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**Detour in Italy leads to embracing humility** by Monica Hidalgo Breaux, PhD, MSW

*“The Father of Lies called to me from hell, “You cannot walk, nor speak, nor even feed yourself. Come to me.”*

Half-jokingly, I asked God to help me give up my arrogance for Lent. God works in mysterious ways. I found myself in Italy, expecting to do a mission for God. Then I broke my foot.

I became united to the helplessness of Christ of the cradle and Christ of the cross. Tons of grace poured forth and, for a brief period, arrogance was no longer a problem. My new challenge was that I



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could not walk nor speak the language. Also, I became separated from my companion who was carrying my money, so I could not buy food. The Father of Lies called to me from hell, “You cannot walk, nor speak, nor even feed yourself. Come to me.”

My heavenly Father encouraged me to be distracted from temptation. Drawn to a nearby church, I found myself in the sacred presence of relics of the wood from the Bethlehem manger. The blessings of the time I spent there are beyond expression. I thought about how the cradle of baby Jesus is a food trough, and in the Eucharist, He is our food from heaven. I heard God calling, “You cannot walk, nor speak, nor even feed yourself. Come to me.”

I reflected on our Blessed Mother’s unplanned pregnancy. I am thankful to the Blessed Virgin Mary who opted for parenting and to good St. Joseph who opted for adoption. His protection was crucial in our salvation story. Many years of my past were spent reaching out in mercy toward women who were seeking an abortion. I witnessed how pregnancy can cause a woman to feel temporary despair, but with loving support from others she can regain her trust in God to feel safe enough to face her future.

I believe that the spirit of abortion goes beyond rejecting human life in the womb and I recognize that spirit within myself. Each day, God sends person after person who can release me from the prison of my selfishness, but I refuse to receive them. I will not meet their eyes, give them a look of love, hear their words, nor acknowledge their value. I am afraid I would be overwhelmed by their needs and their problems. I don’t know if I can afford them in my life. With self-righteous arrogance, I reason that I can barely cope with my own life and my baggage of self-pity. In a way, I abort them.

Every single person is created by God to bring Love to others. As we mature emotionally, we become more aware of missed opportunities, but opening our hearts to chaste relationships is always humanly possible. At the manger, I saw my arrogance as being ugly, unchaste behavior. I understood how this sin of pride interferes with the splendor and grace of holy masculinity or femininity. As a woman, my chaste sexual choices can offer the world one of the many faces of God, but I will never attract anyone to Christ when filled with arrogance because it is not Christian.

When Jesus spoke the truth to the unchaste woman at the well, she went out to invite others to be drawn to Him, even if they were coming only to hear the gossip about her own sinfulness. My story is written in that same spirit. It is inspired by Caryll Houselander’s quote from “Wood of the Cradle, Wood of the Cross”: “At the moment of His conception, our Lord accepted the littleness, discomfort and indignities of the helpless infant, unable to walk, to speak, or even to feed himself.”

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