

Reflections on My 70th Birthday

Wan Mei Wen

Although I was born in the year of the Horse, my 70th Birthday happens to fall in the year of the Dragon. Reminiscing over the past 70 years, that over the passing decades, I had to make many adjustments in my life-sometimes under very difficult conditions.

I was born into a scholarly upper middle class family in China with all the old traditions and family values deeply ingrained into me from an early age. Needless to say this would strongly influence my personal development and subsequently affected critical decisions I made in my own life in such areas as education, profession and even marriage.

The first major change in my life resulted when because of the Chinese revolution my family, like so many other families, fled to the island of Taiwan. Then when I was only 9 years old and emotionally and physically most vulnerable my parents obtained a divorce. It was during this stressful time that I discovered God whose boundless love then guided me from that time onward and helped me to overcome and ultimately succeed. My education in Taiwan was more directed by the strict rules and regulations that existed at the time in the educational system of Taiwan than by my own desires. Again with the Lord's help it became possible to adjust and succeed when success seemed almost out of reach.

During my college years in Taipei and because of my conversion to Catholicism I met my future husband, a graduate from the University of Taiwan, Medical College. Together in 1969 we moved to the United States to realize our dream of forming a family and establishing a career. After several job related moves within the United States including brief sojourns in Michigan and Nebraska we finally settled in Los Angeles, California. Since my husband originated from Germany this country also became a second home to us. During the next years we raised two daughters and in the later years we were blessed with the addition of two granddaughters.

In totality the transition from mainland China to Taiwan during a very turbulent historical moment; the unwanted divorce of my parents during my tender years causing chaos in my family, the loosening of family bonds and deep emotional scarring; a rigid educational system that did not allow a free choice of a professional development and a move to a foreign country were experiences that became deeply etched into my very being and dictated my thinking processes and very likely also inhibited the growth of my full potential. However it also helped me to find God. And because of the strength of my faith and the love that he gave me I was able to triumph over many of these misfortunes. I have been thanking our Lord by all of the means that were available to me. I became a member of our church choir and have been singing His praises for the past 20 years.

When I sing it seems to liberate the chains that have bound me in my heart and allowed enlightenment and comfort to enter. I have used His God-given talents such as writing, painting and even acting to thank Him for His mercy and goodness. These days with all the modern medical advancements, it is not uncommon to attain the age of 70. But we can never forget that this is also a blessing from our Lord and I shall follow His commands and teachings and do my utmost to fulfill the reason why he put me on this earth. Money cannot buy peace and happiness, but my belief can provide me with solace of soul and mind. For this I will give eternal thanks to our Lord and further implore Him to be always by my side and remove the apprehensions and worries of my soul and the weaknesses of my body and to forgive the many trespasses I have committed.

In return I shall devote the rest of my life in His service. And that would be my greatest challenge and achievement.