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LIVING MY *fiat*

A Week Away: Lessons from the Shore

Hey Friends,

As I reflect on my last blog, I can now see how God was quietly preparing me for a summer unlike anything I expected.

For more than a decade, I worked for myself. My office was wherever my laptop happened to be, and my work often took me around the world. Life felt like a continuous adventure, where the lines between work and vacation were beautifully blurred. After leaving the corporate world, I forgot what it truly meant to step away, unplug, and rest.

Being the workhorse that I am—and deeply devoted to my vocation as a consecrated single woman—I genuinely love serving God and my parish. Most days, it doesn't even feel like work.

Or at least, that's what I thought.

This summer, I stepped away from parish life for an entire week. It was just me, God, a steady supply of iced coffee, and the ocean. In that quiet space, I discovered things about myself that I hadn't noticed while staying busy serving others.

Before my trip, my spiritual director—a priest and spiritual father who walks closely with me in my vocation—encouraged me to begin seeing myself as a missionary. If I'm being honest, I was hesitant. The title felt too big, too official, perhaps even undeserved. But as the saying goes, "Father knows best."

What I didn't realize was that this beach vacation would become the very vehicle God would use to bring so much into the light.

The waves, the silence, the long walks, and the uninterrupted conversations with God revealed lessons I could not have learned while rushing from one responsibility to the next. Sometimes the Lord speaks most clearly when we finally stop moving long enough to listen.

So, grab a cup of coffee and join me as I share some of these deeper reflections from my week with God by the sea.

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I've always been a foodie.

Not just someone who enjoys a good meal, but someone who loves discovering restaurants with a unique atmosphere and experience. Whenever I travel, I spend hours researching the best local spots. I read reviews, browse Instagram pages, and, as a vegan, usually know exactly what I'm going to order before I ever walk through the door.

So naturally, before heading to Florida's scenic Highway 30A, I did my homework.

For those unfamiliar, 30A stretches along the Gulf Coast between Destin and Panama City Beach. It's known for its charming beach towns, incredible restaurants, and vibrant coffee culture. I had a carefully planned itinerary filled with foodie stops and trendy cafés.

One of my favorite hobbies has always been photographing my meals and sharing my experiences through Google Reviews. Over the years, my Google profile has received more than a million views. People from all over the world have followed my recommendations for restaurants, hotels, and attractions. As a former digital nomad, finding the perfect coffee shop to work from was practically a sport.

But after all the time I spent planning my culinary adventure, God had different plans.

The moment I arrived, I had almost no desire to follow my itinerary.

Instead of restaurant hopping, I found myself enjoying simple home-cooked meals. Rather than exploring every trendy café on my list, I settled into a small local coffee shop directly across from my favorite beach access point. Normally, I can struggle with a little FOMO—the fear of missing out—but as I wandered through the different beach communities, I felt completely content.

I wasn't missing anything.

In fact, I was exactly where I was supposed to be.

Then God began doing something I never expected.

Without setting an alarm, I started waking up naturally at 5:00 a.m. and going to bed by 9:00 p.m. My body loved the rhythm. Gone were the late nights and rushed mornings. There was something healing about living in sync with the sunrise and sunset.

When we're twenty years old, we can somehow survive on two hours of sleep and a cup of coffee. As I've gotten older, I've learned to appreciate the gift of rest.

And in that rest, God made room for prayer.

With this new routine, I found myself praying all seven hours of the Liturgy of the Hours each day.

If you're unfamiliar with the Liturgy of the Hours, it's the official daily prayer of the Catholic Church. The prayers follow the liturgical seasons and sanctify different moments throughout the day. While I've always loved praying the Divine Office, it can be challenging because each hour is intended to be prayed at a specific time.

Yet somehow, during this trip, it flowed effortlessly.

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I've never been able to fully explain my love for the Liturgy of the Hours. The closest description I can offer is that it feels like receiving little love notes from God throughout the day. Every few hours, He gently calls me back into His presence.

Instead of spending my time in restaurants, coffee shops, and online reviews, God invited me into something deeper. He romanced my heart and reminded me of a peace I had almost forgotten—the peace that comes from ordering my life around prayer.

Perhaps the most surprising thing God revealed wasn't about food or routines. It was about relationships.

I am an introvert, and I've finally learned to embrace that.

For much of my life, I felt judged or misunderstood because of my quiet nature. I spent years trying to become more outgoing so others would feel comfortable around me. Eventually, I realized I wasn't being authentic. I was trying to become someone else to meet other people's expectations.

I've stopped doing that.

The truth is, I'm a well, not a waterfall.

I observe. I reflect. I think deeply.

And honestly, I've found that the Holy Spirit often speaks most clearly to me in that quiet place. When I force myself to be someone I'm not, it feels like a performance. But when I allow myself to be exactly who God created me to be, His voice becomes easier to hear.

For years, I traveled alone. I ate alone. I explored the world alone. And I genuinely enjoyed that freedom.

But this trip felt different.

For the first time, I didn't long for more people—I longed for my people.

I wished my nieces, nephew, and goddaughter were with me. I thought about dear friends walking this journey with me.

It wasn't loneliness.

It was love.

God was softening my heart, showing me that while solitude is holy, authentic community is a gift.

And as I sat on the beach watching the waves roll in, I realized something was quietly dying within me—not painfully, but beautifully.

The need to constantly do.
The need to constantly see more.
The fear of missing out.

In its place, God was growing a deeper desire for prayer, rest, and the people He has entrusted to my life.

When I returned home from my trip, I had a very special photography project to complete for my parish. Naturally, I recruited my nieces and nephew to be part of the photoshoots.

It was the first time I had seen them since returning from the beach, and being together made the day even more meaningful. As we laughed, captured beautiful moments, and simply enjoyed one another's company, I realized we weren't just taking photos—we were creating memories that would last a lifetime.

God Speaks *Through People*

I've always believed that God speaks to us.

He speaks through Scripture, prayer, silence, creation, and the quiet movements of the Holy Spirit. But I've also come to believe that He often speaks through people, ordinary conversations, and moments we could easily dismiss as coincidence.

I don't believe in coincidences.

I believe in a God who delights in leaving little breadcrumbs for His children—gentle invitations that remind us He is near if we're willing to pay attention.

Before leaving for Florida, my spiritual director encouraged me to read Story of a Soul, the autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. If I'm being completely honest, I struggled through most of the book.

I admired her holiness, but I felt disconnected from her story. More than once I wondered, Father, why did you ask me to read this? I trusted there had to be something the Lord wanted me to discover, even if I couldn't see it yet.

Then, near the very end of the book, I found it.

St. Thérèse wrote, almost playfully, about creating a mock wedding announcement celebrating her spiritual marriage to Jesus.
The moment I read those words, everything changed.

Without realizing it, every page before that had been quietly preparing my heart. Thérèse's simple, childlike love for Jesus awakened something deep within me. I suddenly found myself longing to love Him the way she loved Him—with complete trust, joyful abandonment, and total surrender.

As I sat on the beach reading those final pages, the floodgates opened.

I couldn't stop crying.

Wave after wave of emotion washed over me, but even more powerful was the overwhelming sense of Jesus' love surrounding me. It wasn't emotional excitement.

It was a profound awareness that He was there.

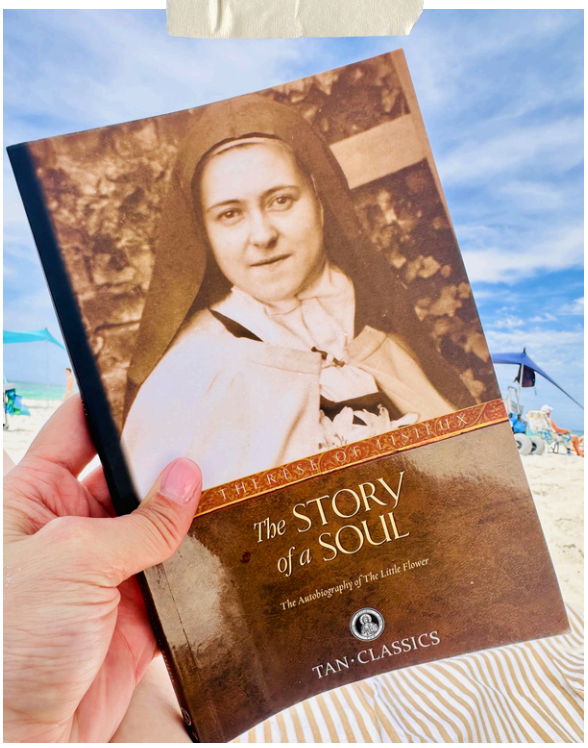
In that sacred moment, I whispered a simple prayer.

"Jesus... if this is really You, I need a sign."

I opened my eyes.

Standing directly in front of me was a man with a large tattoo of the Sacred Heart of Jesus covering his calf.

I smiled through tears.



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Some people might call it coincidence.

I call it a love letter.

That tattoo wasn't simply a sign. It became the beginning of a deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus as my Bridegroom.

God rarely shouts.

More often, He whispers.

He speaks through people we meet, conversations we weren't expecting, books someone recommends, life experiences, and even the stranger who unknowingly becomes an answer to our prayer.

The problem isn't that God has stopped speaking.

The problem is that we've become too busy to notice.

We're constantly rushing to the next appointment, checking notifications, filling every quiet moment with noise. In our hurry, we often miss the gentle movements of the Holy Spirit.

As the days passed and the Feast of the Sacred Heart drew closer, Jesus continued drawing me deeper into His Heart.

Looking back now, I can see that my spiritual director's recommendation wasn't simply about reading a book.

It was an invitation.

St. Thérèse became the gentle guide who took me by the hand and introduced me more deeply to the Heart of Jesus. True to her "Little Way," she didn't point me to herself—she pointed me to the One she loved above all else.

And somewhere between the pages of her story and the shores of the Gulf, I realized that Jesus had been pursuing my heart all along.

When I returned home from the seaside, I knew I wasn't the same person.

The Holy Spirit had given me a mission.

He invited me to let go of the story I had been telling myself—that because I'm an introvert, I naturally withdraw in large crowds. While my quiet nature is part of who God created me to be, He was asking me to stop hiding behind it and become more intentional about spending time with not only the people I love, but with His people.

The first mission?

A San Francisco Giants vs. Atlanta Braves game with my spiritual daughter, Kyleigh. Somehow, we managed to make our way down to the 12th row behind third base. I'll probably need to mention that little adventure in my next confession! 😂

What I learned this summer is that dying to our old selves doesn't mean becoming someone else. It means allowing Jesus to transform us into who He created us to be.

My week at the beach wasn't just a vacation—it was an invitation.

An invitation to rest, to listen, to fall more deeply in love with Jesus, and to say "yes" to wherever He leads next.

The adventure is just beginning, and I have a feeling the Holy Spirit has many more surprises in store.

Thank you for joining me on this part of the journey. I look forward to sharing more of these Holy Spirit adventures with you in August.

Until then, keep your eyes open.

God is speaking far more often than we realize.