

Testimony for St. Anthony Bulletin

By Sue Fagalde Lick

God Provides the Words



God and I seem to have an agreement—if I show up at the blank page, He will give me the words. As some of you know, even though you see me at the piano at Mass, for my “day job,” I’m a writer. I spent many years working for newspapers in California and Oregon as a reporter, editor, and photographer. Those stories came to me. I didn’t have to seek them out. But I have always wanted to do “creative writing,” fiction, poetry, essays, the kinds of things that last longer than a newspaper article.

In 2001, I enrolled in graduate school. It was my third attempt to get a master’s degree, and it could have easily gotten derailed. During the two years I attended Antioch University’s low-residency MFA program, both my husband’s mother and my own mother were diagnosed with cancer and eventually died. When I was halfway through my program, my husband Fred started showing signs of dementia, but somehow, I kept going. While caregiving for our mothers and my husband, it gave me hope to know that I was making progress toward something that would keep me going after they died. I received my degree at the age of 51 and was chosen to be the class speaker. I have published books, essays, poems, and short stories.

“Writing will save your life,” our program director told us at our last meeting before graduation. He was right. It has saved mine many times. I have battled depression for years. Pills and therapy only help so much. But writing is a gift God has given me to deal with the feelings I wouldn’t know how to handle otherwise. When it’s too much, I write it out. Sometimes it’s just a journal entry that no one else will ever see. Sometimes it’s a poem that will touch people’s hearts and make them say, “Yes, that’s how I feel, too.” Sometimes it’s a story that will take us all away from our troubles for a while.

I post on two different blogs every week. Unleashedinoregon.com is my fun blog, where I reach out, share new things I have learned, and try to give people a laugh. My other blog, Childlessbymarriage.com, is for people like me who do not have children because their partners were unable or unwilling to have children. Often, when the day comes to post these

blogs, I don't know what I'm going to write about. But every time, God gives me something. Suddenly, I have an opening sentence in my head, and I start writing.

Last week, I really thought I couldn't do another childless post. What else is there to say? I had been feeling frustrated trying to take care of everything in my house when most widows my age have grown children and grandchildren to help them. Plus, the holidays were coming, and I dreaded spending Christmas alone. I have friends who will take me in, but it's not the same as a house full of family, the way it was when I was growing up.

"I should have had kids!" I shouted to the world. The world said nothing. But the next morning, when I had nothing to write, God said, "Write that. Write how you're feeling. You don't have to be cheerful and wise in every post." So, I did. The comments that have come in have warmed my heart. Strangers have sent their love and support. They have shared their own stories. They have told me they know exactly how I feel. In helping myself, I helped them. We did it again, God. Thank you for the words. You never let me down.

You don't have to be a professional writer to put your ideas and feelings on paper. Try it. When things get to be too hard, it helps. Think of it as writing a letter to God. He will give you the words.

