

Meandering to a
Different Drumbeat

the Joan Times

A New Direction Again!

Our wonderful God of surprises has come up with a beaut this time! You'll recall that since I returned from my one-year volunteer stint in the Holy Land, I have offered at every opportunity a slide show through which I teach about day-to-day life in Biblical times. This is mostly material I was trained to teach to tour groups at the Biblical Resources Study Center in Jerusalem. The information truly makes the Bible come to life.

What has evolved is a one-woman dramatization entitled, *Women of First Century Palestine; Come Share Their World*, for which I am now in the process of seeking bookings throughout the country. So many particulars have fallen into place as the production developed (details follow) that I have no doubt God is nudging me toward this.

Mind you, I haven't the vaguest notion of what it will take; nonetheless I have made a commitment that by 2001, this performance will be featured for at least six national conferences.

How This Came into Shape

Before leaving my California church community late in October, I booked the Adult Education slot between Masses on Sunday, March 7th. To correspond with that day's Gospel reading (*John 4: 1-42*), I planned to discuss daily treks to the village well and the critical importance of water supplies throughout Biblical history.

Once settled into my temporary trailer home in North Carolina, however, my mind began to think in terms of story-telling. So I flew all the way across the country to *portray* women going to the well in an hour-long presentation at St. Leo's in Sonoma. After an impromptu repeat performance later that week for nineteen enraptured women in someone's living room, I began to think, *Wow! I'd like to do this at least twice a week for the rest of my life!*

Add a bit of dramatics to the marvelous teaching of Dr. Jim Fleming of Biblical Resources and you have something quite powerful. I have since presented this more than a dozen times in various states. The response and series of "coincidences" have made it clear I must seek out more and larger audiences. Now if I can just figure out how. ☺

Did the following events just HAPPEN to happen when they happened?

In a tiny town in Pennsylvania, I stayed a few days in the house some friends would soon move into. Hearing there was a morning Mass in the local Catholic Church, I headed there next day, finding a well-lit church with candles burning on the altar, but with only one person in the pews. And yet I could hear a priest interacting with children about the day's Scripture readings. *I must be in the wrong place*, I mused and went looking. In an adjacent room were all the schoolchildren sitting on the floor, very engaged in their discussion with the energetic young pastor. Shortly, about a dozen youngsters stood up, adorned themselves with bits of headgear, costume, or props, and dramatized the Gospel! (I learned later that the children write their own scripts for these enactments.)

After a lively, participatory homily, everyone trooped into the church, but rather than taking places in the pews, they gathered around the altar.

This is my kind of liturgy!! What a joy!

Another Teachable Moment

At the conclusion, I introduced myself to young Father Joe, gave proper praise, and made an offer. "I don't know how spontaneous your community is," I began, but this is who I am and this is what I do. Immediately we sought out the principal, also a lively young man.

"9:25 to 10:15 tomorrow morning would be great." And so, sitting on the same floor where I had first encountered them, children grades 5 to 8, their teachers, pastor, principal, and a few mothers met *Women of First Century Palestine*. Questions afterwards were poignant, brilliant, and continuing. We had to cut them off for lack of time.

In appreciation, Principal Steve suggested they buy for the school library a copy of my book, *Embracing the Yes!* As he and I walked to the rectory where a check could be cut, we had a most fruitful conversation. Turns out he, himself, is on the national speaking circuit and he gave me several tips and a solid basis for developing my fee structure. When Pastor Joe handed me the check, I stuck it in my bag without looking at it, packed up my slides, and soon decided to pack up the rest of my things and be on my

way. The next segment of my journey was the longest of the three week trip and it seemed wise to get a couple of hours of driving in that evening.

Along the 1200 some miles I had already come, this was the first time (except for a conference I attended) that I would have to stay in a motel instead of the home of a friend. I found a reasonably priced motel, climbed to my top floor room, and opened my laptop so I could enter the book sale into my records. What a sweet surprise to discover that the check covered the book *and* a presentation fee which came within 13 cents of the cost of my motel room!

Later, from Wisconsin, I phoned my brother's wife Diane, a professional actress, requesting she set up a presentation so she could give me coaching and critique. The woman Diane called (at her church) eagerly scheduled the performance and added, "If Joan can get me about three hundred of her brochures before next week, I'll see that everyone at the National Catholic Catechetical Leaders annual conference, *meeting here in Indianapolis*, gets a copy."

You can believe my fingers flew over my computer that day, producing quite a satisfactory first draft of my brochure. The revision is enclosed with this Joan Times. What do you think? Would *your* faith community, grade school, high school, college, director of religious education, Bible study group, women's studies organization, retreat center, or whatever have an interest? You may share the brochure, if you wish, or ask me to send you more, or promote my work in other ways. But most important - if you do - is to send *me* the contact names and addresses so I can follow up directly.

More Serendipity

In Wisconsin I was hosted for a couple of weeks by good friends in their rural lakeside home. One sunny morning, *Women of First Century Palestine* entertained a monthly gathering in a Milwaukee parish. What an energetic and appreciative group of seniors! When afterwards I shook the hand of the sightless gentleman waiting, with his white cane, for a ride home, his heartfelt words overwhelmed me. "Oh, Joan," he enthused, "That was so wonderful! I wish you had gone on for another hour. I practically memorized everything you said so I can tell my friends about it!" And our subsequent conversation confirmed he really had.

Scheduled to leave Wisconsin on a Wednesday morning, I received news from a friend on *Tuesday* of a regional conference *in Milwaukee, that weekend*, of the North American organization known as Christians in Theater Arts. Of course I attended. Most beneficial in many ways!

The next Monday, in Indianapolis, not one but *three* professional actresses watched my performance to give me superb suggestions, ideas, inspiration. I've been working since to develop this unique performance to be all it can be.

The Joan Huguenard Tour 2000

If the enclosed brochure doesn't make you drool, toss out your tissues! The delay in getting this brochure ready is my own fault (I had a couple of other things on my mind.) But we're on a roll now! Biblical Resources and I are ready to sign you up for your experience of a lifetime!

Need additional brochures and applications for friends? Just let me know. Also, feel free to make copies.

For what it's worth, I can't tell you how many times, after I had guided a tour group through the Scripture Garden in Jerusalem in 1997, someone conversed with me afterwards, revealing that when they learned of the Holy Land tour, they signed up not having any idea where the money would come from. Obviously their prayers were answered.

As for safety, I repeat with passion that I felt safer in Israel while I was there for a whole year than I do in this dangerous country we live in. And if you want to wait until it's "perfectly safe" over there, well, it hasn't been "perfectly safe" since *long* before Jesus lived there.

Next year in Jerusalem!

Driver-Helper-Companions Wanted

If you are very confident behind the wheel, have an excellent driving record (I *will* check) and could spend a month or so traveling with me and the *Women of Palestine*, let me know. I'm considering purchasing an "experienced" live-in trailer to pull behind my van.

My Book

Embracing the Yes! ; A Life Recycled, my inspirational personal odyssey, focuses on learning to recognize God's nudges and invitations. It's been called a joyful, easy read with food for thought, good humor, and inspirational messages. *Embracing the Yes!* is available by calling (toll-free) 1-877-BOOK-YES or send to my P.O. address \$25 (includes shipping and handling) + if you live in California - 1.45 tax.

Other Writings

Alas, certain plans have been abandoned or postponed as I felt led in this new direction. So I won't be publishing three more books in 1999. We'll see what the future brings.

Be in Touch

I'm not as hard to find as you think! My mailing address has been the same for three years! And my email stays the same. You can leave a message at my toll-free numbers. *Please* call again if we don't respond.

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