

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

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April 2003

Editor's Note: This month's story is another related to my Ireland Pilgrimage, Sept. '02.

Dear Friends,

A typical morning of errands at home was behind me. Ground fog had lifted but left the skies a white-gray. I backed out my driveway, switched on my lights for safety and began a collection of rote prayers I honor each day when I first sit in my car.

For my short trek, I drove past the busy six-lane, choosing an alternate route lined with orange trees. Before I turned onto the two-lane, I prepared. I opened my windows and moon roof part-way.

Rolling along the grove-lined little-traveled macadam, my senses responded to the sight of green and the sound of air rushing in the windows. I was carried into another place. The experience reminded me of my Ireland pilgrimage.

Months ago, the afternoon sun peeked through dense road-side foliage as our tour bus motored the narrow country roads. Hill of Tara was our destination. Our guide, Carson, prepared us saying that Tara was once the Spiritual Capitol of Ireland. Irish legend and folklore formed in this place. On one hilltop a person might see forty-five percent of Ireland on a clear day. This hill was where the ancient Ard Ri' (high king) was crowned. From days of old, Tara was a magical, holy place.

After the bus slowed and turned down an even narrower lane, it stopped near a cluster of small cottages. I stepped down onto a dirt and gravel parking lot. Then, Carson led us up a one-lane gravel road, flanked by pastures. Before we'd gone a quarter mile, our group entered what appeared to be a farmer's fallow field of small knolls. Long blue-green grass bent in a light breeze rippling like waves. A long, straight low place through green indicated our path to Tara.

I stood in the small valley, its high green sides reminded me of grassed-over river banks. Our guide said this passageway led to several unseen hills. One was ceremonial. Relics suggested the kings lived on another. These pre-Celtic (Christian) people organized their lives as tribes, related like branches of a great extended family tree—all belonging to the same leader. All clans made the trip to Tara for celebrations of family, religion, and state, much like we gather for weddings, funerals, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Fourth of July.

Our guide pointed to the top of a sloping grassy valley and waved to its mounded sides on our right and left. He said some researchers suggested this low area was a kind of road. Wagons would have approached the hill laden with produce and other gifts for the king. Other archeologists thought this place held footings for a huge hall where food was served to thousands.

I gazed at the empty field. Carson spoke of a time without written record. His tale of tribes, kings and festivals slowly sank in. I felt a presence of the place. In a bond of

silence, pilgrims stepped separately off up the passage. I hung back. I observed their slow ascent and took pictures.

When I began my trek, I walked slowly. Vibrations of the past seemed to have settled here and each step stirred them like loose dust. A breeze blew the long grass this way and that and produced images of an ancient time.

A preteen girl walked in a long, slow-moving procession. Possibly she was making her first festival trip. Her hair hung dark and long. Each side was accented with careful braiding. She walked beside her mother at one side of a wooden cart heaped with tied down parcels. Both women wore dark, shiny beads and vests woven brightly with strands of orange and yellow. These festive adornments contrasted the browns and blacks of their long skirts, hems dusty from travel. A woven bracelet hung from the girl's left wrist.

Finally old enough to make the trip, the girl laughed and chatted to her mother who only smiled in response. The girl walked ahead on tip-toes craning to look around. Then she hastened to her mother and the cart, pointing and describing what lay ahead.

Myriad sounds greeted the girl: shouts, songs, carts rolling, dogs barking, even cart ponies, complaining. She breathed in unfamiliar sights, sounds and fragrances, savoring them all. The sensory elixir buoyed her.

The images faded by the time I reached others at the top of Tara Hill. Later, after re-cording the images in my notebook, I summed it simply,

A journey into the mystical—

*

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, "My visit to Tara Hill happened more than a week before I got the message, The way is through the green. (Feb. '03) Still, I see the same subtle message in this experience where I followed a green passageway into the mystical."

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(Letters to the Editor)

Frances,

My daughter (also named Joy) wrote me the included poem about her meditation experience with *her* message, *The way is through the green.*

GREEN WAY

On the misty moors

Of emerald shores

Where the old gods dwell

From crag to well

Where faeries weep
 And wounded knights sleep
 A lady walks the enchanted way.
 “Danu,” the wild ones say.
 She knows what no man can speak
 The trees her secret keep.
 An ancient tale, truths long forgotten
 Not even Morrigan dares to whisper of,
 Nor ravens who feed on
 That which death’s cold embrace leaves rotten.
 In the depth of her emerald eyes
 That is where the truth behind all truth lies.
 Star light is her pale skin
 The soul of the land within
 Barefoot clad in green
 Time falls behind wherever she is seen.
 Listen to the voiceless whispering wind keen,
 “*The way is through the
 green.* “

Every image ties to something in Old World mythologies. The really eerie part is that two of the lines come specifically from things I had told her when she was younger. I had forgotten I had used the phrase, "The way is through the Green" in an unfinished fantasy adventure I wrote years back.

While my two girls were away from home for the first time at church camp, I wrote them daily installments of the story. But, the first time I ever wrote the phrase was in a concisely written account of a vivid dream I had in 1976. Another line in my daughter’s poem—and the story I wrote back then-- came from that dream, *Time falls behind wherever she is seen.*

The beginning of that dream was a story of an interchange between a mother and a daughter. The daughter was six years old and they were on a yacht approaching New York City harbor. The mother put a beautiful pendant emerald around her daughter's neck and told her to remember, *The way is through the Green.*

Prayers for us all,
 Joy

Joy (Mar. '03) says she has taken on a new project to replant White Dutch clover (also known as Irish clover) in her yard. She hopes having her favorite green plant back in her yard will make her more receptive to any more GREEN messages. She promises to provide updates as the process unfolds.

Hi Fritzie,

I enjoyed reading March *Ninepatch*. It is also great to be back in the flow (See top, next.) of things in the newsletter. Are you still wondering about, “The way is through the green?”

I had a similar question about *The Green* at one time. It had to do with the holy women of Jerusalem. They were following the Lord while he was carrying his cross to Golgotha. He told the women not to weep over him but over their children. There is a quotation from the Bible, in which He says,(Luke 24:31)

If they do these things in the green wood, what will they do in the dry.

Later in my life, words of the prophet, Ezekiel, got my attention. It was a time when I was going through my "born again" experience. In part, Ezekiel said, (17:24)

...I wither up the green and make the dry trees become green...

At that time I had gone from dry to green and went with my new *green* full blast. I recall nine years of joy! That time has never been surpassed. Perhaps I was a spiritual glutton. Thinking back, I wish I had cherished more the personal, intimate, saving knowledge I was experiencing. Awareness of His presence is all I really need.

If *you* have been touched, Fritzie, that is all you need. Go with the *green!*

Love –Joy- Peace,

Lee

Lee (Mar. '03) says, "In my own personal encounter with The Good Shepherd I am aware that other individuals have distinct revelations or visions, which are genuine. It is always easier to share these experiences with people whose origins are the same. Ninepatch offers a forum where diverse insights convene. Cherish, reflect and meditate; such moments can be eternal."

Well Frances,

I'm not waiting anymore on selling my other house! (I've told my realtor as much.) So many postponements have already occurred.

I am following my intuition! It's creepy-- to say the least-- but I feel like a "guiding hand" is moving me more than my own sense of reason.

With the nation gripped in this situation of uncertainty right now, I find I am leaving my home where I feel I will be safest if something terrible should happen.

Keep up your great spirits!

Cat

Cat (Nov-Dec. '02) says, "I'm off first thing tomorrow to visit my son in another state. My springtime wandering urges are strong right now. I'll miss my latest Ninepatch but look forward to it on my return."

Dear Frances,

In a recent e-mail, you said you were trying to sit in silence every day -- for at least five minutes. You went on, "However, I remember last year I had trouble with just this little thing. Some days I could barely stay awake those few minutes."

(Giggle!) I have the same problem! I used to meditate almost daily but now there seems to be no time/space. When I do try... *snoorres!*

I was told that having a focus point is helpful. I've been searching for something ... maybe a statuette of Jesus or Buddha. (?) I will know it when I find it, I guess.

Good luck!

Lynn/TROR

Lynn/TROR (Mar. '03) adds, "I've also tried the repetition of a mantra like Ohm and found it powerful, though I have yet to try adding the use of prayer beads to my meditations. I've used a Rosary, but want to buy some Tibetan prayer beads, I think."

Dear Frances,

I want to share with you some good news! (Don't we all need some these days!) Friday I met with my prioress, and her council. There, I was formally approved to make my final vows with the Dominican Sisters in September 2003! I am very happy and excited. I have found new life, energy, and deep happiness with this congregation. They have helped me to deepen my relationship with God and open my heart to so many people-- a freedom I never had before. They support and encourage me in using my gifts and give me wonderful guidance so that I don't overdo and burn out.

May you and your families find peace in your hearts and light that one candle to bring light and peace into our world.

With love,
Patience

Patience (Feb '03) adds, "In this time of impending war, I am blessed with opportunities to bring true peace to people hungry to have real peace in their lives and neighborhood. I also involve myself in local marches for peace."

Hello Frances,

Thanks for your letter! Life here goes on the same—not much changes.

I haven't gone to the library recently. Instead, I am working on a Bible study course from our church. I also have a cross-stitch sampler I've been sewing. Since we've had lots of snow and it's cold, we just stay inside, warm and cozy, hibernating.

We went out to supper with our children and grandchildren last Sunday to celebrate my husband's birthday. That was nice. My dad stops once in a while to visit. It's good to see him and be with all my family from time to time.

Take care. God Bless.
Love and Prayers,
Linda Sue

Linda Sue (Mar. '03) reports, "My husband is still spoiling me. He does all the cooking and buys me surprises like flowers, candy and recently a musical angel."

----- **F-O-R-U-M** -----

(Readers Write to Other Readers)

Dear Gail (Mar.'03),

I've been carrying around your e-mail address with me for months, always sure I would take a moment to write and yet never doing so. Today, with the threat of war looming I'm finally trying to act on one of the good intentions rolling around my tipsy life.

I hope this note finds you well and at peace. I'm very pleased to be here on the West Coast, in this now not-so-new job. I'm finding out how much I've missed living in a sunny location! My husband is happy here, waking up each morning with the same comment on his lips: *Another day in paradise.*

I'm nearing a year since my parents died (They died within two weeks of each other.) Anniversaries of defining moments are always hard. I appreciate so much your kind notes stuck to my *Ninepatch*. As I said earlier, I'm still carrying one you sent to me by Gauguin, *I close my eyes to see.*

Take care and peace be with you,
Georgene

*Georgene (Mar.'03) adds, "I've been reading *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur S. Golden, and last week I went to hear Ann Lamott, author of *Traveling Mercies*. I still haven't found women friends I can just 'hang with' here."*

----- **F-A-B-R-I-C-S** -----

(Our Experiences)

A SMALL MIRACLE

When I read the Special February Miracle theme *Ninepatch*, I thought, "Miracles? Naw, I don't have any good, BIG ones." But, I have had a small miracle.

I finally got a job as a reporter and editor for a small county newspaper. I write four or so articles per week. This means that activities at work are rather like what I did during my unemployed days. I check e-mails and surf the net.

Besides the fun of research, writing for my paycheck means I actually have time to engage in correspondence. As the trade off of this wonderful job I've landed, I have to go to bed early (10 PM) almost every night. I also have to stay terribly late on Tuesday, when the paper goes to press.

Still, this is the work I wanted and search for nearly a year. It's still a small miracle I have the work I love.

Christa Weber (Oct. '02) adds, "I think of Frances' Ireland trip with some longing. No traveling for me for the moment, though I long for that freedom, especially with the social constraints imposed by my hours which also include a two- hour commute."

SEEKING APPROVAL

For a number of years I have been a member of a Twelve Step program. In the steps we study, number eleven leads me to,

“...improve my conscious contact” with the God of my understanding.

I also routinely participate in other self-help discussion groups which are composed mostly of women.

In my search for spiritual growth and from my reading and listening to what others share, I am learning it is vital to my growth to trust my *feelings*. They are the language of the soul. As I peel away the layers of peer pressure, socialization, and the expectations of others, I am beginning to know *Who I Am*. I find where my parameters are, and what's important to me.

Recently I have begun to notice a common thread in my conversations with a number of women. That strand indicates that some of us lack confidence in ourselves. I hear it in women's fear and hesitation concerning choices or decisions.

Some of us are easily intimidated, and appear to have an instinctive need for the per-mission or approval of a male--spouse, lover, father or friend. Or, lacking that, some seek re-assurance from a professional or one in a position of authority. It is almost as if we women need permission to trust our gut-level instincts— to know what our feelings are telling us. So often, we defer to men (who do not share a woman's experiences) then express anger and discontent when their advice or guidance doesn't improve our lot in life.

It seems that when women seek *approval*, what we really want is *validation*. In his book, Gift of Fear, Gavin de Becker makes a point repeatedly. On a gravely serious level, he says the gut instinct is very often the first warning of impending bodily harm. Becker says, on page 30:

...Can you imagine an animal reacting to a gift of fear the way some people do, ... thinking *It's probably nothing?*

Fear has many faces--not all of them physical.

I spent too many years thinking and doing what others told me was right for me. Now I work at keeping my soul, mind and body in alignment, and thinking for myself. I honor my instincts; I let nobody tell me how I feel. (It is wonderful to be free of all those strings that used to bind me. Now I am responsible for only myself.)

I believe women model behavior for others who look up to us. We teach others by how we allow ourselves to be treated. (This is especially true with daughters and granddaughters.) Sometimes it takes courage to stand up and be *Who I Really Am*.

June (Feb. '03) says: "I continually remind myself that I have a wonderful opportunity every day--choices, about everything--and I am responsible for those choices. "

ASHES

I had an experience last night at a small Ash Wednesday service at my Protestant church. At the end of the service, the small group of attendees went up to the pastor standing at the front of the church to receive ashes.

For about the fifth year in a row, I stayed seated, with no intention to receive the ashes. As I sat in the back watching this humble custom, I struggled with, "Why am I so resistant to this practice?"

Here are a few answers I found. First of all, I think of ashes as a (Roman) Catholic tradition. Second, the feelings I had remind me of the first time I put in my own gas. Pumping gas was something I just didn't do. I'd send the kids out of the car to do the deed. The first time I pumped my own gas, I just knew the whole world was watching Elaine getting her hands dirty doing this unfeminine act. Fortunately, I'm able to pump my own gas today without a second thought.

What is most important about this ash business is that receiving ashes in front of witnesses would be very humbling, something like pumping my own gas. It would also suggest that I accept and acknowledge to others that I am a child of God and that I'm here on Earth to serve Him. I think I'm still not ready to go that far. This is an area where I need much work.

I think I want to be a Christian but I've been faking it for a long time. To have received the ashes last night would have been dishonest. And yet, why did I show up for the brief service? I must still be seeking answers, still curious, but not quite willing to put in the effort.

Elaine (Mar. '03) adds, " On the Oprah TV show recently, I was fascinated by a segment about a book called, The Power of Full Engagement. It's about the importance of managing energy (not time) as a means of achieving high performance and personal renewal. While I haven't read the book, I know instinctively that this concept is true-- at least it is true for me.

A GARDNER'S SPRING GLEANINGS

Let the beauty that we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.".....Rumi

While kneeling in the vegetable garden and pulling weeds, I came across a cluster of tiny iridescent pearls. Exploring gently with my fingers, I found that they belonged to the slug lying unassumingly next to them. It lay so unobtrusive that it took my eyes a while to spot her earth-colored body. She was such a contrast to her snowy eggs!

Gazing in wonder for some time, I finally slid my trowel gently under her and her progeny. Then I carried them outside the garden to a spot where they would be safe and

could be about the work they were created to do in this world. No longer are they my enemy to be destroyed, rather they are revered for their unique role in nature. My job is to find a way for us to live in harmony.

Now when I find a slug in my garden, I gently gather it up and place it safely in a similar situation, but outside my area, in the woods. This is one small way I am learning to, *kneel and kiss the ground*, for all is sacred and worthy of respect.

Elise (Aug. '01) wrote this piece for Vol. 18 of the MorningStar Adventures, Summer 2002 newsletter. She adds, "I will say that I carried out many hundreds of slugs last summer. I was almost ruing my decision not to kill, but to live in harmony and respect with this humble creature. I find that learning to be more and more a person of peace in all dimensions of my life is not easy and involves many hard choices and sacrifices."

A NINE-HOUR MIRACLE PRAYER

I'd spent the morning with lady-friends at a prayer circle. When I got home I didn't feel like helping out with any more of my husband's paperwork.

Standing there considering what I wanted to do, I noticed this CD and book that a friend gave him, Healing Mantras by Thomas Ashley-Farrand. I decided to open it and see if I wanted to do--maybe one a day -- just because.

When I picked it up, out of its pages fell this paper. It's much duplicated print listed the, "Nine Hour Miracle Prayer."* (I have no idea who authored it.) Supposedly, you are to start your first hour at 9 AM and read a prayer every hour, on the hour. By the time you reach the ninth hour you should have any answers you are seeking. Following is that prayer, in part.

Miracle Prayer

FIRST HOUR

I come to You as a fearful child, Dear God...

SECOND HOUR

I pray to You for understanding...

THIRD HOUR

I have searched every corner of my heart, Dear God. Please take away the fear and anger that are there.

FOURTH HOUR

I come to You as a small part of Your infinite creation, knowing that even the tiniest thing in Your universe receives Your full attention...

FIFTH HOUR

I feel Your angels draw near to me. I know that I am not alone...

SIXTH HOUR

I am free now. I have done what I can and leave the rest to You...

SEVENTH HOUR

You are infinite and all knowing and working on my problem right now...

EIGHTH HOUR

This time of trial is almost over. I see that You have blessed me many times...

NINTH HOUR

I come to You, Dear God, in this last hour. Give me the grace to receive the blessings that You offer...

I thought it was fortuitous that this fell into my lap so soon after I listened to the soulful needs of another. It was no accident.

*Pam has re-married and is the mother of a 22 year-old young man who is in the Marines, stationed off the coast of Kuwait. (Yes, prayers are welcome.) In her spare time, she reads, does crewel embroidery, gardens, sings, bakes and volunteers as a mentor in her church. She is presently between jobs, after burning out in social services. Now she's trying her hand at writing children's stories. *Editor's note: If you would like a copy of this complete prayer process, send a self-addressed envelope to Ninepatch at our business address.*

-----**I-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S**-----
(Reading and Listening)

TWO DOCENTS ALONG MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

I recently completed two great books that have helped me along my spiritual journey. Patricia Hampl's memoir, Virgin Time, In Search of the Contemplative Life, is a renegade Catholic's pilgrimage to sacred places in search of a spirituality that she did not find in her birth church. Her writing is beautiful.

Then, I turned the pages of Catherine Ingram's, Passionate Presence, Experiencing the Seven Qualities of Awakened Awareness. The author expands on seven qualities arising from the heart. They are silence, tenderness, embodiment, genuineness, discernment, delight and wonder. Ingram is a compelling force in Western spiritual thought. Her Dharma Dialogues have helped thousands find their "heart intelligence".

Don (Mar. '03) adds, "The UNIVERSE has arranged for me to spend three days of solitude at a friend's beach house. It just happens (?) that time will include the Full Worm and the Vernal Equinox! (Howzat for planning!) My agenda is to write, but my main focus is opening my self to Ingram's awakened awareness."

-----**T-H-R-E-A-D**-----
(Our Spirituality)

TOGETHER
Life was creative,
I was active,

My sun shone!

**The dark of the moon
Came so soon,
Imprisoning me.**

**It is as pearly morns arise
Where both sun and moon
Ride pale skies,
That freedom comes.**

Phyllis (Feb. '02) was an original Ninepatch contributor. This poem is from Father Lou Anderson's personal collection.

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