

The day was going to be a hot one. Veronica could already feel the heat rising from the paving stones in the tiny veranda beside her house. She liked to sit in this sunny spot early in the morning before she got ready for her job at the law-office in town. The house where Veronica lived was just outside the town of Satillo in the Mexican Province of Sierra Leon. By April, the daily peak temperatures in this high desert region were steadily above the 90 degree mark of the thermometer hanging on the adobe wall in a shady corner of the garden. Even this early in spring, the cheerful blossoms on the Impatiens in the garden beds already made a rainbow border for the veranda. Veronica noticed that the little flower beds looked really good this morning, completely free of the weeds that usually came up and mingled with the flowers at this time of the year. She did not remember having weeded the beds recently. Perhaps Hernando had done this before he left for his job across the border, in the oil fields near Galveston.

Thinking of Hernando made Veronica sigh, and a thoughtful frown hooded her face for a moment. Today was the young couple's first wedding anniversary. Yet, although they had been married for exactly one year this morning, Hernando and Veronica would not be together to celebrate this joyous day.

Hernando was a chemical engineer. The only jobs that were available for engineering graduates in his area were in the big petroleum refineries that dotted the coast line of south Texas. So, when the opportunity of a job had presented itself the previous month, the couple had decided that Hernando should take it. This meant they would only see each other every three or four months, when Hernando would be able to get enough time off to make the trip home to Satillo. And Veronica understood that this was unavoidable, given the scarcity of jobs. But she thought that Hernando would have at least done something to mark this day, their first wedding anniversary, even if he couldn't be here in person. However, so far this week, no special letter or small gift, or even a telephone call had arrived to let Veronica know that her young husband was thinking of her. And this made her very sad, indeed.

About a half -hour later, Veronica was putting the key into the ignition of her car, the brand new Chevy Nova that had been a wedding present from her parents. As she started the car, Veronica smiled at how the bright yellow paint of the new car glistened in the morning sun. It looked really good! Usually, by this point in April, pollen from the pine trees in that arid region of Mexico completely covered everyone's car with a green, filmy jacket. There must have been a freak rain storm the night before which had washed away the pollen from the car. Strange, Veronica thought. She didn't remember hearing anything like a thunder shower. She must have been sleeping particularly deeply.

At her desk during the day, Veronica worked on the various legal briefs and correspondence that her bosses gave her. Her job as a paralegal meant that she was responsible for much of the correspondence that flowed between the lawyers in her firm and their clients. But even as Veronica worked, she kept one eye on her office door. She half expected to see a florist bursting through the door with some flowers from her husband. Oh, she knew that flowers were dreadfully expensive, and the young couple was on a tight budget. And even though it would have been wasteful for Hernando to spend that kind of money, Veronica nevertheless hoped that he would have done *something* to remember her on this special day. But, no flowers arrived.

There was another surprise though. After lunch, when Veronica came back to her desk she found a cup-cake with a single candle in it, and a note which had been signed by all of the office staff wishing her “Happy Anniversary!” This really surprised her. She didn’t remember telling anyone about today being her special day. She must have mentioned it to one of her colleagues and forgotten.

That evening, after fixing a solitary meal for herself in the little kitchen of the house in Sattillo, Veronica poured herself a small glass of the local, dry red wine and wandered out onto the tiny patio. The fire-flies had begun to rise from the tall grass at the end of the yard. In the spring, they came out at this time of early evening and began their frolic in the yard, twinkling like out-of-season Christmas lights. Now Veronica was desperately sad. She and Hernando would usually share a glass of wine together here on the veranda after dinner to conclude their day. A few tears like little snails began to crawl down her cheeks. Veronica missed Hernando so much!

She noticed that a wine glass was there on the table where the couple often sat after dinner to take in nature’s floor-show of the evening smells and sounds. She must have placed the wine glass there the previous evening and forgotten it. By now, Veronica was terribly hurt that Hernando had done nothing to remember their special day.

Late that night, when Veronica slipped sadly into bed, as she reached to adjust her pillow, her hand touched the edge of something. She pulled out a huge, pink card from under the pillow where it had been hidden. On it, in Hernando’s hand-writing was written, “To my Beloved.” Breathless with excitement, Veronica tore open the envelope, and found a bright blue card. Red, yellow and green butterflies danced on the front of the card, and when she opened it, she found a long letter written in Hernando’s careful, elegant hand.

“My beloved: I am writing this to you before I leave so that you will have some testament of my love on our special day.

By now, you will have received from me all those small pieces of evidence that testify to my love for you. I arranged for the neighbors’ son from across the street to weed the garden beds. I know how special it is for you to sip your morning coffee in the sunshine of our veranda, so I made sure the flower beds would be especially beautiful for you on this glorious day. I also had the young man wash your car for you last night. Your parents were so generous with this wedding present, and I wanted you to understand how much their kindness means to me, particularly today of all days.

Did you wonder how your colleagues came to find out about the date of our anniversary? I confess that it was me. I called your boss and asked if they might do something special for you today since I could not be here. I also had the young man from across the street mow the yard while you were at work today. The freshly mown grass makes it easier to see the fire-flies at night, and I know how they make you smile.

I also asked your sister, Celita to come to our house this afternoon and place a wine glass on the veranda table before she hid this card, so that you would think of me as you sat in our special place this evening.

I’m so sorry that I cannot be with you in person, beloved. But all these things I have arranged, just for you, in order to surround you with proofs of my love, until that day when we can finally be together. Until then, never stop believing in my great love for you.

Your adoring husband, Hernando.”

As the woman read these last words, she bowed her head. How incredible, she thought, that I could go through an entire day without seeing all the things that he has done, just for me, to prove just how much he loves me.

***Seeing the Proof of his Love (Reflections on Lk.10:21-24):*** “He didn’t have to make it this way, but He did...just for us!” That’s the phrase that so often my wife and I tell each other, when we see the opal fire in a sunset or an impossibly large harvest moon. Over and over again the evidence of God’s love for His creation is visible to the human eye, if we will only take the time to look for it.

If you read Psalm 8, it’s easy to come away only with the idea that this psalm is poetry designed to praise God’s majesty – and of course it is. But this particular song of David can also be seen as a kind of grateful love-song to God. David is pouring out his heart to his Creator God. The eye of his heart has just caught a glimpse of the majesty and beauty of the God of heaven and earth, and David is struck breathless with amazement. This man who was born the youngest son of a sheep farmer is beginning to come to grips with the incredible miracle of what such a wondrous God has done for him. What indeed is man that God is so mindful of him? What could we have possibly done to make such a God care so much for us? (see Ps.8:4).

The beautiful tableau from Luke 10 where we see Jesus stop for a moment in His journey toward the Cross to simply say “Thank you” to His Heavenly Father is, for me, the very heart of the Incarnation. In order to wrap everything into His person before taking it with Him to offer up on Golgotha, Jesus had to come to grips with the full sentiments of the perfect Man whom God had created in Adam before The Fall. A key element of those sentiments which God had placed on Adam’s heart at his creation from the dust of the earth was gratitude.

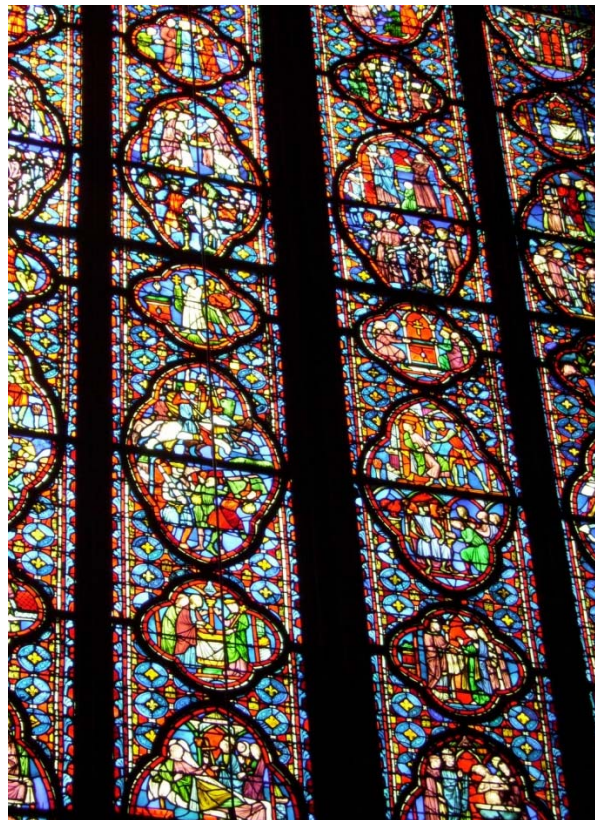
It doesn’t make any sense. There is no rational explanation for this kind of boundless mercy. The inexplicable quality of God’s love is a part of what Jesus is talking about in Luke 10:21 when Our Lord thanks His Heavenly Father for hiding this kind of love from the eyes of the learned, and revealing Himself instead in terms of utter simplicity. I think David is echoing this thought in the second verse of Psalm 8 when he talks about God having constructed a protective bulwark against evil from what comes out of the mouths of babes and infants. “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger” (Ps.8:2 – NIV).

Another beautiful dimension to Jesus’ ecstatic praise song in Luke 10 is its inclusivity. In Luke 10: 21, Jesus thanks God above all else for revealing the boundless quality of The Father’s mercy specifically to the simple. On Thursday mornings, a group of about a half-dozen folk comes to clean my office. They are clients of the Division of Disabilities and Special Needs Center in the county where I live. These six smiling adults are people with mental challenges who require the special attention of a loving society. To begin with, my relationship with these people was rather uncomfortable. I had never had much interaction involving people with special needs, and I found it challenging to maintain a polite, meaningful conversation with them. But one morning, God laid it on my heart to ask them if they would like to pray with me before they left the Church offices. So, we gathered around in a circle, held hands, and soon their prayers were pouring out and up to heaven - prayers about the people in their lives who

were sick, or lonely, or in trouble. Not once did they pray for themselves, and their prayers were so sincere, so sweetly powerful that I suddenly felt awed and humbled to be in the presence of folks who can see the love of God so very clearly. One of them, Christie, was baptized during the month that this book was being completed.

In Revelation 5:8, John sees the Four Living Creatures, the ones who stand closest to the throne of God, holding bowls of incense which are actually the prayers of the Saints. I believe it is the prayers such as those uttered by my church's cleaning crew, simple prayers like these which find themselves in that perfume which the Lord God keeps ever close to His person. Yes indeed, God reveals the essence of His limitless love to the simple of this world. Perhaps it is these wonderful, innocent middle-aged children that Jesus is speaking of in the Beatitudes, those blessed pure of heart who truly do see God.

***Seeing the Proof of His Love*** is a story about seeing the world as God intended His children to see it. We need to remove the blinders which are the cacophony of distraction created by the idols and illusions of this world, if we would truly see the proof of God's immeasurable love for His children, a proof which actually surrounds and abounds every single minute of our lives.



*A Cross in the Window, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century nave windows at St. Chapelle. Paris – Summer, 2009*