

THE HOLY SISTERS IN SAN JUAN: Part I

Previously, I wrote about living in Puerto Rico between the ages of three to five. It was a most auspicious time in my spiritual development and I would like to share it.

When, my family moved to Puerto Rico we lived in a house close to old San Juan. The house happened to be across the street from a several houses belonging to the Catholic Church in which three elderly and one young nun resided. Also, residing in these houses were several young pregnant girls and single mothers with young children.

Shortly after our arrival, I was in my front yard and saw a young nun picking some flowers. I did not know why she was dressed in such curious clothes and so I crossed the street, looking carefully both ways of course, to introduce myself.

I walked up to her, put my right hand out to shake hers, and introduced myself in English, "Hello. My name is Michael and I live in the house across the street."

She smiled and shook my hand saying, "Hello, Miguel. That is how we say Michael in Spanish. My name is Sister Anna Marie and I live here. It is very pleasant to make the introduction of such a well mannered and handsome young man."

I am sure I must have blushed for she was very pretty. Dropping my hand, I asked her, "Sister Anna Marie, why are you wearing a black dress and have your hair covered?"

Sister replied, "Child, I am a nun with the Catholic Church and this is how we dress. Have you not heard of nuns and priests?"

I answered, "No, Sister. My parents never took me to meet a nun or a priest. I have never been to church that I remember. But, I think you are very pretty and I like your smile."

She responded, "Child, you must have been baptized? But, that, you could not remember. What religion are your parents?"

"I do not know Sister. They never told me. Is this a bad thing," I asked?

Sister Anna Marie smiled and took my hand saying, "Come, Miguel, I want you to meet the other Sisters. I am sure they will like you." Off we went into the house right across from my house.

We found the other Sisters chatting. Sister Anna Marie interrupted, "Dear Sisters, I have brought our new neighbor to introduce to you. He is a very polite, and I might add, complimentary young man."

The three older Sisters introduced themselves and I greeted them in the best gentlemanly manner I knew. After this, Sister Theresa said, “Let us go to our kitchen and have some cake and we can all chat.”

Sister Anna Marie took my hand to make sure I felt safe.

I had a nice time with the Sisters, as they were very friendly, telling me about what they did for a job. I found it very interesting. After we finished the cake, the Sister Theresa said, “Sister Anna Marie, I think it is time to take our young man home and meet his parents.”

Sister Anna Marie and I stood up. I thanked the Sisters and said goodbye. Sister Anna Marie took my hand and we left the house, crossed the street, and went to the front door of my house. Sister Anna Marie knocked on the front door and our maid, Rosa, opened the door.

Sister Anna Marie and Rosa introduced themselves. Sisters asked for my mother and Rosa said, “Madame is resting as she is having a difficult pregnancy. I take care of Michael’s baby brother. So Michael spends much time by himself as his father works very much. But, thank God, he does not mind being by himself.”

Sisters replied, “There are children his age living at our little home. He might like to spend some time with us and the other children. I am sure the other Sisters would be happy to look after him as they found him to be a very proper gentleman, indeed. When, it is convenient, please tell Madame that I would very much like taking care of Michael.” Looking at me, Sister said, “If it is OK with Madame, you can spend as much time as you would like with me and the other Sisters. I have already grown very fond of you.” She turned and returned to our residency.

The next day, my mother visited the Sisters and chatted for some time. She told them that she would be honored to have them look after me. She told them she had been raised Lutheran, but had no problem with Catholic religious instruction generally.

So this is how my life with Sister Anna Marie and the others came about. Moreover, the two years, I spent with the Sisters, explains my tenderness and concern for pregnant ladies without husbands and single mothers with small children. For in truth, the Sisters took in young ladies and helped them find a place to live, a job, and sometimes adoptive parents.

I might add that my love for beans and rice and flan was gained with the Sisters, as I ate lunch there most days.

Though, I spent much of my time helping Sister Anna Marie, Sister Theresa often would sit with me and ask me questions and tell me stories from the Bible.

One day, I went to Sister Anna Marie to tell her of my dream about my visit to Heaven which had happened shortly before I met her. She listened most attentively and then took me to

tell my dream to Sister Theresa, who they called Mother Superior. After, I was finished, she said to Sister Anna Marie, “Sister, I think our young gentleman had a vision. It surely was not a plain dream. All of us will discuss this later after evening prayers. I think he deserves some cake.”

So we left Sister Theresa and went to have some cake in the kitchen. I asked, “Sister, what is a vision?”

She replied, “A vision is like a dream, but it comes not from your own imagination, but from God. It is a great gift of the Holy Ghost. The Prophets of the Old Testament that I have told you about had visions also. But, do not worry, little friend. We will discuss your vision tonight and go seek advice from an old nun living in a large convent. She has visions of Our Lord also.”

Nothing was said about my vision for several days. At last Sister Anna Marie said, “Miguel, today we go visit the nun who has visions so she can meet you. She said she thinks that God spoke to you and so is most anxious to see you.”

So Sister Anna Marie and I took the bus to a large convent where Sister Agnes Louise lived. It was interesting to watch out the window of the bus. After we arrived, one of the Sisters took us into the garden where Sister Agnes Louise was tending the roses.

As we approached her back, before we said a word, Sister Agnes Louise said, “Dear Sister Anna Marie, I see you brought the boy with you. It is good.”

Sister Agnes Louise asked me many questions about my vision and my experience with any religious order. During our conversation, she suddenly stopped speaking, stared ahead for a few moments, and then resumed her speech. She said, “Sister, your little friend, who loves you very much, is very special, indeed. The Holy Ghost did take him to meet Our Lord and what he tells us in his vision is accurate. God is most pleased with this little boy, whom God has known for many ages, but Miguel does not remember.

“Sister, God has graced his spiritual care to you, even though you are young. He will only be with you for a short time so preparing him to fight the Prince of Darkness will not be easy. The most important thing is to show him the power of God’s unconditional love—a love he feels for you, Sister, though he does not understand yet. He needs to feel such love from you for it is the only gift we can give our little warrior so to support him. His life will not be an easy one and so he needs to feel that your love is always with him and will never abandon him. Our Lady’s love will flow via your inner heart into his. Do you understand, Sister,” she finished?

“Sister Agnes Louise, “I understand. For I have loved this little boy since the day we first met. When, I am with him, my heart burns. I knew he was special the moment I met him. That God had sent him to me to be loved beyond measure. His little heart touched mine and the Sacred Heart touched us both. I will be his friend and support always and watch over him,”

answered Sister Anna Marie.

Sister Agnes Louise said, “The bus will leave soon. It has been a pleasure spending time with ‘my little warrior.’ I wish you well. You are in the very best of hands and heart with Sister Anna Marie. Goodbye, my dears.”

We left and returned home. Sister Anna Marie brought me home and gave me a big hug and kiss on the forehead. Then, she said, “I do love you and I feel, how much Our Lady loves you. We will always be with you so never give up. Don’t be late tomorrow for we will visit the home we found for your friend Jose and his mother. Sweet dreams, my child.”