

Why Me, Lord ?

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According to the twelfth century Persian poet, Farid ud-Din Attar, “Pilgrim, Pilgrimage, and Way are but Myself toward Myself”, somehow, I knew that such mystery could not be known unless experienced. I am not a mystic, but mystery proved to me that anyone who suffers deeply enough is actually in one with the mystery. So this is how it started with my pilgrimage to Medjugorje in October 2006.

Less than a year ago, the Lord took my husband back to His Kingdom.

My grief over the loss had not been easy, and I certainly had tasted the loneliness and emptiness in my heart during the most trying moments. In the darkest hours, the thing that I couldn't bear the most was the memories of traveling with my husband like two pilgrims on a vast terrain. I missed him so much that I thought I could not bring myself to travel again in my life.

Sitting in an empty house, looking vacantly through the window, I heard the voice of Our Lady speaking to me, “Rose, you belong to the living and let the dead rest in peace.” But I am a doubting Thomas. How can I believe what I heard is not made



up by my own fantasy? My conscious attitude has always been seeing is believing. Readily, I dismissed the gentle voice inside myself. The voice, however, persisted.

Some say that change takes courage. I will say unless it is a strenuous challenge, there will be no courage to be taken. Just when I turned my back on life, then something happened, and I landed on a pilgrim's journey to Medjugorje.

It was August 3, 2006. After the morning Mass, I felt a light tap on my shoulder. I turned around and saw Mrs. G. She said she was going for a pilgrimage to Medjugorje on October 1st. In addition to that she also heard from Dominic that I would like to go too. I was not able to respond right then, because the world seemed to have stopped in me and around me. That was how deep the grief took me. However, I told her that I would return to her with an answer in a week.

Obviously, Our Lady was much more persistent than I was myself, because I did not have a week to make my decision. On the next day, I was told to get ready for the tickets. I had always wanted to

climb the rugged mountain of the White Cross in Medjugorje. Although my heart desired to climb the mountain, would my badly degenerated knees cooperate? The voice of Our Lady appeared once again in my night time prayer. She softly says to me, "Rose, if you want to, who can stop you? Follow your heart, not your knees." The next thing I knew was the tickets booked, money paid for, and departure time scheduled.

When all was done, on one morning, I felt another light tap on my shoulder after the Mass. It was Mrs. G again. This time she said, "You know, we made a mistake. The Rose that Dominic was referring to was another Rose, not you."

Whether it is a mistake or a random chance, I think somehow someone's fulfillment of the calling is often at the expense of another's sacrifice. If it is true, we will all take turns to fulfill each other's calling. After weeks of a vigorous training under a physiotherapist, and water treading exercises, I conquered not only my grief, but also my body. I was totally ready to embrace the calling from my heart.

The journey was as difficult as I had thought, but I kept my vigilance. The moment when I reached the top of Mount Krizevac, I knew Our Lady had worked her way through me, because my knees survived the 448 meters high mountain. Standing next to the White Cross, filling with gratitude, I heard Our Lady whispering in my left ear, "Rose, not once, but twice." As if the words took themselves by the wings, I heard myself speaking loudly to everyone that we climbed up, to the same spot the next morning, to watch the sunrise. No one said anything. But I knew I had yet another appointment with God.

Early next morning, about 5 o'clock, I got up in

the darkness and felt my way down to the kitchen and snatched two pieces of bread, an apple, and a bottle of water, and then I moved towards the gate. A ferocious barking suddenly sounded in the direction of the entrance. I jerked back, and said the Guardian Angel prayer. No more than a few seconds, I saw a puppy wagging its tails and coming towards me. Cautiously, I patted its head and hoped that it would not attack me. But it turned out it was only a friendly thing seeking attention. As we walked side by side to the edge of the village, the moon shone brightly still. Although I was alone in the dark, and in a strange country, I felt serene. The hike was effortless as if the Guardian Angel himself were there leading me. My companion walked ahead of me guiding a grief stricken pilgrim. Could it be that in my most fragile condition, it represented my instinct to survive this pain? But, most of all, I could see the beaming wisdom of Our Lady in the form of the bright silvery moon shrouding the entire valley. When I was led to the White Cross again, I felt I was finally in the bosoms of the Lord. Without even my awareness, I experienced her presence in me through feeling, but not through knowing.

On top of the mountain, I also found the answer to my own question. Because I chose God in the first place, God in return chose me to bear his testimony on earth. In other words, whoever chooses God is chosen by God. The plan that He had in store for me was to lead me through the journey to Medjugorje so I could embrace the very lesson about Life. Now, I think of my husband's death as a mystery that connects me closer to God, the all embracing force of life, and this part of the pilgrim's journey has to be done in solitude by each of us.