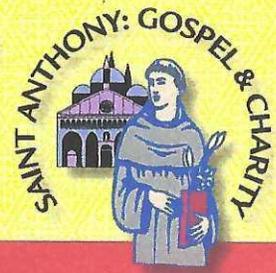


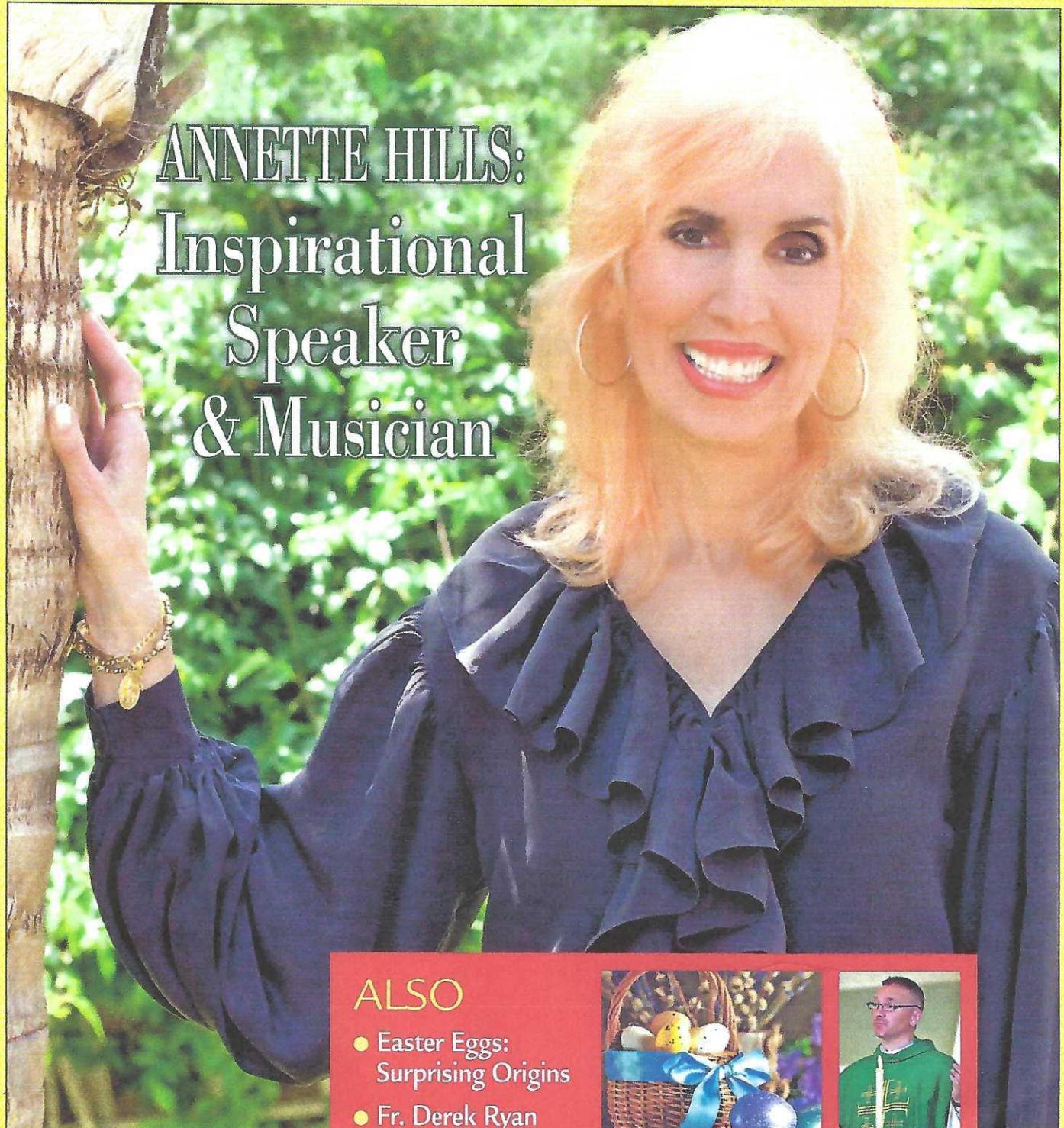
Messenger

INTERNATIONAL EDITION



of Saint Anthony

ANNETTE HILLS:
Inspirational
Speaker
& Musician



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MARCH 2024

GOD & I: Annette Hills

*A California woman describes her evolution
from professional recruiter to inspirational
speaker and musician*

By Mario Conte, OFM Conv.

YOU started working as a professional recruiter in the corporate world. What were the recruiting strategies and tactics you were most satisfied using in your business? Did they change over the years?



My recruiting strategies and tactics did change, but I believe they were effective because they were combined with my overall philosophy, which never changed. Allow me to explain. Some of my initial recruitments involved positions with high turnover, so I needed to recruit 100 new hires every month. After two years I was promoted to the senior recruiter and hired a diverse work force of employees including executives, managers, supervisors, and I even worked on a CEO recruitment. These recruitments often required complex interaction, strategies and tactics with fine-tuned interviewing techniques, intuitive insight, and negotiation skills.

Someone once asked me if overseeing the hiring process made me feel important. My reply was that I never felt important because my philosophy was to make applicants feel important, relaxed, truthful and honest enough to share their knowledge and skills with me so that together we could make it the best job fit – a job that would fulfill their personal needs and long-term career goals, like a job made in heaven for them.

Over the years, employees frequently took time to thank me for hiring them and discussed their pleasure with their overall careers. My Dad had an expression that I tried to live by. He said, “It’s nice to be important, but more important to be nice.” Following that philosophy in my career and in every aspect of my life has always paid big dividends.

What led you to change your successful position in the business world to become an inspirational speaker and award-winning recording artist?

I was blessed with a very successful business career for over two decades. During ten of those years the Holy Spirit led me to volunteer personal time on weekends to combine my professional people skills and my vocal talents to perform for the elderly and disabled at 75 different facilities and communities in southern California. After I retired from the business world, it seemed like a natural continuation and seg-way into a new speaking and singing career. I eventually recorded many of the songs that I sang for my audiences using God-given talents to glorify and honor him. In 2012 I won the Album of the Year Award from Catholic Music Express, and was also nominated for Female Vocalist of the Year and for Song of the Year. From there I went on to be a church cantor and give inspirational talks and concerts for events in the United States,

including California, Arizona, Colorado, and upstate New York.

Could you explain in easy, general terms, who an inspirational speaker is?

It is ultimately God who allows our paths to intersect with people, presenting us with opportunities to give love and receive love, often in ways only he can orchestrate. To help me remember the uniqueness and gift of each person on my path of life, I assembled a scrap book of notes after my professional retirement. One of those notes was from a man who I worked with, and his note took me quite by surprise because I had absolutely no idea that I was an inspiration to him. His note taught me what inspiration is all about. To address this point, I very humbly quote a few sentences from his note: "Of all the people who have retired since my employment you are the first that I will actually miss... a lot of people claim to be followers of Christ, but few are able to live it. You, my friend, in my observation, are a true disciple of Christ because you lived it every time I saw you here at work. That is something that you should be more proud of than all the years that you worked. I hope that wherever you go in life that you continue to share your faith by your good deeds." So, I now summarize and simplify the

BORN IN upstate New York, Annette Hills had a flourishing career hiring thousands of employees over the course of 22 years. However, in her second career as an inspirational speaker and award-winning recording artist, Annette found her true calling and joy in presenting uplifting inspiring talks and music to audiences thirsting for God. Annette now shares her life experiences of how the Lord healed her of a major illness and taught her how to deal with childhood sexual abuse (not related to the priest scandal). She energizes her audiences to continually focus on their God-given mission and reach new goals as they journey through life. Her captivating testimonials deliver spirit-filled encouragement and invigorate her listeners. Annette is a Dame Grand Cross of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, a Papal Order. In her personal life, Annette enjoys being a wife, mother of two adult children, and grandmother of two beautiful granddaughters. Visit her website: www.annettehills.com



answer to your question by saying that I learned from my colleague that inspirational speakers are not just those who use clever word skills to convince others of their message. *Effective* inspirational speakers are those who inspire with credible words because they share truths from deep convictions reflected from the inside out, from inner beliefs, and from giving witness to a way of life.

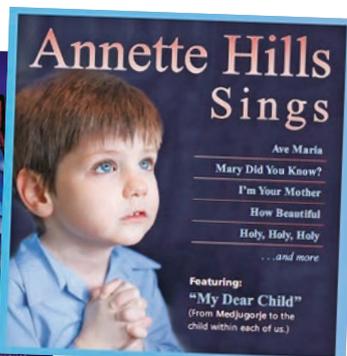
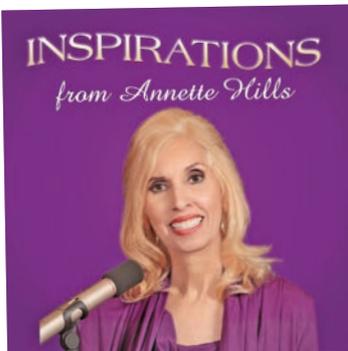
Who is God for you? How would you describe Him in your conferences if you were asked this question?

We recognize that God cannot truly be described or defined. Moses could not describe him except to repeat what God himself said, "I AM". Yet it is amazing to realize that we can constantly communicate with the great "I AM" from within our hearts. I find it easier to describe what God does rather than who he

is. He reads my heart and mind and hears my prayers. He works in my life in a remarkably tangible way. God became very real to me many years ago when he healed me of a major illness. It was then that I realized for the first time that he was not just a super being somewhere in the heavens, but that he truly knows me in a very personal way. We are made in his image and likeness, and he lives within us because of the gift of Baptism. God is almighty, the Creator of heaven, earth, the universe, and of everything; and yet he is my Abba, Daddy, and I am his child. He is three persons in one (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). He is my all in all, my Redeemer, Savior, and Lord. He is love and mercy itself. He knows when I sit and when I stand. He knew me from before I was born and continues to love me. He loves us all so much that he allowed himself to become human, be crucified and consecrated as a tiny host so we can partake of his body, blood, soul and divinity! Thanks be to God!

What's the central message you believe God wants people to hear in your conferences?

I believe that God wants us to hear that whether we are new on our spiritual journey or theo-



Annette giving an inspirational talk about Divine Mercy in southern California; Annette has published a Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy



logically educated and advanced, the Holy Spirit lovingly invites and evangelizes us to continually attain a fuller experience of our spiritual calling, mission, and purpose in life.

What do you believe God has taught you personally about prayer?

He taught me that his will is always best. He hears all our prayers, but sometimes he answers in ways that we consider negative and contrary to our requests. He is a loving Father, and often in retrospect we realize our perceived ‘negative’ answer in prayer may have protected us from a greater evil. When we recognize his loving wisdom and/or protection, we must remember to thank him with our *fiat* (let it be done); and sometimes a little humor helps too. For example, I have a coffee cup that says: *God answers all prayers*. Sometimes he says, “Yes.” Sometimes he says, “No.” And sometimes he says, “You’ve got to be kidding!”

I read that the Lord prompted you to take singing lessons and use your musical talent, but that at the end of one year you had to stop abruptly. What happened?

At the end of a year of voice lessons, I sustained a severe injury which resulted in major surgery. I will just briefly say that during the healing process one day I became aware of the Holy Spirit asking me to bring a healing message in song to others who were convalescing. I ultimately graduated from a wheelchair to a walker, to crutches and to a cane and physical therapy before I fully recovered. In my inspirational

talks I love to share Romans 8:28, which teaches that *all* things work for good, even our struggles.

When were you able to resume singing?

I fully recovered within one year, resumed singing, and started a new music ministry. For the next ten years I gave 100 volunteer performances in my spare time. I continue to offer my ministry every day to God, and he continues to mold, refine, and enhance it. I now have three music albums and a Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy album. This Chaplet, which I recorded with the Most Reverend Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange, has aired on EWTN multiple times daily since 2017. My ministry does not look like it did when I started singing for the elderly and disabled in 1999, and it does not look like it did in 2009, when I first started singing as a professional recording artist, and it will not look like it does now in another year. My evolving ministry currently focuses on inspirational speaking combined with music. Technology and global events such as the pandemic encourage continual change and shape the world we live in, often dictating how we serve God and bless his people.

I am a Franciscan friar from St. Anthony’s Basilica in Padua. Do you have any particular devotion to this Saint?

While on pilgrimage to Italy in 1995 I was humbled to venerate St.

Anthony’s relics which were on display in the church of St. Francis in Assisi. There have been instances (too numerous to mention) when he has answered my prayers of intercession to find lost articles. He is also well known for his preaching abilities, so I implore his help for my inspirational speaking career too. Throughout the years, I have told him many times in prayer that I want to give him a big *Thank You* hug when we meet in heaven!

Is there any particular project that you are working on?

I am excited to share that the Lord has inspired me to write a book. It is interactive and captures profound witness stories and discernment techniques. It is a practical, easy-to-read book and encourages a new awareness of and relationship with the Holy Spirit through our life experiences, joys, achievements, and struggles. Each chapter is full of meaningful insights with examples of how God works behind the scenes of our lives. This book is dedicated to spiritual enrichment for laypersons, religious, clergy, and all who may have fallen away from the faith. It is my hope that this book will be published soon and that your audience will be spiritually nourished and strengthened by reading the book. This endeavor seems to be a new evangelical direction in God’s continuing plan for my ministry. To God be all glory!

MSA