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Bio Clip - Mother Veronica

Mother Veronica pointed to the Bible on the altar. “You must never read that book. It is a sin if you do. The only person that can read it is a priest and only during the mass.” The warning words of the nun who was my second grade teacher caused me to itch with curiosity. And right there and then I decided that when I grew up, I would get my own copy of that book and read it. I just had to find out what it was that it said that it was a sin to know. I was eight years old. I thought adulthood happened at age 15. Fifteen minus eight is seven. I had to wait seven years. The thought of such a long wait overwhelmed me at first, but I was determined to give it a go. A few days later, I just couldn’t wait any longer.



Teresita, 3rd Grade - Havana, Cuba

After I made sure no one saw me, I sneaked into the school chapel. Good, it was empty. I dashed straight to the altar, grabbed the Bible and went to hide in the back corner, crouching by the organ pedals where no one could detect me. Filled with thrill I opened the book. Problem. Why didn’t I remember that when the priest read aloud from it he spoke in Latin? I had to quickly come up with plan B. Got it. The nuns in the kitchen surely wouldn’t know that Mother Veronica said the Bible was off limits. Um. But Mother Veronica also said that students were to never enter the kitchen.

I walked into the kitchen and went straight to the first nun I saw there. She was busy working by a counter. I opened the Bible to a random page and pointed to it, holding it high above my head for her to see. “What does it say here?” Immediately she looked scandalized and took the Bible. She must have told on me because Mother Veronica sent a letter of complaint to my mother.

My mission failed, but Mother Veronica wasn’t through with me. From that time on, whenever she passed me on the hallway and no one was around, she seized the opportunity to slap me hard across the face. I needed Divine intervention against that woman.

The day came when Mother Veronica and I passed each other on the second floor hallway, right at the top landing of the wide and beautiful, marble staircase which curved down onto the lobby. When she spotted me from afar, she spread a smile. By that time I had been conditioned to interpret it as the warning of an impending slap. So this time, as we passed each other, I ducked. Yet the strength she had prepared for the blow was such, that its force thrust her off balance when she missed her target. Had she not instinctively gone for the

From the Desk of Teresita Pérez

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handrail and grabbed it firmly, she would have tumbled down the staircase. Coming up from my squat position, I turned my head for an instant as I continued walking away, and got a glimpse of her wild maneuvering to save herself. She never slapped me again.

The burning desire to read the Bible stayed with me. “You brought the Light to your home,” Morayma would tell me. She had been the instrument God brought into my life, as I was about to leave my teen years behind, in order to commence to satisfy my thirst for spiritual knowledge. Morayma was right. In my household, I was the first to have a conversion experience, followed by my sister, then my mother, my sister’s husband, and finally my dad. But my being first did not mean I had any merit over and above the others. On the contrary, I was first because God is a Savior and he worked out the best scenario for our entire family to know Him. So there was no spiritual favoritism towards me by God. In fact, I was the worst of the lot, the nut case, the rebel, the one that needed to be stopped in the full bloom of youth, before I continued to ruin my reputation more than it was necessary. God called me first because He wanted to save my entire family and I was the perfect shortcut. You see, my budding faith gave birth to virtue and I no longer talked back to my mother in disrespect. The shock of seeing me submissive to her was such, that it overwhelmed her. She pointed out her astonishment to my dad, insisting that there must be something good in this new faith that I suddenly found and wanted to share with them. Calling me first was not about me, it was about God, His wisdom, His divine and eternal saving nature that was working on behalf on an entire family that we may all share together in His wonderful salvation.