

A Humble Transformation

Inspired by Luke 1:39-45

Mandy packed the last of the boxes in haste. Today she is moving to a small home in the hill country, leaving the city behind. This was her time to begin again, a perfect time for change — it's the fourth week of Advent! She has gained hope and courage in this Season of her life, stepping out of the old, learning from the past. She feels herself walking in the footsteps of John the Baptist. Her time in the spotlight is done. Now the Lord is calling Mandy to the quiet. He led her to this decision to step back. Watch. Listen. Keep it simple and humble. There will be joy again.

On Christmas Eve, Mandy lights a fire in the fireplace and looks out the window to watch the snowfall covering the trees and shrubs in a soft blanket of white. She hadn't seen such natural beauty in years. Now, she is blessed to experience it every day. This new year will bring new blessings and new direction for her. This is her first Christmas to be all alone. While it feels sad and desolate on one level, it is wrapped in peace. Mandy is unsure what the future holds. This had never been her plan. She loved being with lots of people and lots of action and noise. She built a career on leading teams and bringing the action, and she was very good at it! But, her prayer and reflection opened this new path with a new beginning.

Circumstances change. Over the past few years, there had been nudges, thoughts, events, and moments when she could sense her former lifestyle was drawing to an end. Then, a pivotal series of broken relationships filled with scars and pain grabbed her by the heart and turned her toward this new journey. She clung to the Word of God's promise to shepherd His flock. He promised to protect what His right hand has planted. Trusting in this gave her the courage to make the move. Mandy quickly found a job in the quaint, town bakery. Her cupcake skills gave her new purpose and it was pleasant work. She rose early each morning and spent her shift in the back kitchen baking and decorating the goodies. The townspeople delighted in them. Business was good and traffic picked up. By Valentines Day, the owner asked Mandy to help at the front counter for a few hours each day after the baking was done.

All was well. Mandy was content with her quiet routine of baking, reading, and taking long walks. It was a huge adjustment from her former life of long business hours, and nightly social events, parties, dinners, and concerts in the city. This was nice.

One Spring morning, a local named Emily entered the Bake Shop and greeted Mandy. When Mandy heard Emilys greeting, something sparked inside of her. She felt the warmth of the Holy Spirit and knew they would grow to be great friends. They had an instant connection of sisterhood. Both women felt it. And, sure enough, over the next

few weeks the two women began to get together regularly for coffee chats and hikes in the hills. They shared books and songs and prayers.

Mandy hadn't yet looked for a Church home in this new town. Not going to Church was also new for her. She hadn't missed a Sunday Mass since birth. Her relationship with the Lord had changed in the Advent of this lifestyle transformation. She felt lost and unsure. So she stayed away and waited. Mandy found God in the quiet. She found Him in her heart. She came to know His presence in a very different way.

Her new friend Emily invited Mandy to Ash Wednesday Mass. Let's sit together in the back. You don't have to do anything. Just be there. I feel the Holy Spirit is leading my invitation. She nudged me to invite you to come home. Come to Church with me. Mandy agreed. It was a bitter, cold night, but the dark and the damp didn't hinder attendance. St. Michael Church was packed! The two women sat in the back corner as planned. A group of the faithful were up front reciting the Rosary aloud before the start of Mass. Tears surfaced when Mandy heard the prayer, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." At that moment, Mandy's heart leaped for joy and she felt a tremendous desire come over her. She wanted to receive Jesus in the Eucharist again. She knew Communion would taste different in her mouth. She knew God's Word would sound different in her ears. She was overcome with joy. She was home.

Mandy believed goodness would continue to be born in the movement of her life. She knew God's promise to her was being fulfilled.

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