



Mary Carol's Musings

Hopeful Thoughts from Mary Carol Wall

May 23, 2006

It is another beautiful spring day... Caitie and I got back from Rochester a little while ago from having a new MRI done to see how the chemo has been working. I am hoping the verbal results will be available by the time I go to have my fifth adriamycin/cytoxan dose tomorrow... but if not, I will know by next Wednesday, at the latest, when I meet with my surgeon in Buffalo for evaluation.

On the way down from sunny Rochester, Cait and I stopped at my friend Barb's place...she's the youth minister from Holy Family, just north of us, who ran head-first into colon cancer last year, much to everyone's shock. She and her family have been traveling the journey and engaged in the battle for a good while, now, using courageous humor, faith, love, and sometimes just taking advantage of the numbness factor to keep on plugging away. They, too, are on the hurry-up-and-wait plan for test results, as her liver enzymes were somewhat elevated. Meanwhile, they are focused on a yard sale for the end of this week...so include success in emptying their closets and filling their wallets while you are busy praying, please!

A good friend of mine and I would often joke about how God works off of two basic theologies (other than the most fundamental theology of all: the Theology of Love), which are the Theology of Hurry-Up-And-Wait, and the Theology of Pain. I believe Dom Carisetti, Tim McLaughlin, and my Jim refer to the latter as the Theology of the Two-By-Four, to which God occasionally must/needs resort in order to get our attention!

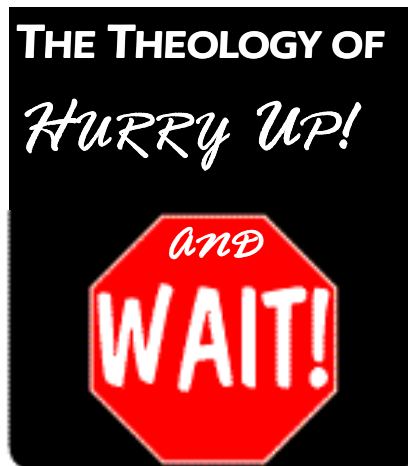
The Theology of Hurry-Up-And-Wait is one that Barb and I and our families (and all the other folks who have experienced major health or other crises) know...while we await results from medical tests, we are trying to juggle scheduling, families, job responsibilities, kids' sports teams, family vacations, etc...all of which are dependent upon the results of the test. So, we develop a Plan A, Plan B...Plan Q, etc., etc., etc. All of you have experienced this...waiting for the job interview feedback to know where you will go to live...waiting to learn if there was a promotion to decide if you can afford a house or a car, or a kid's college expenses for the college they desperately want, and so forth.

The trick is to realize that while you have to wait for those answers, you must NOT wait to live life. Those waits and

obstacles and unclear paths ARE your life, and mine, too. How do we live with exuberance and joy when we don't know which way we'll be jumping tomorrow? I don't know. Sometimes I don't pull it off very well...but I'm bound and determined to try. Most of us firmly believe that everything happens for a reason. I believe that is so, from the bottom of my heart. So, when my wants and dreams are not immediately realized but placed on hold (or maybe even canceled!) I have finally concluded that it is because there is something else right where I already am that God wants me to notice. If I am not permitted to move on (to another school, a better job, an easier-to-maintain home, a higher college degree, etc.) it must be that I haven't fully reaped the benefit of where I'm at. Or, maybe, there is someone out there who will receive some benefit from me that has not yet benefited. Something like Mary Poppins or Nanny McPhee...they didn't move on until their young charges grew and/or healed so they could do ok on their own. Maybe we hold those positions, too, but don't realize it.

So, while we are 'stuck' we need to look around us and see what there is to enjoy in this place that has us in its hold. How about the people that are here? Some of them feel just as stuck as we do. It is from some of these folks I have learned to expand my sense of laughter and of humor. Many have taught me not just endurance, but grace and dignity and strength because of that very necessity of endurance. And often I have learned that I developed skills (and the aforementioned strength) because I couldn't walk away from something and therefore chose to find the best way to engage those circumstances. Truth be told, I have met and enjoyed some of the most wonderful teachers who are the everyday people around you and me, who choose to live and laugh and grow even if they are in situations not of their choosing. I think my biggest heroes were everyday people who we now know as big names...who just did what they had to do, where they were stuck, because it was the right thing to do.

Oscar Romero was a shy, scholarly priest who wanted only to be left alone to learn about God in the writings of the saints, but he was made Bishop in El Salvador, in part because no one thought he could handle the job and would therefore leave politics, etc., in the hands of the current powers.



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This quiet, bookish man who abhorred power and politics was open to the little people, and because of his love of them, in very ordinary ways he let God use him to change the face of El Salvador.

My very first hero was Harriet Tubman. She had nothing to work with but sheer grit and determination and a conviction of what was right and what was wrong. With no money, plenty of experience of abandonment and abuse, and a significant physical handicap, she not only managed to acquire her own freedom, but got hundreds more people free as well, and much, much more. She knew how to live sacrificial love in everyday ways, and it changed her world.

And there are others: Mother Theresa, Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and other everyday people using only everyday means and resources, with an abundance of love. Few, if any, would have chosen their circumstances (except maybe Mother Theresa for at least part of the time!) but all made the most of what they were and where they were, and lives and history were changed. Hurry-Up-And-Wait paid big dividends.

So...maybe we're stuck in a hospital room or nursing home we don't like (or a chemo treatment we'd rather avoid!)...maybe the marriage is getting mighty heavy, or the kids have exhausted our hearts and minds and souls...maybe the job or the classroom is full of people who give far more grief than support, or we are underpaid and don't know how we'll cover the bills and feed the family. Somehow, some way, God is in this. God will carry us...and if we keep our eyes open for him, we'll get the glimpses of heaven that will keep us on our feet, even if we don't seem to be moving forward. I can promise you, if we hang on to him, the blessings will more than make up for the pain, just maybe not in the way we expected, and often not in the way we wanted.

As a result, Barb and her family enjoyed her daughter Sarah's track meet today...and Thursday and Friday they will be reaping the benefit of all that hauling and organization and pricing and cleaning of their yard sale items all week. Maybe they can't take their family vacation to an out-of-the-way camping spot for a week or two...but they can plan mini-trips, maybe to potential colleges for Sarah to investigate.

As for us...well, I have chemo #5 tomorrow...and I have family I love to cheer me, and friends, too. I have long wanted to see old MacGyver episodes that I remember from yea these many years ago. Thanks to a Netflix gift certificate from Cheryl, I have some of the first season episodes waiting at hand to watch...if I don't manage to

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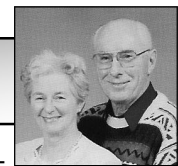
go see Liam's baseball game tomorrow night. Livvy has lent me some excellent books, as has Liam (Scholastic books had a buy-one-get-one-free sale last week...it's been hard to keep my hands off them 'til this week!). And this weekend, my brother John and his wonderful wife Christine (it's her birthday today!) and their three amazing children will be coming for Memorial weekend, as well as my college kids passing through (except for poor Cait who is 'stuck' here doing a heck of a lot of cleaning and other work! Thank the good Lord she still manages to smile!) And life is good...so very, very good.

So, may all of you enjoy this late spring, and what promises to be the first of the summertime temperatures this year. And if you are feeling decidedly stuck and unblessed, it's ok...there's someone out there that YOU are blessing, even if you are totally unaware of it! Meanwhile, may you know yourself surrounded by an abundance of God's laughter, love, peace and joy... love,

Mary Carol

PS...Our Caitie's part-time job fell through when the business closed...if anyone has any suggestions or knows of someone hiring locally, we'd love a heads-up! Thanks!

Tom Madigan Update



Janet Madigan reports that Tom continues to make slow recovery from strokes he experienced a few months ago at the couple's winter home in Florida. Tom, who has not yet recovered his speech, would nevertheless love to hear from his St. Mary's friends. Please give Tom's room a call at 1-727-298-6897 or write him at the Morton Plant Hospital Rehabilitation Center, 300 Pinellas Street, Clearwater, Florida, 33756.