

***My Wish List  
and Other Stories***

***That First Kiss and Other Stories***  
***My Wish List and Other Stories***  
***Better than Natural and Other Stories***  
***Straight from the Heart and Other Stories***  
***Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories***

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We dedicate this book to the next generation:

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The precious gift of faith that we were given we now happily hand on to you—in fulfillment of Jesus' desire: "The gift you have received, give as a gift" (Matthew 10:8).



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## *Preface*

Life is filled with opportunities for sharing stories. We share stories with classmates at school, with friends at parties, and with relatives at family gatherings. We read stories in books, watch stories on television and in movies, and write stories for English class. We even read stories in chat rooms on the Internet and swap stories by e-mail.

Whenever we listen to good stories, we find ourselves responding in a variety of ways: we laugh and we cry, we tremble in fear and we sigh in relief, we shake our head in disbelief and we nod in agreement. We respond in these ways because good stories are like mirrors: they give us a reflection of ourselves. The joys and sorrows of the stories' characters reflect our own joys and sorrows: we laugh and we cry from the heart because we recognize ourselves in the tales being told.

Some of the most meaningful stories that people share focus on growing up. These are stories of going to school and playing sports, of losing friends and finding new ones, of falling in love and breaking up. These are also stories that try to deal with the big questions

of life: What kind of person do I want to be? Where is my life going? How do I relate to my family? What kinds of people do I want for friends? How do I make difficult decisions? What do I really believe in? Who is God?

This book is a collection of stories about young people. The characters in these stories experience wonder and struggle, hurt and forgiveness, failure and success, tears and laughter, learning and relearning. In other words, these stories are very much like your own. You are invited to use them as mirrors for looking at your own life.

After every story in this book, you will find a set of questions to help you take a deeper look at yourself. The title of this set of questions is "Seeing Your Own Story." When you think about the issues and events in your own life that the stories reflect back to you, you can begin to see yourself in a new light and learn more about the unique person you are.

After the reflection questions is a section called "Seeing the Faith Story." This section is designed to help you make connections between what you are discovering about yourself and what it means to be a believer in God, a Christian, and a Catholic. The questions at the end of this section can help you view your own life through the eyes of faith.

This book is one in a series of five. The other books in the series are entitled *That First Kiss and Other Stories*, *Better than Natural and Other Stories*, *Straight from the Heart*

*and Other Stories*, and *Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories*. Each book in the series presents several opportunities for you to discover more about your own story, to examine your own issues, and to search for your own answers about life, God, and faith.

It is our hope that once you see your deeper self through the mirrors of these stories, you will continue to reflect on the important matters of life. We believe that life becomes happier and more meaningful when we take the time to be reflective. A word of caution: Looking into the mirror of a story may become an exciting, lifelong habit!

## *My Wish List*

The snow was falling quietly on the sidewalk, the flakes glistening in the streetlight like miniature diamonds. Paul was lost in thought as he stared at the winter wonderland outside his bedroom window, wondering what had happened to his Christmas. Moving from Vermont to Colorado after his mother's death had been hard enough, but the empty holiday season that he'd just experienced thoroughly depressed him.

It wasn't because Uncle George and Aunt Gretchen were stingy or insensitive, but they just didn't know how to celebrate Christmas! They didn't hang holly around the front door the day after Thanksgiving, the way his mom had. They didn't put candy in their kids' shoes on the feast of Saint Nicholas. They didn't serve hot apple cider at Sunday dinner or line the sidewalk with luminaries on Christmas Eve. Worst of all, they opened their presents before going to Midnight Mass instead of on Christmas morning!

Now, what sense did that make? Half of the excitement of Christmas Day was opening your presents in your pajamas, and building a

big fire in the fireplace, and eating candy and cookies for breakfast instead of cereal and toast. Here it was Christmas night, and nothing had happened to remind him of his home or his mother or his happy past. "This could be any boring day of the year!" he complained to himself.

While staring at the snow-covered sidewalk outside his window and sighing at his sense of loss, he was distracted by cries of laughter coming from down the street. He looked in that direction and noticed a young man about his own age pulling three youngsters on a sled, yanking the rope every once in a while and sending the trio spinning in circles.

Suddenly, Paul remembered another Christmas, the one after his tenth birthday. He'd gotten a sled from Santa Claus that year—"The shiny one I put at the top of my wish list," he mumbled. Closing his eyes, he saw himself sitting in the rounded steel sled on Christmas morning, watching the flames as they surged to the top of the fireplace. Out of nowhere, he heard his mother's voice.

*"Well, what are you going to give away this year, Paul? Heaven knows you've gotten lots of nice things."*

*"I don't know, Mommy. Maybe the red muffler from Uncle George and Aunt Gretchen. I think I'll give it to Paige Rabne. Her dad lost his job when the logging plant burned down last month. She cried when she told us about it at school."*

*“Sounds like a good idea, honey. And I’ll take this box of bath oils to Mrs. Rabne, and a plate of cookies and some fruit for the family. Get your clothes on, and I’ll pull you over there on your new sled.”*

*The ride to the Rabnes’ takes only five minutes. The two of them arrive out of breath, having laughed and sung the whole way there. When Paige opens the door and receives the Christmas present from Paul, she blushes the color of the muffler, and her eyes fill with tears. Mrs. Rabne thanks Paul’s mother three times for the bath oils and food, and then offers a dozen eggs in return. Minutes later, as the happy gift bearers are about to pull away, with Paul seated happily on his new sled, a sad face at the front window stops them in their tracks.*

*“Oh, Paul, we didn’t bring anything for Joel. Heavens! What were we thinking? Let’s run home and find something under the tree.”*

*“No, Mommy, he can have this. Let’s just say we didn’t want to bring it into the house because it was wet.”*

*The two return to the front door and give Joel Rabne a brand-new sled for Christmas.*

Paul opened his eyes and returned to the present. “That’s another thing they don’t do here in Denver!” he complained aloud. “We always gave away one of our presents on Christmas Day. I don’t remember anyone here mentioning poor people today—not even me!”

Instantly, the transplanted Vermonter knew how to salvage his Christmas. He went over to his dresser and picked up the watch that Uncle George and Aunt Gretchen had given him. It must be worth forty-five dollars, he thought. How many homeless people begged me for spare change when I was buying Christmas presents this year? If Uncle George’ll let me borrow the car tomorrow, I know exactly where to find another Rahne family.

All of a sudden, Paul was smiling. Christmas wasn’t lost, after all. “Thanks, Mom,” he said as he went downstairs to join the rest of the gang around the card table. For weeks, they had been begging him to learn to play pinochle. It was high time he found out why they loved that game so much.

### *Seeing Your Own Story*

- Why was Paul’s Christmas in Colorado empty? Why was the memory of the sled he’d gotten from Santa Claus so important to him? What holiday memories are important for you?
- Choose one of your favorite holidays and think about the ways your family celebrates it. Which of these family customs are most meaningful to you?

## *Seeing the Faith Story*

Human life is full of natural rhythms. Our earthly existence is rhythmic: from birth to death, childhood to adulthood, growing up to growing old. Our bodies are rhythmic: from sleep to wakefulness, hunger to fullness, sickness to health. Our emotions are rhythmic: from happiness to sadness, pain to relief, rejoicing to grief. The year is rhythmic (from winter to spring to summer to fall), the week is rhythmic (from workdays to leisure days), and the day is rhythmic (from dawn to daytime to dusk to nighttime).

Much of what we do—even what we celebrate—is determined by the various rhythms of life. We celebrate birthdays and funerals, new jobs and retirements, the first day of kindergarten and graduation from high school, holidays and holy days and hump days and payday. And the ways we celebrate are marked by little rituals as well, as Paul discovered. For him, the Christmas season meant decorating the doorway with holly after Thanksgiving, giving candy on Saint Nicholas Day, drinking hot cider on Sundays, illuminating the sidewalks on Christmas Eve, opening packages and lighting a big fire and eating candy and cookies for breakfast on Christmas morning, and choosing one present to give to someone less fortunate.

The Catholic church's liturgy (its public prayer and worship) and its sacraments (bap-

tism, confirmation, communion, and so on) also have a natural rhythm. The sacraments highlight key moments of life—including birth, growth, and the sharing of meals—and there is a familiar pattern in their celebration. For example, the weekly Eucharist, or Mass, always has an introduction, Bible readings, the blessing and sharing of bread and wine, and a conclusion.

The stories in this book focus on the seven sacraments, highlighting the natural rhythms they build on and the divine rhythms they reveal. The church's worship can be truly wonderful when it helps us not only to proclaim, but to live the core mystery of our faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

- Why do families and close friends often tell the same stories year after year when they get together for the holidays? Do you enjoy hearing your family's stories? Why is the telling of stories about Jesus important in the church's celebrations?
- If churchgoing is part of your family holidays, what do you find most meaningful about the services?

***Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.***



## ***Appendix A: In Case You Want to Know More***

*My Wish List and Other Stories* is one of five books in a series based on the principal topics of the Catholic faith. You may have noticed the italicized phrase at the end of each story. This phrase, which may be familiar to you, points to the particular topic highlighted in the story.

The first story of this book, “My Wish List,” has a concluding sentence that reads, “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.” When these words are said at Mass, the people reply with one of several responses such as, “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” These responses express Catholic Christians’ belief in the paschal mystery—the mystery of the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians believe we all can participate in the paschal mystery. Because of Christ’s presence within us, we can experience joy after grief, or fuller life through suffering. Catholic Christians celebrate special moments of Christ’s presence through the church’s sacraments.

Each story in this book is a mirror for understanding one of the seven sacraments of

the Catholic church. If you want to know more about the church’s teaching on the sacraments, you can consult the following table. In this table, four sections appear for each story except the introductory story:

1. a statement from the official celebration of the sacrament that the story is related to
2. an explanation of the statement
3. a relevant citation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
4. a notation of selected paragraphs from the *Catechism* that provide background on the sacrament

### ***“My Wish List”***

This story introduces the book and explains the meaning of sacraments.

### ***“College Jitters”***

1. “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
2. This is said in the sacrament of baptism as those being baptized are immersed in water or water is poured over their heads.
3. “The baptized have ‘put on Christ.’ Through the Holy Spirit, Baptism is a bath that purifies, justifies, and sanctifies” (*Catechism*, number 1227).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 1213 to 1274

### ***“All That Matters”***

1. “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”
2. This is said in the sacrament of confirma-

tion as the persons being confirmed are signed with oil on their foreheads.

3. “The effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (*Catechism*, number 1302).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 1285 to 1314

### **“In Memory of Jesus”**

1. “Do this in memory of me.”
2. This is said in the sacrament of the Eucharist—Mass—after the consecration of bread and wine.
3. “The Greek words *eucharistein* and *eulogein* recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim—especially during a meal—God’s works: creation, redemption, and sanctification” (*Catechism*, number 1328).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 1322 to 1405

### **“Do We Need Gas?”**

1. “I absolve you from your sins.”
2. This is said during the sacrament of reconciliation after the penitent has confessed his or her sins.
3. “Only God forgives sins” (*Catechism*, number 1441).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 1422 to 1484

### **“Seeing Stars”**

1. “May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.”
2. This is said during the sacrament of the

anointing of the sick as the sick person is marked with holy oil.

3. “‘Heal the sick!’ The Church has received this charge from the Lord and strives to carry it out by taking care of the sick” (*Catechism*, number 1509).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 1499 to 1525

### **“The Best Vocation in the World”**

1. “Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and put into practice what you teach.”
2. This is said during the sacrament of holy orders as the deacon is entrusted with the book of the Gospels.
3. “Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time” (*Catechism*, number 1536).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 1536 to 1589

### **“Why Get Married?”**

1. “I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.”
2. This is said during the sacrament of marriage as the bride and groom commit their lives to each other in the wedding vows.
3. “It is ordinarily understood that the spouses, as ministers of Christ’s grace, mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church” (*Catechism*, number 1623).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 1601 to 1658