express rage to friends telling them about it.

I had a long talk with publisher. Afterwards I felt release at idea of giving it up, and then at being more detached. A key insight of publisher was that some teachers and speakers write but they don't really care about writing itself and don't even notice how the editor improves it.

During prayer I thought – well, why did I write the book? To give hope and indicate a way for angry Catholics to get better. But the same people can find a way through your grace in, say, adoration prayer, through Recovery, Inc., or another anger management group, or through counseling.

Sept. 12, 2003

A nice scene at the hermitage where we had a huge thunderstorm which makes lakes of mud on our unpaved road. One of the male hermits drove me at high speed through one of these lake-like puddles. We skidded to an inch of the fence and then wound up with a flat tire, with about a mile's walk back to the key that was holding the spare tire outside the back of the SUV. To avoid wrecking my lovely old Birkenstocks, I removed them and tried to get traction walking on the side of the road, but got thorns in my feet, so I walked in the mud puddles, very carefully but finally fell into the mud. So now I have wounded feet and a backache. It was tiring, but it brought me closer to this very quiet hermit, especially when he managed to change the tire and also drag the same car out of the mud later in the day by stomping on the back of the car.

How sweet after the horrendous 4 AM storm to see the “church mice” all come to the parish daily Mass at 7 AM anyhow. We all smiled at each other – we 25-30 – with great pleasure.

Sept. 13, 2003

Feeling rattled by all the stuff with the publisher and the storm and the mud you reminded me that life is an unfolding drama, not a solid state (eternity) or a syllogism. Through the prayer of the heart you are trying to pull me into the hearth that is warm and secure so I can stand change better.

Today is the feast of St. John Chrysostom. When he was being dragged through the mud of the city by his persecutors, the Church looked about ruined. And he was able to write with such confidence that there was nothing to fear:

“The waters have risen and severe storms are upon us, but we do not fear drowning, for we stand firmly upon a rock. Let the sea rage, it cannot break the rock. Let the waves rise, they cannot sink the boat of Jesus. What are we to fear? Death? ‘Life to me means Christ and death is gain.’ Exile? ‘The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord’ ...I have only contempt for the world’s threats, I find its blessings laughable. ...I am surely not going to rely on my own strength! I have his promise...that is my staff, my security, my peaceful harbor...’Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world.!’

September 14, 2003

It was a joy to speak to a hermit in Italy who was just clothed in his habit.

Today Jesus seemed to say, “Ronda, I love you, with all your knots and ups and downs and snarling. I want so much to just drown you in my love. Stop fretting about the future. Just know that I will be with you and it will be good even if it is not perfect and if you fail often. So don’t think you have to copy Fr. P or Pere T or anyone. Just be you and let me love you into a better you.

Charles Williams wrote in his novel *The Greater Trumps*, “Nothing was certain, but everything was safe. That was part of the mystery of Love.”

Sept. 28, 2003

I prayed before the Sabbath dinner to let my guardian angel lead me in conversation. Instead of trying to be center-stage or make smart funny remarks I listened to others, cooked and cleaned and showed Daisy, a little girl, how to braid yarn. It felt very peaceful.

An author, Roy Schoeman, sent me the last draft of his book, *Salvation is from the Jews*. It is a masterpiece of synthesis for Jewish/Christian relations, especially for Catholic Jews. I felt after reading it and writing to the author about the review I will do that I must go to Israel. But when I prayed quietly Jesus, you seemed to say, “I am equidistant from all places; live in my heart.”

Sept. 29th

For the second time after the Latin Mass I went into a sort of trance. This time longer.

September 30, 2003 – letter to the hermit seminarians in Italy

Carissimi fratelli,

Intercede per me, poverina. Guardi che umiliazione!

Some months back Ignatius sent me a book for an endorsement for the back cover. They do this often. I loved it and sent off a lovely quicky blurb and forgot all about it. A week ago the author of the book, not knowing I had written a blurb, sent me a pre-publication copy to review for NOR. It seemed familiar but I read every line since the subject is Jewish conversions and the Second Coming and it is wonderfully written and edited and conceived. I got into an e-mail correspondence with the author, who was converted by a direct vision of Mary in a dream, He regretted greatly that illustrious Ronda had not had a chance to write a blurb for the back cover of the book. He wrote to Ignatius begging them to let me write one. They told him I had! He was much surprised.

Proof positive - senility is not around the corner, it is here, now, I am pazzi, finito, niente, obliterato! What is more I now regularly go into trances in the hearth chapel (this is a chapel with the tabernacle in an old hearth) or think I do, but probably I just lose my mind temporarily.

Of course a senile person in a trance sins less, non e vero? Ah, the silver lining!

Buona notte, Santa Pazza

October 1, 2003

Dear Roy (author of the book I wrote 2 endorsements for forgetting I had already read it 6 months previous)

Happily I talked to my staretz this morning about the dementia issue.\ He smiled. He says its absolutely classical that a person changing from a hyperactive life to a contemplative life would forget what was going on in that active life. So instead of my forgetting I had read your book signifying dementia, it's an indication that I am called to contemplative life. I woke up thinking that also, that little Therese was telling me that I am being detached from super-efficient work life, into putting the heart first. And that goes along with passing the active baton on to younger apostles and being an encourager vs. being a main player.

I pondered a little the strangeness of all this coming out in relationship a

relative stranger...there must be some reason why you should be hearing the inside story of this transition in my life by being the near occasion of forgetfulness..

Shalom, Ronda

A friend tried being a Carthusian hermit. He left shortly. Here is how he described it: “It became very clear to me, living at the monastery, that the primary form of the devil’s attack on contemplatives is mental – in imagination, paranoia, self-image, discouragement, etc. – and I DID NOT have the strength to survive such attacks in the long run (I barely survived a few weeks.) He suggested I be careful that bad thoughts in my head weren’t planted directly by the devil.

October 7, 2003 Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary

Meditation on Littleness

**One who is totally vulnerable becomes invulnerable
because there is no pride left to squash?**

**As under the heavy tread of the giant tire,
the tiniest of the ants escapes from the hill?**

**The strutting tyrant,
The bravado tongue
Becomes a handful of dust
While the tiny soul soars into Light?**

**God became a babe!
The second person of the Trinity a circle of bread!
While the rustic maid becomes the Queen of heaven!**

**If everyone is seen as but a poor little thing
Even I, I, i,
Will Thy kingdom come?**

October 9, 2003

**Feelings of love for Martin, my husband, on the 10th anniversary of his death.
Talking to him. Of course I loved him in spite of all the squabbles and deep wounds.**

**I read about Arafat – “he finds it difficult to live without a cause, a struggle,
a grievance, and a conflict to define him.” I wondered, is this part of why it’s hard to**

be a contemplative – no cause to define me? Also in marriage – sometimes a woman’s identity becomes grievance at her husband.

October 12, 2003

There was a hurricane warning here. I was angry because someone seemed to despise me as a wimp for being afraid of hurricanes. Later I realized I think of hurricanes as involving people on the roof of their houses dragged off by helicopters whereas he is thinking in inland hurricanes which are minor. Anyhow, I caught a glimpse of this same person doubled-over on the floor in prayer in a tiny narrow room about 2 ½ ft. by 10 ft. – my heart melted.

In his sermon Fr. talked about how there are all these structures in the Church in formal communities, but actually Jesus formed more of a rag-tale band around him. What counts is to be intimate with him.

October 14, 2002

Just when I was feeling despised, I came upon this Psalm (119)

“Although I am weak and despised
I remember your precepts...
Though anguish and distress have seized me,
I delight in your commands...
If you teach me, I shall live.”

October 15, 2003

Drawn into deep prayer, I had a sense that all the schemes for different apostolates I have been having are coming from a desire to escape the contemplative life, to return to the “firm” ground of activity, but that I am called now to the contemplative, and must drop all schemes. This was confirmed by Fr. who nixed totally trying to combine any fixed apostolate with living at the hermitage.

October 19, 2003

Dear Father,

Do you remember I said a few weeks ago when you returned from Europe that I had a sense you were going to say something that would change my life greatly. You smiled and changed the subject.

Well, I think I know what that truth is. It ties in with a seemingly off-hand comment you made about my needing to be less serious and also, another day, about the disciples being a rag tale band – not highly structured.

Here it is: IF I, LIKE YOU, WERE TO TAKE JESUS TOTALLY SERIOUSLY, AND ONLY CLOSENESS TO HIM SERIOUSLY, THEN NOTHING ELSE IS REALLY SERIOUS – not structures for hermits as related to bishops, not books, speeches, daily organization of physical tasks around the place, not you, not me - ONLY THE BELOVED.

“I belong to my beloved, and he belongs to me....On top of the mount, nothing.”

What a change in me if I were really to believe and live this!

Gratefully, Ronda

From a letter to a friend:

I am reading a long bio of Disraeli - a fascinating character. There is an incident where the Jewish politicians were refused a seat in the English Parliament because they had to make an oath on the N.T. These Jews wanted to make the oath instead on the O.T. Disraeli, born of Jewish parents but baptized in the Anglican Church and a believer in Jesus and a regular Church-goer, rose up and said since Jesus and the first Christians were all Jews the Parliament qua Christian should accept Jews. It took about 10 years for him to win on that one.

Dear Cathy,

I notice there's now a travel alert to US people not to go to Israel. That may be the end of our idea of making a pilgrimage. It looks more and more like war to me.

I decided to contribute to bullet proof vests for Israeli soldiers. That doesn't sound abortion related. (I wanted to show solidarity with Israel without any contribution being siphoned off say to Israeli women soldiers getting abortions.)

I have bad feelings about that issue in Israel. It is a bit like our situation with Hispanic undocumented. If the Israelis (except orthodox Jews) are contracepting and aborting themselves to a low population and the Arabs multiply, do the Arabs have more right to that land, as I think the hispanics do here. The Jerusalem Post (on the web) has writers who keep throwing in that issue of demographics - that the fence has to come in before the Jews become a minority in Israel.

Any ideas?

October 28, 2003

Letter to a friend,

In preparation for meeting maybe 10 secular poets, my daughter's friends, coming to the reunion, I picked up a bio of John Donne off the shelf here.

I love very easy poetry such as Emily Dickenson, Tagore and Francis Thompson but find more difficult poetry hard to understand. Still I love certain lines - like from the actually rather difficult to understand poetry of John Paul II, my favorite line is

“When horror and hope are equally balanced in my soul, no one will accuse me of simplicity.”

After Charlie's death no one accused me of naive Pollyanna-ish formula spirituality. I radiated grief and so that line jumped out at me.

Here is one from Donne's sermons that exactly fits your witness story:

“God...hath often looked upon me in my foulest uncleanness, and when I had shut out the eye of the day, the Sunne, and the eye of the night, the Taper and the eyes of all the world, with curtaines and windowes and doores, did yet see me, and see me in mercy, by making me see that he saw me.”

Isn't that stunning?

Shalom, Ronda

Dear Fr. P.,

I am feeling suitably mortified about the glitch on the web. Somehow neither the attachment, the disc, or the hard copy are the same, when I thought that sending 3 ways would have to solve all potential problems! Alas, another example of how when Ronda helps everything gets worse. Yesterday when this all unfolded, I crouched in my oratory so happy to crochet, something I can do. Jesus seemed to say “If you can only knit and pray that would make Me very happy.”

PAX Ronda

In the famous Myers-Briggs personality test, sensates are those whose senses are very alert and therefore usually do very well with anything requiring close observation. I am a zero on sensate functions. I was writing to a friend about all the adjustments so hard for a zero sensate during my life time – culture shock:

Driving a car vs. subways and buses
Washers and driers vs. in the sink
Airplanes vs. trains
stereos
Tape recorders
Computers vs. typewriters – and then e-mail and net
Microwaves
TV remotes,
Hair-dryers
CD's
ATM's
Cell-phones

Praying about it, the thought came – well I survived, even if in a humiliated state.

October 29, 2003

My daughter Diana has a friend living with her, a woman who used to live in a Hindu ashram but is interested in becoming a Catholic. She wants me to be her godmother. While looking for a suitable nearby Church, I am writing for her a pre-catechumenate contemplative approach booklet. Here is the first part:

THE DIVINE LONGING FOR THE HUMAN HEART

A Contemplative Introduction to the Catholic Faith

by Ronda Chervin, 2003

Part I

The Center of Reality

Images:

A spinning ball of earth in a void of space.

or

**A huge heart with myriad rays of love –
one ray beaming into a heart with your name on it.**

Scripture:

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Trial, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, of nakedness, or danger, or the sword? ...For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers, neither height nor depth nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

Meditation:

Go some place where you can be alone with the phone shut off.

Ask God to take you into the place in your heart of the deepest longing for love.

Dwell in the pain for as long as you can.

Then cry out, interiorly or out loud, “If you are a God of love, fill this place in my heart.”

Wait as long as you can. If you don’t feel anything, repeat this meditation every day along with the others suggested.

(It turned out this new friend firmly believes in a God of love and wanted insight on more complicated matters, so I dropped this approach. More of her questions later.)

October 28, 2003

After 25 years away from the sacraments my daughter Diana says she wants to come back. She had an interior vision of receiving communion again. Since my daughters don’t like me to write about them I will not give the details, but I am dying with joy. Dearest Jesus, Mary, Joseph, guardian angel of Diana, St. Diana, St. Helena, godparent Leni, all you saints, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. It is a great confirmation to me of the efficacy of prayer since I have been praying for my daughters much more here than ever before.

Quaking sobs because I felt they left the Church because I was such a bad Catholic being a daily communicant and yet so sinful. So now I feel forgiven. My Diana is saved. Like the end of Faust – saved!

November 2, 2003

Feeling weak and frightened as I prepare to leave to visit Carla and the family in N.H. Suppose I am not supposed to stay here at the hermitage. Suppose

everyone thinks I'm a liability (because of being so inept, so unsacrificial, weak and fragile, needy, etc.) and prays I will leave. So I asked one hermit friend, "Given that I'm nothing like the rest of you, who are holy, silent, austere, sacrificial, why should I be here?" He answered – "Because you're different – you have so much love for us and you show it all the time." Of course this brought tears to my eyes. That is my gift except with people I am in conflict with, I generally have lots of appreciation-love even if not as much sacrificial-love.

I had a long talk with Fr. P. about possible colleges I might teach in if I thought my time here was more just a sabbatical. He thinks that I am too old to deal with the tensions I would find at any college I might think of teaching in. Now is the time not for running around but for being a sage that people come to. He thought there would be more quiet teaching work I could do here in the future and that I should be training other women to go out to the parishes with my workbooks, etc.

In general, he thought that it could take years for me to continue real progress to getting over the nervous flutteriness I have from a whole life of workaholism. I need to stay away from anything around here that makes me nervous – be more of an anchorite.

I felt greatly oriented and glad. He laughed a lot which makes me feel he likes me. He is so kindly, so I know he has compassion on me and wants to help me a lot, but it is important for me to feel liked where I live also.

Later

I just had an unusual experience at the dentist. The dentist is a very suave drop dead handsome hispanic of about 45. He started asking me about the hermitage - our mentor is one of his patients. He asked me how I got there. I said I was teaching in a nearby city and coming for retreats and liked it so much I decided to stay because Fr. P. is a real spiritual giant even though he has such a modest demeanor - and he helps heal the agonies of my life.

So while he was putting the novalcaine in and pulling out the rotten tooth he started telling me that he could use that, too. That he has a dark side to him, and then that he goes to Church for 3 months and then stops, he doesn't know why, and that CNN had a program about the Catholic Church that in spite of the priest scandals we are growing rapidly!

Then he went into what he disagrees with in the Church. I mumbled that I'd like to talk to him more without the handicap of the pliers in my mouth. He laughed and disappeared leaving me to the charming assistant to process.

I wonder who the patron of dentists is? I will look it up. I didn't find one. If you know of the patron, dear reader, let me know.

AT THIS POINT IT SEEMS THAT WHAT WITH PREPARING FOR MY TRIP TO MY DAUGHTER IN N.H. AND OTHER MATTERS, I DIDN'T DO SO MUCH INTERIOR PRAYER BUT I DID WRITE A LOT OF LETTERS TO PEOPLE.

**I think these could interest readers of this journal so I am putting them in.
November 5, 2003**

(Letters to F. are to the woman living with my daughter Diana who used to live in an ashram and who wants to be a Catholic.)

Dear F.,

I happen to be rereading a few books written by the family friend we are thinking of for your godfather. He is an extraordinary man, presently writing a book about the Sudan where he flew in helicopters risking his life to villages with the exiled Bishop to help prepare texts and videos to convince US Senators that they needed to aid the Sudanese, where Muslim fanatics kidnap and enslave thousands of little children. He comes from LA where he was brought up by Christian parents who adopted him – but it seems he had a partly Jewish background – anyhow he was a musician and went to Boston University, there converted to the Catholic Church – tried being a hermit monk in the very monastery in Big Sur where Charlie committed suicide. Gabriel left the monastery and became a leader of the charismatic Catholic prayer groups in L.A. where I met him and he was Martin's best friend.

He wrote a book about St. Joseph – fictional – that I am rereading. Some things about sin and redemption struck me as relevant to your questions, so I am typing them out for you:

This scene takes place in Egypt where Mary and Joseph fled with Jesus to avoid Herod killing the child. They are sitting around a campfire and Joseph is known for telling parable like tales.

The tale is about a king who has one son only, a beautiful child full of joy. Even greater than the king's love for his son, however, is his love for his people who are being devastated by bands of vandals who plunder the towns and countryside. The country is now full of widows and orphans and refugees. Nothing he does is successful in getting rid of these thieves.

An angel comes to the King and tells him to place his son, his only son, in the midst of the thieves. Finally under great pressure he agrees, hoping the boy's goodness will win them over. He places the toddler in satin clothing, with gems in the seams of the garments on the road where the thieves operate. The thieves decide to take him with the idea one day of getting ransom for him.

The king's son grows up among the thieves and becomes a cunning daring thief while the king weeps, at night with no lamp in his house until his son should return.

Finally the angel comes again and tells the king that his sufferings are over and to proclaim a feast. The bandits with the lad come to the feast. While everyone is drunk on the king's liquor, the thieves figure out how to get into the bedchamber of the king to steal his treasure. The thieves lift the boy up to the window of the king's chamber with the idea that he would enter and then open the palace doors to the thieves.

The boy gets through the window and stumbling about in the dark of the room falls over the father. "His fingers graze the contours of a fine noble brow and then onto eyelids that moved like gates of gold in the darkness. The lofty cheekbones reminded him of something he could no longer name, but the high thin line of the nose he grazed made him think, strangely, of his own...But it was when his fingertips happened upon the figure's lips that the word came to the child's mind: Father, he cried."

....At this point in the story Joseph is telling, young Jesus signals that he will finish the story.

The thieves are captured and sentenced to a terrible death. As the King read out the degree, the prince stepped forward and asked his father for a favor. The Father says, any favor.”

“Spare the lives of these men and pass the sentence on me instead.” – The boy realized that someone had to pay for the evil that had been done.”

The king protests that his son is innocent. “Yes, father, that is true,” the boy replied. ‘But you have accomplished more than you know: If you have created me the son of a king, you have also made me the brother of thieves.” This the boy said, because he loved the bandits (who had saved his life and fed him)

Finally the king realized what the angel had meant says to place his son in the midst of thieves and all would be well,” for after the death of the boy, the people collected his innocent blood and poured it out on their crops and never was there famine, or disease again in that land. On the anniversary of the prince’s death banners of the color his blood were paraded in the cities and villages to remind the people of the price that had been paid for their happiness.”

The story in the book is much longer but I just took out the salient points of it.

Later in the same book Gabriel has someone explaining what repentance is – “Christinaity is meant to impart to us a progressively greater capacity for Life, that life which the Apostle Paul daringly characterizes as “the power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead’ ...the power of indestructible life.”

Sin diffuses our ability to grasp, indeed, finally, even to hope for that life. Sin narrows our focus, withers our human capacities, limits the range and scope of our desires and, ultimately, denies us access to ourselves. Grace breaks into that slumber, to dispel the blindness, and to create capacities for truth, for reality – for life in union with Life....Repentance does not only mean sorrow or regret...but teshuvah – Hebrew for turning to God, like the Prodigal Son, turning away from darkness to open out one’s life.”

Well, you can see that Gabriel would be a good godfather. He is often out of town. When I come, we will invite him to meet you and you can see if it is a click.

From F. to me:

I began reading the Catholic Catechism and have skipped through it at bedtime, reading about Mary and the Church's esteem of her and many other things.

The one compelling thought that has resurfaced through my reading (- for I've had this thought about Christianity in general for a long time) is this: so much of the scripture and the "reward" for believing in Christ seems tied to an avoidance of death... we are supposed to be resurrected ourselves, our flesh intact, and live in the kingdom of God. The emphasis on resurrecting our physical bodies disturbs me, not from a Catholic point of view but because I've always felt that our bodies were nothing more than containers for our souls here on earth, and once we leave them, our souls rightly go to join God. So, why all this emphasis on having our "container" go with us?

A minor question is this: How is it that we are in heaven soon after our physical deaths, yet awaiting the second coming of Christ to discern between those who are worthy and who are not? How does one get to heaven in 2003, or 1594, soul and flesh intact, only to be judged at some later date of Jesus' choosing?

Bear with me here, Godmother; these **are** some fundamental questions of mine regarding what have always seemed to me to be paradoxes of Christian teachings. I'm looking for answers!

F.

Dear F.,

On the Resurrected Body. You have the particular judgment at your death in which you go to heaven, purgatory, or hell (supposedly the least populated place). In the General judgment at the end of the time everyone gets to have a common understanding of this judgment. That is, in some way, you know the whole of the destiny of everyone.

These issues are greatly hard to understand because of the relationship of time to eternity. We live in a sort of splayed out conveyor belt of time. God lives in eternity. Eternity has 2 meanings in English - everlasting time - and timelessness. Timelessness is God's eternity. Our souls are everlasting, but after death participate in God's timelessness as well. Sort of like on earth your soul can be in one timeless place but your hands could be knitting - in time, or cooking. Some women saints cooked while in ecstasy.

On the body and soul. This is a hard one not only for Hindus but for others influenced by the Greek philosophical tradition. In both of these the soul is the real core of the self and the body is like a container or a jail said Plato. In these ways of thought at death the soul sheds the body and either merges with the divine or enters it when purified by reincarnations in some way.

Because we believe that God revealed that He Himself made the human person, as a body/soul composite - Adam and Eve (we don't read that he made their souls separately and then cast them into bodies but that he formed the clay into Adam. The soul doesn't pre-exist the body). Examples - you don't say about a photo of you at 10 - that's a photo of my body at 10 - you say - that's a photo of me at 10 - it is a photo of the embodied you.

Since God who is by essence spiritual and immaterial assumed a body in the incarnation and rose in it to heaven, etc. the concept is that the body is part of the nature of the person. When it dies and the soul goes to its particular individual judgment, with the exception of Mary whose body was assumed, it waits until the general judgment for the completion that will come with being reunited to this other part of the self that suffered with it on earth and is then resurrected. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that even though the beatitude of the soul takes place in heaven before the reunion with the body, because we are created as a composite, there is still a lack until the reunion.

Check in the index of the Catholic Catechism under resurrection of the body for more page numbers. Skimming through the index is fun.

Keep asking these good questions.

I am probably going to send you a booklet written by a fascinating thinker. He was the Swiss ambassador, from the Protestant background, to India in the 50's. During that time he became a serious Hindu practitioner. But eventually became a Catholic contemplative. He wrote this outline for a longer book I have always found illuminating of the similarities and differences between the 2 ways of thought.

Have a good Thanksgiving day.

Love, Ronda

November ? 2003

I composed this poem to send to one of my hermit friends.

Hermit-why's

**Eremitically sealed,
medicine?**

scent?
liqueur?
no, you?

Packed by God alone,
sealed with wax embossed
with inscrutable runes,
only angels read.

Demons dance round
look through stained glass
under altars at transparent coffins
hope to shatter and defile
peer at a heart
swathed tight in grace

The curious tap the pane
they hear no echoes
or human sounds
mums the word
of pregnant silence

Human love that wants to give
finds no entry place
where only the heart-beat
of the divine beloved
can be heard.

Alone pure need
can melt the seal
releasing healing balm
for the wounds of
poor little ones

November 20, 2003 before the big family visit to New Hampshire:

I do believe God likes people to pray for each other since it binds
Together the mystical body. I released myself from the main drag here and sat
quietly in my lovely room in front of the crucifix and God gave me much peace and
love for the members of my family about to arrive just to cherish all the good in
them as he does.

What a victory it would be for grace in me if I can really just pour out
love and not get into wrangles defensively!

I think at the root of it in divorced children, as we were, is the sense

that people who disagree enough split - so there is a fear of losing the love of these family members because of all our differences.

Letter November 20 from F.

Dear Ronda,

While I was outside cutting huge cardboard boxes into dumpster-sized bits, I noticed something that looked like half of a credit card sticking out of one of the cobblestone joints directly in front of our porch. "You know," I said to myself, "that little piece of plastic is just stiff enough and tall enough to actually trip someone -- most likely the mailman, with his arms full of fragile packages." So I finished what I was doing and then picked up the piece of "credit card". Only it wasn't a credit card at all. It was a blue plastic ingot-like thing, and on it was written in large letters "DISCIPLESHIP". That made me laugh -- reminded me of the ashram and so I figured this was a little "haha" from the guru. Then I noticed the very fine print beneath that word. It read: "You were created to become like Christ". Turning it over, I discovered another message: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

"Well, well, well," I said to myself, "how bizarre is this?! Here I am worrying about this week's projects and the New Hampshire Party (she did not come to this family party because she hates air travel) and still wondering about Jesus, and out of nowhere I get told exactly what to do and how to feel!" Anyway, it was just too "odd" a thing not to share with you, especially since my attitude towards all that needs doing (F. is a carpenter and is renovating Diana's house for sale) changed dramatically after I got those little messages, and once my mind wasn't focussed on fretting, I worked well throughout the day and accomplished many more things than I'd expected to be able to do. Off now to buy paint and other goodies before my energy dwindles. (I got up @ 4:15 today to see everyone off and didn't go back to bed.)

Love,
F.

Thursday, November 20, 2003

Dear F.,

The first guest, Wendy, a poet from N.C., is a bead maker and made me a rosary as a gift, so that seemed like a very good sign. She's not a Catholic. I have many rosaries I pray on once a day, but I pray on a chaplet of beads - that's not a rosary, it's a bracelet size thing, and it is less obvious if you are praying it all day - so my plan is to pray the name of Jesus on it for the 4 days of the reunion. I'm very glad you like having an intercessor, since that is a big part of the hermit life.

December 10, 2003

Letter to a friend:

So happy to hear from you.

I am so happy you liked my funky afghan. A Ronda original. Sometimes I think that when I get to the pearly gates instead of mounting to heaven on the prayers of my intercessors or my mountain of books and articles, Mary will extend a huge connected rope of all the things I knit for people out of motherly love and a wholesome way to deal with nervous tension! Anyhow, I thought it came out a little garish and you might not like it, but it seems as if you do! It was a sort of "fleece" given that I did it before meeting you face to face.

You asked about depression and solitude? I have been researching the -hermits for a good year now and my sense is that those living in relative solitude when depressed need to do one of these things:

- manual labor - tough - Seraphim of Sarov thought it absolutely essential!

- talking to ones spiritual director. If your present one doesn't help you enough, he might be meant to be more of a spiritual friend than a mentor. I can't remember a single time when I was feeling depressed that talking to my director didn't help immediately if not sooner.

- work on a new project. I find that even if I am thinking - no, start the project after I get back from x or y place, in fact, since I am a creative person, I don't do well only praying and doing busy work. I need the challenge of something creative to work on.

Well, that's plenty of unasked for advice from your new spiritual friend.

After a lot of turmoil at re-entry here just from fatigue, a back that almost went out, etc. yesterday waking from a nap I had a terrific gust of blissful grace that seemed to come from Little Therese. Thanks for your prayers.

Roy Schoeman sent this transcript of questions a newspaper asked him to address in an interview. Roy Schoeman is a convert from Judaism and the author of the new book *Salvation is from the Jews* now available through Ignatius Press. Information about the book, including excerpts, and an account of the author's conversion to the Catholic Faith can be found on his website www.salvationisfromthejews.com .

December 12, 2003

Dear F.,

Today is a day I thought you'd be interested in. It is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

As you probably know the Aztecs were a fascinating culture but given to huge human sacrifice rites. They had prophecies though that their culture was coming to an end and visions of horrible "white" conquerors.

Sure enough the white Spanish conquerors came but with the Franciscan missionaries. See the film Mission if you haven't which is about Peru, but still similar. Anyhow, of course the Mexicans were allergic to the missionaries given the evil deeds of the conquerors.

But then came the apparition. Maybe you know the fantastic story leading to the conversion of more people in one fell swoop than any other apparition ever. Millions converted because Mary came in the form of a Mexican empress, with the Mexican sign of being pregnant - a black sash around her waist, looking Mexican and telling a Mexican peasant man who was a spiritual leader but a Catholic convert that she wanted a basilica built in her name. He doubted but agreed to see the bishop as she requested. The bishop said he would only do it if she gave him a sign. The sign was Juan Diego coming back with roses, which never grew in the winter in his tilma (robe) and on the robe a painting of the Virgin who appeared. This robe has been long studied especially since it causes healing miracles. There is no way that it could have been painted with the paints on the hemp tilma since such paints do not exist, and in the eyes of the Virgin as studied by contemporary (now) experts with modern photographic techniques can be seen the form of Juan Diego as Mary saw him!

Read more if you like. Meanwhile, Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for my dear F. and whole Jump clan.

An interesting sideline from Fr. P. – the former Rector of the shrine who was convicted of embezzlement of millions of contributions is the one who passed the idea around that Juan Diego never existed.

From F. about Our Lady of Guadalupe:

I love the mystical/miraculous aspects of all religions; I believe them to be God's version of hitting us over the head with a two-by-four to get our attention, and, being one of those judd* people who once needed a burning bush every other

day in order to believe, I appreciate the supreme compassion of the Lord in providing "signs" at every corner.

The Virgin Mary seems to be the great mover and shaker in Catholicism -- at least

so far as visions and conversions go. For reasons inexplicable I myself have always found her the most accessible between Jesus and God the Father; truly, out of nowhere in the past I would find myself saying a compromised version of Hail Mary: "Hail Mary, full of grace, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come and blessed art thou amongst women... "

I was equally at home with hollering at Krishna, usually in the shower, alone with my unwieldy mind which would be racing to all its dooms and glooms, and I'd say something like, "Okay, shut it off now, Krishna, I've had enough!"

Meditation taught me how to quiet my mind finally, but my mind is still the same bag of wind it's been since childhood and it seeks every opportunity to rail away.

My shirking of daily practices prevents me from realizing that my mind has gone on and on for hours ('til someone here says, "What's wrong with you, F.? Why are you so cranky?") but lately I *have* spent five minutes each night meditating, just so I can get an idea of how incessant my mind's lust for dominance still is. I can get about a minute into meditation and then my mind cranks up -- interrupts -- and I sometimes follow it through its diatribes before remembering that I'm meditating to shut it up!

Anyway, I thank God that I'm at least "onto" myself... I know we've all got dervish psyches determined to undermine our tranquility and devotion. Nothing to do but tame/corral the dervishes and see Life as it truly is, which is beautiful.

I've always had a strong "service" chip... I must be doing something for someone or I become unhappy. There are so many pitfalls to this way of being, though: I can't just go out and sweep the sidewalk to feel useful, nor can I select a name at random out of the phonebook and offer my services to that person. There's a "worthiness" attached; at the ashram it was easy enough to feel that I was doing

God's will working long hours to renovate the guru's dilapidated old buildings. Out in "the world", though, work is just a "job", viewed by most as a way to make money. If one toils as though they're working directly for God, co-workers become incensed: "You're making us look bad. Slow down!" And so forth. Here at Chez Jump, I've run the full spectrum between wanting to do whatever I can around here to feeling like they don't care if I help or not. And, Chez Jump is not the ashram; it's my home, populated with people I love, and I get to indulge my "service" chip only if I want to -- it's a courtesy on both our parts, I see now.

Isn't that grand?

*spiritually dull

Love,
F.

Dec. 13, 2003

Dear F.

We're a lot alike. I believe that everything good, as the Jungians say, has its shadow side. So having an active analytic mind means that ones distractions are more interesting and convoluted whereas a less analytic mind is distracted say by the desire to eat a hamburger next.

Being a helper personality - that is a large part of mine - has great benefits to others but the shadow side is looking for ways to help that no one wants. I miss teaching because I was needed by the students to help them through whereas now here I am not needed at all, except, as you are at the Jumps, for love.

Today I make minestrone soup for our Sunday brunch and let it simmer away. It is one of my only 2 regular jobs - a 2 x a week mail run to the town and making the main dish for Sunday brunch the only optional communal meal but one where guests who have come to Mass come. I will pray for your meditation times to grow tranquilly - maybe pray on that rosary more - I like your hybrid one. You could pray it over and over like a long mantra on the beads.

**Please pray for me for peace of mind, also. I have an extremely nervous restless little soul. Love, Ronda
Letter to another friend:**

Dear I.,

I have been praying for you during the night and now this morning listen to this from the Office of Readings from St. Ambrose.

"Do not imagine that you are displeasing to him although you have called him, asked him...no, for he allows us to be constantly tested. Even if it seems to you that he has left you, go out and seek him once more. Who but holy Church is to teach you how to hold Christ fast?...How do we hold him fast? Not by restraining chains or knotted ropes but by bonds of love, by spiritual reins, by the longing of the soul. ...be fearless of suffering....Maintain the house of your heart...sweep out its secret recesses until it becomes immaculate...Christ comes again and again to visit, for he is with us until the end of the world..."

I was thinking this morning, yesterday I felt God's presence and still I was all ditzzy about my future feeling torn this way and that because I saw a description of a new school with a head I met a few times and liked.

**I would love it if you came here for a few months and I could pray with you charismatic style. I was touched you wished I would come to DC. I would love to share a place with you and mother you since you are so dear to me, but I cannot leave my oratory here and the relative peace I have here to go some place where I have no teaching to do and no sanctuary. From being in this tiny place I hate cities, strangers, large marble interiors of Churches, etc. etc. I am not a counselor and can't advise you really, but I am praying for you.
Love, Ronda**

December 15, 2003

Dear R.

I had a long talk with Fr. P. about all these apostolic leanings. He thinks that I should do short teachings as an overflow of love "from the bosom of the Father" as some old saying goes, vs. out of a possibly unconscious need to feel loved for doing something. What he thinks I really need is the contemplative experience of being loved for myself which I lacked as a child. He thinks I should avoid huge things like teaching at new colleges, and just do small things that come along and that don't involve administrative involvement where my perfectionist idealistic bent would make me miserable. I will ponder this in my heart. It fits I think with your sense - don't push, don't rush into big things, see what comes along as opportunities. Thanks for caring.

December 17, 2003

Today I started one hour of week of tutoring an 8 year old daughter of a friend of the hermitage. The mother is a great devotee of the infant Mary and so I dedicated this work to you, little infant Mary. It was such a sweet feeling to be close to this little girl who, when she visits us, is usually so interested in the young male hermits that I can't get to know her. I am getting her to write and draw a big page each time of the highlights of the Bible, and then teaching her to braid wool as a preparation for knitting.

Excerpt from a letter to the grandmother and grandfather of my son-in-law Pete who lives in Los Angeles:

“Well, this is the first Christmas ever at my monastery instead of with the family. It feels strange. I am praying that this will be a special Christmas for you in some unexpected way, because God loves to surprise us especially when we feel “over the hill” as I do.

“Mostly I am surprised at how unimportant things take on so much flavor now that I am less busy. This week at the hermitage we slaughtered a deer – we rent out to hunters on our property here. The head of the hunters imports deer all the way from Canada and then feeds them up in hopes of winning a prize for the huge antlers that come from lots of protein in the diet, apparently. The deer wander to our side of the 1,300 acre ranch perhaps because it is further from the gun shots. Anyhow they don't like to carry the meat back over 5 States, so they give most of it to the poor, and one each time for us. One deer yields enough meat for the 6-8 of us for about 3 months, especially since some hermits are vegetarians.

“The first time I saw the carcass being sliced up I had to force myself to help since it was so new to this NYC gringo type, but this time, seeing all the money on meat saved I really got into it and it's kinda fun to see hermit monks plunging knives into hunks of meat and laughing their heads off. Thought you'd like this description.

December 20, 2003

Excerpts from a poem my daughter Carla wrote about her father, a writer, who died ten years ago:

The Broken Pencils

....

“A writer writes” the old man said to me,

while legends struggled from the furrows
on his hunted brow,
unwritten yet, unwritten even now
except in nightscapes: there, the pencils crack
like thunder, but such pencils have no lead.

...! Do not fool around!

You have to give
up everything.
to talk with all your heart, you first must find
your heart. It's drowning in a midnight sea,
it's speechless: give it breath, force it to be

a swimming triumph: off the boat, to shore...
I'll dream,
and should I see that lion (*my husband's nickname*) whom I loved,
not yet succumbed...

I'm coming father! Wait for me! I come.

What a tear-jerker! Eh? Oh my Jesus, ten years later I miss my husband more than 1 year after his death. Understandable really. I think I didn't cry all my tears yet - busy with earthquakes, moves – busy! Now that I am not busy they can flow at the drop of a poem.

December 21, 2003

I am thinking about the prayer posture, curled up on a ball, during adoration that many of the hermits assume. It is so touching that they make themselves so small to feel God's love. O my Jesus, make me small even though I can't assume that posture with my creaky old body.

Most faces look greatly different smiling or in repose. In the case of sanguine, hopeful people, I think that even in the unsmiling face, the smile is almost waiting to come out and so it is almost foreshadowed in that face if repose. On the other hand, in the case of melancholics the normal sad face is almost totally different from the smiling face which comes forth almost like a miracle of grace.

Some holy people strike me as beautiful but inaccessible. They will do anything to help others out of charity, but do not wish to be close to them in a heart to heart manner. Others, the teddy-bear types, are warm as can be but less sublime or inspiring. I asked Jesus why he sometimes sets such people seemingly one-sided people in my path when I so crave the combination of the sublime and the close.

The reply that I heard in my heart was: so you would appreciate how beauty and intimate love are in me perfectly combined. I am a jealous bridegroom.

(From a letter to a friend hoping to become a consecrated widow. She had a wonderful closeness to her husband and wants her consecration to reflect that rather than seeming to be going for something "better" such as religious sisterhood.)

"I am thinking just as in spirituality in general you have the negative way - go to God by seeing the limitations of all created things - and the positive way - go to God because of your gratitude for created things as foretastes of heaven, so... in the widow walk - you have some widows a) going to Jesus because of the limits of their husbands and some because of b) the virtues of their husbands. Probably I am mostly 'a' and you mostly 'b.'

My friend who I am instructing asked if it were true that Mary was a god. I replied: Look it up in the Catechism - people are very confused about doctrine right now because of various rifts in the Church. There are, for instance, South American liberal theologians who want to see Mary as the 4th person of the Trinity for feminist reasons - they see the Trinity as too patriarchal, etc.

Since Mary was planned to be the Mother of Jesus, the God-man, she was freed at her conception from original sin - the tendency to choose evil. She still could have but she wasn't as drawn as we are. This does not make her God.

The reverence Catholics give to Mary is based on her being the Mother of the Savior, full of grace as the Archangel Gabriel calls her when he comes to tell her about the incarnation. Who else is *full* of grace? We only get some.

This reverence is not worship. Technically we do not pray to Mary but ask her to pray for us. As in the rosary, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.

Because she was so close to Jesus and suffered incredibly with him during his life (when you reread the Gospels you will note his own villagers wanted to throw him off the cliff as a madman) and also suffered so much under the Cross, she is considered to be a mediatrix of grace - I see it like a dance where God involves as many people as possible in the giving out of graces so that in heaven we are already when we get there, if we get there, interwoven in loving gratitude to many saints.

In terms of feminism, Mary's unique role, as the poet said "nature's sole and solitary boast", provides the feminine archetype of motherhood, virginity, widowhood of what is it to be holy both for women and men. Many men who have trouble with God the father because their own fathers were less than fatherly in terms of loving protectiveness, etc., are drawn to Mary.

(I found journal notes from November – December 24th 2003, not in sequence – which I will append on this page)

I am pondering the idea of “faces.” Some people’s front face and profile are not so different that one couldn’t see them as in harmony but others have very very different front faces and profiles – one, usually front face, warm and lovable, and the profile more a sharp, or closed in look. We want to affirm that the good face is the real person and the bad face something in need of a “face lift.”

I came back from the trip to N.H. with back pain and horror at the mountains of errand and desk work. I took a nap and woke up in bliss, feeling as if Jesus, Mary and Joseph wanted me to feel cherished. Maybe this was a foretaste of a heaven that is not as far off as I usually think. Jesus seemed to say “I will not abandon you! Isn’t my heart much bigger than yours?” Later, I got the same message from St. Therese of Lisieux who likes to help me. Jesus also seemed to tell me work on improving my speaking – that everything should be edifying or funny. After I get this down then he could work on attitudes like hopelessness and lack of trust. Typing this in September 2004 I saw that he did just this – first helped me to be a little better in my speech and then started in big time on trust.

“Be like a little ball of Ronda so that I can mold you into St. Ronda” Jesus seemed to say.

Fr. Patrick teaches us to be more affective than effective.

I read somewhere that Arafat finds it difficult to live without a cause, a struggle, a grievance, and a conflict to define him. How about me? You?

Br. Daniel wrote from Italy “just as Mary had no idea how what Gabriel said could possibly come to be, and the Angel said Fear Not, so also do you have no idea how feelings of peace and calm are going to come upon you, but Fear Not: it is only the Lord who in covering us with His love can provide peace and settlement, and He does it on His time schedule. Eight months can pass of apparently fruitless endeavor when suddenly a bloom comes quite unexpectedly. ...the eight months of apparently useless preparation were absolutely essential and purposeful before the bud could even form.”

I was frantic over how cold the chapel was. Jokingly I suggested to Fr. P. that I could run into the chapel just for holy communion, or did he have another solution. He laughed and offered a spot heater in the chapel instead. I thought the incident indicated how much better it is to display vulnerability than to be angry and problems.

From Office of Readings Thursday, Second Week of Advent quoted from St. Peter Chrysologus “God comforted Jacob ...encircled him with a wrestler’s embrace to teach him not to be afraid but to love him...in all the events we have recalled, the flame of divine love enkindled human hearts and its intoxication overflowed into men’s sense. Wounded by love, they longed to look upon God with their bodily eyes. Yet how could our narrow human vision apprehend God, whom the whole world cannot contain? ..Love does not reflect; it is unreasonable and knows no moderation. Love refuses to be consoled when its goal proves impossible...whatever reward they merited was nothing to the saints if they could not see the Lord. (It inspires us to long to see His face.)

December 24, 2003

It is so different here at the hermitage than in a family Christmas setting. Because there are so few decorations each one stands out – each day one more candle is lit before an icon. At 7 PM adoration there were many lit candles around each, especially an icon made by Sr. Catherine of the Nativity. And suddenly the poinsettias appeared and the little simple crèche.

During prayer it seemed as if Mary offered me to hold her baby a few minutes, as a regular mother might. Thank you Mary for this moment where the baby Jesus felt so very soft and sweet and reminiscent of my own babies in my arms.

December 25, 2003

In his sermon Fr. P. mentioned someone claiming that the first liturgy could have been, in effect, Mary’s gestures with the baby Jesus.

December 28, 2003

Excerpts from a letter to Fr. P.

I feel a need for a sort of year end “assessment,” good and peaceful by the grace of God.

First, I loved your image in a sermon of “Father’s house” is the “Father’s bosom.” It reminds me of the old black spiritual “Rock-a-my-soul in the bosom of Abraham.”

Someone here quoted you once as saying humor is good because it relieves tension in community, so I enjoyed greatly the funny brunch today.

I am so grateful for how God is using you to help me. I consider that anyone being able to help me is quite a feat, given the convoluted defense mechanisms most women indulge in, me included. I appreciated the ingenious ways I see you as handling me to try to keep me from getting admiration as a substitute for love, for

example by straightforwardly acknowledging my gifts and very gently admonishing my faults. Bravo!

Whenever I follow your advice it works! It's dawning on me that maybe you might even be right 90% of the time!

December 27, 2003

I asked a locutionary, about whom I will write more later, if Jesus had any message for me. Here is how she replied:

From Jesus: "I would have her joyful but even more than that, I would have her at peace. I can place peace in the hearts of my servants, but as you have seen yourself, only if they are disposed to accept my gift of peace. As you are now attempting to accept this gift from me, I would have her also accept my gift as I extend the same gift to her. She must meditate on the newness of each day in My service. I will remember all of her actions for heaven. I will forget any human mistakes she has made. I am like this with every soul who serves me so beautifully. You may send this, of course. My servants intercede for each other with such energy that I cannot but answer each prayer. This causes me great joy...Your ministering to each other is another illustration of Me within you. It is I who respond so rapidly and passionately to the pain of a hurting servant. For this day, detach even more from all around you. You are with Me. That is all you need be."

After reading this message I felt floods of peace and also a clearer sense about my future. I had been ricocheting back and forth peacelessly about here vs. other possibilities, not just work places, but my daughter's haven in N. H. Mostly concerned about my growing disabilities. But after the message and the graces of peace that followed I felt confirmed and peaceful that since here I have so much more peace, I should stay here as long as I can.

December 30, 2004

Much is happening here. On January 7th for 3 months comes our French hermit icon-writer, Sister Catherine, the one who did many of the icons we see in the little chapel. She is coming to visit and also to fresco a hermitage in Mexico we are building. She is supposed to be a real free-spirit Holy Fool who sings and dances spontaneously in chapel!

January 1, 2004

From a letter to a friend having difficulty with parents who don't understand him:

“My godparents, who were German, used to speak of the German verb "bejahen" which means "to yes" as in affirming someone. They thought one of the deepest needs of the human person is to feel "yes-ed" in their very being and that this was part of the gift of love. Jah is German for yes.

It is a great gift to have parents who understand and affirm one. Rare, I would say. Yes, many have parents who will affirm something about a child but rarely the ultimate inner nature of him or her.

It occurred to me that Jesus was not very understood by his own villagers who wanted to throw him off the cliff as insane because he dared to make himself God. Perhaps you are not that familiar with that Scripture passage.

At 66 I am happy that anyone understands any part of me.

Years from now you may be able to forgive your parents even if for now "keeping them in outer boundaries" is the best strategy.

Sometimes, when feeling rejected, I would think - "well, would I be willing to be like the rejectors in order to have their affirmation?" No!

January 3, 2004

A priest told me in confession that when God allows an evil to come to us, right at that time, he has already planned what he will give us of abundant graces to be happy in spite of that cross.

My new friend Roy says that women are the gas pedal and men the steering wheel!

January 4, 2003

Letter from the friend I am instructing:

I liked the line in your article: "We need to see ourselves as funny, frail, striving little sinners in need of mercy and forgiveness." That's classic Ronda to me -- humorously truthful or truthfully humorous.

Also, your steady reminder to slake one's thirst for love -- not only as a recipient but as a bestower too -- at the limitless fountain of God is the single most important teaching all human beings -- men and women -- need to imbibe, in my opinion. Think how unskewed people's lives would be if they sought love in church, rather than in bath houses and on the streets....

The guru used to say to her snotty devotees, "If you think you're here in Baba's ashram perfectly spiritual and whole because you do the practices every day, but you haven't spoken to your parents/family in years, think again! (She had been educated at Oxford, so she said "agane", like an Englishman.) None of us 'makes it' in this world until we have 'made it' with our family. Those of you who are here 'hiding out' I want you to get up right now -- right now! -- and take what you've learned from Baba to your parents, to your brothers and sisters. It is easy to practice seeing God in each other in Baba's house, but Baba meant for us to see God in each other EVERYWHERE. So many times in darshan, people come and say, 'My father abused me, my mother abandoned me' -- they want to know how they can reconcile their hurt with the love they now feel. The answer is always the same: 'This love you now feel is a gift from God; go and share it freely with the very ones who hurt you most.' Otherwise, what is the point of *sadhana*? Baba didn't go around the world building pleasure palaces; he took his own guru's instructions: 'uplift the downtrodden, feed many people' and created refuges on every continent. In Baba's time, that was enough. When he took *samadhi*, Baba commanded that his ashrams become *gurukulas* (-schools, on a plane with seminaries, sort of) and we have spent many years attempting to fulfill Baba's wishes. His ashrams are now places of learning, not retreat; we honor him and his benevolence towards us by taking back to the world what we are taught here."

Sometimes, a handful of people *would* get up, and depart on the spot, headed to whatever amends or reunions or forgiveness they'd avoided their entire lives. Indeed, the guru's words were fuel for my own soul when that day came for me to choose "hiding out" or face "making it" with my parents. The guru looked at me long the day I left. She knew I'd wanted to stay, she knew I worked hard, she knew -- even though I often avoided her, haha! -- that I loved living in her ashram and that I craved its cradling harbor. "Pat," she said at last, "everything you seek here is awaiting you *out there*. Take *sannyass* in your heart and rejoice in the service God has given you." I admit, I was bitter that my skills, my devotion hadn't merited the guru telling me to stay on, but, as I looked into her limitless eyes, I sensed -- despite my desires -- that she was right in bidding me to go...

So today I am able to sit here and type to you, unfettered by regrets...In short, I feel pretty "clean" as far as family goes, which ought to make my entry into Christ's family all the smoother.

From my reply: I wanted to tell you about a practice many modern Catholics are now doing called Healing the Family Tree. You write down on the "tree" grid the worst traits that impacted you of each family member and then you have a Mass said for healing, and then other exercises like writing letters that you don't send to each one about what you felt and they "write back", as it were, through the Holy Spirit, what they were going through when they hurt you. It's terrific.

I think you did incredibly much to spend so much time with your father in his last illness and your mother. You know widows go through many processes and some want to be more alone vs. others who want family close close close.

At first I wanted to rush off and do my own things that I couldn't when Martin was alive because of his health such as teach in Ohio at this great Antioch like college in a climate he couldn't have taken, but then later I wanted to be with the kids. It's not a steady state being a widow.

Regarding the question of the Pope being allegedly divine, perhaps it would help to make these distinctions: sacred, holy, divine:

Sacred is something set apart for God such as a sacred space for the altar not used, say, for ping pong, or sacred vestments not used for the swimming pool.

Holy = sometimes synonym for sacred as in "the holy altar": but about people is means either saintly (incredibly good in a heroic way)

Divine - absolute perfect being

"I had a divine hot fudge sundae is a cute saying but a hyperbole like "awesome"

Now, the Pope is called The Holy Father. This is more like set apart.

His doctrine on faith and morals is infallible, which means that the Holy Spirit Jesus promised will keep him from leading the flock astray on faith and morals. That does not mean on policy.

Some Popes were also saints, such as John XXIII who body is incorrupt (did not fall apart like normal corpses) or St. Teresa of Avila. Some Popes were villains. In the case of sinners who became saints like Mary Magdalene or Augustine, their saintliness is dated from the time of their conversions.

Some gurus are saints and some are not. Some unsaintly gurus still have good teachings, some don't.

At least this roughly describes how a Catholic understands it.

January 8, 2004

Sister Catherine arrived. I liked her immediately. Here is how I described her in the preface to her life tale as told to me which I started writing after I got to know her better: "an older French woman, short of stature, wearing a simple sweater and long dark skirt, and beaming with joy appeared at morning Mass in our simple hermit chapel."

January 19, 2004

Dear Fr. P.,

I am feeling so good about being here I am thinking I need to make it the best place possible for my poor old battered body. A main consideration is the car. Since I bought the used car – a very nice \$5000 Mitsubishi SUV 4 wheel drive type car in New Hampshire, I am thinking maybe I should drive it down in February at the end of my visit on the basis that the snow will probably end by the time I reach Washington, DC and I could just slowly taking it easy, drive as much as I can each day, and then have the car for all needs and also, of course, it would be available for any needs of the others here when I am not using it. I have it insured for total coverage plus towing plus occasional driver. This is based on the idea that if I am only 3 months per year in N.H. it would make sense to have the car here and rent a wreck there.

Can you see anything against it?

January 19, 2004 from a letter to a philosophical seminarian

Celibacy - is a gift. Even if hard it should be joyful - a comparison, when I do most menial tasks it is hard and not joyful, but when I do things like writing or teaching even though there is some sacrifice and hardness basically I feel joyful even making those sacrifices such as, say, digging up some fact for a class on the web.

Of course celibacy goes much deeper into the soul than research. All Christians love Jesus. And many are in love with him, but the celibate has to be in love with him to make the sacrifice. You could ask Jesus to either woo you into being in love with him or give you a clear sign you are to not be a vowed religious or priest. Of course that leaves out the single life, but most men who want to be married find someone to marry.

Every vocation has lots of sufferings, as I always told you and that lovely young woman I met (what happened to her by the way?) If you decided you crave marriage, you would need to find a wife who loves being with kids because it is hard for philosophers, not to love children, but to spend all the time they need for their nurture and growth so it would be very difficult if you wife was also a heady vs. an earthy person.”

Tonight I thought that now that I am better at searching the net I should look for long lost godchildren. One I found I had last seen about 15 years ago. She is now 19. It was such a delight to talk to her mother, and old friend, and to this dear godchild.

January 20, 2004

My new friend, a widow who wants to become a consecrated widow wrote this beautiful passage about her marriage and God:

“There was a time, when T. was still living, that I was open to some of the stuff I read regarding other lives and reincarnation. But to sit and watch illness take the life of one you love, well, that changed everything. Love in the uniqueness of Ton's being and mine grew closer and closer in those days. I also remember thinking, years ago, how it might not be so difficult to live through T.'s death because God was the source of my love and focus. But that has so changed. God is still the source of my love and focus. What stirs in my heart though is this thought. If God is truly a loving and personal being, he would know how much and how important love and communion of being is. After all we hold that that is God's very own life--relational life and being. I can't possibly believe all of that (love) is for nothing. It would make love nothing more than a scientific energy that responds to chemicals in the brain! I remember the look of love...not sexual encounter...but the real look of love in the days when death was knocking at our door. It was deeper than brain chemicals and transmitters!!

I responded:

I like the way you relate it to the experience of love as death draws near. Since my husband died suddenly, it was different for me, but I think that perhaps a mysterious sign of having completed purgatory is that the soul of the dead person is more united then in experience to the spouse.

An analogue concerning widows who think of consecration as a continuation of their human spousal love and those who don't might be that Jews who become Catholics but love their Jewish identity like to called themselves completed Jews when they become Catholics vs. assimilation; so widows who remained in love with their husbands see consecration to Jesus as a completion of their spousal love vs. as an opposite.

PERHAPS THE WIDOWS WHO WANT TO BECOME SISTERS VS. CONSECRATED WIDOWS, ARE THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE THEIR BRIDAL RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS AS NEW AND IN CONTRAST TO THEIR HUMAN SPOUSE

AND

**THOSE WHO INSIST ON RETAINING THEIR STATUS AS WIDOW WHEN
CONSECRATED ARE THOSE WHO SEE IT AS A COMPLETION?**

About Walker Percy, Paul Elie writes

“His faith, he insisted, was not about order or community or permanence. It was an act of desperation, made true by his stubbornness in maintaining it. Why believe? ‘what else is there?’ Why not scientific humanism? ‘It’s not good enough.’ Why isn’t it? “This life is too much trouble, far too strange, to arrive at the end of it and have to answer, ‘Scientific humanism.’ That won’t do. A poor show. Life is a mystery, love is a delight. Therefore I take it as axiomatic that one should settle for nothing less than the infinite mystery and the infinite delight, i.e., God. In fact I demand it. I refuse to settle for anything else.”

January 24, 2004

From Michael O’Brien Cry of Stone

“poems are frozen inside all words, like ice waiting for the sun.”

Fr.P. says that the holy family wants us to be part of their family.

January 27, 2004

(to understand this little poem you have to know that the starets in a hermitage is the priest leader)

In the silent spaces of Solitude,
Slowly comes the sound,
Of his strumming on our souls.

When starets leaves,
The song is not the same,
No longer serenade

Lament,
Sigh,
Cry...

Then only silence.

When starets nears again,
Tap, tap,

Whispering anticipation.

Dear Fr. P.,

I wish you would work up a teaching on this topic I keep bringing up.

I am wondering about whether child-likeness, as in going to the heart, isn't different in some respects in the feminine vs. the masculine.

For example, today when I brought her asked for groceries up to Dunn kitchen, Sr. Catherine ran up to me and kissed my cheek and said "you are such a nice Mommy."

It was so disarming and charming and childlike, but no man would make such a gesture, not because it is child-like but because he would seem effeminate. Isn't this because being affectionate and vulnerable is more feminine than masculine?

So, say, if a male saint were to walk up to an enemy soldier and whistle a brave little tune, that would be childlike but masculine, sort of like St. Francis of Assisi. A woman would not likely do such a thing.

This is important for prayer of the heart and spirituality of child-likeness because probably in a study of this for our Institute we need to find examples that would resonate with each sex in its differences not only generic ones.

January 28, 2004

O'Brien's new novel A Cry of Stone, regarding the death of a beloved:

"He was alive, he had not gone out of existence, he had merely been carried to another station of the journey, beyond the reach of the eyes but not beyond the reach of the heart. In her heart she carried him still, and her love for him continued and grew. So the heart's loss was also, strangely, the heart's gain."

Also from that book "The interior castle, cannot rise unless the bastion of pride is leveled. The stones crumble, and only weakness is left. Then he comes."

January 30, 2004

I went in to see Fr. P and I must have looked very woe-begone because he smiled sweetly at me. I just said, I felt hurt by what you said yesterday. (He said something I interpreted as meaning he didn't like my poems.) He looked surprised and denied saying it. Then he gave me this long loving look, which is rare from him. And added "I'm sure your poems are excellent." I said, no they're not, but they very much from the heart.

Since December I have been in touch with a locutionary. She sends me words she has received. Of course, as Catholics we are not obliged to believe or follow private revelations of this sort, but because I think hers are genuine, I am excerpting parts I found spiritually helpful. (These have since been published by CMJ Marian Publishers under the title *Direction for our Times* by “Anne.”

August

From the Blessed Mother:

“Children, I know it is difficult for you at times. Remember that I lived the earthly life and drew much comfort from faith. I was often unsure of what the future held for my Son but I knew it was suffering. I lived that reality, despite which I remained cheerful, dutiful and joyful...I constantly asked our Heavenly Father to sustain me. When I felt the grief of my Son’s future, I stopped whatever I was doing and made an act of obedience to our Father. Whenever you feel unsure of yourself or afraid, make an act of Obedience. Say the following: “God in heaven, I pledge my allegiance to you. I give you my life, my work, and my heart. In turn, give me the grace of obeying your every direction to the fullest extent possible.”

Blessed Mother

August, 2003

“Do not spend time talking about a better way, a different way, or your way. The plan I have outlined is to be completed only one way, and that is heaven’s way. Be docile receptacles of the great graces that gush from heaven now, directly into your heart.” ***

“These times are blessed with extraordinary graces so practice trust and you will be rewarded in a distinct, tangible way.”

August 13, 2003

Blessed Mother:

My dear consecrated souls, are you listening to your mother? Are you letting my messages reshape your soul and your direction? Perhaps you are angry at your mother. Tell me, dear little wounded soul. You may tell me if you are unhappy. Only through communication can we get to the root of the trouble and heal your pain. I do not want any blockages between us. So you must be honest. If you have healing that must be done, look around now. I will send you a holy soul to assist you. You will know this soul and with the help of this comrade, you can discover the source of your pain and we can lance any wounds that continue to take you from your mother. My child, injustice exists in your world. But injustice is not allowed in heaven. There is only love and celebration. Let me tell you about heaven so that you know and understand the glory of your destination. Heaven is filled with souls who love God. These souls, all filled with joy, explore every facet of the Divine. There is

great knowledge to be had and anything you want to learn, you can learn. Imagine exulting in the accomplishments of all of the saints, both those who are known to you and those who are known only to God. In heaven, your accomplishments will be celebrated. Your faults, your sins, do not make the journey and are not only forgotten, but incinerated. Can you imagine, dear ones? Do you begin to picture this? Let me continue. In heaven, there are vast spaces, filled with every bit of beauty ever created by God. If, on earth, you create something that is divinely inspired, and this is what we want from you, it will endure in heaven, to be admired and explored by your brothers and sisters. Your spiritual relationships will also follow you to heaven. Every memory of your sins will be erased because you could not enjoy heaven if you were constantly annoyed by the memory of your mistakes. This is a mercy of God Himself and a good illustrative example of the character of your God. Please consider that more. He is never spiteful, never vengeful, and never punishes to punish. God, your all loving Father, moves only for the benefit of you, His creatures, created in love and hope. Children, I say to you with love, let go of your pain. I will help you. Ask me, please, and allow me to wash away the past hurts inflicted upon you by troubled souls. I wish your wholeness, your wellness, your confidence. Your healing is here, in my hand. I extend my hand to you now and place it in your heart. Be with me, dear one. It is to you, I speak.

“Consider those with whom you are comfortable. Do you not see that those souls carry true love within them? It is safe to be with them because they carry a seed of God in them and that is what generates that love. It is that seed you respond to when you feel comfortable and safe with a person. Well, dear ones, I have to tell you that fewer and fewer carry that seed of love and that is why so many of your fellow brothers and sisters have fallen prey to diseases of the mind. Man was not meant to live without love in his life. He should walk through each day and experience a little love in this person, that person, and ideally, through every soul who has contact with him. ...Now a man can survive quite nicely if he is nurtured by divine love. ...But few souls are accepting divine love.”

Here are some excerpts from earlier locutions:

December 17, 2003

God the Father

Greetings to you, little soul who seeks to do My will. I am with you and thank you for your beautiful prayers from the heart. It is My intention to speak with you and have you also record My words. Kathryn, I intend to give you messages for the world. All of this is My work. Jesus, who guides you so specifically and carefully, is united to My plan. It is this plan I intend to reveal to you in greater detail and from the unique perspective that only the Father of All Creation can share with His children. Kathryn, do not be afraid. When We are finished with these few words, I want you to describe My Voice for your brothers and sisters, so that they can come

to know their God. What will you say? Listen to My Voice, little servant of heaven. Are you frightened of Me? Why do you want to cry? Is it because you fear My justice?

Me: No. I want to cry because His Voice, which is male, is so kind and loving. It does not sound persuasive, as Jesus sometimes does. It does not sound entreating or a little frustrated, as our Blessed Mother sometimes does. It sounds quiet and authoritative. You get the feeling that He has no questions if you know what I mean. All is clear to Him. He could be speaking at a million times higher level but stoops to speak our humble, limited language so this small, small, being, Me, can understand. He is being careful not to frighten Me. He is being careful to speak clearly so that I can record for Him. He has authority. There is no question. He carries it with no effort. It rolls off Him and into His words. It makes me cry because He is so good and I am not. Being confronted with this incredible source of love and goodness, I wish so badly that I was better, more worthy, that I brought more to this table of the divine. Oh my dear brothers and sisters, I've just gotten a taste of what it is going to feel like when we die and meet God. It's going to break our hearts if we have nothing to offer this wonderful, sweet, kind Father. Do not delay. Serve now, at this moment, in this day. The tears stream down my face as He is not a God of justice at this moment, but a God of love. This is how He is looking at you this moment, as you read this. Serve now. Delay no longer. Please believe that you will only be eternally grateful for anything you do for this God of Love.

Kathryn, My creature, whom I created to serve, do not cry. You have characterized me accurately in a few words. How many can say that? Be consoled that if you do nothing else for Me while you live, you have done that. You must stop crying now for a moment while We work and then I will comfort you.

Kathryn, every soul was created to serve in My Kingdom. Each has glorious qualities that will flourish when they follow Me. Souls think they have little to offer. That is because they are not doing My will, but their own. When they ask Me for guidance, they will get it. I will guide the soul to their rightful role in My Kingdom and their gifts will explode into development under My watchful and guiding eye. Souls feel undernourished spiritually. They are actually starving, My little one, and that is because they do not come to Me for nourishment. They seek worldly nourishment which leaves them terribly unwell because they think they should be fed and wonder why the hunger pangs continue. They hunger for Me. Well, as I have been from the beginning of time, I am here. I am here, dear little children. Your God loves you with a love that will set you to sobbing in joy, as this little soul has done. Do not fear Me. You need only fear me if you are My enemy. And if you are My enemy, you will lose everything. So do not be My enemy. You were created to be My friend and to have everything that I have to offer. In the days to come, We will discuss what it is I offer you, My children. Your inheritance is too glorious to deal with in a few pages. It will take time. But My little recording soul has graciously agreed to allow Me to write through her so We will proceed. This work is My Christmas gift to your world. You see that your God participates in all on earth.

In this season of giving, I also give. Be at peace now, little souls of the world. I am here.

December 17, 2003

Jesus

Good morning, My child. Your prayers to the Father were beautiful and very pleasing to Him because they came from your heart and overflowed with respect for His dominion over all in your life. You also credited God, your Father in heaven, with the success of your marriage. Kathryn, do you know how this pleased Him? Do not cry now as I would direct you in this new project. In answer to your unasked questions, no, I will not leave you, not now or ever. I am your spiritual director and a spiritual director remains closely united to the directed. Yes, you will begin a new file and mark it God the Father speaks to His children. You may keep this message here, in your personal journal, but also move it to the beginning of the new file. You will receive a message from Our Father each day, sometimes more than one. You understand how We will work. We will respect your duties but you are embarking on another project. Give praise to Our Father. Your offering to Him of your life this morning sparked the beginning of this work. Do you see what the humble obedience of one soul can do for humanity? Our Father in heaven is a puppet to His children in that your love melts Him, Kathryn. He cannot resist such humility and thanksgiving. You must record some of your prayers to Him as it should be known how your little soul pleased Him. Please do that for us now and then We will let you return to your day. Such joy is in store for you, Kathryn. Do you not see why I wanted you to stay the course and serve? I want only joy for you. And you will have joy in Our service.

I feel silly because my prayers were not extraordinary at all. I have felt for some time that I wanted to know this God, Our Father, better. I am including Jesus in the Our, which is why it is capitalized. I actually prayed that I would know Him and as God would have it, My friend told Me about a booklet with messages from God. She said they were similar in content to the messages I had received so she sent them to me. I read them and agree that it sounds like the same direction.

At any rate, I have been sick lately. Yesterday, in the interest of getting things done, I pretended to be well and drank coffee all day so I could accomplish some Christmas shopping. Today, I was so weak, I got the children off, with my husband doing most of it, and just sat on the couch. I did get up and go get my missal so I could do my morning office, but I had no intention of going to mass. I sat there in front of the Divine Mercy picture with my feet up and thought about how happy John the Baptist must have been to hear that Jesus was working away, performing miracles and healings. He must have thought, this is great. My job is nearly finished and I have done my best. If he was like me, he thought, what a relief, I'm not nuts. There is a Jesus coming and He has arrived.

Anyway, afterwards, I felt a longing for God and began to talk to Him, the Father. I just thanked Him and thanked Him. I told Him that I wanted Him to know I was aware that the graces in my marriage came from Him. I told Him that I recognized that He had done all for my business successes. He said, in my head, thank you for acknowledging Me in your work. I said thank you for giving me the opportunity to acknowledge you. I also told Him that I intended to acknowledge Him even more in the future and how I intended to do that. He knew that already, (duh) and told me exactly how He wanted it done. I continued to thank Him for the world and for everyone in the world. I told Him we were all grateful to Him. Mostly I explained to Him that I wanted Him to know that I knew it all came from Him and that I wasn't taking any credit. I thanked Him for Jesus and Mary, of course, and for all of the angels and saints. I thanked Him for letting Me work with Jesus so closely and for overlooking my flaws. I told Him I was willing to do my small little bit so that He could be more acknowledged here on earth. I said, use me, God and I'll do my best. I loved Him so much and it is making me cry again. I loved Him so much, and was so grateful to Him, but it is nothing to how I feel now, after experiencing His Voice and speaking with Him. I can't stop crying again. My prayers were nothing special. Jesus is telling Me that what impacted Him, the Father, was my recognition of Him as the giver of all graces, abilities, and gifts, and that I gave the credit back to Him, where it belongs. I am shaking my head. I'm humbly grateful that They are allowing me to help.

December 20, 2003

Jesus

Anne, I am with you. I will never leave you. You must listen to Me and listen to My Voice. You must view all that happens in your life from the heavenly perspective. All. Look at last night from the heavenly side. Remember the peace? You were attacked. I can say it no differently. You failed in one sense and that is that you responded without considering heaven. But, My child, you are not in heaven. You are on earth. And you do not have the benefit of sainthood yet. So you responded like a human. You are forgiven your lapse with the cigarettes. You are forgiven. It is over. Do not dwell in your mistake. Walk away from the disaster of last night. Kathryn, the fault did not lie with you. Do you understand? You asked for something from your husband and the answer was no. So leave it. You are in charge of you. He is in charge of himself and must answer for every decision he makes. Do you remember when you decided to smoke for two weeks, despite My entreaties that you stop? You said no to Me. Well last night your husband said no to Me. This happens quite frequently. Does it mean souls do not love Me? Of course not. It means souls often want to serve themselves before Me. I overlook your mistakes and I will overlook his. Remember, he is a true servant, both to you and your children. You must be more dependent on Me, Kathryn. You are correct in that regard. I will never fail you. I may test you at times. But I will never leave you and I will never fail you. Kathryn, dearest, many souls are beseeching heaven for you. I cannot disappoint them. Now rest in My heart. We have much to do on this day. Your Father, God, who loves you to the distraction of great sins in this world, is prepared

to unleash a torrent of graces through these messages He gives to you. Little slave of the Saviour, would you say no to Him, simply because you are disappointed in your husband? Did you hear what He said to you this morning? Kathryn, you have little faith, it is true. But you must believe these words spoken to you. This is the most important work of your time here on earth. Be happy while We accomplish it through you and understand that all of the anger of the enemy will not impact the success of this undertaking. You are Mine and I am yours. Rely on Me and all will be well. Will you smile the smallest smile for Me this morning? Thank you. Now move with confidence into your day, not dread. All of heaven truly is available to you and last night I was assaulted with pleas for your peace and well being. You are loved, Kathryn. But you must walk this walk in faith. My blessing falls upon you at every moment of this day. My mother will speak to you also this morning but first you must take a message from your Father.

December 20, 2003

Blessed Mother, Mary

Dearest little soul, you must believe that all will be well. You heard me accurately yesterday and gave me your answer. Anne, dearest, the path is set for you. All will be clear soon and you will only be grateful at the way you are serving heaven. Do you think for a moment that you will regret your service to Us? Is such a thing possible? Kathryn, dear little soul, this is part of your service to Us. It is not pleasant, I know. But carry the words of Christ with you all day and reread them. He loves you so. He so often rests in your service to heaven. You do not see that you are doing well, my child, because you are constantly focused on the needs of others. But there is everything beautiful about your life and so little that is dark. You will make mistakes. You must praise God for your mistakes and falls because without them you might be prideful. Pride is not conducive to holiness, Kathryn, and you and I know that. Your mother loves you and is so pleased at your stream of yes answers to heaven. Persevere, my little lamb. I hear your poor heart when it hurts and I long to comfort you. I will soon be free to do so. Persevere.

January 12, 2004

God the Father

Children of the world, be consoled. Hardship during your time on earth is to be expected. Be peaceful about the difficulties that come your way. Look to Me for consolation. Tell Me your difficulties and I will comfort you in a way that defies human understanding. Remember that when all was going well, when you had many material possessions and advantages, you also had unhappiness. It is important that you retain a heavenly perspective now, during this time of difficulty. I want to share My view with you. From heaven, where I monitored the fall of every leaf, I saw a world that was unbalanced. Some of My children had every

possible earthly possession. Because of the abundance of such possessions, My children in some parts of the world began to think in a distorted way. They thought then that they were entitled to such riches. When they could not secure the riches they admired, they began to think they were deprived. They became unhappy, much as a child who has had too many treats will get sick and feel unwell and stop laughing and smiling. A child who indulges in too many treats sickens himself, which is why a parent is careful to control the amount of treats a child ingests. My children in the more affluent areas of the world experienced this occurrence and their unhappiness and dissatisfaction led to all manner of spiritual decay. My heavenly view shifts for a moment and I gaze upon other areas of the world, where during this same time, children lay dying of starvation and disease, simply for the want of basic necessities. These are the two extremes. They are equally disturbing to Me because I neither created one group to be gluttonous or the other to live and die in misery. Children, were you the father of this group of individuals, what would you do? You would, like Me, say, enough. We must restructure. The Father's riches must be more equitably distributed. Now there are many good and just souls in the first group who share their wealth and have always done so. You will be rewarded far beyond your ability to imagine. You have understood the injustice. You have assisted your holy brothers and sisters who have selflessly gone to minister to the unfortunates in God's family. And for the souls who have given their lives to Me in the spirit of missionary work? I need not discuss here what is to be their reward. What limit can there be on the gratitude of the God Grateful? All that I have is available to these merciful servants. So accept My peace as I create a world that is healthy for all of God's children. You will be happier, My dear ones, when the rule of Jesus Christ has been established on earth. What difference is it to you as long as your eternity is secured? I want joy, now, for all. If you do not feel joy, if you experience the sorrows of the world, know that it is temporary and that My plan is for your spiritual safety and salvation."

I loved that one especially. I am one who has given much to the poor though being middle class myself and it is my joy that because I live as simply as I can I have so much to give, so this was heartwarming confirmation. But I also dream of everything going kaput and everyone going back to the farm. The idea that food has to reach us through mega corporations makes me feel so insecure plus the injustices involved like sweat shops in other countries for cheap Wal-Mart food, etc. etc. So I am pleased "Jesus agrees with me."

February 17, 2004

I did an interview for Zenit about the theme of my article on the Joys of Being a Woman of the Church from the book on The Gift of Femininity published by Servant, edited and assembled by Christine Mugridge. I got a letter from a Canadian priest saying that he liked the article so much that he Xeroxed it for all the girls and women of his parish and had a Women's Celebration Day around it. It brought tears to my eyes to see how much witness stories help others. I saw how Jesus wants to use me this way, because he has given me the courage to give my witness.

Jesus seemed to be telling me he would use me wherever I go because I want to bring his truth and light and love, but that he wants me to have the deep quiet time with him at the hermitage also.

March 5, 2004

I have been thinking about how some angry people are more angry at strangers and some at those who are close – but behind the anger it is the same false perfectionist stance and flight from the cross of the limitations and sins of others. “Except for you, my life could be great, so I want to annihilate you with my anger.”

Seeing THE PASSION – it felt not like a film but like an intervention of God forcing the world to come to grips with what Jesus suffered for us. My grandson Nicholas was very impressed. I thought it was terrific in terms of apologetics in the sense that no one could think that without the Resurrection the disciples would risk such a death.

March 7, 2004

Arrived back at the hermitage to view Sister Catherine’s extraordinary frescos of saints and angels in the big chapel. When I walked it felt as those saints and angels she painted were really present with us.

March 12, 2004

If you “don’t fit in” somewhere, do you try to “stand out” or “hide”?

Unrelated – I was reading the famous old novel USA by John Dos Passos. He has this glamorous, charming, young woman who had many abortions getting into her late 30’s, notice that she is growing old. Her husband is preparing for her to go for the abortion when she decides against it, saying, “I want the little brat!” This reminded me of choices some women I have known made at those ages.

March 15, 2004

From JP II The Way of the Cross

“The cross is raw crudeness and horror, barbarity and ignominy, the place on which, atrociously, dies the Incarnate Son of God. Let no one dare to violate or cover up the atrocity of pain, the place in which love reveals itself and life gushes forth in abundance, the icon of mercy without limit, and beyond all human expectation.

O cross of Christ, which shines out tragic and brilliant in the night of human agony. By your light is illumined every dark step of sorrow....You lead humanity back to its original splendor...our one hope, the safe anchor in the storms of life.”

March 18, 2004

Response to “Anne” concerning an entry in the journal of her locutions. Here is what she wrote as she heard Jesus speak in her heart:

“Jesus

Well done, little soul. You see how the enemy seeks to negotiate with you. I want you to record many things for Me on this day. We will begin with your experience in church this morning. We will then move to your suffering on this day and then I will return to you here.

I am drawing a complete blank on church this morning. I have been in the garden since yesterday. To be honest I've had a terrible time thinking that I just want my life back. I can't earn a living, I'm tired of being broke, I'm tired of feeling like a nut, and I'm tired of not knowing what is going to happen to me from one day to the next. I have these feelings and I make acts of obedience because, despite all, I know that I am going in one direction and that is toward heaven. Nothing will knock me off the path of service to Jesus. Nothing. I will do whatever He asks me, whenever He asks me and that is my decision. I decided to overlook these feelings and not torment myself any further as Jesus understands humanity and the pull of the world. He wants me to know what I am giving up and I feel so beaten down anyway that I do not have much energy to entertain myself with reproaches and the drama of self loathing. So I am complaining at times. Whatever. I would like to shake the hand and congratulate the soul who would do this and not have the odd moment of crankiness. I cannot remember what happened in church, that's how much impact things have on me so if our Lord wants it recorded, my sweet Saviour must please remind me. Okay. I think I have it. I was doing this kind of resigned complaining. My hands and feet hurt terribly, and after mass I did the Stations. During the stations and in contemplation of His Passion, I made yet another act of commitment to Him and to suffering this Passion for Him. (Please believe that I get the barest taste.) He made me understand that my little acts of obedience in the heat of the temptation to rebel give Him tremendous glory. They are more powerful than the most poetic and joyful praises of love sung to Him at times when we are in the spirit of unity. Now, do not be discouraged and think that there is no point to our joyful outbursts of love. They, too, give Him glory. It is simply that dedicated duty in the face of complete and total flatness of spirit is a good thing and we must see it as the opportunity for God's glory that it is. God is good to give me this opportunity. I'm nearly laughing as I write that because the words and the sentiments have been scraped pitifully from the bottom of my barrel of faith. Once again, intellectually I know it to be true far more than I feel it emotionally. I am in a pretty dry state of spirituality right now.

Regarding the suffering today, I'm glad it is over, I will say first of all. Secondly, the devil now attempts to divert me with a new pitch. He offered me millions of souls if I would cease this suffering. He said he would give the kingdom millions of souls. He then asked if I heard him. I am attempting not to dialogue as our Lord does not want

me to talk to him. As he was asking me this I felt as though he were ripping something from the inside of my chest. My heart, I suspect. This went on. He said give me the suffering and I will trade you millions of souls. You will have served Him well and saved millions. You can have them through the messages. You want God's glory? Make the deal. This was at the end of the suffering and he, the devil, then said, relax, you're done. Get up. I remained still because I work for Christ and only Christ tells me when I am done and when to get up. Sure enough, I wasn't. He was trying to get me to excuse myself early and leave some of the suffering behind. I waited and he then said, I'm leaving you to think about it. I will be with you until tomorrow and I'll help you to think about it. I'm willing to hand you millions of souls through the messages. All you have to do is give me this suffering you hate so much. What's to think about?

Well, reader, I will tell you what's to think about. He is not the one who decides what I do and do not do or decides what I suffer or do not suffer. Despite my continual and unabated complaining, I suffer willingly and I so for Jesus Christ and His mother, whom I love with all of my heart. I was then told by Jesus that I was finished and I rested. Our Lord explained to me that of course we would not negotiate that deal or any deal with the enemy, because, as Jesus said,

We do not deal with evil, first and foremost, because evil never looks after the interests of heaven. Never. We can rest in that statement because as My goodness is never changing, the evil of the enemy never changes. The goal is always darkness when one is dealing with those who work for hell. Now, little soul, I tell you also why we do not make such a negotiation. What if the evil one agreed to give us every soul in the world but one and that one were yours? Would I hand over My cross, accept the compromise and merely shake my head at the loss of your soul? You see My smile in your heart, Anne, because you know how ridiculous the very suggestion is to Me. I could no sooner do without you than I could do without the whole of the heavenly kingdom. You are Mine and I am yours. Each soul is equally precious to Me and you know that because I have revealed My heart to you. You will be given flashes of what the evil one offers you today. I have no fears about your ability to stay on an uneven and narrow course as you have often proved your reliability to heaven. Be at peace as you keep Me company in the Garden this evening. All is well and I want to tell you, My little friend, that My stay in the Garden was made bearable by contemplation of little acts of courage like you made this morning in the church.”

Anne, this was so beautiful. I go through minor feelings of confusion, come to think about it, usually after my nap, which is near to the Crucifixion time. I offer it up when I remember to, but this locution more than any other will get me to be sure to see this is how the devil works on me. It brings tears to my eyes. I really like the gutsy (Chicago?) way you write your part, just the way it comes. I think Jesus honors that vs. flowery memorized prayers when those, even if beautiful, don't match your real feelings.

March 18, 2004 after Catholic Answers phone radio interview.

Dear Roy,

I thank you for writing that the program went well. It is so draining to do these things. I felt absolutely wiped out and thought mournfully, who could I talk to who would have listened to the program and then I remembered you were praying and listening and wondered if you would write!

That a real act of friendship!

I am not sure why it's so draining - didn't used to be. Because I'm more contemplative? Or just old? hmmm.

Roy's response:

- I think its a good sign, the drainingness -- I associate it with being a > "conduit" for inspiration (read: the Holy Spirit); when the plug is pulled, I feel like a wrung out dishrag. You have Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament there? That's usually what works for me.**

My reply:

Yes. It works for me afterwards but not before.

I talked to Fr. P. He said that it is usual that if someone is praying in a contemplative way that apostolic work becomes much much heavier because of greater spiritual sensitivity, especially public works. He thought that I shouldn't give up the apostolic activity but do it less - try for at least 10 days between public works.

I can't do that this month which I over-scheduled up but I can in the future. That sounds right.

March 25, 2004

Dear Tom,

(Concerning frustration in prayer)

This is just guess work, but I think that creative Catholic intellectuals sometimes get so wrapped up in the sense of Jesus as a symbol in our religion as a symbol that we can lose the most basic sense of Jesus being who he says he is in the Gospels and proves Himself to be in the intimate I-Thou of the sacraments and mystical prayer.

I find that reading the Fathers and Doctors centers me on the truth, away from speculations. When we read the proofs of St. Thomas closely we realize God is the center of all reality and not dependent in the least on my concept of him in a subjective sense. Then adoration makes sense vs. floating in vagueness during prayer.

So, when you review C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity where he says in those famous WWII radio addresses - look either Jesus is a madman, a liar, or he is who he says he was. In Hebrew tradition to say I and the Father are one is a divinity claim. So, don't think of him as a prophet or an archetype but either as really God or as only a philosopher who cannot save us from our sins. And so, if he is really God, the living personal God, pray to him with that sense in your heart.

Does this tie in at all?

March 26, 2004

Dear Tom,

I love the part where you wrote about suffering in imitation of Jesus out of love. The Passion really focusses on this.

By extreme hermits I mean the ones in early Egypt Christian times who ran out to the furthest reaches of the desert in rags. Others took a ciborium with the Eucharist with them to little huts they built and or met on Sundays for Mass.

It would be wonderful for you to visit here. Let me know if it is feasible between traumas in your life. We are not narrow, by the way.

I can't read 58 pages of anything right now. I am due to give a talk for Pax Romana in the parish near the UN where UN people are invited. I leave next Wednesday and return Sunday so don't expect e-mails during that time.

Doctors of the Church - I love the Office of Readings - full of strong teaching, but especially for apologetics Augustine and Thomas. There are nifty little compendiums of Thomas that just hit the highlight and not all the controversies he is answering. I bet you could easily find one on used books Barnes and Nobles cheap.

"Hating not being a saint yet!" I understand. I am appalled. When I became a Catholic at 21 I thought maybe 5 years would do it. All of these feelings have to do with proudly wanting to be an ambassador vs. a child of God. We want to give love, not receive love. What makes us more holy is being super receptive to God's love as did John of the

Cross, Teresa, and Therese. Somehow, big hearted as we both are, we think receiving love is a bit sentimental. Project-itis fits in very well with this.

How about - on the way into Mass each day, as well as thinking of all the people you need to help with this and that, say a prayer such as

“Jesus! I am the one who needs to be saved. Here I am the humble publican confessing to -----(whatever your main weaknesses are.) I am poor and needy. Help me. As you fill my body with your precious body and blood, please make your love percolate into the marrow of my painful body, heart, mind and spirit.

I'll be praying for you. Love, Ronda

Sunday March 28, 2004 – from “Anne’s” locutions:

Jesus

My child, do not worry about what kind of messages I am giving to others. During this time the enemy seeks to confuse My children with misleading information that would inspire fear or anxiety. You will feel a deep sense of peace and quietness when I am present. Kathryn, if you want to know something, you may ask Me. Be assured that I will give you everything you need, including information, to complete your mission. You can also read Holy Scripture with Me and I will explain many things to you that way. You began to read Revelations at My request and you put it down. Pick it up again and I will help you. If you don't understand something, you may ask. It is possible that I do not share knowledge with you because I do not want you to have it. It is also the case that you did not persevere in that regard. You are not forbidden to read other messages. I just do not want you confused or frightened. You will die someday. You know that. So will every other human created. Prepare for that day and all will be well.

April 8, 2004

(from a letter to a friend feeling bad because her married son is not as close as before)

I spent many sleepless hours praying for you and pondering everything you said. Today in prayer certain things came to me. First, you know sometimes you tell me things no one else would, from long acquaintance and I reject it at first but then see you were right.

Here are some thoughts for you to ponder. If they are totally off base just forget them.

Mothers and sons. Often mothers choose a husband for certain needed qualities, but want opposite ones in their sons or opposites plus the same good ones of the husband.

For example, I wanted my husband to be a father. I needed a man who would be less idealistic, more protective, more shrewd, and provide for my kids more than I would being a spacey Franciscan Catholic. Even though I provided for the kids, after he became disabled, he kept me from becoming a total hippie Catholic. But then I wanted Charlie to be a Franciscan Catholic. So I was looking to my son to provide the qualities that weren't in my husband.

By analogy, your first husband, I gather, was an adventuresome wild type of guy. You wanted in your second husband an opposite to that - someone strong, intelligent, prudent, steady, kind. But in your son you had some of that wild adventuresome quality. Now that is there for his wife and not you. So that is part of the pain.

In part the healing of my grief for losing my little Saint Charlie (as he was to become) is being a surrogate mother to seminarians. Ask God to show you how you can mother other sons as you move on to work with the needy, some of whom are probably shipwrecked wild ones.

Any truth to any of this?

Love, Ronda

April 8

I spent a few hours reading this short book about Marthe Robin (pronounced Roban) a French woman of the 20th century who after becoming paralyzed for unknown causes in her early 20's after that never ate, drank, or slept and bore the stigmata on Fridays. She was a holy soul and foundress of a local H.S. and of Foyer de Charite - retreat centers and a whole movement with 60 of these centers world wide by 1980's. Probably more today. She founded these things from her bed by priests following her inspirations.

Here are two lines that struck me:

"All of life is Calvary and every soul is a Gethsemane where all drink in silence the chalice of their own lives." (p.58 Peyret's bio- Marthe Robin: The Cross and the Joy by Rev. Raymond Peyret (NY, Alba House, 1983)

"my real joy on my sickbed is profound.....What a labor! What growth God has wrought in me! But what leapings of the heart, what death-struggles of the will it takes to die to self." (p. 54)

Easter Triduum:

Dear Carla, my sister,

So many lovely things here. First of all an older woman who is trying living here does the decorations, so she picked beautiful simple wild flowers, a magenta colored cactus blossom for the altar of repose.

Then the stations, after the men carried the cross (about 4 feet high) about 5 yards each from station to station, a little bitty woman, visiting mother of a hermit, offered to take it. I felt ashamed. Even though I have a bad back, etc. etc., I figured it couldn't be that heavy if she carried it, leaned against her shoulder, so I gingerly volunteered for the next to last Pieta Station. I figured Fr. P. would say no if he thought it was risky. But he didn't.

I felt very brave and noble and was congratulating myself on my courage, when we turned the bend on our long road, and there right in front of my station was reclining a huge black cow. It was so funny, totally cutting the ultra-serious way hermits do these rites - total silence always, not little whispers, as most lay people including me tend to. The cow moved away when I arrived. When we got over the little rise to the last Resurrection point, there was the whole herd waiting for us. 6 cows and 5 calves. I

suppose some were steers, I didn't check. It felt like they wanted to be with us for the Resurrection.

During the whole procession our mother cat who just gave birth to 5 kittens followed us meowing.

I have been having a lovely week. I am feeling since NY, that I am just in the right life and place. By the way my back is better since I stopped sitting on the floor to pray and now sit in a stodgy chair with the cushion instead. So travel is a bit easier. It just seems that it is just right to have long periods of quiet contemplative prayer and then go out on a speaking date, but not more than 1 a month, and spend time here writing, not counseling but just affirming people. Since the priest is so austere it doesn't hurt to have a spaniel-like friendly old woman affirming them.

Jesus seemed to say in my heart, "Yes, Yes, Yes."

A line from one of the sermons - we need to love others in the place of their greatest need which they will only open to us if they feel we love them.

I love Taize hymns.

I am going to play the St. Matthew Passion while cleaning up.

Love to you and Arthur in the place of your deepest needs, Ronda

April 12, 2004

(I asked "Anne: to ask Jesus if I should visit her in Ireland this August and about canonization procedures for CharlieRich and here is the answer)

Jesus

"In answer to your questions, little soul who seeks My will, you must be prepared to wait. I will send you the answers in time. For now, I want you to continue seeking the grace of enlightenment from Me in the tabernacle.

(I am asking Jesus if Ronda should book a ticket for August. He responds patiently but firmly.) I have said she will wait and I will tell her when it is time.

(At this time I understand that I should be quiet as He is talking directly to Ronda and I just interrupted.)

(This next paragraph concerns my working on a possible cause for the canonization of Charles Rich, a Jewish convert lay contemplative mystic who mentored and befriended me for decades. I edited several books of his letters and wrote his biography. For more information go to www.friendsofcharlesrich.com.)

"With regard to the initiation for proceedings to honour My servant, I say again, the time is not now. I want you to continue to pray for this earthly

acknowledgment. These things are brought about often through the prayers of the faithful on earth, who seek to bring glory to their brothers and sisters who have gone before them. This is how it happens. When My time comes, all will flow naturally.

I have answered those questions. Now I will speak of another matter. I wish My little servant to respond yes to Me in another area and that is in the area of trust.

(I made this part larger to carry around with me and read from time to time):

I want to draw you close in against My heart.

I desire unity with you, dearest, but you pull away because you do not trust your Jesus.

Would I ever fail you? Would I ever send you a plan that was detrimental to your spirituality and your unity with Me? You know that I would not because My desire, like your desire, is unity.

I want to draw you directly into My heart, and I want to do that now. You need do nothing, only trust. Tell Me you trust Me all through each day.

You desire My happiness and you seek to comfort Me. I will be comforted by unity with you. That is what your Saviour desires.

Ask Me to give you heightened trust. Practice trusting Me. Ask yourself, what would I decide to do right now if I totally trusted Jesus?

The answers will come to you and you will struggle less with doubts and anxieties. These things are not from Me and they hinder Our progress.

I love you completely. Let us remove these final little blocks and be together so you can serve Me with abandon.”

(I felt greatly moved by this locution which cuts with a two edged sword for me. Afterward, reading it over and over on a busy confused day because my computer screen seemingly died – as if the computer was overwhelmed that Jesus came right through its old being? – I felt driven to rush down to Laredo to buy a replacement –

when I finally got back and went to bed early I had a sense of Jesus trying to melt my heart and of Mary's sweet presence hovering over me as I prayed the rosary falling asleep.)

April 13, 2004

My computer monitor went into death throes. In my usual exaggerated way, I immediately thought – this is a sign to give up writing and e-mail and the net! I felt depressed as soon as I decided that. Then Jesus seemed to give me an answer – he is weaning me from lots of loud speech through the relative silence of the computer. I should get a new monitor and not worry about being addicted at this point. Slowly but surely I will be able to put prayer before projects so that I would come to the projects with peace.

April 22,2004

I went to confession about an argument I had with someone about Israelis and Palestinians. I see that it is a Recovery, Inc. type of thing in the sense of we get a rush of symbolic victory overcoming enemies in argument since we can't win on the ground, especially in political arguments. Such arguments are spiritually dangerous. Even though infallibility doesn't cover application of Just War, since the Vatican is preaching peace, if I start a campaign about the Israeli side I could be agitated a lot of the time.

Dear Roy,

Actually I take everything you say very very seriously and I have been pondering it ever since. (Roy wrote that he thought the Pope's views were just misinformed and came from his trying to think the Arabs are the underdogs.) Not that it shook my faith of course since these matters don't come under infallibility.

I spend many hours in my oratory pondering how Hebrew-Catholics, Jews who became Catholics, should deal with the current dilemma of our loyalty to Israel. After all, Israel includes plenty of pro-abort atheists - Sharon is an atheist at least up til recently and I haven't heard different. Just the same we cannot help desiring that Israel be victorious. Then, what about the claims of Christian Arabs against Israeli treatment of them?

We had a sermon today about poverty of spirit for contemplatives. Fr. P. said that especially for contemplatives we want to avoid a kind of problem many academics have is that they infallibilize their own opinions, so they are rich in half truths and can't listen to anyone else. Not that the half-truths aren't true but that a kind of arrogant assertion of them is not in the spirit of Jesus.

I immediately went to confession. I analyze my tendency to be this way as coming from feeling weak because I cannot win on issues such as Israel with other Catholics, so I want a symbolic victory by debating them into the ground meanwhile ignoring that after all Israelis aren't exactly saints either. My husband who was much more pro-Israeli than I still thought the sabra soldiers looked like Fascists.

You, Roy, are much more of an expert on these matters, so you have much more of a right to be assertive, whereas I am basing my ideas mostly on Arutz-Sheva, Joan Peters, Exodus of Uris and holocaust books about Europe.

I don't think it is a matter of Catholic obedience at all, Roy, to disagree with the Pope on political issues. Still it is important to always assume the good will of the Holy Father, since he is so holy. We need to hope that when we think he is the victim of propaganda, he will be corrected.

I think it would be good to have a talk on all this at our Conference (a planned conference of Hebrew-Catholics and others in NYC for March, 2005).

April 22, 2004

I visited the home of a friend who has teen girls. What a delight to hear them giggling in the other room. I miss that aspect of family life in my hermitage.

I was thinking about how long people live nowadays: to have more time to recover from their lives?

The worst times of life, usually are teen-age, mid-life and disabled old age.

April 25, 2004

Dear Irene,

After visiting with you last night when we spoke about possibilities for your future life, while I was falling asleep, it seemed as if God showed me the radiant beauty of your soul and then he entrusted it to me to cherish and pray for.

Kierkegaard says that God has a prophecy for what each person will become in his grace. This seemed like that – like the seed of you buried underneath all the insecurities and anxieties. Even though this was ineffable, it lasted maybe a half hour, and the adjectives I would use to describe the sense of your soul would be radiant, delicate, soft, empathetic, extremely feminine.

Love from your intercessor, Ronda

April 25, 2004

Diana said that Christopher, my grandson, says “abortion is the worst thing in the world,” and that God should be spelled Jod because Jesus is part of God. She also said a while ago that Christopher and Pete, her husband, watch lots of movies together about Jesus.

April 27, 2004

Dear Fr. P., NOT SENT

(Note: sometimes I write a letter and plan to send it, but then later think better of it. However, I would like to leave it in here as a record of what was going through my mind at that time.)

Today is the one year anniversary of when I donned my modified habit (a simple tan dress and a long scapular to match those of the brothers), since even more modified since the rosary beads around the waist clicked too loudly and the belt of white wool just never sat right.

As I sat cutting up the old patchy dress that Sr. Catherine got paint on and anyway it was falling apart, and used parts of it to improve my tan jumper, I had lots of time to pray about my status.

With the grace of God I feel that over time I have improved a little in terms of understanding the life here and what doesn't work. Following your great direction I now rarely talk about the college or any complicated outside matters. I am much much better off in the more distant hermitage and with the car. I am much better off doing jobs that are on my own vs. collaborative ones.

I believe that I am living more out of the heart, in Pere Thomas' sense (Pere Thomas Philippe was the Dominican priest mentor of Fr. P.) and I am lighter in spirit also. Alleluia.

We have had so many conversations about titles that my head spins a little when I think of them. Clearly, at least for the near future, I am not suited to be a sister. Since I am also apostolic, calling myself a hermit contemplative doesn't sound quite right.

Lay contemplative doesn't sound right because I do have a private promise and I just don't feel lay at all in that aspect.

I would most like the title dedicated widow (someone, you,? suggested this title once to me) with the aim of becoming a consecrated widow within this ecclesial community. For instance, there are lay consecrated members of communities such as Mary, Immaculate Queen in France. They are mostly singles who have always been single. You once said that widow was a somewhat negative term in the sense of husband died. But widow can be positive in the sense of honoring the married vocation the widow had before as certainly did Conchita and St. Elizabeth of Hungary and others who were de facto consecrated widows.

Next best, as I see it, would be Oblate Regular, if that is a category within the rubric of ecclesial community if this develops, as you described it.

Well, it is not really important, but the anniversary of my modified clothing brought it all to consciousness for me. When I go about outside here, I will call myself a dedicated widow living at a hermitage unless you say otherwise.

PAX Ronda

(I was glad I didn't send this letter, because in a conversation a few days later, Father explained how it is crowded already and later when we have more priests (5 years from now) we could have different sites on our various properties with a priest ministering to different groups of hermits including maybe one for widows, but not now.)

Trust, trust, trust, in Jesus, but now I am pondering what this means for me now.

Unrelated – a very loving woman I know was being scolded by her husband for being messy. I asked her: "how many times do you see the word "neat" in the Gospels, and how many times do you see the word "love"? And even I, who love neatness, do value love more.

She replied: Thank you - I have always known that your heart is the biggest part of your mind.....:)

April 30, 2004

Dear Fr. P.,

Today in your wonderful sermon you spoke of the comparison between a babe nourished by the blood of the mother and then the milk with the Eucharist.

They didn't show mothers how to breastfeed when I had my twins but I did breastfeed my son and it gave me such a wonderful feeling about my body, previously experienced as an ugly encumbrance on my soul, that of my very bodily substance I was giving life to my son's body, and I felt it was analogous to the Eucharist.

During the rest of the Mass I was thinking about our short conversation yesterday – how in my anxious little heart the thought of the seminarians being based an hour and a half away at a new site and then how that would mean you would be there often, also led to picturing days of days of each week going to the parish for Mass....

Jesus seemed to tell me this – you qua “father” have to be with your seminarian “sons” more than with your widow disciple “mothers.” And I, after all the pain of having to be with priest “father” dissenters, must want to sacrifice anything that there be good priest fathers in the future in the spring-time of the Church. So I should be willing to sacrifice the visible presence of my seminarian “sons” for the sake of their becoming priests and of my priest “father” for the same great benefit. In one way or another every contemplative is a victim soul if not by choice just by bearing the crosses God sends.

By the time in the future when I cannot have the physical presence of my father and sons a lot of the time, assuming this will be the case, I should be experiencing His personal love for me so much more deeply through contemplative prayer in my own oratory here, that it will be less painful, so my Jesus: father, lover, and friend, tells me.

If this sounds like the voice of Jesus to you, you can pray for me to get through this period without *unnecessary* pain, but if you have some other “take” on it, let me know.

Sigh! Love, Ronda

When I next talked to Fr. P. he suggested that I use my imagination too much in a pessimistic manner.

Later, Jesus seemed to suggest that I be more like a camel, retaining lots of grace and keeping it for dryer days.

Sunday Sermon of Fr. P. on May 2, 2004 for 4th Sunday of Easter

(Note: This was taken down by me in shorthand. Later when I put some of this on our web-site I included a note about these sermons being designed for contemplatives here, so that they would have to be modified in some ways in the minds of actives.)

“Today is the 1st Sunday of May. We will have a May crowning and rosary after Mass. It is also the feast of St. Athanasius by date, hidden by the Sunday feast. St. A. did so much to sustain the hermits of his time.

In the Gospel reading from St. John Jesus speaks about our eternal life. He and the Father and the Holy Spirit are one in our spiritual life. Even though we have distractions and troubles that make us fear to be “snatched out of the Father’s hand,” as Jesus explains, we should not fear. We can think that the devil is snatching us out of God’s hand sometimes. We feel as if we are not in God’s hand or his arms, as if we have been stolen away from our hopes about our spiritual life.

But, despite sins and betrayals, Jesus says that ordinary people like us will not be snatched out of God’s hand. He wants to talk to us in our ordinariness to assure us that it is not true that we are snatched. On this beautiful day after the storm yesterday, we need to think that he wants to give us an intimate life with the Trinity.

In the face of great problems that could have discouraged humans and even in the midst of persecution, we can live a sublime life and each of us is called to live that.

The Gospel speaks of the “voice” of Jesus. The Holy Father has been speaking a lot about the “face” of Christ, but here it is his voice that is mentioned. John the Baptist rejoiced to hear his voice. According to St. John of the Cross, the voice is the interior voice heard in silence. God speaks in silence says St. John of the Cross.

We need to be gathered into the hand of God by our recollection (gathering ourselves) not through logic and reasoning, but being touched by the voice of love even more intimate than sight. The auditory is closer to love than sight, which can be deceived easily as by seeing “lights” or tricks that come from bad spirits.

Hearing the vibrations from the voice in our own hearts that are attended to that voice we thrill as it responds to the longing for the voice of the Good Shepherd. This is an affective hearing. In order to hear that voice we have to have the gift to be gathered by recollection. It is hard if there is too much exterior noise.

We confide ourselves to the Blessed Virgin Mother of the poor to take us into her arms to be gathered into God’s hand.

We have to dispel the conflictual voices and distractions. Just as St. Paul talked louder to overcome the voices of unbelieving Jews, we have to “talk” louder than the persecuting voices. Sometimes we need the courage to speak over the voices of bad spirits telling us that there is no use trying to be contemplative because we are hopeless or that “this is just not your line of work.” I used to have such temptations in the beginning years in France. I argued these down so that now, even though I feel just as inadequate, I have talked myself out of giving up.

When you are starting, you have these persecuting voices and it is hard to hear the inner voices. Jesus knows that and so we need a spiritual resurrection of our little hearts that need to know that none of us will be snatched away.

It is a major truth of this Gospel, because some of the most subtle temptations are where we feel snatched out of his hand into the chaos of our minds. The Father is greater than all this.

Let us dedicate ourselves as little people to our spiritual Mother Mary to renew faith and hope in the resurrection, when we feel deluged and have a hard time gathering ourselves together.

Recollection comes through a special grace as we are drawn up into a hidden spot necessary for the contemplative life. St. Teresa of Avila says that before a great mystical grace “I was in a great recollection when it happened.” The prelude to the mystical is recollection.

We need to pray because each of us knows how poor we are in terms of distractions and troubles. We need to pray for recollection so that we can hear that voice in our heart.

May 4, 2004

Ronda,

...Also, I have been rereading the article by Shoeman taken off the internet. He accuses Boston College for not encouraging people to convert to Catholicism while equating it to other world religions such as the Hebrews. Having graduated from BC, I think he doesn't realize that faith to Catholicism is a gift from God. If people are not called to it, is it better to denounce their choice of religion or accept the best of their world? I look forward to your answer.

Dear Tom,

Glad you are back on board.

Jesus said he came for the Jews first. Every reading these last 2 weeks is about how the apostles went first to the Jews. Throughout the centuries many Jews have converted. We are a universal Church - the catechism repeats this often. One and true doesn't mean other religions are completely wrong but we have the fullness of truth. I like the way JP II puts it in Threshold of Hope that there is a main light from God and then other religions see shafts of this light.

Jews rush to join Jews for Jesus and Messianic Judaism partly because they stand the street and preach.

Letter to a married woman whose husband is dying and who is interested in becoming a consecrated widow after he dies:

Having fantasies is normal. It is when they become obsessive that they become a drain.

On spiritual gluttony, there is a certain clear way of distinguishing. If you are a spiritual glutton you go around from place to place looking for spiritual highs and detest the lows and flee from them into escapist mechanisms such addictions including co-dependency on perfect people. If you are a fervent woman desiring to be purified you accept, with struggle of course, the crosses God sends or allows offering them for others

and begging to be purified through them. That does not mean asking for crosses or not trying to eliminate them when possible, but it means accepting them when you can't change anything.

Hope this helps, Love, Ronda

Dear Ronda,

Well, you "nailed it." Yes, I fantasize about my future and the fantasy doesn't include my husband. When I realize what I'm doing, I think it's being selfish. Then, I read where Angela of Foligno, after her conversion, prayed for the death not only of her mother, whom she considered a "hindrance" to her spiritual progress- but also of her husband and child and her prayers were answered! That really surprised me, but didn't inspire me to pray likewise. My fantasy is to live with other people who love God above everything and live a life of prayer and sacrifice and study. Yes. That is a very nice fantasy.

You asked a question in your book that I wondered if you found the answer. I suspect you have and I don't remember Charlie answering it in his letters to you. The question was: "*How does one distinguish spiritual gluttony from simply being a woman of desire, fervent for the purifying of God with mystical experiences not to "feel good" but in order to be purified?" I am so afraid of spiritual gluttony.* I live with so many fears...spiritual gluttony, spiritual vanity, etc. etc.. Fear has been such a part of my life. But gradually, I am being healed.

I can't believe Charlie lived so long! And longing so to go Home. How old was he when he died? I will order his autobiography from St. Bede's.

Today is a good day for me. Ray goes to work on Thursdays and Fridays, so I have the house all to myself. It is QUIET in here. Nice. I can be among the "pots and pans" with you know Who.

May 8, 2004

Dear Fr. P.,

Here comes my cyclical letter of gratitude at times of leaving. It will be about 6 weeks before I see you again, unless our paths cross during the first week of June when I am back, but leaving June 7th for N.H.

The history of our relationships came to mind this morning in prayer. It began with admiration, then came fear you would reject me because of the college/hermitage problems, then came on my side a sort of mournful resignation

realizing that you would never be a “teddy-bear” priest for me nor a spiritual friend in the way Charlie Rich was, where he would share his every feeling, thought, and grace with me, like a twin; and now, for the last 6 months or so, it is more like my relationship to my holy godfather and Von Hildebrand, where they were loving mentors...

...but something new for me is how Jesus is showing me himself through mystical graces where he lets me share in His way of infusing you so that I meet him in your heart and soul both through your loving kindness and suffering of and for me, but also just seeing who Jesus is as he floods your soul and heart and speech in sermons and your way of celebrating the Mass, and spiritual direction.

I have always thought the more a woman is a Catholic leader, the more she needs a stronger male mentor. I see this is Alice Von Hildebrand for whom Dietrich was everything, but now she gravitates toward Fr. Benedict Groeschel who lives nearby. Also, of course, almost all the women saints, and maybe all, but we don't know of it, had strong male mentors to help them grow.

So it is a great grace, for which I am grateful, that God has brought me to your feet to learn at this phase of my life.

In return I am very happy to intercede for you, and perform small literary and monetary services of whatever kind, and anything else you may ask in the future.

Bon voyage, Adieu, Au Revoir, Buon viaggio, etc., poor little Ronda

Dear Irene,

Here's a mental challenge for you.

Given that, as per the Sennott book, (The Body and Blood) about Israel – where at first it seems the Arabs and Jews are villains and the Christians are all victims, but then shows how when the Christians were in power in Lebanon for awhile, they did the same evil things) almost all people when they get power become vicious, doesn't this confirm the prayer of the heart and working on anger in people's souls since behind all the violence is fear of being vulnerable and not having enough faith in God to be either passively resistant a la Gandhi, or even follow just war criteria?

May 13,2004

After Fr. P. left, I felt upset and insecure as usual. Then at adoration I had an interior vision of Fr. P. smiling and walking toward me and then felt his strength come into me.

June 4, 2004

Dear John Henry, (this is a letter to John Henry Crosby who is working on Von Hildebrand Legacy Plans)

Alleluia. I just finished Von Hildebrand's treatise on Schubert while listening to the C Major Quintet on my tiny little CD player.

Glorious.

I felt Gogo's (nickname of Von Hildebrand used by all his friends and family) presence in the room almost smiling as I read and listened.

This is what I think. I think whereas Gogo philosophized out of the German side of his personality and wrote like a German, in writing of music, he wrote out of the Italian side (his German family had a villa in Italy where they went every long summer, so little Gogo had a strong Italian background), and that is why that side of him comes leaping out of your wonderful translation. Of course I loved both sides.

June 5, 2004

Dear friend,

I read "The Secret Language" (about eating disorders) that you gave me through the night and finished most of it. First of all, I felt such sadness that I have failed you so often because I did not understand and just don't have all the gifts it takes to help, especially not the calm serenity. Please forgive me for these limitations.

The first thing I saw is how like Recovery, Inc. this is – the negative voice is the symptomatic idiom always telling us that everything is unbearable and that we are failures every time with have a set back. The Recovery language is about realism, objectivity, averageness and humility. PLEASE KEEP READING THAT BOOK (Mental Health Through Will-Training by Abraham Low). I would love to have a daily session with you doing that system on trivia either by e-mail when I am away or when I come back.

Perfectionism and despair that one cannot save the world or ones family is just like exceptionality in Recovery.

The part that I did do right as a sort of informal helper would be affirming your gifts, refuting your negative thoughts with objectivity, and trying to distract you with projects.

June 12, 2004

Visiting St. Scholastica's Priory in Massachusetts to pick up boxes of Charlie Rich tapes and letters, I was almost in tears over the discombobulation of travel, cold and heat, and desire to be finally settled in one place. I reread the locution Jesus seemed to have sent me through Anne and realized once more that unity with him counts more than unity of place. He does have a plan for me and it will be good for me. Right now all I need is trust. Meanwhile Jesus told me to thank him for having so many options.

June 30, 2004 – written to an atheistic friend.

Dearest Emily,

I will pray for your surgery. I am delighted about your new grandbaby. Just looking at her must be a great joy even if you can't help much.

About purgatory. Here the basic way I see it is that at the time of death everyone sees Jesus. If they love light and goodness they move toward Him. Now, to be in heaven you have to have nothing but love in your heart. But sins of the past constrict the heart and leave pockets of cold, resentment, non-forgiveness, hate, etc.

Purgatory is a place of purification - I call it stretching the heart to love more and purifying it to get rid of those pockets mentioned above. You can tell even in this life that repenting, forgiving, etc. is painful.

The pain is mainly spiritual and immaterial since souls do not have bodies, but as a condescending to our earthly viewpoint it is described by Jesus and shown to visionaries including Dante as physical pain. There is no fixed Catholic doctrine resolving the conundrum of how souls without bodies can be shown as suffering physical pain to visionaries. I looked it up.

Here is how you could "pray"

God, if there is a God, I am very sorry for all the sins, defects, etc. of my life, especially those that directly hurt other people. Please forgive me. I offer the sufferings I have been going through with Parkinsons and all the ones in the future as a penance for those sins and defects. Also if Christians are right in what they believe, show me clearly.

Can't hurt. Chesterton said the reason he became a Catholic was to get rid of his sins.

Love, Ronda

July 3, 2004

Dear Fr. P.,

I woke up suddenly in the night with the old mind trying to wrap itself around the experience of the "kingdom" here in relationship to "the tragic sense of

life” embodied in Moby Dick as reflected in the “a sinking ship” experienced by me as I ponder various possibilities for my future.

I am wondering about your vision for the hermitage. Is the theory, based on the mystical vision of Pere Thomas, that a hermit village that has as its source the deep experience of the love of the Holy Family (visually expressed in the surrounding icons) can live the mystery already on earth without the power struggles that go on even in the “good” Catholic world where activism can feed pride and kill love?

Or, is the contemplative life, just another form of spiritual warfare, with more subtle power struggles, where ultimately the only love that doesn’t fail is forgiveness extended from the Heart of God through our hearts toward each other in a little microcosm of the wider world? (Vague memories of Melville’s Billy Budd, read many years ago, as illustrative of the idea that love conquers all only in a tragic manner not so as to “improve things.”)

Is our hermitage in America, rather than in France, because the American dream bolsters greater hope even in the midst of tragic failure, giving more of a natural foundation to the “grace which builds on nature”? I trust the hope that comes with a graced leader, you, of a less sanguine temperament than that of the “utopians” who tried to lead some of the places I was at that seemingly failed.

Asking these questions seems important for me. Personally, do I see this village as a spiritual rest home, or launching pad for my little apostolic ventures, or am I to be a part, however peripherally, of a new way of living the Kingdom of Jesus?

Were the complications with the other group who left here, a kind of “evolutionary stage,” a refining fire, to shape the nature of what will now grow?

The April locution passed down to me, where Jesus urges me to trust, suggests that I don’t really need to have an answer to these questions, the asking of which might be the last gasp of the intellectual approach to life.

On the other hand, as one among several lay contemplatives who are living here and who will live here, it could be good for me to firm up my sense of the meaning of hermit village.

I was challenged by your recent sermon about going deep into the heart and not getting bogged down in worry and scruples. The outer forms must flow from the interior life. Possibly Americans, including me, have a tough time with this idea, pragmatically wanting all the time to build up the exterior without the more arduous spiritual warfare of dealing with the moment by moment betrayals of love. Pere Thomas’ more seemingly French sense of this interior way is a help.

Is the answer to all these questions not your words but your being?

July 5, 2004

Letter to a friend:

Here is why I love you:

I love you for being a big warm teddy-bear who is loving to me

I love you for going to daily Mass and adoration

I love you for bringing up a large family of great people

I love you for choosing such an adorable wife

...

I love you for surrounding yourself with wonderful people.

Over time people who love me have called me on these defects:

interrupting people when they talk as if only Dr. Ronda has anything important to say

being rude by not listening sufficiently to others

moving around during adoration which distracts people

judging others harshly

interrupting others who are working with my needs

When I hear these things I try desperately to justify them rather than to work out a way to get better with the help of JMJ and the Holy Spirit. But after the first sting, I do try to pray for help from JMJ and the Holy Spirit and over a long time people say I have improved.

How are JMJ and the Holy Spirit trying to help you with your defects? Here is the one I am concerned with

I believe you make promises you can rarely keep because you like to make other people happy by saying yes to what they ask for and also you just lack good judgment about what is possible to accomplish given the ever changing demands of the work you have taken upon yourself.

Just the same not fulfilling promises makes other people upset, angry, and hurt.

So how do you think JMJ and the Holy Spirit can help you to do better on this?

Wishing you had more help or that others didn't care if you didn't fulfill the promises isn't much of an answer.

You don't have to write back to me about this if you don't wish to but the Holy Spirit seemed to be telling me to write it, reaffirming that none of these changes my estimate of your great virtues listed first.

Love, Ronda

(He didn't answer but we are still friends, a miracle in itself, perhaps).

Later Jesus seemed to tell me that he didn't bring me to Fr. P. because he wanted me to be like him, but because he wanted me to see what he, Jesus, was like, through the way Fr. P. is, so I would be closer to him, Jesus. I already have Saint P., now I want St. Ronda. He seemed to beg me to trust him as I do what is life-giving to myself, rather than trying desperately to be more like Fr. P. Jesus wants to make me into a radiant outgoing saint who combines the contemplative and active, because all that counts is love in its many forms.

I had a talk with Fr. P. about my letter concerning the nature of this community. He reminded me that this is not a community, more like individuals receiving guidance for union of our hearts with that of Christ.

Fr. P. also said that he and others notice that I seem stimulated and in good spirits after going out to give talks, whereas if I am here a long time I look more tired and drawn. He thinks, however, that I wouldn't stay at a place so rustic and inconvenient with such a bad climate if I didn't feel in solidarity with the goals of the ones who are called to the full contemplative life. So I just need to find my way to integrate the contemplative and the active. I could call myself a widow-oblate if I wished and still wear a plain tan dress when I am off the grounds, but not the scapular.

Letter to a member of the Hebrew-Catholic Association Board:

I guess I would think of a Hebrew-Catholic wanting to support Jews living in Israel as the first plank. How would we support this concretely? Obviously trying to refute those who make out that the Jews simply grabbed Arab land and deserve to be flung into the sea. But what else? Should we send money to support an army that probably does abortions for the female members?

Should we advance some kind of support by Hebrew Catholics in a public forum just with some kind of manifesto, say from the H-C Association? Would this manifesto be published simultaneously in an Israeli paper or web as well as in some US paper?

Just floating ideas at this point.

Shalom, Ronda

Hi, Ronda:

Welcome to the list! Interesting question. I think we should start by defining our terms. What is "Zionism"?

My understanding is that it started as an essentially atheistic "back-to-the-land-for-Jews" movement with kibbutzim and the communal raising of children.

It has seemed to me like a negative thing. It was denounced, I believe, by the Orthodox.

On the other hand--and on a deeper level--I remember Abbot Leo Rudloff saying (back in the 1960s) that the State of Israel, even though atheistic, was a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy of the coming together of the dry bones. They needed to "come together" first so that the Lord could breathe his Spirit into them and make them live.

Would you say that Zionism is the belief that Jews should be allowed to live in Israel in peace? What would a Catholic Zionism add to this? That the Jews should accept the Messiah? Isn't that true for Diaspora Jews, too? Why call that "Zionism"?

But I have a feeling your definition of Zionism involves more than my tentative one.

(Interesting questions - not resolved)

July 7, 2004

Franciscan University of Steubenville wants me to do a show for their TV Forum shown on EWTN about my book *Taming the Lion Within: 5 Steps from Anger to Peace*. Talking to them about this program, to be done in October when I am giving a workshop there on this topic, I started pushing for a tape of it, as well. Jesus seemed to laugh at me and say, "So reaching a million people on TV is not enough for you?" I laughed aloud.

July 8, 2004

Regarding Jesus seemingly laughing at me about the Taming stuff at FUS, I am thinking **IDON'T TAKE IN THE GOOD ENOUGH, BUT JUST LEAP TO THE NEXT WORRY!** He wants me to soak in all the good he is arranging for me.

July 9, 2004

Went to the ordination of priests from the community who ran the college where I used to teach. If felt the Holy Spirit urging me to go to celebrate with some

of the ordinands who had been my students. I prayed and prayed to be able to feel love for those administrators I might meet I had been in conflict with. Sure enough I saw one in the opening procession and had the grace to jump up onto the kneeler, and wave with joy to see him. He seemed delighted to see me also. I realized that even though we experienced such severe problems we have been praying for each other. I thought, what joy will there be in heaven when we have forgiven every single person who ever harmed us!

There was a wonderful moment during the ceremony at the point where all the priests attending give a hug of peace to the newly ordained. A very thin, shorter, priest who was previously a High School wrestling champ, grabbed a huge newly ordained friend of his and lifted him off the floor. It was such a marvelous dramatic unconventional gesture. It reminded me why I loved this community in spite of all the problems we had.

July 11, 2004

After Sunday Mass at the bigger chapel I backed right into a car Fr. P.'s aunt and uncle had donated to the hermitage. Those staying longer to pray in Church heard the loud bang. I felt stupid, senile, ugh!

July 12, 2004

From the book *Star Children* by Clara Asscher-Pinkhof about the children herded into temporary detention facilities on the way to the concentration camps:

“We were permitted to bring my father to the gate. Two men carried him on a bier covered in white...We walked behind until the gate opened and two men passed through with their load. My father entered into freedom, but the gate was closed for us.

Oh, he received death in a friendly way; he knew that only death could open the barbed wire and the gate. He nodded to this space, this freedom, in the days of his illness, and now that they are open to him, he has greeted them happily...what happens to his body is the secret of the little brick house there in the distance. What happens to his soul we will know and understand all the rest of our lives; the good, which is imperishable...it is not death that has to open the barbed wire and gate, but the soul itself, grown until it is unassailable, which can rise above the impediments created by harsh hatred and mightless might. You can live and be free however tightly your mortal remains are wedged.”

July 14, 2004

Coming to see that my conflicts about where to live in the future revolve around a perfectly understandable widow's need to be protected by strong, just, men. Unconsciously, as I waver, I am probably weighing up how much I can trust

the men in each locale to take care of me. In the Psalms, though, it is written “put not your trust in princes.” When will I truly believe that God the Father is protecting me?

July 15, 2004

Fr. P. told me today that all the male hermits say that they are disturbed by the way I look around during prayer from my perch at the front of our little chapel. He suggested I might consider sitting in the back instead.

At first I felt numb, but then deep prayer of quiet came over me. Even though I can see what they mean, I still felt rejected. I look around because I love them so much and in a motherly, and also former teacherly, way, I want to check out how they are doing. They say teachers have a terrible time retiring because they are used to being center stage directing everything in the room.

I talked to Cathy, one of my oldest friends. She thought that the men here need to bond like a family – they are younger and will be close for the rest of their lives. However, she thought it possible that I need to be some place where I can be more central. That might not be so much ego as just my character which is not introvert.

The next morning I felt an urge to remove the scapular I wear on these grounds because actually I am not part of them, really. This could seem like an over-reaction out of pride, but it didn't. It just seemed like an admission of something I had been denying.

July 17, 2004

I had a long unusually intricate dream where I was talking to St. Edith Stein who was visiting and speaking at the college where I used to teach. She was like Alice Von Hildebrand, very intense and compassionate.

I couldn't remember what she said, but I woke up wanting to offer all my sufferings for the conversion of the Jewish people.

My friend Roy Schoeman who loves Edith Stein so much thought it was not a dream but a real interaction where she was giving me instructions.

An interesting quotation: “The guardian ego is a scriptwriter, tagging moods, experiences, behaviors, and things as “me,” keeping a record of its biographical inventory, which is stores in memory. Since it is a mental function, however, all it can really come up with is an *idea* of the self, which it eventually fashions into an *ideal* – and unfortunately too often into an *idol*. Its attempt to feed and keep the idol intact is narcissism in its purest form – the worship of the *self-idol*.”

Dear Hebrew-Catholic friends,

Looking forward to the novena before the feast day of Edith Stein in August, I am thinking that some of us might be called to make an offering of this type:

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, you know how I love the Jewish people and wish that all of them would know you, their Messiah, at least as well as I do. I offer to you the little and big crosses of my life now and in the future for the enlightenment and ingrafting into your Church of the Jewish people.

Dear Athol, (a Jewish convert member of the Hebrew Catholic Internet Board who writes articles about the Kabbalah in relationship to Catholic realities such as the Eucharist)

These articles are especially fascinating to me because I am descended on my mother's side from Russian atheistic communist Jews, but from my father's side for Sephardic Jews who emigrated during the expulsion from Spain through Holland to the Island of Curacao. My grandfather came for S.America to USA and was related to famous De Sola-Poole rabbis. He himself was not religious but was a secret Jewish Mason in NYC. I only found this out many years after his death. We always heard of Luria's and other people with names you mention as being the bad Kabbalah people. However, part of the family De Sola were conversos, and I always figured that they prayed for the Jewish branch and that when I converted they were glad.

Now I am a great lover of Teresa and John - so there is a resonance in their writings probably of a line of mysticism that my most distant relatives were familiar with even if in debased forms.

I think you have the making of a terrific book here, by the way.

July 20, 2004

I am experiencing something almost like brain fever from being on the Hebrew-Catholic web dialogue.

One of the brothers who was a friend from before we came here, suggested that I fling myself into the arms of God the Father before most of the group leaves on a trip, rather than being too demanding before hand as if to insist that those who are staying prove they will take care of me.

Even though I think he is right about this, it also made me want to leave a place where the people I depend on come and go so often.

July 24, 2004 Feast of St. Birgitta widow and pilgrim

I have been in great turmoil over what I should do in the future. I got so upset I decided to insist on some kind of answer:

Should I
just stay at the hermitage and cut out all the outside works
or

plunge into the outside works leaving the hermitage for someplace else
or
try to balance the two in some ratio that would work

Jesus seemed to answer me this way:

"You don't belong anywhere. That is your cross. I have told you before not to join any group but just be Ronda of Jesus and let me set you down anywhere in my Church.

"I don't want you to make any decisions regarding active/contemplative. I want you to follow the Holy Spirit by doing anything good you want to do that is offered and I will be with you all the time whether in your oratory or away on work in my Church.

"Don't push, don't strain. Enjoy the beauty here, and the excitement of other places. Offer the fatigue, or the heat, or the cold to me without TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO ARRANGE YOUR LIFE TO AVOID CROSSES. DO INSTEAD WHAT MAKES YOU JOYFUL AND ACCEPT THE CROSSES THAT GO WITH IT.

"I love you and you love me and Mary, Joseph and the saints and that is all you need."

Sounds pretty right on to me. Cuts like a 2 edge sword through all my dreads and fantasies.

July 27, 2004

"One's own free unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy--is that very "most advantageous advantage" which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms."
-Fyodor Dostoevsky

This quotation fits in well with some of my schemes for alternate life-styles to this one at the hermitage. How wrong could it be to want to be in a place where I can love and be loved in an appropriate but still more naturally extrovert manner?

July 30, 2004

I had written a letter to Bishop Burke of St. Louis about consecrated widows and the status of this emerging vocation at this time. Here is a part of his reply:

"At present there is no rite for the consecration of widows.

A widow can live a life dedicated wholly to Christ and she can make private vows. It is not proper for a widow to wear a habit or a veil since these are signs of belonging to an institute of consecrated life. A consecrated virgin living in the world should not wear a

habit or veil either, since these are signs of separation from the world, and the vocation of the consecrated virgin is lived in the world. With the approval of the local Ordinary, a member of the faithful may have a suitable oratory with the reserved Blessed Sacrament. Some consecrated virgins...have such an oratory, but not all of them do."

(In the meantime an interesting possibility arose to visit and check out a lay Catholic village in Arkansas where one of the leaders is a very happily married older man who is a Jewish convert from NYC. He would be happy to have other Hebrew Catholics nearby to help with his mostly e-mail apostolate.)

August 4, 2004 Letter to Marty (the leader mentioned above) in Arkansas

I got out of the public library a 1927, woodcuts included, version of the Life of Pocahontas, by Watson, since I see her name prominently displayed on the map near to Hardy (where the lay village is) and I have never read her story not even as a classic comic!

I want to ask you and Irene and Ariela (a Jewish convert sabra from Israel, married to an American gentile convert) to pray for me during this exciting but difficult time. The move would mean leaving a truly saintly hermit priest.

By comparison the reasons for leaving seem trivial such as the fact that hermits are silent and I need much more interaction and that I am too old for the torrid climate and other inconveniences. All this seems worth it when the hermit mentor is present but when he's away very often and long it doesn't seem worth it.

I have been here only 1 1/2 years full time, the rest being long, long weekends for 2 years. Part of me is eager to look into a big change, and part is afraid of nothing working out anywhere.

Jesus assures me He will be with me wherever I go.

August 7, 2004 (letter from a very old family friend, Gabriel Meyer, the journalist and writer of beautiful books about St. Joseph and also characters in the Holy Land)

Ronda:

Shalom!

Have been working day and night on the Sudan book (due and payable by Dec. 1) and haven't had an opportunity to check out your website.

On the hermitage situation: Not being able to talk about all the particulars in person, I wouldn't hazard an opinion on whether or not you belong where you are. However, in that this isn't the first time you've found yourself in a similar situation -- feeling that a particular setting is not your spiritual home, after all -- it's worth looking at the whole question of Finding Where I Belong.

What you describe in your email seem, at least at first reading, like the annoyances, inconveniences and, indeed, disappointments that are part and parcel of any situation -- including one to which you'd been called. As Cardinal Newman so memorably wrote:

Everything this side of heaven, everything born of earth -- even the best -- finally disappoints. (That's a paraphrase.) It's a hard truth, but a salutary one, I think. On a fundamental level, there's no way out of feeling lonely, because we are alone, with all our constitutive hungers that cannot be satisfied, met or even addressed short of God. Lonely in the best of marriages; lonely in the best and most vital of religious communities; lonely even, God help us, when we get to be the center of attention and everybody thinks we're wonderful.

As for the other things you list (and I'm sure there's more to it than you had time to sketch out): they sound like the stuff of life (mismatched schedules, discomforts due to weather, not getting enough of something you imagine you want or need, etc.).

I'm not saying you shouldn't move on, or that the hermitage is right for you. What I am saying is that there is no perfect or ideal community where everyone is available to you just the way you want them to be, or where everyone (or even anyone, for that matter) understands. If that were so, should we ever find such an ideal community, a sensible person should run as hard as he or she could from it (as old St Macarios urges). It would be a spiritual trap, precisely because such a community that so thoroughly meets our needs would allow us to remain focused, centered, grounded on and in our (chaotic, unappeasable) selves, and the dreams we wish to foist on others, instead of wrested (as the classical spiritual writers say) from such a life dominated by the self precisely by the demands, inconveniences and incomprehensions of others, through the work of loving and serving them.

I know you know all this; but it's all I had to offer by way of advice at this point. I have always found these truths exhilarating in the abstract and hard to take in real life. Nevertheless, as Ignatius of Loyola would urge, you use hard truths to clear away the brush around the issues (this is a REAL paraphrase), and, then, if there's more to it than that (than the normal resistance we put up to the demands of love), we'll be able to see more clearly.

And, for the record, I like talking to you.

Love and blessings,

Gabe

August 10, 2004

Pondering the trip to Arkansas for a visit to see if I liked it, I was feeling very confused about whether I need to stay here at the hermitage, for the sake of my soul. Perhaps, after all, I am called to be a victim soul, as seem to be some of those here.

Then at Adoration I felt Gogo (Dietrich Von Hildebrand) trying to help me from the world beyond – to tell me I am more like him with this exuberant joy combined with inescapable sufferings. I realized that Gogo had a spirituality not just a philosophy – though they were intertwined and this spirituality was in his person even more than in the books and formal talks.

I called Lily (Alice Von Hildebrand) and she said that my gift is that I have so much joy in spite of the terrible sufferings of my life. She thought I absolutely was not called to be a sacrificial soul in that sense.

August 11, 2004

Draft letter to the Catholic Solitudes Community (I did not send this after all, but spoke out portions of it to different people here in ways that fit my relationship to each one. However, again, I am keeping it to remember how I felt at this time in my life.)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With the pathos and humor characteristic of my “tribe” I am writing this letter about a painful but possibly not unexpected decision.

Yes, even though I love, love, love having the Eucharistic Jesus in my oratory, and I revere you, Fr. P., as a holy priest, and I love my holy brothers and sisters here and do believe that everyone here loves me with true Christian charity, I am planning to leave.

I am anticipating that some of you will think the reasons are obvious and bad, such as:

“She’s a wimp when it comes to even tiny physical hardships and even more when it comes to spiritual warfare; or

She’s an ego-maniac, so she can’t stand not being center-stage.”

Actually I think there is some truth in the above, but probably even more significant are factors that are undramatic and more humbling such as:

I am old – Adios amigos, companeros de me viejez.

Old people like things to be steady and structured with few changes. It took me 2 weeks even to adjust to changing Mass to 7 and Adoration to 6 let alone going off to Hebronville when Fr. P. is away.

Old people like to see the same faces every day. This place is a kaleidoscope of people coming and going and coming, sometimes unpredictably.

I am a widow –

Most widows crave the protection of men who are strong, like those of you who are brothers, are, but we want you to be near, preferably in sight, and always in the same place. You could easily add up how many of my very annoying demands have to do with not knowing if I can get help in practical areas of my ignorance.

I am an extrovert –

Extroverts gain strength from fellowship and get weak from solitude. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are great supernatural friends and I feel their love most of the time, but still...

I thought, and so did Fr. P., that these difficulties might be overcome by taking off for speaking trips. That is enough, when I can come home to a stable base, but not when many are not here. But there are such very good reasons for you not all being here a good part of the time that there is no way I can even imagine that changing.

So, where is the old holy fool thinking of going? For years and years I have been dreaming of some colony or complex for older people, not yet convalescent, that would be Catholic, ardently so, but also have in residence creative and/or intellectual types. Well, it exists. There is a group of about 30 families plus widows living in Northern Arkansas in the country with condos to rent for \$350 a month and also home-school families on the same property. It has a 24 hour adoration Church a few miles away. It has a Latin Mass (St. Peter's Society) on Sundays. It includes a few charismatics, Schoenstatt people, lots of Operation Rescue people, lots of Marian devotion, and one of the leaders is a Hebrew-Catholic Writer and Evangelist who hopes more Jewish converts will settle there to help him with his outreach.

Of course it is probable that not a one of these people will be as holy as you'all and then my big attempts at holiness by osmosis will go by the board! If you're not smiling yet, I got you wrong.

Perhaps you will wonder why I didn't consult you more about this decision. I guess it is because it would be too painful to hear your spiritual reasons why I should stay and still want to leave because of my more trivial but still real reasons.

I promise to pray mightily for you and recommend this hermitage far and wide. Please pray for me and accept my undying gratitude for all each one of you have done for me in prayer and deed, and let me make retreats from time to time. And when you think of me...perhaps, instead of thinking of me as a failed contemplative, think of me as, actually, I have always been, your favorite category of person: a poor little thing, Ronda

August 16, 2004

Feeling insecure before this trip to Arkansas for 3 days, I thought if I trusted in you, Jesus, I would realize you love me and you will be with me wherever I stay or go.

If I decide to go because I am just too stressed when Father leaves, what is so awful about that? In Recovery, Inc., it would be putting my mental health first.

August 17, 2004

I decided I ought to talk to Fr. P. about Arkansas before going to see. He said I am not a contemplative or a nun but an active with contemplative inspirations and that if I don't have enough outlets then my energy gets skewed. It is perfectly legitimate to think about my retirement needs and maybe I should try Arkansas for a couple of months to see if the fantasy checks out, naturally and supernaturally. I could always come back and forth.

I did go to visit Arkansas and did like everything about Mary, Star of the Sea, the Catholic village. Nothing seemed ecstatic about it but more like Goldilocks

finding a chair and a bed that fit. It is easier for me to fit with lay people who are trying to be holy than with hermits who are holy. The little condo I will rent so cheaply seemed like a kind of snug hobbit house. I came upon a reading from Ezekiel on the feast of St. Bernard: “They went astray in the desert wilderness. In their straits He rescued them...to reach an inhabited city.”

Jesus seemed to be showing me all the great good it was for me to live at the desert hermitage and how all the people here helped me and I helped them, but that he allowed the part that was so hard to help me now to leave for another place. All I need to do is trust and hold on tight.

As a result of deciding to try Arkansas for at least 3 months, there are less entries here since I am busy boxing up books for a move by Oct. 3rd and also trying to squeeze in many other commitments made before this decision.

One of the most delightful of squeezed in events was doing Taming the Lion Within: 5 Steps from Anger to Peace at a local prison. I had never done any prison ministry. There were 40 men who are in a Catholic RCIA program run by a wonderful warm, insightful, sister, who invited me to come because of the many anger problems in the prison. To my surprise I fit in very well! I think it is because prisoners are not into denial and the desperate way I cling to Jesus in the midst of problems such as anger, resonated with their desperate way of clinging to Jesus in the midst of their anger and resentment. Somehow the NYC street girl came out full force in my lingo and passion, different from talking to students or parish people. They loved it and invited me back.

August 27, 2004

I met a priest at the ordination last month who is now in charge of evangelization in this diocese. We talked about the possibility of doing Catholic radio interview, talk shows on the station here. For starters I will do one with the theme of Woman to Woman – 13 half hour shows with teachings and women of the community I admire.

Later it turned out that the shows might be postponed because of the need to have some on the election issues by the priest who had set up mine. I wrote him concerning radio talks about pro-life and voting:

The Bishops in Germany during the Nazi time are now berated constantly for not being even stronger condemning Hitler in the political forum even though some of them did instruct Catholics not to vote Nazi.

There is no way 50 million aborted babies balances out with deaths from capital punishment, etc. I know that many Catholics vote democratic because they think that party is better on social justice, but 50 million babies killed is the hugest social justice issue, ever in this country since slavery just as the murder of innocent Jews and Poles and handicapped was a social justice issue in Germany.

How any Catholic can vote for a candidate who was actually against banning partial birth abortions is beyond me. How a Catholic democrat can live with that platform is beyond me, etc. etc.

I am delighted a great priest will be able to enunciate some of these pointers to hispanic voters - well worth being bumped for.

Another time, however, I think in regard to Bishops and laity - when a lay person donates many hours of volunteer time to the diocese and the Bishop has to postpone something, it would be good if he called the lay person and said, "Thank you for all your work on this. I really appreciate it. Unfortunately I have a higher priority right now. I am sorry that I have to postpone yours or add this new proviso contrary to what you were originally told."

August 28, 2004

For the feast of St. Augustine, Fr. P. spoke about how a person like him of such extreme sensibilities had to integrate the human and divine in his life in a different way than those less extreme. Given his past life, after his conversion he hated to be alone and surrounded himself with friends. I related this idea to myself and decided to make St. Augustine one of the active saint patrons of my more active life in Arkansas. Other good patrons could be St. Paul, St. Edith Stein and Mother Teresa (as a speaker).

August 30, 2004

Dear Fr. P.,

Before you leave for W.V. could we talk about this? It might explain something about women coming but then leaving here, but it could be false in which case I would like to know why for my own growth and wisdom:

If a father figure is trying to help in the healing of a son-figure – of course with God the Father as the supernatural healer, it seems, as I have heard, that separations are a necessary, since part of the process is the father figure letting the son experience that with his unconditional love in the background, the "son" can be independent, at least at intervals.

But the archetype of father-daughter involves the father eventually giving away the daughter into the hands of the new male protector, the bridegroom, without essentially any independent time in between. By the way, could female promiscuity of college girls be related to this? They have to leave the father but the bridegroom is not yet in sight?

If this is true, then daughter figures experience separation from the father-figure mentor as much more painful, unless she is handed over to another protective male figure.

Does this mean that the father mentor for a woman with a father wound has to be someone who is always there, such as a paid psycho-therapist or a priest who is stationed somewhere for a long time and has plenty of time for the broken one?

Talking to Fr. Patrick about this he thought it was not true – he thinks all that stress over separation is because of brokenness in my childhood with my father – he says women with hermitess vocations love to nest in their hermitages and don't care about separation from father figures at all!

September 2, 2004

Long talk with Fr. P. about my new venture in Arkansas. He thought I should pray Abba a lot as a healing of the father wound. Pere Thomas taught that the Trinity wants to be everything to us: father, friend, brother, beloved. The Holy Spirit is the Father of the poor.

I am wounded about “home.” I want to have a home. I need to pray that the interior insecurity is healed in the home of the heart of God. Our ultimate home is heaven. We need to pray that the heavenly Jerusalem will touch down in our earthly homes so that we don't feel like refugees.

In prayer we have a foretaste of the heavenly Jerusalem – of our supernatural home. Deeper than prayer of quiet, I need spousal prayer of union to feel the presence of my brothers and sisters, the saints. Any earthly family will always lack part of what we need. For some the natural family was like team but not spousal.

In the heavenly Jerusalem we have the feeling of being the beloved and we will have sisters and brothers and friends and we will be fathered, but this is only possible in the Trinity.

Since I have these anxieties from childhood, natural security props are good, but they don't provide the ultimate security in the Trinity. Even if I have every natural security in Arkansas I could still feel insecure if I don't enough cultivate the supernatural. God can allow me to feel insecure in order to draw me into the supernatural security of my absolute home in the bosom of the Trinity. To experience this I will need at least 3 to 4 hours of silent prayer! Without this, the heavenly Jerusalem won't have a touch down point. I have to provide, as St. John did when he got the Revelation of the heavenly Jerusalem, the landing strip, as it were, for the touchdown.

Unless I make this my real project, all the other active projects will leave me with this interior insecurity.

September 7, to Marty Barrack

I am terribly excited about coming to Arkansas, but also sometimes tense – particularly if I am too much alone during a day I start getting frightened that I will go mad before Oct. 3 - actually I have some interesting things to do in Corpus Christi after Fr. P. and the brothers leave for their W. Virginia jaunt to our hermitage made of log houses.

**First of all this weekend I am doing my Taming the Lion workshop in a parish. After that I have a mini-course with seminarians at my last little college on Battle for the 20th Century mind - 3 very bright seminarians and possibly the radio show will resurrect so I oughtn't to be too lonesome out at the ranch but instead zipping back and forth to the city, full of good friends.
Praise the Lord, Love to Irene and you, Ronda**

September 8, 2004

After a nap I awoke with such a feeling of bliss, I thought it was Mother Mary's kiss. I had been reading about how some of us find it hard to be close to Mary because we think of her as so perfect. Maybe she wants to overcome this barrier by making her presence felt. It helps me to imagine she is like Lily Von Hildebrand – so pure but so warm.

September 9, 2004

Letter to a friend who suffers terribly from feeling a failure in life.

As a penance for your sins of despair please make a big poster with this written on it

**CHRISTIAN SUCCESS = HAVING LOVE FOR GOD AND
NEIGHBOR IN YOUR HEART**

I will try to remember that every time you call, the first question will be:

Irene, how did you experience love for God and for others in your heart today?

such as - I felt sorry for so and so thinking of how he was hurt by his former wife. I felt love for Jesus thinking of how shafted he felt by his people when I heard to Gospel reading today. I felt love for St. Peter Claver thinking of his love for the black slaves. I felt love for my students thinking how uncertain they are about truth. I felt sorrow for myself thinking of how many wounds I received as a child but love for myself for struggling so hard with such odds.

JOURNAL ABOUT THIS LOVE EVERY DAY.

**DO IT - TOUGH LOVE Ronda
September 9, 2004**

(This back and forth involves an Orthodox Jewish family man in Israel who is moving toward Christianity in the Catholic Church and writing on the Hebrew Catholic Assoc. dialogue board. By the way many non-Jewish Catholics like to dialogue on this board. If you like what I quote from it, look into lurking or writing on it. And please pray for these Jewish seekers!)

From Richard R.

Subject: [AHC] Jewish Christian/the paradox and the mystery

Hi,

After reading Colleen's last post, so candid and beautiful, I decided that I wanted to tell you about an experience I had yesterday.

I went shopping with my family to Home Center (Yes, they're here in Israel, too). I looked around me at all those THINGS under those awful florescent lights, and the girls walking by with shirts too small and pants too tight...There was no play to BE. I had started saying the

rosary silently on the journey there. I said to myself: keep going. And then it was as though all that emptiness and darkness yielded before a light. . Every word of the rosary carried me beyond my immediate environment and I was in the vestibule of someplace I hope to be forever. I felt sorry for people who were so pre-occupied with just which color plate they wanted. I wanted none of it.

And, this morning, my morning prayers, my Jewish daily prayers, opened to me as though arising out of the words I had addressed to Mary and the meditation that revealed the glorious mysteries in new ways.

My recent posts have not, perhaps, reflected this deepening Jewish Christian experience, coming as they have, out of my concern to restore the continuity of Jewish and Christian religion. I am afraid they sound cold, reflecting more the side of me that is deeply inspired by scholastic philosophy and is restless until I submit my mind to God , rather than the side of me that is restless until I submit my heart to God.

For me, the issue of how to be both a Jew and a Catholic (to me, Christianity is Catholicism. Protestant theology makes no sense to me when it is not positively offensive, and the inwardness, mystery and dignity of Catholic liturgy is in perfect harmony with my personality.) is a pressing existential issue. I must have both! Which is perhaps a bit greedy. But I have experienced in my own life the redemptive power of Catholic faith, even the small faith I have come to so far.

My father fled the holocaust from Nazi Germany in 1938. I fled to Israel from the spiritual holocaust of America in 1970. In that year, I applied to a yeshiva. When I was accepted, I burst out crying. I was home. But that was just the beginning of a difficult journey. Now, I can't imagine living without a mezuzah on my door, without kosher food, without the Sabbath, without the High Holidays coming up. For the life of the Torah has redeemed me from the culture of darkness and placed me in a culture of light. And it has taken me to the threshold of a new light that is its own light, though it shines forth from the eye of a child it has disowned.

Yet I am wary. For I know that I am one of those who would have chosen to remain in the desert rather than enter the "real world" of the

land of Israel where manna would be replaced by wheat, where days spent in prayer, meditation and the contemplation of God's word would be largely replaced by farming, where faith would be tested by the burden of coping with materiality and the moral ambiguities of political life. I would fly from this world with too much relish, for there is nothing I want here anymore. And sometimes that makes me want to cry. Recently, as I was meditating on Christ carrying the cross, I realized that he didn't suffer that passively. He had to put his energy into carrying the very cross on which he would be crucified. In a small way, that's what life feels like, all the time, except the times when through meditation and prayer the seal of this world is broken.

I was consoled when I heard Fr. Groeschel talk about the hope of heaven. Yes, yes! I want to go do heaven. Jews don't talk much about heaven. They talk about taking care to do God's will in this world. Perhaps, if I were a better Jew I wouldn't need the consolation of hoping in Heaven. Perhaps, if I were a better Jew, it would be enough to know that I am serving God right here. Ah, but then, it is the very hope of heaven that has given me a patience for others I never had before, and it is the mystery of Jesus that has renewed by appreciation of Judaism.

Paradox imprisons until it is sprung by Mystery.

All the best,

Richard

Dear Richard,

Even though your letter was addressed to Colleen since you posted it on the board I would like to respond -

even though I am a woman, I was brought up by an atheist feminist mother to debate first and love later. My first interest in God was that He was Truth and it took me awhile to catch on that Love was His first name.

Wanting heaven is wanting to receive and give God and neighbor perfect love. Worldly selfish people don't want to go to

heaven, because what's in heaven they would want. Or, to use Buber's wonderful language - God wants our response to His I-Thou love. I saw lots of love for God and eternal union with him in the Chasidic mystics Buber introduced me to.

I loved this post of yours because it revealed more of your heart to us.

The last line is a gem - a poet lives underneath the scholastic.

Ronda----- Original Message -----

Regarding patience and mystical experience of God's love - to which you referred, Richard:

I am presently devoting most of the time I am not either at Mass or prayer, or writing on the Board, to giving workshops entitled

Taming the Lion Within: 5 Steps from Anger to Peace -

any customers from this board I will send my book free, or buy it from David Moss, by the way.

The gist of the book is that when we don't feel sheltered enough in God's love with the hope of heaven (Augustine says the only happiness on earth is hope of heaven - there is all kinds of joy, of course, from experiencing God's gifts on earth but not the solid happiness of hope for heaven where God will dry all tears....etc.)

when we don't feel sheltered in his love our vulnerability to harm, frustration, rejection, etc. makes us either hotly angry or coldly angry (long term resentment - cold-shouldering those who frustrate our plans, etc. etc.) Feeling vulnerable because we are too weak to bring about paradise on earth on our own terms, we either lash out **IMPATIENTLY** or withdraw **COLDLY** to lick our wounds.

Raging lion-like anger is a vain attempt to feel strong when frustrating events make us feel weak.

It took me 9 years of a secular anger-management free group that, by the way, has a branch in Israel - free by donation - called Recovery, Inc. - not 12 Step, plus psychotherapy, plus hours of contemplative prayer a day to become more of a lamb.

An olive wood statue of a lion with the lamb made by Christians in Israel graces my workshops!

Please pray for these workshops - some I am doing now in prison ministry.

September 13, 2004

Response to a woman on the board who thinks abortion and contraception are okay in many circumstances.

Dear Debbie,

Since I went away for the weekend I see many people on the board have written to you from a variety of viewpoints.

When I prayed about it I was torn between logic and what I could read between the lines in what you wrote - or thought I could.

Let's start with logic. If we say that right and wrong depends only on feeling, then the feeling of the date rapist that he knows "she really wants it no matter what she says," counts as much as the feeling of a woman that she needs to use contraceptives. Feelings are indicators when a person's emotions are a response to genuine intrinsic realities vs. more reactions and sometimes over-reactions to past wounds, etc. Statistics I have read show that raped women who do keep the baby do better psychologically than those whose own hurt pushes them toward hurting the innocent child - same with incest.

I believe almost all cases where the life of the mother is at stake are now double-effect instances - though there are still a tiny

percentage where it is one life against another. The way I explain this in ethics classes is this

the ship is sinking - people are clinging to life rafts. Do you have a right to push someone else off the life raft to increase your chances of survival? Sure, you are less blamable if you do it than if you could kill someone in cold blood, but still it is not right to do it. By the same token, killing your baby to save your life is not right even though much less blame-worthy than abortion on demand for trivial reasons.

Enough logic. Between the lines I read that you have been hurt by ways you have felt treated in the Church and all of us have. I like to do my best to try to change ways of dealing with people in the Church that are less than loving. These may be intertwined in experience with ethical issues but they are separable in the sense that only if there is authority for moral teachings can we avoid anyone justifying anything by false logic.

**I would be happy to dialogue further with you on any of this.
Love, Ronda**

(I stopped editing this a long time ago. Somehow the page numbers got funny. This is supposed to be p. 114 but it is 105 instead. Let it be.)

October 4, 2004 Star of the Sea

It has taken me almost 2 months to calm down after the throes of moving, even though I had so little to move. I put in a few copies of things I read. See November 24 for my initial assessment of this move.

November 5, 2004

Dear new friend,

(a member of our Hebrew-Catholic fellowship group who wears the Jewish traditional garb at Mass)

That is so wonderful that you were able to pray over people in this charismatic way with your Jewish prayer shawl! Alleluia. That's an H-C development that I can totally get behind.

What a bond we have on fear of rejection. I like to say in talks - how ridiculous is it to go into deep depression because someone didn't smile at me when he or she just happened to have a migraine at the time.

You are giving me fuel for my back burner book on co-dependency and contemplative prayer based on the idea that only drinking in the love of Jesus in depth in prayer can heal those of us wounded in the heart. I was thinking of some title for the book I am writing about this like "Hole in the Heart" but it sounds too much like a murder mystery!

Of course you know the saying of the famous Pascal (discoverer of the vacuum) that "there is a God-sized vacuum in our hearts that only God can fill."

Possibly it would help me to freely and confidentially share with you episodes each day on e-mail of feeling rejected and struggles in prayer to let Jesus into that wound.

Actually I was amazed that anyone with an orphan background could be so openly warm to strangers as you are. That is certainly a grace.

**Obviously it is worth being wounded to reach out to others warmly -
isn't that the life story of Our Savior?**

Love and prayers, Ronda

Dear friends,

A prayer for Hebrew Catholic meetings:

**Yeshua, Messiah,
coming for your people,
now as then -**

**As we join in small
and large meetings,
we Jews,
who have let
You find us,
want to sing our fulfillment song
to 21st century Jews**

**Help us to teach this song, also
to our non-Jewish brothers and sisters
in Your church,
so that Jews may hear this melody
from their lips, too,
and take hope.**

**Our Lady of Zion,
and your entourage
of Hebrew-Catholic saints,
lead our chorus,
in a Magnificat to
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Alleluia. Amen.**

November 15, 2004

When I wake up I sometimes think, “I can go to daily Mass to receive my Jesus because this priest made the sacrifice of celibacy to bring Him to me.”

November 24, 2004

The transition to living here in Arkansas was much more stressful than I imagined – not because of setting up house which only took 2 days but because of recurring computer glitches. On the shadow side, I feel ashamed of being so addicted to it that its failure causes me to go into a tailspin. On the positive side, after all, I am a communicator and in a new place writing to many old friends on e-mail and tracking the details of speech dates has to be important and quite a cross when it is not possible.

The people are wonderful – very interesting, diverse and lovingly friendly to me.

There is a hermitess here, building her place slowly. I feel such a pull to her and to her land. Even though my condo is wonderful – beautiful wide view of Arkansas hills and trees, much more spacious than my previous hermit hut, etc. there is something in me that can’t stand conventional living places. I could when I had to for the family, but now....

Mostly I have been trying to see how to get a balance between prayer and working on ministries here and speaking in the wider world. I did a few EWTN shows on Taming the Lion Within, and as a result I am flooded with requests for talks near and far. On the one hand I am delighted to be wanted and on the other less and less able to handle the proliferation of details surrounding each speaking engagement which usually include either visits of local people at the place I go to who know me and want to see me and also trips to the family when these can be piggy-backed.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph seem very, very near all day and night but in a different way than when I was at the hermitage where spirituality was

much more intense. On the other hand, I feel more comfortable as an ardent lay woman than as a highly deficient contemplative.

I am meeting the Bishop to see about becoming a consecrated widow. This feels just right at this point. Also, since consecrated widows are not allowed to wear a habit I am veering toward the blue denim outfits lots of the women here like to wear with a suit and blouse for talks.

I had been praying for the gift of counsel. It turns out that God does give it me when it comes to anger problems where I feel highly competent because of years of Recovery, Inc. and the synthesis in Taming the Lion Within.

December 2, 2004

I had a lovely experience just now. I go to the jail for Legion of Mary to minister to the women there. Today I went to the courthouse to pray for one of the women we visit in the jail whose case was coming up.

I left the key running in the car, but carefully locked it with the button since the jail area is full of hoods. When I came out I realized I didn't have the key in my purse but congratulated myself on the spare in the magnet box under the bumper. Alas, that key didn't work. I walked over to Conoco. Seeing my huge cross, the man asked me if I knew the Mahoney's who he thought were the most Christian family he'd ever seen. They live at Star of the Sea. As a result of this tie in, he asked a cop friend to open my car so I wouldn't have to pay the locksmith! Hurrah!

Dec. 5, 2004 About Carla's 5th high risk baby conceived on Martin's birthday.

Last One

**O little childlah
conceived late fall
when the branches
of the trees
had already said goodby
to their leaves**

**How have you,
but a month old,
made yourself
so fiercely loved**

**that large older ones
pledge their lives for yours?**

**and over-the-hill
grandparents,
biting their lips
as they face
the dark night
laugh again**

**will we see you here
dear babe
or only in eternity?**

Dec. 29, 2004

Great line in Michael O'Brien's Strangers and Sojourners: "I began to find it more important to forgive my enemy on the day I found out that I am my enemy."

February 1, 2005

Dearest Carla,

(concerning a glitch I had over a business deal) I recall Martin saying with regret that in her old age his mother had lost her fangs!

Maybe it will pass, could be a week of a bad cold and sore throat after 3 weeks out of town, but I am so depleted that I just feel I have no fight left in me for ANYTHING!

At the moment my only concern is to go to Mass and live somewhere where it is warm in winter and cool in summer (i.e. adequate heat and A/C.) So far my little condo is pretty good for this.

What is going good is Taming the Lion on which I make no profit but I get lots of hits on the web from another round of TV programs based on the one I did at Steubenville with celebrity theologians and priests. It showed today and I already am getting e-mails and a huge old codger ran into me at the Catholic coffee shop and shook my hand with pleasure because he's just seen me on EWTN. It felt very nice.

Love, Mom

Feb. 17, 2005

Realization – because of charismatic renewal with its emphasis on witnessing about Jesus, I can talk to Bible belt gals in prison – sing Amazing Grace and witness from the heart better.

February 23, 2005

"Life has an eloquence greater than any sermon" Kierkegaard

The Holy Spirit seems to say: “I want you to let Sr. Judith teach you how to be compassionate -not just to minds, but to bodies in old age who are undergoing my Passion as a purification - now all bravado has to go and they have to become weak and in need only of my mercy. Will you be my merciful hands? If you bring compassionate love to those in most need - body and soul, will I not send you just such compassionate friends in your time of gradual bodily demolition?”

February 23, 2005

Letter from Jim Ridley about the near gulf property (where they are building a Catholic writers’ and artists’ colony I hope some day to live in)

Dear Ronda,

This is to let you in on the latest elations in our realty relations with the Meaney’s, piquing us to impatience and persistence both. The two divine doctors (Dr. M. Meaney is a doctor of philosophy and his wife Francette is a medical doctor – they are donating the land) kindly deigned to meet with me after Mass yestereve to calm my qualmish consternations. There are absolutely no obstacles. The problem is these nego-go-go!tiations are forced to kachuga-chuga-chuga along jalopily under the puny power of my Galopagus tortoise engine cogi-cogi-cogitating flivver brain instead of by your own nuclear turbine cheetah-speed streamlined mind rocketing into high gear inSpirited -inquizzzitory - analytical overdrive which would move our plan ahead so much more mucho farther faster.

Dr. Michael had generously spent a goodly portion of his day making inquiries on our behalf of his realtor and his brother as to weather they might make available properties that could facilitate our dreams at a more modest initial investment, a portion of a 700 acre river ranch in San Patricio county and a Meaney property on White’s point perched on a Dover-like cliff overlooking Nueces Bay and the mouth of the Nueces River. Of this enticing property his brother said that he thinks they sold it recently. He can’t remember for sure, but he wasn’t able to find evidence that he paid taxes on it this year. He’ll

check into it. Still this site with its gorgeous view would not give you the luxury of a daily swim in the sea as would the Rockport plot...

Jim

March 1, 2005

(Letter to a despairing friend who spoke of missing Mass because of despair.)

I was praying for you and this thought came to mind, hopefully from the Holy Spirit:

It is not wrong or evil or unspiritual to say to God "I am in such mental, physical, emotional, spiritual pain, that I wish I was dead. Help me now." I have prayed that way on numerous occasions. I lie down on the floor and beg Him to help me any way He wants.

It is not wrong to say I wish I had a husband, a career, a way out of debt or I wish my father and others in my family showed me more deep healing love.

What is wrong is to say - This is what I need God and you deliver or I'll go on strike by missing Sunday or Holy Day Masses - of course it's okay if you are utterly exhausted from your pain.

I love you and pray for you and that is REAL EVEN IF YOU ARE TOO MUDDLED FOR NOW TO FEEL IT.

Ronda

March 1, 2005

**Dear Ronda:
(her answer to the above letter)**

I have not gone on strike. What's more, it's quite clear to me that I am full of pride and arrogance and really am rotten interiorly - hateful, angry etc. I simply don't know, and really struggle with whether I actually have faith at all. It is all quite unreal to me. I do go to Mass, but it feels empty and meaningless. I simply go through motions, but really am not sure if I believe at all.

Thank you for your prayers.

Dear friend, (answer by me to above reply of my friend)

Of course we feel hateful when we are angry. I think the anger has been long bottled up and it is scaring you when it comes out.

I think you are in transition on this to see that people don't fall over dead if you challenge them as in "Ronda, you're not listening."

Neither will God fall over dead if you tell him in prayer and at Mass that you feel awful and you feel as if you got a raw deal in life, etc. etc., but you hang in because you do think He is your only hope even if you are full of doubt.

Love, Ronda

March 3, 2005 from Anne (locutionary of Direction for Our Times – if you read this and like the way she writes in her own voice and in later citations from Jesus, Mary and the saints, go to www.directionforourtimes.com)

I feel my mission is to persuade people to find their path and begin the ascent. How on earth can we make this palatable to souls who do not want to suffer, do not want to sacrifice, and do not want to make changes in their worldly habits.

Well first of all and most importantly, we have to show joy. These people are not stupid. If we are miserable nobody will want to join our ranks. And if we are not joyful, we should be.

Secondly we need to set an example of climbing. If we are standing still on our own path, looking around and pointing at all the others who are not on their paths, we discourage people from finding their little lane up the mountain. We who stand still on the path take all of our credit from simply finding the path. Even a demon knows how to locate the path. The holiness comes from the ascent.

Next, we need to illustrate to souls what is at the top of our little lanes. Is it worldly acclaim? A clear credit card account? A 2005 model car? A big house in a nice neighbourhood? None of these things are at the top of the mountain. Only Jesus is there.

Why is He to be desired? Well, He is the best therapist, the best friend, the best doctor, and the best accountant all rolled into one. He is omniscient, He has prepared your place for eternity and He is the only one with directions on how to get there. Souls must stop asking all of these other, equally directionless people for illumination when only Christ has the information they seek.

I do not want to wade into the world and tell people that the road to heaven is steep and harsh. This message is too grim and dreadfully inaccurate. I will say this. The road to heaven has been marked out for you. You may view it from where you are standing and feel fearful as it looks difficult. Here is what you do not know. When

you get to the foot of your little lane, the one personally labelled with your name, you will find Jesus there, waiting patiently, with total love and acceptance in His eyes. He is clean and clear, like beautiful mountain stream water. All is Light and Truth and Joy with Jesus. He will take your hand and up you will go, like the roller coaster car as the chains grab it and pull it, high, higher, and higher. You will quickly get so high that you will abandon your hold on your destiny and simply enjoy the view, allowing Christ to take you.

Now, with regard to the steep drop that comes after you feel you have reached the top, it is only an illusion. You feel a sense of fear in your companionship with Christ at times, but it is only when you look straight down, forgetting that the car is underneath and the loving arm of the guardrail is safely holding you in. My advice to souls is to continue to enjoy the view, despite the down turns where you feel the wind on your face and the fear in your stomach. Jesus has you. You are really still on your little path, and the next ascent will come swiftly. The only difference in a worldly roller coaster and the heavenly mountain is that you end at the top with Jesus, not the bottom.

March 4, 2005

Dear Claire, Jim, Francette and Michael,

Greetings in the Lord. I am anticipating a happy conclusion to arrangements pending regarding the Rockport property.

Since we are all linked up in this together, more or less, I thought all of you could look this over and, as we say so elegantly in Americanese, de-bug it. (Sorry to be so formal but after my past experiences with verbal messages not in writing at an institution that doesn't need to be mentioned, I am absolutely bent on putting everything in writing no matter how much I love the people involved.)

DRAFT AGREEMENT BETWEEN RONDA CHERVIN AND CLAIRE AND JIM RIDLEY REGARDING RENTAL ON FORMER MEANEY PROPERTY AT _____ ADDRESS.

Starting from the date when Claire and Jim Ridley and family move to said property, I, Ronda Chervin, agree to pay a rental of \$1,000 per month under the following conditions:

1. Either a room no less than 15x15 ft. in the new Ridley house on the ground floor with a ramp from some door in the house, or a separate "hut" with ramp would be built and available for rental including:

a) size 15x15

- b) toilet with bath**
- c) counter with large 2 basin sink**
- d) A/C and heater controlled by me**
- e) hook up for small washer/dryer unit**

2. Gas, electric, would be paid by Ronda. If there is no way her separate gas and electric can be computed, a mutually agreeable percentage of Ridley bill will be decided upon. Phone installation and monthly bills will be paid by Ronda.

**3. The Ridleys would plan, except for emergencies, to be living on the property at least 10 months of the year.
(Don't want to be a hermit!!!!)**

4. It is anticipated that such dwelling will be available 2 years from the date of purchase of the land. Should such not be the case, this agreement will have to be re-negotiated whenever it is clear that 2 years is not a realistic date.

5. If Ronda becomes too disabled in the judgment of the Ridley's to live independently in the room or hut, she agrees to leave without any conditions or fuss. ("Into Your hands I commend my spirit.")

6. If the building is finished earlier and the Ridleys don't want to move in, Ronda can choose or not choose to live there alone at same monthly rental.

(Aha - here's the part my analytic brain did not figure out - how long a lease do you need to make it fair for you to take the risk building the room and then having me decide to move out at a later date?)

By the way, one of my alternate career choices before I found the consolation of philosophy was law.

Just to end on a more delightful note: how I long again to be near to my dear, dear friends of at least these virtues:

Claire: beautiful, yearning, artistic, witty, and a gourmet cook;

Jim: deeply loyal to the Church and to family and friends, affirming, zany, bibliophile, kindly;

Francette: indefatigably concerned for the welfare of others, insightful, shrewd, humble, and a gourmet cook;

Michael: holy, profoundly wise, amused, reliable, generous, peaceful,

affirming.

Of course if any of you stop cultivating these traits, the deal is off!

Amen. May it be.

Love and prayers, Ronda

March 5, 2005

Dear Solicitor Reformer Chervin,

Yours is the most entertaining sheet of legalese I have had the amusement of perusing since my hilarious divorce decree. May it be likewise the prelude to as miraculously joyous a consequence. Had you settled on a law career, the courts would have, I'm bound, by now become therapeutic forums of contrition and consolation, councils of recon-silly-ation and mirthy-full forgiveness. St. Thomas More is laughing his head off. I especially got a jolly guffaw over the part about the "thousand" shekels and the "ramp". I'm surprised you are not cantankerously invoking the traditional hermitanchoress discount (or is it anger-ess?) along with the widow's exemption and the godmother rebate to which no court in Christendom would by rights deny you. And where is your fine print sanity clause? "Hey, there's no such thing as Sanity Claus," as the Marx Brothers say. Now as to the ramp: Surely you are not demanding wheel chair access. Maybe a boat ramp, since we'll be so close to the water ? We figure this is actually your foxy attempt to trick us into arranging accommodations for your Harley. Just tell us up front, Ronda: Did you in Arkansas become a consecrated Chopper Jockey with a vow of velocity and a habit of black leather, silver studs and buckskin fringe ? If so, and you intend to sleep with your motorhorse we suggest you increase the dimensions of your residence to 20 x 20, the standard size of a garage. To this and the ramp we will agree on the condition that you pay your own insurance on the machine and that you do not ride it in the Feast of Corpus Christi procession...unless, of course, the bishop insists. When obedience bids and binds, we will bend and bow.

The Landlord Riddleys

P.S.

The Blessed Meaney's have made us a splendifferously generous offer on the property, contingent on the expiration in a few months of their contract with the realty company they hired to sell it. I have tearfully accepted their proposal. Pray that circumstances converge to give us a vivid 20/20 vision of God's will for us.

Night of March 6, 2005

Sudden words in my head, "I am looking for the hands of the one who will bury me."

March 6, 2005

Dear Ronda (letter from Jim Ridley, the one who with his wife, Claire, is founding the writers' and artists' colony.)

How much more pertinent now - prophetic even -this passage from the first chapter of Moby Dick:

"Take almost any path you please, and ten to one it carries you down in a dale, and leaves you there by a pool in the stream. There is magic in it. Let the most absent-minded of men be plunged in his deepest reveries-stand that man on his legs, set his feet a-going, and he will infallibly lead you to water, if water there be in all that region. Should you ever be athirst in the great American desert, try this experiment, if your caravan happen to be supplied with a metaphysical professor. Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for ever."

You are that metaphysical professor who has led our little caravan to water. And may the water from the rockport sands prove to be the Living Water flowing from the Heart of Jesus.

Jim

March 7, 2005

Went to confession about envy of a beautiful woman who lives in our parish. I realized that even if I choose to be counter-cultural and not wear rich clothing and make up I could still be envious of those who do.

I am thinking of the meaning of that peculiar curse word, "mother-fucker." I have often wondered at it. Of course Freud must have loved it as exemplifying his theory, but in a related sense, is part of male sex the urge to re-enter to woman-womb and be released from the tensions of adulthood. In a book by an Indian writer called Red earth and pouring rain (p. 210) by Vikram Chandra, right after a young lad insults another boy by calling him a mother-fucker, a prostitute claims that sex unites and makes castes equal "In love our hearts have mingled like red earth and pouring rain."

The insult symbolizes the taboo? Because God sets up sexual energy as a way to cross into new bonding with new families and children coming from that attraction, rather than all huddled and incestuous and ingrown?

Draft article March 14, 2005

Linguistic Cleansing

When you think of sins of thought, **WORD**, and deed, probably under the title “word” you are confessing curses, calumny, detraction, or harsh judgments.

But there is a need of purification in our words that does not involve sin per se but would also make us better Christians

Examples:

Use of the words “all,” “we,” “some”. I have an opinion about something but I am in a minority. By enunciating the opinion with the word “we,” or “all,” instead of “I” or “some” people, we are pridefully bolstering our side.

Use of demeaning descriptions such as bums vs. street people. It may seem artificial at first to change a common word to what could seem a euphemism, but it is also a delicate form of charity to avoid a word associated with disdain.

Not using words that come to mind, withholding love, such as never rarely affirming others when they deserve praise.

March 15, 2005

I wanted to have a special prayer time before leaving for NYC so Sr. Judith gave me some Scriptures:

"Cast your cares on Him." Letter of Peter

When I read that one,

Jesus seemed to say, "You know, Ronda, you need never be anxious again, if you choose to trust in Me."

Dear Joe,

I was greatly touched by what you said to me and Sr. Judith just before we left last evening. (He said that he hadn't had sisters and loved having us two as sisters to him now). To understand why,

picture a high school girl, 2 years younger because she was skipped, under-developed, gauche, surrounded by zvadik gorgeous Jewish teens, who felt so inferior that even if a handsome junior or senior said hello on the school staircase she was too non-plussed to say hello back, and instead waited till one of the more eccentric looking boys picked her out:

So now when she's 67 years old along comes a big tall affluent 74 year old version of Rhett Butler, married to the most gorgeous Jewish woman, and (to use my new vocabulary word – dayanu (Hebrew word used in Passover services meaning – “it would be enough:)

he even deigns to talk to me, dayanu;

he even offers to help with anything I might need in my widow-plight, dayanu;

he even cooks gourmet luncheons; dayanu;

he even give me a hug from time to time, dayanu;

he even thinks that something I have to say could be meaningful to him, dayanu;

and his gorgeous Jewish wife smiles;

Very healing! Keep it up! Ronda

Dear Sr. Judith,

I was feeling pretty carefree and then 2 hours later came this painful but healing insight about the clothing issue (that is my concern about what I should wear as I move toward becoming a consecrated widow)

After Martin died, I put on lipstick and wore, for me, gorgeous hippie style colorful outfits and flirted with every single Catholic man I could find and after 12 of them rejected me I decided I wanted to wear no make up, blue,

I thought that Jesus might be mad being chosen last, sour grapes, etc., but He seemed to tell me He didn't mind at all, and He scooped me up into His embrace and He still does, but since I associate the being scooped up with the blue, grey, tan dresses, it still looms as an issue. In fact, the more loved by Him I feel the more I long for blue, charcoal and tan.

Eh?

This memory came up:

When we were about 13 we first put on make up and wore tight clothes. Since our parents had divorced, or rather separated as they never were married except common law, our father used to pick us up on Sundays to take us to the movies, etc. The first time I wore lipstick and a tight sweater to this Sunday meeting my father called me a slut and made me go home and wipe off the lipstick and change into something more asexual.

Now then, when I met Dietrich Von Hildebrand, the great philosopher and my new teacher, when I was 21, I was wearing lipstick and attractive clothing. None of the close in members of the Von H set wore lipstick. Once there was a Christmas party. I was planning to wear a bright red dress kind of crepe with some back showing. Shortly before the party my godmother told me it was not modest to wear at a party where there might be priest guests and suggested I should not wear it.

So, of course, I identify being a beloved Catholic woman with not wearing make up or red.

March 15, 2005

Got blue dye to dye my bright red A-line dress and it came out plum! Nice compromise.

Diana, my daughter who lives in the LA area, sent a box of NY Jewish food – lox, bagels, herrings, sturgeon, white fish. We gobbled it down – I commended her for being so lavish

Tears listening unexpectedly to hearing the Kol Nidre on the radio (cello piece played at Jewish funerals that my son, Charles, who committed suicide played in concert). I called, my daughter Carla, asking “why did he do it?” She says she thinks we should credit him with free will and look at his letter. (See En Route to Eternity, the chapter, “Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee.”

March 22, 2005 – My sister Carla wrote about all this:

Dear Ronda,

Whew. This is a brief message of love to say I've read it (my letter about the teen experience with our father and make up and sexy clothing). Yes I do remember the day, and about the Hildebrand set, but also that you were told by Balduin (my godfather) to look pretty and wear lipstick!!! You told me that. They wanted you to bloom. You looked so beautiful in the dress Diana gave you - I believe it is a mauve color. It has flowing lines. I was fascinated Isn't there a good balance between 'slut' red and drab gray or tan or blue? Dad definitely had problems torn

between his mother and father's different ethos. (My father's Dad was a Don Juan Hispanic married to a puritanic Christian woman). But kids do need guidance - too bad though such kind of guidance leaves such wounds. I believe I got away from Dad's wrath because of my thinness. But now, be a beautiful bride of Christ. Bright clothes do not have to be provocative - just let them say, I'm for life! love, Carla

My reply:

Dear Carla,

Thanks for writing in your busiest week. I had a funny answer right away. I bought dark blue dye to dye the bright red dress. It came out a lovely plum color. I didn't remember Balduin saying to wear lipstick. How fascinating what we do and don't remember!

Your affirmation means a lot to me. I am going to just go to the thrift shops and look for dresses that I like. The purple one, unfortunately, had tassles which got all grungy. So I cut them off, but it doesn't look that good any more for talks. So I will buy a few more myself.

Did a conference on Jews and the Church in NYC. NYC is like hell! the hotel was on 45th Street - those gigantic flashing signs and hordes of people - 1/2 hour to go 8 blocks in the rain in a taxi, garbage all over the streets. The conference went well but I was delighted to get out of there. Non-heated Church basement for the talks 60 degrees inside - hotel like our apartment years back with clanging radiators, peeling paint, walk down 10 flights broken elevator all for \$144 per night! Plus painful bleeding hemorrhoids! However 180 people mostly over 60 sat for 12 hours in the cold basement listening to us! And the wonderful woman who sponsored the conference, Nona Aguilar, gave me a big stipend, more than agreed on, to compensate me a little.

I am making a vow that unless conditions improve drastically I will stop out of town talks after April 2007 at 70 years old. Want to make a pact?

Love and prayers, Ronda

From Nona, the conference organizer:

Dear Ronda,

Thank you so much for your contribution at the "Jews and the Church" conference. I heard from someone who is a friend of Alice Von Hildebrand's who told me that she came to the conference unwillingly (only because of her debt to the Von Hildebrand's) She was considerably more unhappy after she arrived. She

reports that she settled down to listen in what could only be described as **THE WORST FRAME OF MIND**. But before dinner on Saturday, you turned her around completely. Yes, she learned a lot from Roy and from Father Koterski, but you were -- are! -- the star in her book. She had long heard of you from AvH, but never met you. She thought you were wonderful, funny, and utterly terrific. She quoted you extensively, in fact. She concluded by telling me that yesterday, for the first time in her life, she knelt and prayed for the conversion of the Jews. "And I will pray for that intention from now on!"

Fondly,
--Nona

Dearest Nona,

By the time I landed in my bed last night after a whole day of hemorrhoids and nausea on the plane, I actually thought I was going to die, no hyperbole. And now this!

Maybe to win the conversion of the stubborn Jews it takes just this much redemptive suffering! Tears of joy, Ronda

March 24, 2005

While praying the Mercy Chaplet today at 3 PM for Terri Schiavo I felt an urge to put down some thoughts from the standpoint of a former atheist though of Jewish background.

Cardinal Newman once wrote that it would not be licit to commit one venial sin even if the consequence would be the elimination of all the suffering in the world. Only a person who believes in eternal happiness could write such a sentence.

Nothing is more common to atheists than the view that the worst evil is suffering and that it is to be eliminated at any cost to others that is legal.

The only reason an atheist might think that some rights are inalienable is because in his/her mind the violation of rights such as the right to liberty would involve greater sufferings in the long run such as a hugely greater amount of slavery.

Ergo, if in the perpetrators mind the suffering of a husband in having a bed-ridden wife where she cannot help monetarily or in other tangible ways, would easily seem to outweigh 14 days of starvation. The sufferings of a baby in the womb from a saline abortion would be much less than the

suffering of 24/7 care of a baby. According to most atheists, only because some people love babies would that sacrifice be worth it.

The reason we don't think this way is because we believe that doing evil is worse than suffering. Someone could believe this is true even as an atheist just on the basis of the intrinsic negativity of evil, but it is unlikely. Plato tried to prove this in the Republic, namely that irrespective of any divine perspective to do an injustice is much worse than being a victim of an injustice. Why? Because it hurts the soul to do evil and the soul is more important than the body.

Most religious people can stand to take suffering rather than do evil because we believe that in heaven we will be blissfully happy.

Accordingly, if we really want to see an end of the horrors of anti-life sins in our times, we need to pray and pray and pray for the deep conversion of sinners and also against our own, perhaps, smaller sins of choosing evil rather than sacrifice.

The smallest avoidable sacrifice that we undertake out of love for God and neighbor is a witness that sacrifice is better than selfish choices to avoid suffering - if only letting someone get ahead of us on the freeway without bad-mouthing them, or getting ahead of us on the supermarket line!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, save souls!

March 25, 2005

A friend of mine, not on this discussion board, was telling me of her outrage that a Catholic family member thought it was right to withhold the feeding of Terri. Here is how I responded:

Dear M,

My experience with dissenting or former Catholic family members is that it is much better to put a taboo on discussions of Catholic truth where they disagree. It just makes me murderously spastic and does no good.

What I do is warily advance a position once. This time one family member who doesn't practice the faith agreed with me totally about Terri. Another did not respond to my best shot.

This is the only way we can still be bonded as family at all – not to try to argue them into the ground or let them try to argue me into the ground.

In Recovery, Inc. language (This is not 12 Step but the group I facilitate founded by a Jewish psychiatrist for anger, fear and depression) - you have to put your mental health first above trying to influence others with scant hope of success that will make you crazy when they respond negatively.

In Recovery, Inc. lingo you are trying to get a symbolic victory by winning the debate. This gives you a pseudo feeling of power. But actually except for prayer we are usually powerless to win our family members over on some of these issues. Only divine grace can crash through the wall they have created - usually, though not always, to justify their own dissenting decisions on other Catholic matters.

Jesus did not debate with Caiphas, Annas, or Herod. He stated the over-arching truth and won our salvation by the suffering they oppressed him with.

March 25, 2005

It turned out my friend's relative actually was moved by her presentation of the facts and she was offended by my letter seemingly harshly judging her trying!

Dear M,

I feel as if we were just sprung out of a great snare in "making up" so quickly.

Unlike busy you I have hours and hours to think about things. I am thinking today that the habit of reading and answering e-mails quickly is not good and places us wide open to the Devil who loves to make dear friends misunderstand each other.

There is a man here, Marty Barrack, who likes to say - "if anything I do annoys or puzzles you, don't waste more than 60 seconds before talking it over with me." Well, at first I didn't believe him but I have tried a few times and it worked out very well. He actually is humble enough to hear about glitches and not get so bent out of shape that others would never try again.

So, I am going to ask that we adopt the same good principle. I was so glad you had the guts to call me on my harsh reaction to your good deed and that way it all came out and could be reconciled, I am glad you forgave me so swiftly.

Next this woman's husband wrote me an interesting letter about my input on how most atheists think:

Your eloquent explication of atheistic blind sight was for me an invigorating drink from the tankard of Truth.

And then this Good Friday reflection by him about Terri:

“When the Law of man, which by nature is at the service of Life, retracts its plighted troth to Life and proudly vows allegiance to a new master whose name is Death, the Law, by Death's courtly sorcery, is transmogrified into a savage idol. Like all false gods, it demands of its worshipers human sacrifice. Terri Schievo will not be its only victim any more than the first of the unborn to be lawfully aborted has slaked the appetite of Moloch for human flesh. In her graven images, Justice is depicted as being blind. Blind indeed has she become. There is One who can heal her blindness. He offers His Light to her darkness, but she tightens that black rag around her eyes to keep His muddy spit from getting on her painted lids, which flutter in coquettish anticipation of Death's sweet kiss.”

March 27, 2005 (A poem I wrote about each of my daughter's pregnancies)

**YOUR FIFTH,
Our Fifth**

**No more!
I can't!
No more!
I can't!**

**Only the
daring
take
risks!**

**The first
your
breakthrough**

**The second
your
praise
of
motherhood
in the valley
of the
shadow
of death**

**The third
your
triumphant
love
of
the
surprise
of personhood**

**The fourth
fear
hope
delight!**

**The fifth?
fruit
of
new love**

**And we
husbands,
brothers,
grandmas,
grandpas,
aunts,
uncles,
get to
lick
the
cubs!**

Easter Sunday, March 28, 2005

Letter to grandsons age 9 and 5

Dear Maxie and Zach,

Ever wonder why we celebrate holidays at all? The word "holiday" comes from "holy day". Ask your Mom what "holy" means. Well, why do we celebrate birthdays? It happened so long ago, your birth. You don't exactly get re-born on your birthday, do you? But, in celebrating your birthday, we are remembering the day you were born, and helping you see how unique and wonderful we think you are.

Same with holy days. We are celebrating a great event.

Easter we are celebrating how that Jesus who died such a painful death on the Cross, rose from the tomb to go up to heaven.

If you are not sure what this was all about, ask Nicholas or Alexander to put on the Resurrection scene from Jesus of Nazareth.

March 28, 2005

Fr. Define, our wonderful Latin Mass, Society of St. Peter) quoted Pope Gregory saying that our response to the events of Easter is unrestrained joy.

I looked around. "Unrestrained joy?" They appeared to be so grim. Of course they had joy inside, but certainly not unrestrained.

I am thinking of infusing this topic into the Readiness to Change talk (out of Von Hildebrand's book Transformation in Christ, in the form of mentioning how far from being ready to change. Most of us hate change, become very defensive at the idea of it, and dig in totally against the slightest criticism. Use as an example how readily Latin Mass people would show unrestrained joy at Easter Mass and by contrast how charismatics find it unbearable to listen to 1 1/2 hours of Latin. If asked to change we would resist greatly. Happily I am straddling enjoying both the English Mass and the Latin Mass, but in other areas, of course.....I am just as reluctant to change.

The goal would be not that all Latin Mass people would dance on Easter Sunday or charismatics go to the Latin Mass but that we would respect each other's freedom of choice.

March 31, 2005

About the book by John Grisham The Painted House – showing Arkansas life during the time of the Korean war, I don't find the book depressing at all. But then I am used to reading contemporary novels. Mostly I found it funny.

It raises interesting questions about Christian writings vs. writings that depict Christian scenes. In Catholic writings even if the ending is not happy in worldly terms, there is a sense of hope and redemption of suffering and light in the darkness, as in Undset, O'Connor, Walker Percy, etc.

I heard that Grisham was a minister. I don't know about that. The book doesn't strike me as Christian in the above sense.

But a Christian can read a realistic novel about the way people live and feel and think and get insight out of it such as in this book - yeah, this is the way a kid of 7 would think. This is the way life is like for undocumented workers, for hill people, etc. etc. That is why their faces look so guarded or sad.

I also recently read a saint story about a Norbertine Saint who lived in the 12th century -- during the Crusades. Life was extremely depressing in those days and the saint story was filled with one depressing episode after another (about death, the plague, poverty, fear, doubt, etc). It was an inspiring saint story about faith in the midst of hopelessness.

But I try to think of such depressing stories as more reason to "count our blessings."

April 2, 2005

The dying Pope. My daughter Diana, not a practicing Catholic again yet, responded this way to a report that the Pope told his aides "Don't weep. I am happy. Pray with joy.":

"Ah, lovely. this is bothering me more than I thought it would. I did wear my amethyst rosary out to dinner as a symbol (color-coordinated with earrings, bag and jacket to please Nonna), and did the chaplet you recommended.

Sister Judith wrote this lovely, loving poem:

THOU ART PETER

**Peter hangs between earth and heaven
as his children pray for his soul -
God is calling him home.**

**Our father, our brother,
for he is Peter and servant
of the servants of God.**

**Our hearts cry our eyes weep,
we are losing our moorings
for he is Peter**

**The world mourns,
even the most hardened
is moved - for he is Peter.**

**Heads of states, heads of
nations, all recognize
this man is Peter.**

**Now he returns to the
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
from whence he came.**

For he is Peter.

Sister Judith

**From Carla my daughter in New Hampshire also not a practicing Catholic again
yet:**

Re: John Paul II's end of life-- priest, sportsman, poet, MAN

**I shall miss a great friend, one who wooed me with that extraordinary visage when I
was even further from the apses and naves than I am today. This pope is an
astonishing figure. He will ALWAYS be alive, a galloping amazement, a tall white
column, or just a man with a face borrowed from some eternal guidebook labeled
"this is how they look when they are real."**

**(then Carla about this Quote from John Paul II from his death bed, some think
addressed to the youth in the Square, others think addressed to Jesus and Mary):**

"I have looked for you. Now you have come to me. And I thank you."

**I think this sentence may not have been directed at the youths at all. As a statement
uttered from a deathbed, can one imagine anything more joyous? No matter in
whom I believe at the point of my own death, I suppose I would give my left arm
now if I could be sure of saying the same.**

**Goodbye, shepherd. I had looked for you, oh, in many ways. I will miss seeing your
crook on the mountains."**

April 2, 2005

**Amidst tears of joy that dear John Paul II is having a hand in drawing my
daughters back to the Church, I thought "I will honor him by working for the
Church until I drop dead" vs. always thinking if it is too physically hard to travel,
etc. then I will stop , certainly by age 70!"**

On quite another subject:

Letter to my sister Carla

I think you have always been very realistic and stoic about physical pain and I have always found it unbearable - as in dental pain, etc. I wonder why? Am I more sensitive to it, or just in general much more self-protective?

Alas!

April 2, 2005

**Pope Left a Message for Divine Mercy Sunday
Read by Archbishop Sandri in St. Peter's Square**

VATICAN CITY, APRIL 3, 2005 (Zenit.org).- To the surprise of the faithful attending the Mass for John Paul II's eternal rest, a Vatican official read a message the Pope had prepared for Divine Mercy Sunday.

Archbishop Leonardo Sandri, substitute of the Vatican Secretariat of State, told the crowd of 130,000 in St. Peter's Square today that he read the text "with much honor and much nostalgia" -- and "by the explicit indication" of the Pope himself.

"To humanity, which at times seems to be lost and dominated by the power of evil, egoism and fear, the risen Lord offers as a gift his love that forgives, reconciles and reopens the spirit to hope," affirmed the Pope in his posthumous message.

"It is love that converts hearts and gives peace. How much need the world has to understand and accept Divine Mercy!" the Holy Father's message stated.

John Paul II proclaimed the feast of Divine Mercy for the universal Church when canonizing Polish nun and mystic Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) on April 30, 2000.

In his message for the recitation of the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father wrote: "Lord, who with your death and resurrection reveal the love of the Father, we believe in you and with confidence repeat to you today: Jesus, I trust in you, have mercy on us and on the whole world."

April 4, 2005

Little article for godspy (a web Catholic magazine. They didn't publish it even though they asked me for it):

Most of us could write a long article about everything that we loved about John Paul II's impact on our lives. As a philosopher, I had a special joy in teaching his thought.

Married to a playwright with daughters who are poets, these facets of St. John Paul the Great also delighted me.

the line from his poetry I quote the most often comes from his rock quarry labors as a young man:

"When horror and hope are equally balanced in my soul, no one will accuse me of simplicity." (paraphrase - check)

When my son committed suicide (RIP) I thought - how can I teach or give speeches? If I couldn't save my son, who could I help? Instead, what I found is that surviving the horror of the suicide of a child gave me experiential credentials for all those I taught who had suffered in excruciating ways. They would not "accuse me of simplicity!"

John Paul II was an active saint with a strong contemplative side - a third order Carmelite priest. He wrote his doctoral thesis on faith in John of the Cross. One of his themes is this: we long for and cherish mystical experiences. But no human experience can encompass the infinite God. This is why faith is even more important. Supernatural faith is a gift from God that reaches the infinite eternal God.

Ronda Chervin, Ph.D.

Interesting talk with a woman philosophy prof. at Lyons College, Dr. Martha Beck who writes about Plato's dialogues. She wondered how I wrote so much. I replied

Dear Martha,

Well, you are younger than I and still have time. My guess is that you are trying to write perfect insights perfectly, like Plato did, whereas I write, like Kierkegaard, as a desperate person conveying saving insights to other desperate readers!

April 10, 2005

Quotes from Pope from the Ghetto by Gertrud Von Le Fort,

"Justice exists only in hell; in heaven there is grace, and on earth there is the cross. But the church is here, that she may bless those who bear this cross." P. 170

"He whose love for Christ is not yet perfect, is loved so much the more perfectly by Christ." (p. 204)

"the power is mine and the hour is mine; tomorrow I shall be Pope. Then there will be no more slaughtered innocents."

Response of the Wandering Jew:

“And what will you do with the slaughtered Innocent on the Cross?”

A prophetess “No woman is called upon to speak, unless she is ready at all times to hold her tongue for the love of Christ and His Church.” P. 305

“It is better for a person to die of the truth which the Lord has created, than that he should continue to live on the illusions he creates for himself.” (p. 321)

April 11, 2005

**Sisters of the Cross
Dear Sister Cecilia,**

Here is the preface (to a new book by Venerable Conchita of Mexico)

“When you listen to a beautiful love song, do you examine each word? And if some lyrics manifest a pathos or a joy that goes beyond your own, do you turn down the volume, not to hear the melody? I doubt it.

For those of us nowhere near the height or depth of Venerable Conchita’s union with Jesus, there may be a moment when listening to her love song that we want to close the book because the pathos and joy of it is above and deeper than our own level. We find that we can’t drop it. Why? Because it is too beautiful.

When reading Holy Hours, I seemed to hear my Jesus tell me not to give up because my prayer is so inferior to Conchita’s, but rather to sing her song for now, only in a “lower key.” For example, when Conchita asks Jesus for more and more sufferings, I could just ask for the grace not to make such a fuss over the sufferings that come along unbidden.

Meditative reading of Holy Hours speaks to a place in our hearts we don’t always want to go. Why? Perhaps because there is a part of us that does not want to be too intimate with Jesus. “Love is not loved” Saint Mary Magdalene dei Pazzi used to proclaim. Once those words rang in my soul and I asked Jesus why I was so shy about loving Love.

- *is it easier for me to love You as truth
because truth is strong and love is vulnerable?*
- *is it easier for me to love You as beauty
because beauty is sublime and love is messy?*
- *is it easier for me to love You as mercy
because mercy is balm and love is strenuous?*

I told Jesus that as I looked into His tragic eyes, I wondered if the reason I am afraid of love might be deeper still.

Terror of surrender to your Divine heart whose beat is so loud I could no longer hear my own?

Or, still more simply, that I could refuse you nothing, no matter how painful, if I was close enough to know you wanted it!

I heard Jesus telling me that I could not experience the fullness of His love for me if I was afraid to come closer. 'Perfect love casts out fear.' Surrender!

This dialogue ended on a Marian note:

Do I fear that after diving into Your waves you might cast me out on the shore even more helpless to survive?

No! A perfect unison of heartbeat with You, my Jesus, would render me more like you, Mother Mary. You, Mary, certainly did not emerge from your surrender to the Holy Spirit as a dead fish. No! Rather as Queen of Apostles!

Conchita's spirituality is precisely a proof of the depth we all could go in experiencing the love of Jesus were we to surrender totally.

Don't we not want, just as Conchita did, "to kiss those pale and mute lips, which spoke only tenderness and breathed only charity..."? (Holy Hour, 3)

Don't we want, just as Conchita did, "to try to think inside of Jesus, not just live, but think with His very thoughts, so saintly, so immaculate, and as transparent as the sky without clouds...just and non-judgmental..."? (Holy Hour 7)

Don't we want, just as Conchita did, "to perform our works in a supernatural manner...(rather than) routinely, thus, lazily, without stirring up fervor, scattered and without spirit."? (Holy Hour 13)

Don't we want, just as Conchita did, "to make our lives a tapestry of acts of love that may serve as both wrapping and life for all our virtues."? (Holy Hour 14)

Don't we want, just as Conchita did, "to hide in the depth of the rock, to be cured and become happy."? (Holy Hour 17)

Don't we want, just as Conchita did, "to cheer up, and be brave!""? (Holy Hour 21)

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!

Now, as you begin to join the heart of Venerable Conchita in her Holy Hour prayers, ask the Holy Spirit to make you at least long to long for the transforming union that was hers.

(Letter from Athol, a Hebrew Catholic Australian lay apostle who does a lot with genealogy.

Dear Ronda,

This is what I have pieced together. Your family the de Sola were in Spain and then went to Portugal where they were brought before the Inquisition as relapsed Jews. They left Portugal for Amsterdam in the early 1700's and then in the early 1800's they went to England where David Aaron de Sola (born 1796 in Amsterdam) was the chazzan in the Bevis marks Synagogue in London. His son Abraham de sola was the chief rabbi of Quebec (whose family is recorded in the 1881 Canada Census). Are you from this family? David Aaron de Sola's daughter married Solomon Pool (an Ashkenazi) from whom I presume Rabbi David de Sola Pool was descended (his son I would think). There is an article by Julian Kemper in the Esti magazine on sephardi Genealogy in 1999 volume 4 in which it states that Julian was able through the Inquisition records in Lisbon to trace the De sola family for 17 generations. the article is called 'OsCristaos-the New christians: the De Sola Family' by Julian kemper. see the link below to Esti
<http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/1321/index.html>

Cheers Athol

I wrote back to Athol: "Fascinating. I was told part of my family on my Grandfather, Solomon De Sola's family (originally Spanish Jews) became Catholic and stayed Catholic in Curacao where they lived - members of this group used to come to NYC to go to their free dentist Jewish De Sola relative. The other part remained Jewish, including my side. So I figured the Catholic side was praying for the Jewish side and our conversion was partly a result of their prayers.

Dear friends (this is addressed to 2 friends who have been urging me to dress better):

I had such an unexpected experience this evening. Anne Kootz wanted me very much to go to her concert in Batesville. There wasn't enough room in her husband Buddy's car and she had to go early to rehearse, so she said I should hitch a ride with a friend of hers, a widower. My letter to her tells the story. I think it is because of the green dress vs. my usual dull rags so it is your faults!

Dear Anne,

Maybe you're a Catholic yentah (matchmaker)? This Paul man, who obligingly drove me to the concert, who, by the way, is 90 years old, on the way back described it as his first date since becoming a widower 7 months ago! When I told him that it was not a date and that I was trying to be a consecrated widow, he replied that he had decided when his wife died not to remarry. But then as I was getting out of the car at the Church he remarked, while inviting me to visit him, that even though he was 90 he still could do a lot, such as still drive very well, and concluded with "well, now you have a chance for a boyfriend!"

He seemed to me to be a dear fellow, full of humor and New Yorkese ways, but he didn't seem to get it or was that just his way of being friendly?

I am leaving Thursday but when I come back I will see what you know and how I should handle this right. He is probably more lonely than he divulges and just wants to have more feminine friends?

April 30, 2005

Dear friends,

Not sure yet but I have been invited to apply for a co-host job on a Catholic radio station (also on the web) for a Catholic Woman to Woman show. It would be a paid job and I could do it out of my house so I could phase out all travel except to family and friends and reach potentially 26,000,000 people a day! It is a paid job so I could pay someone to do all my errands, etc., maybe even eat a rack of lamb from time to time.

I would become the Dr. Laura, Dr. Ruth of the Catholic Church - Dr. Ronda -

Feeling over excited I asked Jesus about it and he seemed to say

"Well, I have stuffed you with wisdom, why not let it all out?" Also that he has prepared me for this role since I have the philosophical and spiritual wisdom plus the popular approach plus the gift of gab plus all the books on woman's issues.

If it's not God's will it will crash quickly, I hope.

May 1, 2005

Dear friends,

Even though we are not supposed to discuss politics on the Association of Hebrew Catholic discussion board, there is a related philosophical issue with regard to attitudes toward Israel.

Just on an ethnic level, people who live in a country have a right to love it and want to protect it. This does not mean they should defend it in the sense of "my country right or wrong," since universal just war theory is binding on Catholics, still one can't say that a person of Jewish ancestry whether atheistic or orthodox or anything in between doesn't have a right to hope that the land of ones people would survive just as US Irish Americans want Ireland to survive.

For instance, Germans fought for their Fatherland even if they were anti-Nazi just as we would fight for the US in spite of our horrible abortion laws!

May 1, 2005

(Message of Jesus, alleged dictated to Anne – Direction for Our Times:

Be at peace, dear children of heaven. There is no reason for anything but a peaceful countenance. I am working in your soul if you are allowing Me to do so and you will come closer and closer to Me. You see that I am calling you to do this. I want you to behave like Me and even to think like Me. You will be gentle and kind to those you meet in your day and they will then consider what it is that makes you different. And there is a contrast between those following Me, and those following the world. The closer you come to Me, the greater the contrast. I would like to see a multitude of souls drawing closer to Me. You can help with this project because you represent Me. I am calling everyone and I use each of you to do this. So be My voice in your world and cry out to your brothers and sisters. Tell them of My love for them and tell them of My wish to draw them closer to Me. If you allow Me to work through you, I will do so. If you practice loving all souls and being merciful to all souls, soon you will be speaking My name to them. You understand that if you are not merciful and kind, it will not matter what you say because souls will be repelled. It is only through your love, inspired by Me, that they are moved. So be gentle as I am gentle and souls will be drawn back into the safe pasture of My Sacred Heart.

May 3, 2005

Dear Carla,

In a speech Pope Benedict gave in 2002 about the nature of the beautiful he contrasts the Greek Adonis type notion with the Christian notion in which the disfigured Christ on the cross is the most beautiful because it is the great demonstration of love.

This paragraph made me think of beautiful non-pregnant Carla and beautiful pregnant Carla so I thought you might like it:

"In the face of the Shroud of Turin so disfigured there appears the genuine, extreme beauty: the beauty of love that goes "to the very end."

May 5, 2005

Dear friends,

In terms of anger management - here is a spectrum of possible attitudes toward the Jones article (an article written by Michael Jones attacking views of Roy Schoeman and other H-C's):

Someone - could have written Jones a carefully reasoned polite refutation. Maybe someone did and I missed it. My experience of Jones is such that I wouldn't have written anything directly to him.

Marty - wrote a refutation and sent it to a major Catholic magazine

Another member - wrote insults to Jones sending these insults for us to enjoy presumably because it is hopeless to deal directly with Jones.

In terms of the Catholic anger-management courses I am giving:

1 and 2 represent charitable means;

3 represents the attempt at a symbolic victory - i.e. we feel weak because we cannot stop Jones from writing erroneous articles which could hurt many. Since we feel weak, when we write or enunciate insults it gives us the phony feeling of being strong. An insulter is in the strong position from which ridicule issues forth.

Trying to get symbolic victories through insults, however, is ineffective and also is unchristian. True, we read of Jesus occasionally using sarcasm about Herod and the Pharisees, but this is very very rare compared to his "forgive them, they know not what they do" statements and unbelievably loving actions such as dying for his enemies.

Since it is unlikely I will get to die for Jones, the best I can do is support good articles written against him and pray for him often.

This is my take, anyhow. PAX Ronda

May 7, 2005

Dear Daniel,

(Originally it seemed as if a good friend of all of ours was going to be part of the Rockport Colony – called Watershed. I wrote to him about contemplative and active aspects of the future colony).

Office of Readings for Saturday 6th Week of Easter, St. Augustine writes:

"You are to follow me by imitating my endurance of transient evils; John is to remain until my coming, when I will bring eternal blessings. A way of saying this more clearly might be: Your active life will be perfect if you follow the example of my passion, but to attain its full perfection John's life of contemplation must wait until I come."

If we are aiming at Watershed at some kind of mix of contemplation and action, then we will clearly have the blessings and crosses of both, non e vero? Lots of trials of daily life interacting with the world and the trial of the stretching yearning aspect of the contemplative but also the joys of accomplishment and of blissfully being taken up out of the transient into the eternal.

May 8, 2005 (letter from my daughter, Diana)

Happy Mother's Day!

Thank you for being a tiger when we were little, and letting us ride you and brush your hair and flying us in the air. Thank you for loving every scribble and jot of paint and words I ever created, and instilling in me the knowledge that I was special and valuable.

Thank you for showing me (by following your model) how to be passionate about what you do, and try hard even when it's difficult to do your best. Thank you for suffering with such enormous dignity that it's difficult to know you're in pain.

Thank you for believing so much that faith flies like white heat from your fingers. Thank you for doubting so little, even when tested like Job.

Thank you for sharing your warmth and generosity. Nobody I ever knew gives so much and so easily. Thank you for your joy in small things like a lovely beach and your marvelous gratitude for small gifts.

Thank you for letting me ride (figuratively) on your tiger back as you age, marveling at your courage and strength. I pray that I can be the extraordinary woman you are at your age.

I love you, Mommy.

Diana

Dearest Daughter,

I love you so much.

It is nice to think that you think of me that way, even if it is not true. You paint me strong colors and I feel weak and shaky a lot. Is it because I really am stronger than I think, or because you want me to be strong and think that if you tell me I am strong I will be stronger? If the latter, you are probably right.

Perhaps I suffer big things with dignity and humor but I am a captious little foot stamping dwarf about every day frustrations which you deal with with much more humor and grace.

I think of myself as tight and miserly even if having bouts of generosity and you as easily generous.

If I would paint a portrait of you I would have strands of all the colors of the rainbow moving from the circumference of the edges of the picture into a close swirl that will tighten up to become your final personality, something so strong and focused.

I see images of Nonna (my mother, her grandmother. Nonna means grandmother in Italian – which name she adopted because she didn't like the name grandma) now redeemed and laughing with joy at how we all are doing.

Love, Mom

From: Diana

Huh, I think that the weakshakiness is the core of strength, paradoxically. Know what I mean? It's the denial that creates the black stuff. And we're all on our way to where.

I'm having fun with my new relationship with Mary Magdalene. (She prayed to St. Mary Magdalene for a special favor) I had such a beautiful day yesterday, lobster on the beach/white satin lingerie and er...fun moments with my husband, where after one feels no guilt/a private courtyard and so much love it hurt...picture Pete dancing around scattering rose petals and telling me I was the most beautiful vision he ever saw! I never asked for much before, and God is giving it to me in spades since I asked. I feel beloved.

Funnily, I picture you the same way (the rainbow thing) but muted a bit because you are so afraid to grab life with both hands and just lap it up. So is Jen, I fear. Generations skip.

I love you!

May 12, 2005

Letter from Claire Ridley about plans:

Dear Ronda,

My view is that we are continuing to build, to watch, to pray, and to gather what the Lord wills. An organic thing works very differently than something cast from a plaster mold. The latter result is a predictably somber or sanguine saint; the former fleshes out what only God knows is possible for the individual, his unique sanctity.

From a letter written to a "recovering homosexual," from one who ministers to Christian homosexuals trying to become chaste:

"...This whole issue of "remembering" the "good" times. There is no mistake about it, there were some good times. In fact, many of those "good times" look a whole lot better than the moment or situation we are in right now. To say otherwise would be "double speak" and the ultimate denial.

"Fact is, not everything we experienced in our bondage days was totally awful. I can remember the good times, just like anyone else can.

"So could the children of Israel when they were dusty, dry and hungry in the wilderness! We imagine that the bondage of Israel must have been nothing more than brutality and torture. Thank you Cecil B. De Mille for that!

"In fact, the Israelites owned property, in Goshen. They also had really nice vegetable gardens...hence the longing for garlic and melons, when all they had to eat in the desert was "this manna". They probably had some good fishing days in Egypt also.

"And yet, the Scripture clearly says that God heard their cries and moans for deliverance. No matter how nice the fishing might have been, or how plenteous the produce, Israel knew that they were called to be free men, not slaves. Servants yes (of God), but not slaves (of man).

"Deliverance came....miraculously. Through the Red Sea Israel passed. Freedom! Next God led them to some very bitter waters. YUK! Who could drink THAT??? Moses throws some charcoal in it and it's made sweet. Next, it was just a short 7 mile walk to the most beautiful Oasis you can imagine. This Oasis had 7 Springs! Ever been to Mammoth Springs? Imagine 7 of those. WOW. And the water was not only plenteous, but sweet too!

“Now why in the world didn't God just take Israel from the Red Sea and lead them directly to the Oasis?

“Next stop, a huge rock! Not a drop of water in sight. Man did the people complain about that! "Better to be in bondage in Egypt", they said, "than to be brought to this wilderness to die!" Moses strikes the rock and, VIOLA!, water comes out! Paul tells us that that rock was Christ!

"Oh, it was SO much better in the old days! We had garlic! We had melons! We had homes and a favorite fishing spot! This freedom thing is too much work, and the rations leave a whole lot to be desired too! We should never have left Egypt in the first place. Woe is us!!! We wanna go back!"

“Sound familiar?

“So, why didn't God just lead Israel to a cleft rock with a spigot in it in the first place?

“The answer to both these questions is the same.

“They never knew the character of the Father! God had to teach them His character. I think this one object lesson went something like this.

"Trust Me. Bondage may appear sweet. Freedom may "appear" bitter.

"Only the Power of your Father can make this freedom sweet. Once sweetened, you WILL be nourished and saved by it."

"Never think that today is "it". Times of beautiful refreshment await...just a few miles down the road...just over the next sand dune."

"Nothing, not even solid rock, can prevent your Father from meeting you, and showing Himself strong on your behalf."

"Although it might seem like a wilderness that you're in, remember that it is your Father Who has brought you to it. Can it get any better than that?"

Oh yeah, one more thing. "You can't drink and complain at the same time! Do you wanna gripe all day? or start drinkin'?"

“I had a very deep and long lasting relationship. It was so beautiful that it almost killed me! Talk about co-dependency! If I'm honest, I can see that the relationship was sick. No matter how "good" the "good times" seem to have been. A slave is still a slave, no matter how good the fishing or abundant the produce.

Anyway, this is what I have learned about remembering the "good times".

June 10, 2005

Dear Sister Judith, (concerning the question of what I should do to foster a movement for consecrated widows in the Church)

I prayed about this during the night and this morning.

I got back a mixed message, as it were.

- **To think of *myself* as a woman of Jesus, a widow dedicated to the Lord**
- **When I get a message back from Bishop Burke to ask him if there is any progress on it and if he is considering different ideas about formation of consecrated widows whether there would be any benefit to my coming to visit him.**
 - **Otherwise to just follow the Holy Spirit in my own life day by day and not push for any project concerning it such as web sites etc. (What I sense from former such attempts (2 groups by mail and newsletter called Marian Women in Ministry and another called Women and Men of Jesus I started at different times) is that I don't do well counseling - and such as association really does involve counseling as much as teaching even if long-distance or informal.**

Really if I had something to do with the formation it should be writing or speaking to groups – i.e. teaching, not individual counsel.

June 15, 2005

Kiss from the Cross is going out of print. It seems like the end of an era to me. It sold some 15,000 copies over it's 15 or so years of existence. May God bless all who read it and took hope. Many thought it my best book.

I am sensing, my Jesus, that this is the time you want to unloose my tight grip on my little book-idols????

In a way it feels freeing. Even though they were all written for you and the kingdom, I am surely too attached to them. I feel already a certain lightness and a little push toward doing more on books on web, POD, videos?

“the Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

June 16, 2005

I found this note of mine in a file for the book on overcoming rejection I am working on. The note didn't fit the manuscript but I want to save it to ponder it: - it was a propos of Freud saying women want to control men.

I asked myself if I am part of this battle of the sexes for power. If I meet men in authority positions I can't control, do I grow to hate them? I do become anxious, such as dealing with the type of priest who charms women into being willing slave like helpers? Do I like male students because I can control their wildness and they have to obey me?

June 17, 2005

Dear Anne, (I was asked to write an endorsement for Anne's series of locutions entitled *Direction for Our Times*):

"I started off reading Anne's *Direction for Our Times* in a sceptical frame of mind. The Church's teaching on private revelation is that you don't have to believe any specific alleged account of locutions or visions. It's not like Scripture and Tradition that every Catholic must believe. And, in fact, some alleged messages don't ring true to me at all.

"When I started reading *Direction for Our Times*, I was charmed. First I was delighted with Anne's honesty about her own failings, struggles and doubts. Then I was delighted with the "voice" of Jesus - so loving, compassionate, yet firm and authoritative. Then I was delighted with the way the words attributed to Him touched my own heart.

"Why do we need these messages now? I can't say for everyone, but for many of us old-timers (I'm 68) who have been faithful for decades there is always need for renewal of hope and joy in the Lord. We need to know that He understands how hard it is for us to see all the dissent in our beloved Church. We need to know that He understands how hard we try not to be among the lax and sinful, but how often we fail. We need to know that He forgives us and still honors our attempts to please Him even in the midst of our distractions.

"I love all the Volumes I have been able to read, but Vol. I, with the many dialogues between Anne in her life as a wife and mother, spoke to me especially as a woman in the Church. I read excerpts to a mothers' prayer group in a parish. They were so moved. After my talk, within 15 minutes the volumes were whisked off the book table by eager hands.

"Private Revelation is not infallible, but what I am sure of is that I am being inspired through these readings to greater trust in the God who is our

only hope.”

June 21, 2005

Images of the week:

Listening to rap music at a restaurant, I wondered, is this the pop version of operatic recitatif (sp.?)

Wonderful last stanza of an Auden poem about what’s wrong with romantic love:

Stand, stand at the window
as the tears scald and smart
you shall love your crooked neighbor
with your crooked heart

Thought before getting my upper dentures:

After I am de-fanged I should be a less aggressive person!

May 30, 2005

Direction for Our Times, As Given to Anne a Lay Apostle

(This part is about the discernments that were made concerning Anne’s apostolate and the writings by authorities. If you are not interested, skip ahead to p. 147. I am including these endorsements because I do think these messages come from Jesus and they are having a good influence on me, so I will be quoting them frequently throughout.)

In July 2003 Our Lord indicated to Anne that her journal was to be published and disseminated:

Jesus: "These words I bring to you are more Good News. I want you to share these words, as you would share the Good News. If you prepare a great banquet, filled with the finest of foods, you do not sit down alone to sample and enjoy it. You invite friends and loved ones to share and celebrate together. In the same way, I want you to share My words. I will secure the necessary permissions and then you must obey the promptings I place in your heart. All will be seen to. I require only your obedience. I send these words to call humanity back to the Light."

A sister who works closely with Anne delivered these messages to Anne's bishop and asked him to read them. Anne began to meet regularly with her bishop and parish priest.

In August 2003, Jane Gomulka contacted Jim Gilboy, the President of CMJ Marian Publishers and asked him to consider publishing this journal. Jim indicated that he does not publish private revelations. He explained that his ministry stems from the Blessed Mother's messages in Medjugorje, and he did not want to detract from this work. He ended the conversation with "I work for Our Lady so drop them off and I'll look them over." Jim reviewed the messages and met with Anne.

After careful discernment in prayer Jim made a decision to print the series of messages in December 2003. Jim requested and was given permission from Anne's Bishop to print the Volumes.

Rome and the Personal Messages for Pope John Paul II

In January 2004, Anne took a series of 12 personal messages for Pope John Paul II. Per Our Lord's instructions, Anne asked Jim Gilboy to deliver them to the Holy Father. Jim agreed, although he had no viable connection to Rome at this time. Soon though, a series of connections opened a path to Rome. Jim and his wife, a sister who works closely with Anne, and Jane Gomulka met with Andrzej Maria Cardinal Deskur, retired Director of Communications at the Vatican, and long time friend of Pope John Paul II.

On Holy Saturday, April 10, 2004 our group met with Cardinal Deskur and presented to him what is now Volumes One through Four of the series entitled *Direction for Our Times as Given to Anne, a Lay Apostle*. Jim and the group explained that Anne received 12 personal messages for the Holy Father contained in a sealed envelope. Cardinal Deskur received the group warmly, asked many questions about Anne and her obedience to her bishop, the Church, and the mission. Cardinal Deskur was given the following message which Anne received before we left for Rome:

Jesus: April 5, 2004

"I would ask my servants to present these words as words from heaven. I have a great mission that I wish to accomplish through these messages and I have attached graces that are unimaginable to human minds. Those who read them will understand if they have been called to participate in this heavenly project. I want these words disseminated the world over. I will see that this is accomplished. Ask me for guidance in this matter and guidance will be available to every person who pays attention to My will. Good and holy

children of God, understand that these times are not like other times. These messages are not like other messages. I am trying to save many souls at this time. Do not think this can be done in the future. It must be done now. I ask that you treat this work according to my heavenly request for urgency. Your reward will be no small thing, even though I know you serve from love, not personal interest. Feel My graces flow through these words to your soul. Feel my truth as I convey it to you. All is well, as I am directing all, but I need many yes answers at this time."

Cardinal Deskur agreed to take the 12 personal messages to the Holy Father the next day at their brunch on Easter Sunday. Cardinal Deskur kept a copy of the four Volumes as well as Anne's personal journal. Cardinal Deskur directed Jim Gilboy to take a copy of the Volumes to Cardinal Ratzinger's office. Jim left the copies with Cardinal Ratzinger's secretary since the Cardinal was out of the country during our visit.

On Easter Sunday our group was privileged to sit on the same platform as the altar for Easter Sunday Mass. We enjoyed the liturgy celebrated by Pope John Paul II, from the third row behind the priests and altar boys. After Mass, we saw Cardinal Deskur moving toward his van to attend brunch with the Holy Father. The sisters accompanying him were carrying the sealed envelope containing the messages for Pope John Paul II.

The following Wednesday, April 14, 2004 our group had a personal audience with the Holy Father following the general audience.

[Photo Jim and Sister with Pope John Paul II.]

Publishing the Volumes and Disseminating the Message

By the end of May 2004, Jim Gilboy had completed publication of Volumes One through Four and began disseminating them to religious bookstores and the general public.

In September 2004, Archbishop Philip Hannan of New Orleans, LA began reading the Volumes. He was so inspired by these words from heaven that he decided his FOCUS Worldwide Television Network needed to play a role in getting these Volumes distributed quickly. He enlisted the assistance of Sr. Breige McKenna and Fr Kevin Scallon to discern the [content of the] Volumes and make contact with Anne's bishop. After reading the Volumes and speaking with Anne's bishop, Sr Breige was deeply touched. She encouraged Archbishop Hannan to proceed. Archbishop Hannan also spoke with Anne's bishop, met with Anne and filmed a series of interviews with Anne and her team. These programs launched the mission throughout the United States.

In October 2004, two Sisters returned to Rome to deliver the remaining sets of Volumes to Cardinal Ratzinger and Cardinal Deskur. Cardinal Deskur met with the sisters and was given copies of Volumes One through Ten. The following Sunday, October 31, 2004, the sisters were granted a private audience with The Holy Father Pope John Paul II in his papal apartment. [Photo of Sister with The Holy Father holding Volume Two.]

In October 2004, Volume Six was published.

On October 15, 2004 Anne recorded the last message for Volume Ten. This completed the recording of Direction for Our Times as Given to Anne a Lay Apostle. Our Lord indicated that this body of work, The Volumes was complete.

In December 2004 Volumes Seven, Nine and Ten were published.

Currently Volumes Five and Eight are not in print. Anne's bishop will decide [discern] when these Volumes should be printed.

...On Christmas night, December 25, 2004, our Lord revealed to Anne that she would receive a telephone call asking her to go to Rome. He instructed her to say yes, and that she would be traveling with her husband. In January 2005 Archbishop Philip Hannan called Anne to ask whether she and her husband would travel with him to Rome to meet with Cardinal Deskur. Anne, her husband and the Archbishop meet with Cardinal Deskur. Following the meeting, Archbishop Hannan was taken to Cardinal Ratzinger's Office at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Archbishop Hannan met with the priest responsible for investigation of mystical phenomena. [Is there an official title for this priest?] Archbishop Hannan is confirmed in his discernment. [bad sentence] He is told to continue His work with this mission.

Jesus to Anne: February 9, 2005

"The Church is aware of this mission of mercy and is assisting through the cooperation of your bishop. It is I who wills this mission and it is I who directs its course."

Other notes from these explanations:

Our Blessed Mother has indicated that Anne is to remain anonymous at this time.

Blessed Mother: April 16, 2005

"I want you to retain your private life as a mother and wife. In order for this to be possible, souls must obey my instructions. Anne, you will speak for Jesus and represent this mission. When you are speaking, you are Anne. When you are working for this mission, you are Anne. When you are serving your family at home or away from home, you are a mother and wife and you belong to your family. Souls must be respectful of this because your vocation must be protected. If the situation arose that you were serving this mission and your family was suffering, we would take you from the mission. You have a heavenly duty, Anne, so please advise souls to be respectful. You will bring great graces to others but only through obedience to heaven. I will help you with each situation but we are serious about this distinction of service. Your family will not suffer. I am personally appealing to each soul to respect this woman's anonymity."

Anne's Bishop and her obedience to the Holy Roman Catholic Church

On January 31, 2005 Anne's bishop wrote the following letter:

"To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that Anne, a lay apostle, is a Catholic of my diocese in good standing. She is a wife and mother of small children who is devoted to her husband and family. I know her to be a deeply spiritual and committed person. In recent years she has felt called to a more public role in the Church while remaining anonymous. She is at all times insistent that whatever she does in the area of public witness to her faith is done in obedience to me, her bishop, and in accord with the authority of the Catholic Church."

The lay apostolate started by Anne involved different pious practices. I wondered why daily Mass wasn't one of them. I asked Anne to ask Jesus about this and here is the answer He allegedly gave:

Jesus says, "Many of My most beloved servants come to Me in the sacrifice of the mass each day. This loyalty delights Me and I use these graces for others without cease. Indeed, it is through these graces that many of My lay apostles will be called. I know that many lay apostles will be inspired to do this, also."

But I am not insisting that they do. This apostolate is for everyone and not everyone will be called in the same way. I have carefully selected the actions that will be necessary for Me to preserve these souls in My grace during the time of transition. All is well. I do not make mistakes.

Talking to Jesus about this, here is what I get:

Daily Mass could be analogous to giving everything to the poor that is not a necessity. It is an invitation not an obligation. That doesn't mean Jesus would not prefer these practices, but that he may lead certain of His people by a circuitous route to these decisions at another time. Just because they may not yet be willing to do "x" doesn't mean that it isn't great that they are doing "y." And since they don't want to receive the grace He would give them to do "x" He is happy they are doing "y."

Well, that's my kinda philosophical way of analyzing what He means and I will ponder it further to see if I am missing something I need to understand.

It's enough to keep me in unity with the movement though I don't think I am called to be a lay apostle. Many times Jesus has told me not to belong to anything but the Church. I think it is because this analytical bent just gets me upset with something or other that is happening, and then I upset others needlessly.

I have been pondering this since that time. Now, when I am editing this part of my journal, I have another idea about it. Could it be that there are very devout Catholics who have such critical minds that were they to go to daily Mass without fail, given the problems in the Church today, they would become overwhelmed by those problems and not more holy necessarily?

June 7, 2005

I was amazed by Carla loving my toothless look. She immediately brightened on seeing me without the teeth or dentures and said that it is my real self, full of joy. Before I looked unhappy and angry most of the time according to her. She just laughed and laughed looking at me. I presume that being de-fanged I think there is no point (pun intended) in expressing anger!

June 22, 2005

Dearest Emily,

As I write I am watching deer that come to inhabited land because of the draught, I suppose getting moisture from the lawn sprinklers and listening to a favorite - Dvorak's Trio in E minor - don't recall if you like Dvorak. I suppose he's one step further toward romanticism from Schubert?

Since in my anger-management system the psychiatrist is constantly inveighing against romanticism I have become slightly wary even of my love for romantic music! Low, the psychiatrist defines romanticism very broadly as any unrealistic feelings that everything could be perpetually perfect or beautiful in life - as in people wanting to think their own views of how to do things are always right and therefore they can critically chew everyone else out over any other viewpoint! A startling but eventually compelling thesis - namely that being opinionated is a fatal obstacle to daily contentment.

Actually I am writing you now because I am marveling at your pain tolerance. I just had my upper teeth removed and a denture put in and the pain killer seems to me to be quite inadequate, so I am on strike not adding the denture which feels like a steel orange into my already sore gum mouth and feeling inferior for being unwilling to bear pain. Without the denture I look like an amiable old crone - so I will have to figure out a solution - other than being, of course, a hermit!

You asked if I liked Graham Greene. He is a sort of sinner Catholic. I feel ambivalent about him. I find his serious novels fascinating but don't like some of the lighter ones at all - but much prefer Waugh in general. If I had to analyze it I would say he depicts the type of Catholic caught between a sense of obligation to God and religion but not enough fervor to surrender to God out of love or reception of love. Therefore these duties become unbearable when they involve sacrifice of human happiness (whether real or imagined).

I am reading a fascinating series of Civil War novels by a man called Shaara - they are written as if he could know the intimate thoughts of Lee, Grant, etc. I picked them up to try to understand both Southern historical viewpoints (since I have been living in the South quite a while now) and men's power struggles to understand better the men in power in situations I have left. I am so ignorant of history that I didn't even know that States had the right to secede. Is that true? We read history only from the total Northern point of view in H.S.

Shaara, who is a Christian, eventually 500 pages into each saga, comes up with the view that the nobility of war is not the motives or politics but the heroism of men willing to die for each other.

A propos literature, I read a stunning line from a poem of Auden
"You shall love your crooked neighbor/With your crooked soul"

I saw it as not so much cynical as a ridicule of the type of Christian romanticism where one imagines one loves other imperfect creatures with a love perfected by ones own idealism vs. accepting that human love is full of imperfections but still wonderful, amazing, and to be grateful for even in mixed doses.

Any day Carla's 5th baby - a girl, will be born after high risk and lots of pain. I will go to N.H. July 4-21 to see little Martina. (The baby was born on July 9th with terrible labor pain. I thought about Jesus suffering for us to go to heaven as like the mother for the baby to come into the world. "How can any child think his/her mother did not love him/her watching a labor!")

July 8, 2005

Long talk with Carla the night before the birth of the baby about how people know that their friends are pretending what they both know is not true. Why? Issues have to do with lots of shame and fear. She thinks I call myself an old hag even though we all know I am attractive in my own way. Why not admit it, but control it, instead of hiding it under an old hag look? I saw she was right, but woke up still wanting to be a dedicated widow because of not wanting to be annoyed and fighting all day with a husband even if a prospect turned up, unlikely - but more importantly because I am in love with Jesus in a mystical way.

June 24, 2005

From Anne:

I was praying for you this morning, on this beautiful feast day, and our Lord allowed me to feel His love for you. Ronda, Jesus delights in you. He delights in your mind, in your need to understand, and in the way your mental meanderings always bring you right back to Him.

Dear Anne,

Watched the last 2 videos of this beautiful real drama of the life of Teresa of Avila. It is not a documentary. It is marvellously done by a great Spanish actress - in Spanish with English titles. I had the feeling after watching that Jesus does want me to do something different either interiorly or exteriorly. Not sure what though.

Of course His words to you about me are very consoling.

June 25, 2005

Dear Jesus,

I am touched by your words to Anne about being delighted with me. At first I thought, who knows if it is really Jesus, but it has begun to sink into my self-deprecating psyche that you really do delight in me.

Of course everything good in me you put there and everything bad I put there, but still I had to let you put it there – not the natural gifts but your use of them for your kingdom.

Ahh. Somehow the de-fanging of the upper dentures has made me different inside also. Maybe because of all the acute pain during the transition?

I woke up this morning 3 days after the surgery feeling rather happy. The words that came to me were “Just you and me, babe,” due to disappointments with various strangers and friends. I think you are strengthening me to see that my compulsive concern about where I live is silly because you really do want me to be a kind of free-lancer – a free spirit to send to different places in your Church and this passionate desire to settle down and put in roots and belong is just my idea and doesn’t work because of the too-critical side of my nature. I am battling it in Recovery, Inc., but meanwhile and maybe all my life I will be a pilgrim for good and bad reasons – “You shall love your crooked neighbor with your crooked heart.”????

Anyhow for this moment let me enjoy the freedom of this thought.

Jesus I love you passionately. You are greater than all my crooked psyche woundedness issues. Yes!

June 25, 2004

Dear Anne,

Hope you never have such a problem. I was signed up for a talk today at the parish. Didn't think the pain from the tooth extraction Tuesday would last that long.

I was faced with - cancel the talk or wear the dentures impinging in a crucifying way on my raw gums or take out the dentures and give the talk looking like an old hag.

God gave me the grace to address the audience this way:

Dear friends. I had this option. I decided if the dentures hurt too much I am going to remove them. When I do, instead of gasping with horror at my old hag look - blow me a kiss. They laughed and laughed and when I finally took out the dentures they blew me kisses.

It was very sweet. A grace-filled moment few will think of opening themselves to. I felt kind of liberated doing it.

Concerning my grandchild coming soon, a friend wrote: “Oh, you can't think of anything when you are about to be a grandmother, you feel as if all heaven is holding its breath.”

August 2, 2005

Dear Daniel,

(concerning a video he made of all of us potential Watershedders at the Colony sharing our dreams about it.)

“What an experience! In spite of all frustrations of the softness of the sound track, etc., it was a wonderful way to savor our dreams and each other!

Jim's opening description of our unstructured pursuit reminded me of the title of Pirandello - 5 (?) characters in search of an author. the line that stood out was "truth is fragrant" regarding the flowers.

Claire - everything you said was marvellous. You look so much more beautiful than the camera captured though.

Michael, you certainly sound as if you want to be more than a donor! I was delighted to see how much you have wrapped your mind around this project and to listen to your long final reflections linking everything good, true and beautiful together.

I even liked myself - very rare. I usually hate to watch videos of myself. I guess you, Daniel, managed to bring out the best in me.

Anne, you also look much better than on the film. I loved seeing you wandering around the property, recalling your enchantment with fauna and flora on the Mexico trip and just around Catholic Solitudes - and your perceptive words about our need for one another.

The film seemed itself a foretaste of our future, increasing our hope.

By the way, there is a man in computers at Steubenville who is trying to see how to hook up an interactive TV set up where I could do all my courses with real students at Steubenville, talking from Arkansas, or also from Rockport eventually. I practiced for a while when I was there and it looks do-able and gave me a taste of other projects we could do one day as team teachers, etc. etc.

From Anne

Heaven Speaks about Addictions

July 27, 2005

Jesus

My dear soul, you are chosen to serve in the Kingdom of God. Nothing can refute this statement. I am Jesus and I need you to help Me. There is a temptation to believe that you will have many days in which to serve heaven. Because of this temptation, souls feel they can languish at times, certain that while they do not serve as fully as possible today, they will do so tomorrow. Well, tomorrow is not what I am calling you to. I am calling you into this day, today. This is the time to let go of any habit that is pulling you away from Me and pulling you away from service to Me. Dear apostle, you must give Me your addiction. (Ronda: smoking, I believe) It can never be a good thing to be overly attached to something that dulls your ability to love. Look into your soul right now. You will find that I am looking back at you. You know that I am asking you to put aside this addiction. You have known this for some time. The day is today. I am not looking for service in tomorrow. You may never see tomorrow because that is how life on earth is designed. Man never knows when he will be called home to heaven. There is a part of you that is fearful. You fear that you cannot be happy without this addiction. Will you believe Me when I tell you that it is quite the opposite? You cannot be happy with the addiction because it is numbing you from experiencing Me. I am in other people. I am in your loved ones. But you are putting this addiction in a place above Me and consequently, above your loved ones, as well as others. Dearest apostle, I will take this addiction from you. I will do this for you, if you let Me. But you have to be willing to accept My grace in your soul. I will do all of the difficult work, the work that you fear. You will remain in the present, in each moment, and you will have grace enough to walk away from this dependence. That is My promise.

Heaven Speaks about Abortion

August 1, 2005

Jesus

My children, you are all so precious to Me. There is a temptation for souls to believe that if they have made a grave mistake, they are not welcome in heaven or that they are not suitable companionship for Me. This is not true. And this temptation must be fought against. Sin is forgivable. All sin. I want to direct attention here specifically to the sin of abortion. This sin has become so common place in your world that some souls have come to believe it is not serious. Well, dear little soul, you must understand that it is the enemy of all things living who has spread this error. This is a trick, a master deceit of such proportion that it has resulted in the

slaughter of many. Now, you may wonder at My feelings on this. I will share them with you. I am grieved, in the extreme. I am sad each time I welcome a rejected little one back to Myself. And they are welcomed home, believe Me. I am all mercy and love and these little ones are in no way at fault so heaven gives them great joy upon their return. In the same way, we will welcome you home, regardless of your sins. Be at peace. There are many souls in heaven who have committed sins of this magnitude. You might say heaven is filled with sinners, My friend, but these are repentant sinners. Would you like to repent? I know that you would and it is for this reason that I have come to you with these words. You are forgiven. I have many things to share with you that will help you to understand your situation. Rest your wounded little heart against Me now as I show you how to return in completeness.

St. Mary Magdalene

I send the most loving greetings to my friends on earth. I am delighted that Jesus allows me to speak at this time. There are great things happening in the world and the renewal makes its way bravely from heaven to earth and from soul to soul. We are watching and helping from heaven. One of the signs that the renewal is necessary is the number of abortions that are occurring. My dear sisters in Christ, this is an abomination. We cannot allow it to continue, neither you, nor I. We have to help our sisters to understand that there is a little life nestled in their womb, a life sent by God Himself. To think any differently is to become a plaything of the enemy. There must be no discussion about this point in the sense that you must never allow yourself to consider, even for a moment, that a pregnancy does not equal a life, a person, a divine plan. Do not back away from this fact, this irrefutable truth. I want to speak to the women who have had abortions and allowed their children to be taken from them in this way. Dear woman, if you think you have committed a graver sin than me, you are wrong. Jesus loves me tenderly and I am a close friend to the Saviour. And yet, I would repel you if you knew how I had lived a part of my life. We are all the same in that we are all sinners. Nobody in heaven looks at anyone else with anything but love and understanding. This is because we all understand that given the right set of earthly circumstances, we could make grave mistakes, such as you did. Your circumstances contributed to your decision. I know this. Jesus knows this. All of heaven knows this. You must accept this, too. If you were in different circumstances, it is likely you would have made a different decision. But it is over and Jesus makes all things new. Let Him make your soul new and you will give Him far greater joy than you gave Him sorrow. I would not tell you something if it were not true. If you return to Jesus with your heart and ask Him for forgiveness, you will have forgiveness and He will forget your sins. He has certainly forgotten mine.

St. Mary Magdalene

My sisters in Christ, allow me, please, to help you. When you are caught in a web of guilt, it can be difficult to get out. It is actually impossible alone. The problem is that you can think so badly of yourself for your mistake that you begin to lose sight of your dignity and heavenly value. Jesus needs your help and you have to respond to Him. You know this. But before you can respond to Jesus you must allow Him to heal you. So put your hand out and Jesus will give a mighty pull. He will release you from the grip of pain that has held you captive. Jesus looks into your soul and He sees everything. He understands. You will face Him someday. It is inevitable. So face Him today and look closely. All you will see in His beautiful face is love. Jesus does not condemn you. It is the enemy that tells you these things. Jesus is all mercy, all understanding. Let Him take your pain and replace it with heavenly joy. Dear sister, do you think for a moment that the darkness of sin in the world has not claimed others in this way? You know that many have fallen victim to the falseness and the distortions of truth. You are not alone, by any means. Many women work hard for the Kingdom and give Jesus great glory. They, also, have allowed their children to be taken in this way. But they returned to Christ in sorrow and He forgave them. He offers this to you now. We will surround you with heavenly grace and then you, too, will work for Jesus and for others. You will give great comfort and joy to these children of yours in heaven if you return to the family of God. There is nothing that should stop you. Come back to the heavenly side where you are cherished, and may I say, so badly needed.

August 2, 2005

St. Mary Magdalene

Dearest sister in Christ, this is the time to heal. Jesus is sending this period for all souls to return to His Sacred Heart. His healing graces are never ending. There is enough for every bit of spiritual and emotional healing that is necessary for every soul who has ever been injured in any way. I am urging you to take advantage of this now so that you can return fully to the family of God and work for your brothers and sisters who remain in darkness and loneliness. So many are unloved. If you spend this period of time working for other souls, in your life, wherever Jesus has placed you, there will be joy in heaven. You will give glory to Jesus and to your children who have come before you. They will be proud that you are their mother because you serve them on earth by serving Jesus. Do you believe me, my sister? I speak the truth. We in heaven never exaggerate and we never tell untruths. We speak carefully and our words are backed by God, Himself. Your children love you and have complete understanding of the fears that moved you to your decision. You will see them and you will spend eternity with them. There is only joy in heaven. Surely you understand that there will be no recriminations and you will have no grief in this divine land. You will be reunited with all of your loved ones and together you will explore the Kingdom of the triumphant souls, who have conquered the world and their humanity. So there is no reason for you not to be joyful and

peaceful. Jesus loves you. All the saints love you. The angels work tirelessly for your return to complete joy. And your children wait to be united to their mother.

St. Mary Magdalene

Sisters, I thank God for you. Your kindness to other women will bring more souls home to heaven. I never judged another woman after my conversion because I understood why a woman would make the choices that she made. Some choices are wrong. We all know that. Who can say that all choices are the correct choices? Here in heaven, we look at events in the world. I, in particular, see women who are assaulted sexually. I am familiar with the emotions that can erupt in a woman after such a thing occurs, either in childhood or in adulthood. These emotions, if not brought to heaven for healing, can result in bad choices. Perhaps you understand what I am referring to. Our bodies are intended for the most beautiful service to the Kingdom. The sexual relationship between a man and a woman is holy and right when it is blessed by God.

If you think these locutions are really from heaven be sure to go to Direction for Our Times for more topics that have been addressed.

Return from Steubenville August, 2005

Praise the Lord. Steubenville is wonderful. Somehow the openness of the Franciscan spirit is wide enough to hold in embrace the conservatives and the charismatics. I enjoyed very much singing old charismatic songs at top volume from the music ministry. The first night the Scott Hahn conservatives stood stiffly but by the next morning they somehow decided it was okay to enjoy it and blend with the charismatics lifting their arms and swaying. Fr. Michael Scanlon seemed like old Gandolf leading the hobbits. He witnessed to an extraordinary grace up in a para-sail when he thought he would die because of a screw up in the contraption but felt God the Father saving him

August 7, 2005

Dear Fr. Michael,

It was such a joy to listen to you again. It happened I had a somewhat similar para-sail experience. I should have known my husband was close to death when he just shrugged his shoulders and walked away when I said

I want to go up on the para-sail so I can see what the Ascension and the Assumption felt like!

Once above the Pacific after noticing how beautiful it all was, panic set in. “I don’t even know these mechanics down there in the boat and I signed a total waiver before getting on this!” Then came certainty of death by heart attack from fear, and last prayers for everyone I ever knew and “into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”

It was only 7 minutes but when I got near down to the boat they said we can give you another lift up if you like. I was shaking with fear.

Another amusing thought – when I saw you again after quite a while I thought “Fr. Michael is Gandolf and we are all his hobbits.”

I thought I would convey all this after the conference but you were gone by that time.

Heaven Speaks About Stress

August 9, 2005

Jesus

My children, why do you hurry so? Why do you feel you must move so quickly through your days? This is not the way I intended the children of God to live... I want My beloved apostles to move more slowly and thoughtfully through their days. I want you to make decisions on what I am asking you to do and what you are busying yourself with that is not from Me. I want your way of life to change and I am asking you to make this change now. In the next week, think about each activity and decide, with Me, if it is something I want you to do or something you want to do. My dearest apostles, I ask that you begin to remove activities that do not further My will...

From Joseph Conti, Holistic Christianity p. 175 “Before union, by three veils I was veiled from God” by the veil of my bigness, the veil of my hardness, and the veil of my cleverness.”

August 14, 2005

Out of a letter to a friend concerning a conflict:

**A good part of being in my anger-management group is that instead of enjoying conflict I now feel the underlying pain more. Or, with no fangs left, I feel less powerful and have less confidence I could win in any conflict, not that I used to win, but I thought I could.
Ha! Ha!**

August 14, 2005

In reply to my telephone messages Archbishop Raymond Burke called me from his phone 314-359-0380 on a Sunday evening to apologize for the delay in answering me. He said it is not helpful to direct widows to their Bishops. The Vatican is working on a rite for consecrated widows and needs those interested to write to them of their desires.

Write to

**Cardinal Francis Arinze
Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments
00120
Vatican City State,
Europe**

August 18, 2005

And how was your day?

Mine went better than expected. It was good to see Gail at Mass.

Hilarious moment. Marty's box in which came the new entertainment center whatever somehow got dumped on Alma drive near the horses. He asked me to drive him down to take pictures of this box to prove to the Company that sold him the Center that the box was there. Anyhow while he was taking pictures I switched on the radio. Sometimes a piece of music exactly matches what is happening in life but sometimes it is the opposite. This was one of those. There was Wagner's Liebes Tod from Tristan and Isolde - one of the most romantic pieces ever written accompanying Marty traipsing around this box on the road!

The doctor says I have the yeast infection again and gave me another large pill plus some samples of something to inhibit frequent urination. He sounded optimistic about a cure.

I am working on the last writings of Charlie Rich before he died and this is very touching. The mystic last disciple of his to whom I sent the 15 boxes to store was at a Marian site where she felt in the presence of JP II and Charlie Rich. They said that she, Catherine, and I must be very joyful in

spite of all our melancholic tendencies. She talked to JP II about how sad I was that I went to Rome and then was shoved away by the guards from presenting him with my husband's masterpiece. According to her JP II said that now he knew the book and that I got the same blessings as if I would have talked to him. Also Charlie laughed at her worries about how to get him canonized saying that it would be easy when the right time came! I don't know whether to believe any of this, but it was delightful anyhow.

May your day have been as good.

Shalom, Ronda

August 18, 2005 letter from Jim Ridley

Dear Ronda,

In a rare spasmodic attempt to practice detachment through the unpleasant discipline of mortifying my errant proclivities towards the hoarding of rubbishy ephemera, I was heaping into the recycling bin today the bulk of my precious ancient collection of Catholic newspapers, when one of the doomed issues suddenly escaped from the stack. It was a Sunday Visitor, dated August 27 (Claire's Birthday), 1995. I thumbed it open as the pangs of impending separation from my earthly treasures threatened to diminish my virtuous resolve and chanced to read on page six the following paragraph: "Fr. Gruber invokes the Benedictine tradition of peacemaking as he directs retreats and conferences on gender issues, welcoming those who are disaffected and those who are perfectly enchanted by Church teaching. He has been joined by BRILLIANT CO-DIRECTORS, including philosopher RONDA CHERVIN..." The trash truck has already performed its penitential services, so I can't salvage the entire collection, which undoubtedly contains numerous such testimonies to your growing fame on earth as it is in heaven.

Dear Jim,

When I read your scintillating rambunctious outrageously funny epistles I want to insert you and a word-processor and printer into a cage and force you to write Catholic style books to rival Wodehouse - and I would throw in a banana every time you sent a page of this stuff through the bars of the cage.

I guess I'd let you have a porta-potty and a cot in there as well.

Remember this image! When Watershed begins I will slowly manipulate you into the cage! All for the greater glory of God.

Believe it or not such Providential moments as you finding the OSV piece about Fr. Gruber's retreat cheer me. I am such a melancholic that I easily think my "time is over" and the next talk should be my swan song, etc. etc. and so each of these compliments jerks me out of that state.

I can't remember if I said I will be doing Marcus Grodi's Coming Home EWTN program this Monday night live from Alabama in case you'd enjoy seeing my face on your TV screen. It looks as if it would show at 7 PM Central time, but check to make sure.

Love to all of you, dear little family, Ronda

August 19, 2005

My daughter Carla fetched out a Miraculous Medal I had "hidden" in her jewelry box some years back and put it on! she feels she must keep it on her or evil will come!

Date lost: After the hurricane Katrina,

Dear Anne,

I am so sorry you are going through these trials.

Here is my take for what it is worth.

Certainly Jesus told you there would be chastisements. But did He tell you that He orchestrated New Orleans and Mississippi, etc.? I didn't read that in what you sent me.

That Jesus allows horrible natural events to take their course because of the many that will be saved by fear is clearly Catholic teaching.

But Catholics usually don't say that Jesus or God caused the event. Why not? What is the distinction?

Some natural disasters do not hit places riddled with sin such as abortion-America. Some natural disasters hit poor good people as when some earthquake had as its epi-center a Mexican Church with people at Mass.

The way I prefer to put it is this: America full of abortion and porn, etc. etc. is certainly due for disaster and liable to Scripturally described outcomes. Jesus in the N.T. talks about disasters falling on the Temple and Jerusalem, though he doesn't directly say this will happen to punish the bad. (At least I don't think he does - correct me if I am wrong) When

disaster hits everyone should examine their consciences and go to confession and realize "you know not the day or the hour" and repent. Those directly effected by disasters we certainly hope made general confessions on their way to their deaths and certainly ought to pray for the reform of their cities, countries, etc. etc.

But why not ask Jesus if He wants you to use the word chastisement directly about the floods? If He says Yes then you have to bring this to your spiritual director and do what He says. Otherwise, ask Jesus if you should just follow the Bishop and not use the word.

September 3, 2005

Jesus

You will be with your children today, quietly editing. Anne, push the booklets forward because they are an important component of all I intend to do. I would like them printed with an imprimatur, if possible.

I have many things to say about the hurricane that has wrought so much devastation. The first thing I will say is that I was merciful, even in My chastising of the earth. I was merciful because I took many souls to heaven with Me, cleansing them Myself. This mercy is very great and souls on earth will not understand the nature of this entirely. I wished to compensate these souls for participating in this time of darkness, a darkness that comes, not from Me, but from mankind's cooperation with the enemy of goodness. Anne, we are moving into a new time, a time of obedience and holiness. Ask souls to come to Me now. Ask souls to reject disobedience. Do not allow the unborn to be slaughtered. Speak up for Me, children of God. If a soul is following Me, they have nothing to fear. There should be a calm acceptance of the Father's decision to reprimand His children. Apostles, your brothers and sisters must come to understand that I am God. I am the God of love and kindness, but I do not see love and kindness on My earth. I see souls being hurt. So I am going to assist My children in understanding how I wish them to live. Look for My example in the Gospels. Be alert for My direction and be humble. Under no circumstances do I wish souls to judge others for these events. All men are sinners. Be humble and teach love. Apostles, this is time for service. You have been prepared. And I am with you.

Anne, I wish that message to be disseminated. The following message is for you. I understand your hesitance and fear with regard to prophecy. Nevertheless, it is part of your role. You will be given strength and

assistance, both from heaven and from earth. You should state openly that I have given a sequence for the beginning of the purification. Nothing more. If asked about this event, you can say that you saw it in a vision, along with the other events. There should be a calm attitude in every talk. You will be joyful, of course, and model heavenly peace. If souls ask you directly about a region, you must say that apostles have nothing to fear. There is great work to be done. Even given the difference between earthly time and heavenly time, time is short. This is all good and necessary. I can only will what benefits My children. You have all been prepared and you have all been told that this period would come. If you feel fear, bring it to Me and I will eradicate it immediately. Fear is your enemy in this work but I can easily remove it for you. Anne, do not feel guilty if you feel fear as it is understandable. But do bring it to Me immediately. In answer to your question, I would prefer you do not discuss regions but give you permission to do so with your spiritual directors or bishop if you are feeling heavily burdened. The reason I prefer you to avoid this type of discussion is because I want everyone prepared. It is not only the regions affected who are being called to renewal. All are being called to renewal. As you know, I am available for all of your questions in an enhanced way during this time. Yes, you should send this to your bishop and ask for his permission to post the previous message.

Regarding an issue over whether meetings of a semi-social nature should include more prayer, I had expressed the wish for more, but others had a different take. Others love social occasions as building family. I ask myself why do I have to be so resistant to social occasions? The image came to me of sinking. Sinking into the coziness of family with no transcendent purposes.

The hermit is the opposite pole in a certain way; the apostle another opposite pole. "In my house there are many mansions." My feeling is that if we prayed more together we would be transcending together - to Him, our true home. Prayer is not for the sake of formality. Charismatic prayer is not formal but spontaneous - but would seem to some like some formal obligation I guess, alien to spontaneity which is effusive family living. Probably I just have to apologize for raising a question that no one else worries about and let things re-emerge freshly.

Home is in His heart, not on this earth, as Fr. Patrick always says.

September 13, 2005

Dear Alice (xeniacarroll on the e-mail)

The Czech consecrated virgin who is working on the adapting of their rite to one for widows in conjunction with the Vatican Office of Rites - sent me a packet of materials.

How my heart leapt with joy reading as well as I could in my very poor Italian, French and Spanish accounts of actual rites of consecration already in place! In one part of Southern Italy they count about 20 widows in various stages of consecration - they have a whole formation program in place. The rites are beautiful to read.

Here is a song that 1000 Indian Widows from some movement called Hope and Life composed:

**We are widows of Bombay
with hope and life
We no longer mourn and whine
in hope and life
In the past we were full of care
Now in our lives there is joy and prayer
We share our miseries and woes
Our sufferings on the Lord we throw
We spread his light, we spread his light.**

Now I am going to write to this Czech Consecrated Virgin to see how we in the US will know if a Rite is approved from Rome that will be in English and how the Bishops will know that a formation program is allowed, since there is certainly precedent.

I tried to read a very scholarly account of Rites of the past in Italian. It appears up until the 9th century there were rites and blessings of consecrated widows including blessing of their habits in Italy and France.

Gradually widows were encouraged instead in Medieval times to go into monasteries instead of remaining in their own homes.

Had a good talk with Fr. Kevin about future consecrated widows and my fears about the closed circuit TV - I guess the worst fear is that the students at Steubenville - computer people and philosophy students will have to see me at my hysterical worst dealing with poor eye hand coordination. As I was asking him to pray for me about both these projects: widows and closed circuit I realized, Recovery, Inc., style, that I don't have to get hysterical if I have trouble doing it. I could just accept that it is average for me to be very very poor about machines and take the secure

thought that with your help and Dave's class' help it will slowly but surely work out. Yes.

Oct. 6 2005

Tired from speaking trip to Canada - Vancouver is beautiful and refreshing. I had a great time but exhausting trip.

The dentist said I had the lowest pain tolerance he had ever witnessed! Good part is that he gave me a refund of \$820 on my lower plate since he says I will never be able to tolerate it! My secure thought is that God will bless me specially for all the dental pain since it is the worst apparently!

HEALING AND WIDOWHOOD October 11, 2005

Working on healing I got the sense that the healing was related in some way to the consecrated widow question. That Jesus wanted me to put being a consecrated widow first. It seems as if he meant in regard to my location, i.e. to go wherever I can best get approval from a Bishop for this vocation. But this morning I woke up with a more comprehensive sense of healing and widowhood, for me, and in relation to working with other widows:

I was brought up to think old=ugly. My parents ridiculed my paternal grandmother for being old, sick, and ugly as well as eccentric and crazy.

My mother, being a counter-cultural bohemian by choice, never dressed elegantly as did the upper middle class Jewish women in the neighborhood – West Side NYC – but wore interesting colorful pants and jacket like tops. When much older she compensated for her aging features with lipstick, powder, and colorful outfits.

My father left my mother and us when we were 8 years old and married a young woman, more beautiful, flowing long hair, wearing dresses vs. my mother's short hair and more masculine look.

Hence conflict for me. I loved the little pink dresses and black shiny shoes other girls were allowed to wear. We had to wear overalls.

When I was older I always wore long hair and dresses to look less like my rejected older mother and more like my father's 3rd more beautiful wife.

I married an older man – a father figure – with terrible feelings when he preferred beautiful little twin daughters to me, after their birth I seemed no longer to be beautiful sweetheart, but old seemingly unattractive Cinderella to serve the little beauties (he called the daughters his little beauties)

Becoming a widow I tried lipstick and a little better long flowy dresses trying to attract a 2nd husband unsuccessfully. Then maybe partly as an over-reaction to feelings of rejection I wore habit like outfits when trying out different forms of consecrated life: Handmaid, Society of Our Lady consecrated widow.

- In speeches I make jokes about when you are aging, look in the mirror and don't say "More and more everyday I look less like Marilyn Monroe" but instead say "Everyday I look more and more like Mother Teresa.

- Being determined not to try to hide aging with make-up or attractive as possible clothing is partly my mother's inherited counter-cultural approach; partly "if I don't even try, I am not being rejected for being ugly." Eagerness to get into some kind of consecrated look in clothing – blue denim, brown. But in the novel Last Fling I have the heroine wearing simple but colorful dresses

- Denture crisis brings up these issues. I thought the pearly toothed denture would improve my looks – instead the pain of them so that I don't wear them very often, has cast me into this unexpected much worse, to my mind, old crone toothless image.

- Finding out that in the US consecrated virgins and potential consecrated widows would not be allowed to wear any kind of habit at first depressed me – no way to escape into a "higher" status where plain same dress every day would solve the conflict of how to escape my dinned in early family sense of old=ugly and totally rejected.

Healing images in light of all of this –

To totally experience Jesus' love for me depends on bringing all of this to Him and seeing that He really loves old women – such as the old widow saints and His mother as an old widow.

Jesus as the second bridegroom is a healing image for the consecrated widow even if she had a less convoluted familial history about ugliness.

If I process this successfully for myself – the insights could help other widows. For instance write a gutsy prayer about widowhood and aging and ugliness

Topic: how the happily married widow got affirmation of being beautiful even as she aged from husband, and loses this at his death.

Sense of how each individual widow needs to decide without pressure from other widows how to dress. Old black dress -forever-European-widows did it by conforming to that cultural pattern. We don't have this now and so have more anxiety about it. Choices: noble older look; funny slightly masculine look (perm but pants); bag-lady look, etc.

P.S. Later on realization that when Charlie Rich became much older and uglier I didn't find his great love for me as important. While trying to avoid hurting him I withdrew somewhat. I feel ashamed of this and don't want it to influence my work for him now on the boxes and boxes of meditations he wrote which I am culling out excerpts from.

Later Oct. 11, 2005

I had a beautiful day by the water fishing with the Winstons at Spring River. Lots of time to stare at the water and this is what Jesus seemed to tell me about all of that misery I vomited out this morning:

I am your savior at every time of your life. Stay away from all those past miseries and just love Me and do what you want to do; be my pilgrim and don't let anyone put you on a guilt trip – “life is a cabaret” - see the humor, the sadness, the grief, and I will give you each day what you need because I am your groom.

Alleluia.

October 12, 2005 Healing Image

Now I look more like a funny little creature “smiler McGee (a name my daughter, Carla, gave me, laughing when she saw me without my teeth or dentures? vs. a noble philosopher. This makes me more approachable, less intimidating, goes along with de-fanged.

If Jesus is to be my twin – that is a we-two-together image, not only submission to His will as different from mine.

October 24, 2005

I sent the long healing reflection about childhood ideas of aging being awful to my twin-sister Carla for a reaction. Here it is:

Dear Ronda,

Sigh, sigh...I think mother's great fussiness over what to wear (which bandana, belt, etc.) is a mix of much insecurity and a desire to be attractive. I also go through too much fussiness and feel insecure. What I try to find is with half a nod to "looks" and the other half to something that will help reflect an inner look. The "costume" helps sustain an inner sense of beauty, and usually I want to wear something that will flow, but I've noticed I'm actually happiest with a camping, walking the dog clothes...it's not the clothes but the situation that is conducive to really forgetting myself. ---

I remember being puzzled as a kid when there were disparaging remarks about grandma - I didn't really understand them I think. I'm sorry we weren't taught to respect older people. We need to cultivate our inherent dignity I must consecrate life like sacred dance. I wish you could have snuggled up to Martin (when he seemed to prefer the daughters) and said, oh M. I need your love too .I was speaking about what to wear to a woman I know and she, offhandedly, waving her hand said, "Oh what do you care." Healing, good. All for now....hope you get your teeth FIXED. I think you needn't have had to go through all this and it must be terrible. Your sense of humor is a life-saver.

love, C.

If you must be a consecrated widow please don't wear awful dreary clothes! How does that speak of you being a bride?

Dear Carla,

Great help in your letter. It means a lot. I am at Pecos after 13 years or so not being invited. I am doing Taming the Lion here. Will respond more in detail. My sense is to wear different color A-line dresses. I am now 99% sure that I want to go back to

Corpus Christi and live in an apartment until the Writers and Artists colony is build. Love and prayers, Ronda

Another image about the teeth issues:

I used to say in speeches, instead of thinking of admired others as idols and then fallen idols; think of them and yourself as funny little creatures. De-fanged I look more like a funny little creature. Yes.

October 25, 2005 after being at Pecos letter to my sister Carla about a session with a sister who does lots of healing work with retreatants:

“Here is the Sister Miriam advice She took my two shoes and laid them in a T shape with one horizontal and one vertical. She said the vertical cross is strong Ronda, the speaker and truth-sayer, etc. The horizontal shoe represents the needy desperate Ronda who wants father figures who is lonely, etc.

That second shoe doesn't need an actual father but needs me myself to love her: The weak part is not the true Ronda but is a part of me. For healing I need to say that I love that weak Ronda just the way she is; she is mine. I need to be Jesus to that part of myself. No one told little Ronda as a child that she could just be herself. (Barbra Streisand song: people who need people are the luckiest people in the world.) It is not wrong to be needy. I have to tell the weak Ronda that I will take care of her. (Very Jungian of course - not quite the way I would put it but I think there is something in it) The strong Ronda needs to say to the weak Ronda that she doesn't have to change for me to love her – that I will carry her into eternity. The strong Ronda is a strong speaker because she tells of her weakness. I should not be afraid of weak Ronda. She is part of the gift. Like St. Paul rejoicing in his weaknesses. hSee Jesus looking at that weak Ronda with love. I need to adopt that orphan Ronda vs. saying to her that I want to get rid of her. I need to give that part of me a home.

R.C. The consecrated widow is known for hospitality. I need to be hospitable to that part of me. But the Scriptures also say that the widow needs Church men.

Then Sister Miriam told me a parable about an ancient woman full of wrinkles who builds a hut in the black forest. Her mission is to put a light in her window in the darkness to welcome those who are lost. An old man is lost whose lantern went out and who is fainting from woundedness. As he is dying he lifts his head and sees the light and drags himself to the doorstep of this woman. She picks him up as if he were a baby and she rocks him and she pats him and says “there, there,” and he gets younger and finally is a new born babe and she lets him go. He is the rising sun and he brings her warmth.

R.C. – the consecrated widow is a wisdom figure, a rock of comfort for the needy.

The Black Madonna holds the child who holds the globe – I need to embrace all of life even the darkness (R.C. “Life is a cabaret”?! I need to rock the world and say “I love you. (R.C. I need to embrace the whole Church even in its darkness?)

I don’t need to do anything but love. God does the transforming. Go to the Ronda who went through the death of Charlie and say “I love you.” I will not abandon you – I will not abandon the Ronda who suffered that way.

The strong Ronda has to embrace the entire darkness of life. Image of an old wrinkled crone living in a cave in a dark forest with a lantern. Weak miserable desperate people find their way in the dark to the cave where she rocks them and comforts them back through their lives until they can see the little child God created them to be and become re-born.

October 27, 2005

Dear Fr.. Kevin,

You would think the Holy Spirit went right from my frenzied little heart to your mouth on the sermons yesterday and today! Alleluia. (The sermons were about dancing one’s way out of depression).

It happens I have to write a paper and then give a talk to the Charismatic Liasons - these are priests, brothers, sisters, lay people in different diocese who liason from the Bishop to the prayer groups. The topic is The Cost of Discipleship. The paper is due by the end of the year - 30 pages, and the talks are in May based on it.

Maybe to make sure this doesn't come out too glib I have been assailed by demonic attacks and unusual sufferings. Since I, too, love to dance, I am going to do it! Yes, yes. My godfather used to say that I was like a little dog attached to a chain who leaps about happily until he feels the chain and then leaps up into the air with horror feeling the pain of the chain. So I am either up or down with no in between stability. This is still true after 45 years!

Your words were perfect to help me - main sufferings are more denture and gum pain and my daughters being together helping buy a house in N.Carolina but I can't be there with them to guide them because I am getting the closed circuit TV stuff this week and also other more personal wounds coming to me this month.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for these Spirit-filled sermons. Ronda

Climbing the Mountain

From Anne October, 2005 for me to edit, these are excerpts:

If Christ is in each one of us, and this is of course what we believe as Christians, then we must venerate Christ in every soul...

We do that with respect and gentleness. Some might say, yes, this may be true but I see souls in error, in mortal sin, living far outside of the heavenly Kingdom. Well, dear fellow apostles, this is when the call to treat them as Christ is at its most profound. If Christ has indeed been driven out of a soul, through serious sin and a spirit of rebellion in that sin, then the call to illustrate our unity with Christ is compelling. How does Christ treat that soul? How does Christ view that soul? I will tell you. Christ does not glance at a soul and see the sin, although He is acutely aware of the sin. Christ glances at a soul and sees the wound that both caused the sin and was worsened by the sin. So in order for the Kingdom to come, and it must and it will, we must treat each other as Christ would.

Sometimes a soul living outside of the Kingdom is bitter. This bitterness is like a sore. When a soul in bitterness views Christ in us, it can be like salt in the wound or sore because our unity with Christ (shows) their isolation from Him. This is good. The soul then comes closer to an understanding of what it lacks. Our experience of this may not be pleasant. It may be necessarily painful because in its pain their soul may strike out at us. This can be understood as an almost instinctual lashing out or crying out in the distress of their disconnectedness from Christ. We must accept these strikes as beneficial penance and part of standing with Christ as a companion on the Way of the Cross.

To translate, I am driving in traffic and I make a mistake perhaps, or commit a deed that inconveniences someone else. I give the other driver an apologetic wave. He responds by swearing at me and shouting, threatening, or what have you. This is shocking for a holy soul. We must offer this to Jesus. We must bring that soul to Jesus in prayer and petition. Our prayer will obtain critical graces for that soul. We must look at this person and see the wound, the sore.

To be more specific to the call to bring Jesus Christ to souls directly, consider a soul who is estranged from the Kingdom. Perhaps it is a family member or neighbor. It is possible that they may be unkind

to us because our holiness is an irritant to them and to their wound. Is it then acceptable to be unkind in return? Not for an apostle of Jesus Christ who seeks to bring His love to them. Remember that it was after the crucifixion that the Centurion said, Truly, this was the Son of God. The soul only saw Christ through the manner in which Jesus accepted suffering from the offender's hands. Note this parallel.

A soul may be tormenting us but for this soul to experience Christ, we must accept it as Christ would. This should be in flashing red lights. We may be praying for this soul and beseeching heaven for the conversion of this soul. So we must not complain at a little suffering for this soul, particularly if it comes from the hand of that same soul.

It helps to examine our motives. Do we want this soul to be saved for the sake of the soul and for the consolation and glory of Jesus Christ? Or do we want this soul to be saved so that the soul will treat us better and make our life easier. I think perhaps it can be a bit of both and this is acceptable. But as we begin to lean more to the benefit of both the soul and the Kingdom and we will become more willing to accept the occasional bad treatment for the purpose of the greater good, which is the salvation of the soul and the consolation of Christ.

We must bring souls to Jesus, but we must not take Jesus and bash souls about the head with Him. We must bring Jesus in the spirit of love, not condemnation. The message is that Jesus loves the soul, not Jesus disagrees with the way the soul is living his life. Is it true that Jesus disagrees with the way some live their lives? Yes. Certainly Jesus was not always pleased with the manner in which I conducted myself. But it is best to let Jesus convey this to the soul. Jesus judges. Apostles are not called to be judges but delivery people. If we deliver Jesus to souls He Himself will correct them, tutor them, and illuminate their path on the mountain. You might say that the most profound thing we do for a soul is show them the mountain.

As in everything, the most effective way to teach something is to set an example by doing it so that others can emulate us after seeing how a thing is done. This brings us to the most important concept of all concepts.

We must always be ascending. What is the best way to love my neighbor? I love my neighbor best by climbing my mountain of personal holiness. It is not helpful for me to spend my time telling others to climb. It is helpful if I myself climb, thereby setting an example for others to follow.

....We should be gentle and loving with each other, always tolerant that no two servants are called to serve in exactly the same way. Each has separate gifts, also, so we must never think it is beneficial to compare ourselves with anyone.

We must compare ourselves to Jesus in love of neighbor. Scripture gives us ample example of the selflessness with which Jesus served His brothers and sisters. He was a dutiful son to His mother and father. He was a good friend to His apostles. Jesus was kind to strangers and those ill and less fortunate. He was patient in the extreme with the flaws of others. He saw each soul as a soul who was somewhere on the mountain and He viewed them with the patience of a teacher, who knows that the total cannot be achieved without walking through the sum. Jesus gave others the room to grow in the light of His love. Are we doing that for others? Or do we constantly point out the deficits in the holiness of our companions? Souls loved Jesus and sought out His companionship. They sought His love and tolerance, His acceptance and steadiness. This is our call to those around us. We must always rejoice in the holiness of our companions. Rejoice in each bit of progress or any bit of hope for progress. This will give us joy and we will not spend all of our time lamenting the failures of those around us, which is really our own failure.

....The Father in the Prodigal son story did not reproach his son. He did not sit down with him and grieve the lost years. He went straight to the celebration and rejoiced in the future service of the returned boy. This is the way our God reacts to returning children. He sees what the child of heaven is now capable of giving to the Kingdom. He sees the potential and the lovely swell of the family, given the return of a loved one. Remember that the laborers were all given the same wage, regardless of when they joined the work. This is an example of a good and gracious God, not an unjust God. We can use this to pull others in. Each servant is as necessary as the next.

Remember that there is little merit in loving those who love us, but great merit in loving those who are a cross to us.

It is through our closest relationships that we make the most dedicated progress up the mountain because those closest to us see our

flaws clearly. We should pray for an increased awareness of our performance in the duty of the relationships closest to us.

It is within the structure of the family that many souls find great holiness. This is why Jesus is so determined to protect the family and this is also why the enemy is so anxious to destroy this heavenly structure. Family members see our flaws, yes, and often it is only a family member who has the courage to illuminate this flaw for us. We must not retaliate in anger if a loved one encourages us to alter our behavior. We should instead be open to the possibility that they may have a perspective that will benefit us. An arrogant soul cannot tolerate any criticism or direction. They will revolt and lash out at the one who dares press against their shell of self-satisfaction. We discussed the way of the cross and the pain that comes with it. Be at peace in this.

Before we take on to instruct someone or gently correct a soul, we must pray. We should spend time in silence and ask Jesus if it is He who is prompting us to assist a soul in this way. We should then proceed in all humility, certain that despite our closeness to Christ, we have a pack full of our own flaws to work upon. Our spirit should be one of kindness and tolerance. What would Jesus say to this soul? How would Jesus proceed?

...Truly, my friends, it is not good for a person to get away with constant bad behavior as it confirms their path. In cases where we are fearful of our family members, we must consider seeking outside help. We should confide in someone, perhaps a trusted priest who can advise us objectively.

Jesus understands that we are doing our best. We must understand that we are part of a heavenly team who shares our goals for all our loved ones. Remember that there are apostles the world over praying for our safety and peace.

The family is a microcosm of the heavenly Kingdom. Each family is a little Kingdom of God. This proceeds out in concentric circles, bigger and bigger. But it begins first with one soul united to Christ, then spreads into the immediate family, and then out and so on. We must do the work first in our own little soul, united to Jesus, then in our own little family, then out and out and out again, into the world, and eventually at one with the whole Kingdom of God upon our death. The work done within the family cannot be stressed enough in importance. It is here we learn how to be a Christian. It is here we learn how NOT to be a Christian. It is within the family that we learn about compassion

and sacrifice and tolerance and forgiveness. Progress is made in quietness and the progress of one soul impacts the entire family. So we must be confident that our holiness will spread out into our families. It cannot help but do so. If we never say a word about Jesus Christ, but begin to live His message, we will benefit our families in ways we cannot understand. The holiness of one soul creates a receptacle of grace for all. Again, I stress, even if we are estranged from all of our family, but we decide to follow Christ in isolation from them, we will draw blessings down upon them all. It cannot help but be so, given Christ's goodness and desire to reach each of His children. We must be at peace in everything, dear apostles. There is no reason for anything else.

Sometimes in describing a thing it is good to say what it is not so that souls can move closer to truth by abandoning what is false. Love of neighbor is not judgmental. It is not unkind, ever. It is rather gentle and patient with the frailty of the soul, whether on the path or drifting in the world. Love of neighbor assumes the presence of the loving God in the soul of each person and treats each person accordingly. How do I treat Jesus? How does Jesus feel in that soul? How would Jesus like to be treated in the soul of the person in front of us? Jesus would like to be encouraged in that soul. He would like to be strengthened. He would like us to help Him to grow stronger in the soul and become the Divine Claimant of this soul. Jesus loves each soul powerfully and totally. We must look at each person as the most cherished child of the Father and we will begin to understand why we must love our neighbor. This soul in front of us is one that we can help escort through the heavenly gates, through our words, our actions, or simply our love.

We must walk gently with the feelings of others, with great reverence for the vulnerability of the spirit. A wounded spirit can be led into all kinds of trouble and we would not like to be the one who has inflicted the wound that caused the downfall of another. Human nature being what it is though, it is possible, indeed probable, that we will hurt others and cause damage to another at some time.

We will come to this realization in silence, not in noise. If upon silent reflection we come to understand that we have hurt another, we should reflect on what our Lord wishes us to do to assist heaven in healing the

wound of the person we have failed. Again, this is not to discourage us, but to cleanse our conscience here on earth, where we can better provide recompense for our failures. It is often the case that our simple admission of wrongdoing can place the person on the path to healing. We should also pray for the healing of the soul so that heaven is invited by us to participate in the righting of the wrong. Heaven heals with far more efficiency than we can and the intercessory power of a repentant soul is powerful. God cannot resist the petitioner who seeks to make amends to others. God comes into these situations with great enthusiasm and effectiveness.

We should not carry the burden of our sin heavily. It is better that we be at peace in our failures while we work with heaven to remove the weaknesses that lead us to sin. We should work steadily with Jesus on our soul, practicing a little holiness each day through the challenges He has placed in front of us. For example, dear apostles, there is no point practicing piety on a day when we are surrounded by souls who annoy us and Jesus is asking us to practice patience. If we follow the path He has traced out for us, we cannot help but become a saint. If we seek to do it our way, we will have greater difficulty.

Always consider kindness. Gentleness and kindness are two attributes that heaven holds in the highest esteem. Our modern world seeks to eradicate these heavenly characteristics but through His apostles Jesus will flood the world with gentleness and kindness

In order to love our neighbor in the same way as souls love each other in heaven, we must begin to think like residents of that joyful place. In heaven, it is all about love and all about Jesus. The Savior, Jesus Christ, is well and truly united to each soul, to the extent that when Jesus enters a room or an area in heaven, nobody remarks upon it, because He never leaves any soul. There is constant unity with Christ in the soul. This is available to us here on earth. We are only separated by our lack of faith and lack of commitment to His will. If a soul commits himself to Jesus here on earth, and embarks upward on the mountain path through the service Jesus has willed for the individual, that soul is united to Jesus. Jesus is welcome in that soul and Jesus begins to work through that soul in the unique way that only He could have intended and planned. Each soul has a purpose and the purpose has so many facets over the lifetime

of service, or indeed over one day, that we cannot imagine the richness of His plan. But we trust in His plan and that is all that matters.

What is the practical reality of this, we might ask. How does an apostle know if he or she is pleasing to God and indeed walking up the mountain path? Well, I can only speak for myself so that is what I will do. When I am serving heaven in unity to the will of the Savior, I feel stretched. I feel a sense that I am laboring. I do not feel a great personal satisfaction characterized by feelings such as “I am truly holy.” A more accurate feeling of the apostle ascending the mountain would be “I am truly learning.”

We should not dabble in false humility. If we are trying to serve Jesus, we must admit it. And certainly we serve in all of our glorious imperfection, so we must freely admit that as well. We can be proud of our commitment to Jesus without being proud of our spiritual advancements or proud of what heaven flows through us. Is a cup proud of the coffee it holds? Does a cup take credit for the quality of the coffee within it? The cup is simply the receptacle or vehicle that is used to transport the coffee from one place to the other. A cup is not proud, my friends, and neither should we be.

I repeat that we must never be discouraged or try to measure our holiness against another's. We must measure our holiness against Jesus Christ. In this way we will remain humble and concentrate not on the road behind us, but on the road in front of us. If the Lord gives us glimpses of His favor, we should thank Him. If He does not, we should not take this as a sign that we are not in His favor. If we are trying to serve and we are living in obedience to our Church, we are sure to make progress.

We should never be complacent. We must understand that if we are alive, there is work to be done in our soul. If we were finished, surely the Lord would have brought us to Him. Work steadily, dear apostles, and we will certainly become as holy as our Lord requires.

We are called to do extra, it is true, so with God's grace let us do the extra with cheerfulness that foils any plans the enemy has to turn us into discontents who add to the unrest in the world.”

October 27, 2005

I had a good talk with Marty about how uptight I am about having to handle machinery in front of the students at the other end and them seeing me get tense and worked up. He talked me down about how of course what a success it will be for FUS when I make it, then they can say that "anyone can do it with our help!" I liked that.

October 29, 2005

Dear Carla, my sister,

Your voice sounds so musical and sweet on the phone these days.

You will be happy to hear that through your prayers or others I got the grace to make a decision. I am going to go for the Corpus Christi writers' and artists' colony plan and leave here in May for there and live near friends while waiting for the colony to be built - meanwhile teaching in the old college.

I think it is the closest to my real dream - a colony of like-minded creatively orthodox Catholics living close but not in a rule-bound community. I can live in a little bungalow on the property.

I am smiling and feeling more carefree and with less riding on stuff here, I am feeling full of love for everyone here who have been so good to me even if not able to meet certain needs.

Dear Carla (daughter)

(In connection with a possibility of my moving in with the family in North Carolina, where they just moved, while waiting for the Colony to be built. I am including lots of details because many a widow who reads this might be interested in such a possibility or be already living one of these):

"I had [planned to move back to Corpus Christi because there is a group of well known friends trying to build a Catholic writers' and artists' colony in Rockport where I could live in a bungalow or in an addition to the main house - theirs. This will probably take another 2 years to build. I could teach at my old college there.

“Everything is potentially good about this scheme, especially re-easy conditions for old hags, except that even though I do love these friends deeply, they are not like family.

The Colony plan could be combined possibly with moving to N.C. this Spring, and doing one 4 month stint in Corpus Christi, Sept. - Dec. 2006 to see better how the college has developed.

HERE IS THE WAY I SEE THE PROS AND CONS OF N.C. LOG HOUSE YOU HOPE TO BUY – (I laughingly call these schemes the Queen Lear scenario)

Pros

**be with those I really love in the family sense of love
help my kids, grandkids in various ways
try out what could be THE long term solution to my aging life style issues**

Cons

fall into big no-no trap of mixing family and business

Plan A for a monthly retainer

I have no other expenses. I have a room furnished with a bed and bookcases and table or desk and my own bathroom. Kids can use it when I am not enthroned but it has only my "STUFF" in it.

Between you and Steve I get

Steve: daily drive to Mass and back - mostly noon Masses

Steve: drives to airport and pick up when I give out of town talks or go for other out of town visits to Diana, etc.

You and Steve: dinner chez the family - other food I cook myself in family kitchen but Steve buys whatever I like at his general food shopping

You and Steve: help with computer right away

You and Steve: My retainer includes electric, gas, whatever such things.

Plan B – smaller retainer - same as above except I drive my own car, but Steve helps me with car glitches. I would pay my own car insurance including towing but for smaller things like pumping up leaking tires, etc. Steve pumps it up and takes it to repair.

We could try this for a year starting in Feb. or May depending on the closed circuit TV Steubenville deal here in Arkansas working or not working.

If you are interested I will pray some more and we could write up a contract of terms

Ooops - every day we will chant once the Auden ":prayer" "Thou shalt love thy crooked neighbor with thy crooked heart."

Love and prayers, Mom

Carla wrote later

You are incredibly foolish, you know. DON'T you understand that I'd love to have you with me even if you hadn't a red cent???

To which I replied. Deep down I do, but probably I'd rather buy love than trust in it!

November 16, 2005

Dear Carla, In the reading for today, from the documents of Vatican II

"Children, as active members of the family, contribute in their own way to the holiness of their parents. With the love of grateful hearts, with loving respect and trust, they will return the generosity of their parents and will stand by them as true sons and daughters when they meet with hardship and the loneliness of old age."

Since my parents had such complicated relationships to their parents and I did to mine, I rarely think in this way, but maybe you and Diana are breaking the mold on this to actually feel it in a more classical manner.

December 1, 2005

Dear Marty, Irene, Sr. Judith, Ariela, Joe, Bill, Anne and Fr. Kevin,

I have decided to leave our dear little Star of the Sea and St. Michael's. This is not because I haven't felt loved, helped and inspired here but for other reasons which will come later.

First, though, I want to thank each of you: Marty for your eager warmth and deeply pious way of participating in the Mass; Irene for showing me what daughterly love could be as you take care of your mother in her later years; Sister Judith for showing me so much about the Christian ideal of sacrificial love and for your insights into my deepest needs; Ariela and Joe for showing me how much love can be shown through hospitality of house and heart, and for the love of the gifts of life you manifest all the time; Anne for your lively mind, beautiful voice and demonstration of such fierce love for your children; Bill for your warmth to me and your modeling of love for family; Fr. Kevin for showing me how a priest could integrate spirituality and psychology and be so affirming and caring of me and all of us.

I have been struggling with this decision for many months. I know you have been praying for me and trying to help with advice. I realize that some of you might not approve of my decision and will question the reasons I give. Since I have prayed much over this and discussed it with mentors and my long time spiritual director, a SOLT priest, who has known me for 6 years, I am not asking for further counsel, but merely sharing with you the reasons I think are valid for me.

Old friends of mine in Corpus Christi are building a Catholic writers' and artists' colony. It is not too far from several part time teaching opportunities. It is only 40 minutes from the airport for going off for speaking. It would involve being closer to others physically than here, but not any kind of rule of life. They want to use the center for doing all kinds of hi-tech audio-books, etc. etc, so there would be lots for me to do even when I am too old to travel. This may take a few years to be completed.

In the meantime I am going to stay for a year with my daughter in N.C. where they will help me out on driving, gourmet meals, and computer. Since I have mostly talked to you all about the problems I have with my family, you will likely think this is a mistake. I think it is an experiment in trying to see if I would be happier having more assistance in living even on a partial basis and accepting the need I have for intimate family love even in the midst of all the problems. I have always put the apostolate first in terms of energy, even though I deeply loved my husband the children. But they, like Irene, have always put family first. Those 2 daughters love me the way Irene loves her mother. Maybe I need that more than I think. Humility! My Steubenville tech man thinks it will be easy to set up the video-conferencing course there, maybe even better in terms of the cable reception they will have for their own work. I will try this out over Christmas. If it works I will leave here in January. If not I will stay until May when that course is over.

Of course, I want to be friends with all of you, seeing you often until I leave and then afterwards by e-mail and phone. Marty, for sure, if I leave as early as January, I can work on your book by e-mail every day if you want.

This has been a very hard decision because I love the spirit of Star of the Sea and St. Michael's and all the wonderful qualities you all and other friends here have to offer. Please forgive me for the qualities of mine you have found difficult and pray for me on my new ventures. The Jesus, Mary and Joseph you all love so much will be with me.

Love and prayers, Ronda

December 5, 2005

Dear Watershedders plus Paula (fellow traveller Watershedder)

Someday you can compile all my letters into a pre-Watershed journal book or for a novel!

I now realize that at almost 68 I am going through a 70's crisis, like a mid-life or 50's or 60's crisis!

Whereas I thought I was completely committed to the plan for getting an apartment in Corpus Christi. near the group, in May or before, the more I thought about living there alone, even with frequent visits, the more it triggered my basic I-don't-want-to-live-alone widow complex.

In the meantime my daughter Carla, now living in a suite in N.C. between Asheville and Charlotte in a town called Morganton, called to say that they found a wonderful log house...So the idea is that FOR A YEAR after which hopefully Watershed will be nearer to completion, on a strict contract with Carla as the dispatcher, Steve will take care of my needs and I will help them out.

The 70's crisis part is admitting that I am an old weak widow-woman who needs to be surrounded by loving people, right in close, vs. a tough Crusader wandering Hebrew-Catholic.

It also involves remembering how whereas though in my heart the family was first, in energy the apostolate was first - and how Martin, my husband, always put the family first, and my daughters put family first - and now these loving beings are willing to be a refuge for this little hiatus. Will keep you posted.

In wrong place entries: I was working with what was the Heart to Heart file already and, senior moment, forgot to retrieve the little slips of paper that were in the file folder so I am going to insert them with their earlier dates but at the end not to have to change all the page numbers again:

October, 2005

A minister of healing has that it is not an answer, but a process. That wounded right to me.

The Taming the Lion talks have become a sort of bridge to moderate Catholics. So many have such dire anger problems that they will come to even a more to the right speaker like me.

I met a psychologist who was a widow on a plane flight. She shared that no friend can be like a husband and children. This gave me great pause and probably influenced the decision I made about staying with the adult children for at least a while.

November, 2005

I went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. My motive was to intercede for the Jewish people to find Jesus.

Highlights of the trip – at Garden of Gethsemane I prayed “Jesus, You could take me now or otherwise eliminate any more sufferings, but I accept whatever You want in Your creative plan to sanctify me.”

I thought how can I speak well to aging women if I don't feel in myself the pain of looking ugly (because of the non-dentures) and the urge to cover it up. I chose pearly dentures to look better and now that failed also). I realize I wanted to look like my noble Grandmother Rosenson who I never met since she died before I was born, not like a funny little elf. I need to surrender this desire which involves vanity and envy of others.

Jesus, You were disfigured and You didn't look like the Son of God, but like a criminal! Just as you were still God in disguise, so to speak, I am Ronda in disguise, so to speak.

On the pilgrimage sometimes it seemed as if a Jewish person there who said he was Christian might have been faking it to keep a good job working with Christian pilgrims. We Jewish-Catholics spoke of this and how we felt

distrust. I likened this to the way the Spanish royalty must have felt about those Jews who became Catholics but might have not had real conversions and then they could be in league with the Muslims of that time. Of course they felt uneasy and wary. The Inquisitorial practices were horrible, but maybe a little more understandable given this reality.

I loved the modern round womb-like Churches such as the Annunciation. Lots of sense of Mary's love for me on this pilgrimage.

A few years ago I started sending a small sum to a foundation that runs a Christian school in the Holy Land for Christian Arabs. I picked out a young girl whose face appealed to me. I got a chance to meet her at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. I was moved to tears to see this beautiful but sorrowful face with big black eyes, fearful – she is about 12 years old. The sight of her made me ashamed of some cynical surmises I had about possible these type of charitable activities being scams. It was such a person to person – Jewish grandmother Catholic encounter to with a sweet Christian Arab girl.

Later I confessed to cynicism throughout my life. How does cynicism help anything? Well one might avoid being cheated but at what a price in the blackening of the soul by suspiciousness!

During the pilgrimage Jesus seemed to say “I was a pilgrim, so was Mary. You are a pilgrim also – go where I send you and forget about a permanent place, at least for now.

Now, all the way back to April 24, 2005 when I gave a short introductory talk before Anne of Direction for Our Times spoke – by the way I loved Anne. This was the first time I met her. I was afraid she seem phony – instead she was so honest, deep, funny, absolutely unpretentious. Here was the gist of my little talk making use of images that were on the minds of the large audience:

God works with me by means of Surprise

In my conversion – surprise God is not a truth but a Person: Jesus The Passion (the Mel Gibson film) – I thought it would not be as beautiful as Jesus of Nazareth – surprise this isn't a film by Jesus intervening in our times through the screen.

Lord of the Rings: I thought it would be a violent boyish extravaganza – surprise – God is showing us we're not failed wanna be saints but heroic little hobbits and He, Gandolf, loves us for fighting.

John Paul II's funeral – boring long ceremony? Surprise, the grain of wheat died and it's the springtime of the Church JP II predicted!

Anne – just a sentimental journal? Surprise: Jesus telling me that I am not an over the hill creep whose mind is filled only with worries and schemes but the beloved child, friend and helper who He needs and wants and who I should trust. Alleluia. So listen up – here she is!

April 19, 2005

Election of Benedict XVI. I was in a restaurant – we moved to the bar so we could see who it was on the TV, bribed a waiter to turn off the muzak so we could hear. When it was Ratzinger, I leaped out off my bar stool and yelled out “We won!” and then cried and cried and cried. I had been so afraid it might be someone opposite to JP II. What will heaven be like. A Protestant eating at the restaurant asked me why I was so happy? I joked – well it's like for you if they chose Billy Graham instead of Jimmy Swaggart! He seemed to understand.

Way back to September 2004 – I dreaded leaving Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the oratory at the hermitage. Staying in a private home Jesus inundated me with rapture as if saying, heart to heart, you can come to me anywhere and you don't need to grieve leaving the hermitage.

January 8, 2005 I got to see Fr. Patrick again, after a hiatus. I said it was better for me in Arkansas because I didn't have to strain to try to be like him! He laughed a lot. He said that I could be consecrated without being monastic.

In a sermon Fr. Patrick said that we tend to think we deserve only rejection and punishment, but the true contemplative knows he or she is loved as in the Song of Songs.

Random thought: Do old people need more sleep, usually, because God wants to give rest to His beasts of burden?

Sense of being a speaker-missionary.

I read in Gabrielle Bossis p. 154 “Take the place of John and Mary Magdalene (under the cross.) Be yourself, you, whom I wanted in this century, this period, this little moment of time on earth, my poor little bride.”

January 25, 2005

Worrying about approval to be a consecrated widow, Jesus put me into an ecstasy. I had a blissful sense that only He counted and that wherever I go I should go as His. During this little time of grace all the rest of the problems about where to live disappeared in the joy of my identity as His.

Good quote in the book by Yann Martel , Life of Pi, “to choose doubt as philosophy of life is like choosing immobility as a means of transportation.”

July 2005 Defending the Faith Conference at Steubenville – great sense of how Franciscan openness made it possible to combine charismatic music and orthodox theology and a real consistent life ethic – every speaker mentioned helping the poor in some manner! Scott Hahn mentioned how Kimberly asked as their 25th anniversary present that they go to a poor country as a whole family and build a house for the poorest of the poor!

Kimberly Hahn said in her speech that anxiety is a sin of lack of trust!

Watching some parents of young adults kids and seeing how worried they were even though these were good Catholics, I saw that it is not only because mine are not yet back in the Church that I worry about them. A dear friend said I need to let go of my daughters more.

The adoration chapels are not for seeing God as a sounding board for my worries, but to bury my worries in His heart.

July 22, 2005

Feeling de-fanged because of upper teeth removed for dentures – related it to before relying on knowing that I could make biting comments, even if I didn't. Also good for solidarity with the really poor who don't have dentures. I don't have to be like Dorothy Day or Catherine Doherty, God is making me poor in His own way, said Sr. Judith.

August 8, 2005

Someone sent a web link about 5 Languages of Love – a book that goes into how each of us expresses love differently and we can't expect the other to give the same way. They are

Affirming
Serving
Gift-Giving
Touch
Quality Time

I realized that I am mostly loving by affirming, quality time would be second, touch third and serving only selectively (i.e. help with intellectual and spiritual problems but not other nitty-gritty kinds).

But some of my friends who are not much on affirmation, touch or quality time are great at helping me and giving me gifts. I need to be more grateful and not wish so much for the affirmation or quality time.

August 27, 2005

Diana, my daughter who is a twin, as I am a twin, spoke about someone telling her that twins are always trying to bond in some perfect way with a twin substitute. We are so happy when we think we can.

I related this to unsuccessful attempts to force friends to be my twin.

August 30, 2005

It was moving to see the helicopter rescuers in New Orleans after Katrina lifting people in their arms off the roofs with trumpeters playing the Saints go Marching in after the storm.

Sept. 3, 2005 Charismatic Conference – where I gave 4 talks.

At a huge general assembly Fr. Faricy told us to ask forgiveness of Jesus for the sins our confessors said weren't sins. We gasped. He shrugged and said "So, I'm a conservative Catholic. What are you going to do, shoot me?"

He told us to ask Jesus what we need His forgiveness for? I thought of draining my energy on schemes instead of trusting Him.

At the last Mass there was such a wonderful mix of Anglos, Phillipinos, Hispanics, Blacks....it was wonderful. I thought "now the anawim are strengthening the speakers!"

September 12, 2005

I called a friend on telling an anecdote that seemed to me to indicate a callous disregard of the poor. I thought he would defend himself but he had tears in his eyes. I was ashamed of “hard-boiling” him in his sin by being so skeptical that he would repent. May I be so humble about my sins and defects!

October 5, 2005

Joan Andrews Bell, the tremendous Operation Rescue woman visited the Mahoney’s here en route to an intervention against abortion. She and her husband adopted handicapped kids. They were so full of fun, especially Emiliano with prothesis legs, twisted arms, but bubbling over with joy! I was so moved.

November 10, 2005

Listening to sentimental love songs on the radio at the dentist I am wondering, is this how men get out their emotions, by singing these songs or listening to them?

December 10, 2005

Dear Carla,

Long Christmas letter with greetings to you from the Frisby's. They have 8 kids now - 4 boys and 2 little girls. Debbie is writing a novel, still working as an editor in the city. Mark seems relatively happy doing home schooling - the older boys do part home and part at the local high school, plus lots of golf!

Interesting choice for a guy with 2 Ph.D's to save his marriage this way.

Now I am praying even harder for immediate results on the log house, because I am a little afraid to stay here till May - I have some new friends but I am by now dying to come to you.

Sadness. Another complicated possibility is that since the Steubenville students have spring break in March, I could conceivably use that time - now tied up in a long speaking date with folks who haven't sent the contract letter, so I am not very obligated, to move to N.C. where by then you will surely be ensconced, assuming any alternate house you buy would also have room for me. Then if the camera doesn't work there, it could be UPS'ed back to Arkansas and I could camp out at my present condo and finish the course. All this would involve would be paying rent in Arkansas for April when I might not be here at all. As rent is \$250 this would not be too painful.

It is super-draining scheming around all this, even though I am a schemaholic. Aha, I coined a new addiction!

Groan.

Love and prayers, Mom

December 12, 2005

Dear friend,

About faith in God's providence concerning things one wants....

I have always felt that if what I want is not something I am sure is God's will, there is no reason to trust that He will give it to me.

I am sure it's God's will that I become a better person and I trust that He will give me the grace.

I am not sure I am supposed to move here or there or this house or that house, so I wouldn't feel I should trust any particular scheme will work out.

On the other hand, I see that God often works differently with others. If they will believe it was His grace if they get what they want, He may give it to them to win their gratitude. If I get what I want I do feel grateful, also, but it's not my main way of relating to God.

Different strokes....who knows. Anyhow I can hope that my daughter gets the house she wants both because maybe it will increase her faith in God, and just because we can hope that those we love get what they want even if later it may seem mistaken as long as what they want it not immoral. We don't hope a murderer finds his missing gun, etc.

Maybe you have another way of seeing this.

Love and prayers, Ronda

Sent copy to Carla – she thought it was dismal. I thought maybe it's because she could influence her father whereas mine never budged an inch.

December 13, 2005

After much fussy worry and anxiety concerning the need to test the video conferencing camera in N.C. before moving there, Dave Dombrowski, the professor arranging the tech part at Steubenville says that he is sure it will work and I should just go without sending it beforehand. Great, great relief.

Sense that no matter what obstacles I can think of this will be a good move.

December 16, 2005

Letter to a friend with whom I have had a complicated relationship:

I have been spending more time in prayer than usual. I am getting the sense that we have been and maybe will be in the future be deeper intercessors for each other than I had thought - maybe you knew this from the beginning.

I happened to be reading an article by a young man. He was describing a funny event at Steubenville called Singled Out - where young people were supposed to come to a dance but purposely try not to seek others toward dating but instead purposely be light and surface. The writer wanted to make the point that all authentic love involves pain and vulnerability.

On the surface our friendship failed because of false expectations, co-dependent patterns, etc. etc., but maybe it has a different sort of "underground" mission, where having seen so much of the beauty and the brokenness in each other we are to hold that up Jesus - bring it into His heart - like your poem about letting go.

It looks very much as if I am leaving for Christmas with the family with no clear sense of the future. They have 2 lenders vying for the loan but neither is operating very fast and I will take a hotel room next to theirs as the relatively cheap Comfort Inn and try to be a help to them as they decide what to do next. By the end of the 2 1/2 weeks it should be clear whether I am supposed to be with them temporarily or not. Your prayers on this would be appreciated. I feel more peaceful about it today though – a feeling that being like Jesus, Mary and Joseph looking for a home has a special Christmas meaning.