

Feeling His Presence....And Being Loved... by Lorelei Pepe

The holidays have almost come and gone now – all too quickly. With a New Year approaching the meaning of Christmas seems to fade away all too soon. It seems in the weeks preparing for Christmas it becomes, a rushed, anxious time for me and others, and there never is enough time. During these weeks, I felt my jangled nerves and calm and peace slipping away. And where was my joy?

But this year for a few moments I experienced the peace, joy and love of Jesus while sitting in church. Yes, church! You see I was asked to be one of the narrators of the Christmas Eve story at the 7 o'clock service. I was excited and nervous as this was my first time and I was honored. So, I decided to go to church a half hour early and sit in the pew and calm down.

When I entered the church no one was there. It was brightly lit up and soft music was playing. I sat in the pew after praying and looked up at the altar with the two very large green Christmas wreaths adorned with red bows and the decorated Christmas trees on either side. The candles – sparkling, twinkling lights and red poinsettias all added to the beauty of the room. It was magnificent. I looked up and took it all in. I don't quite know what transpired in the air, but it suddenly felt different and felt like a blanket of peace came and settled inside of me. It was so comforting and I felt so loved at that moment. Like Jesus was wrapping His arms around me. It was awesome.

If I had to explain this to someone who had not experienced this I did not think they would understand. But yet when I read my part in the script it explained it. This is what was written. **“ I can't help but believe there had to have been something different in the air—something that made people question what sacred thing has just transpired, the birth of our Savior. I suspect many people in Bethlehem missed it. But some were allowed to KNOW and FEEL and SENSE the supernatural weight of Jesus' entrance into humanity. And while they probably did not understand every intricate detail of God's plan, they knew that night was different. They knew that night was special and HOLY”** Yes, I felt that. How ironic the words expressed exactly what I was feeling. For me, it was a magical, supernatural moment and I was filled with joy the rest of the entire service and night. This was my Christmas!

Only one other time in my life did I sense that feeling. It was when I sat with my dying mother for 5 days in the assisted living facility she was staying in. I would come everyday and sit by her bed and hold her hand. She was no longer speaking and slept most of the time. I would just sit and pray and try not to cry. I knew my best friend was slipping away. Her breathing was steady and peaceful. There was one brief moment she opened her eyes and looked straight up to the ceiling. Her eyes were sparkling and she was smiling, not at me, but up above.

I looked up too and could sense the longing she was feeling to go home to be with our Lord. And while I held her hand overcome with emotion and the tears streaming down my face, I could feel the air change and there was a sense of peace that enveloped her and me. At that moment I wanted to go with her.

So, I feel truly blessed to have felt God's presence. I pray for others to experience this too. It is His Holy Spirit that was revealed to me and in me, and helped me believe there is another eternal world waiting for us, a beautiful place called Heaven. **And it all started with a little baby called Jesus! "For He Himself is our peace."**