



I a. Before We Get Started...

I was given a lot of good advice when I first started teaching. Mr. Warnock, a colleague who taught history, told me that if I wanted students to pay attention to what I was teaching always sprinkle a few personal stories in with the lecture. Kid's love stories, in fact, everyone likes a story. So, you'll find that I'll do this fairly often throughout these essays, that is, tell personal stories that are connected, more or less, with the topic at hand. And since this is a story about a Bridegroom and a Bride what better story can I tell but how I met my wife and our wedding. I was twenty-four and a graduate student at the University of California, Davis studying Clinical Nutrition in the Department of Internal Medicine. I was studying one evening in the house that I shared with three other graduate students when I received an unexpected phone call.

"Hi, may I speak to Kevin McMahon please?"

"This is he. May I ask who's calling?" I replied. I didn't recognize the voice.

"My name is Janice Overly. I'm a nurse. I work for Dr. Barton. I believe you know him?"

"Yes, yes. I know him. We went to the same church."

"Oh, I've gone to that church too," she replied.

"Oh, I don't recognize your name."

"I don't believe we've met. Dr. Barton asked me to call you about a patient of his... Pause ...with dumping syndrome."

Another pause. *Do you know what that is?"*

"Yes." (By the way, if you don't know what that is, it is exactly what it sounds like.)

"Dr. Barton wanted to know if you could recommended any dietary changes the patient could make that might reduce the severity of his symptoms?"

I proceeded to make several recommendations to Nurse Janice, but all the while we were discussing the patient I couldn't shake the feeling that this was not your "normal" conversation about dumping syndrome (if normal is even possible with this topic). When I was finished with my dietary suggestions I found myself asking her questions, I don't remember what they were, but I do remember why I asked them. I wanted to keep her on the phone longer. There was something about Janice Kay Overly, Registered Nurse (the Kay I learned later), and some how I knew that I could not take the risk that this would be a one-time phone call. I didn't know how old she was, or if she was single or perhaps involved with someone else. Some things are worth the risk of making a horse's ass out of yourself (as my Dad would have said) and this was one of them.

"Listen, Miss Overly. It is Miss isn't it?"

"Yes," she replied.

Whew.

"You know, dumping syndrome can be kind of tricky. I have my Christmas break coming up and I was going to drive down to see my folks who live in the San Fernando Valley. May be I could drop by and see you, and Dr. Barton of course, and we could discuss this further."

"Ah...I guess so."

Okay, that wasn't super encouraging, but as my father used to say, Persistence ever, discouragement never! I met Nurse Overly in Bakersfield a few weeks later. I have no memory at all if we talked about dumping syndrome. What I do remember very distinctly was that she was beautiful, smart, and committed to Christ—I couldn't have asked for anything more. It was my job now to convince her that I could be everything she was looking for in a spouse. It took about a year to convince her, but I finally wore her down. We celebrated our 40th anniversary on November 25, 2019.

Our wedding was pretty funky. The church we got married in was about the size of a double-wide mobile home. I'm sure both sets of family were horrified by the dilapidated surroundings. Nevertheless, whatever suspicions they might have had regarding the church, the service, the congregation, or the groom it all evaporated when Jan appeared at the rear of the room dressed in a simple "Gunny Sack" wedding gown and a white cowgirl hat to which she had attached a veil. Whatever anxiety I might have been feeling as I waited at the front of the church melted away when I saw Jan looking at me with her brilliant blue eyes and a wide smile. The organ started to play. She would come down the aisle not to the traditional wedding march, but to a song that was both popular in our church, and appropriate to the situation. The congregation enthusiastically sang as Jan began to process down the aisle:

"Alleluia worthy Lamb most high, who sits at God's right hand. Alleluia, every foe is made to bow beneath your feet...."

"Alleluia, Rose of Sharon, true Jerusalem above...."

I might not have been worthy, I thought, but to me she was a bride without spot or blemish.

Alleluia, Worthy Lamb 137

1. Al - le - lu - ia, Wor - thy Lamb most high, Who sits at God's right hand.
 2. Al - le - lu - ia, Rose of Shar - on, true Je - ru - sa - lem a - bove,
 3. Praise be to the One Who fills all life with joy and treas - ure;

Al - le - lu - ia, ev - 'ry foe is made to bow be - neath Your feet,
 Al - le - lu - ia, Zi - on blessed with man - y sons now come to birth,
 Wor - ship Him: The Oil of Glad - ness, Rain that caus - es us to bear

As Your love-slaves speak Your Word, O Lord and King of all the land.
 You have found in Him a Bride-groom faith - ful in a - bound - ing love.
 Fruit e - ter - nal, now may reap the har - vest with - out meas - ure.

Tune: Craig Grunberg, 1974
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 WORTHY LAMB

Alleluia, Worthy Lamb

One of the songs sung at our wedding on November 25, 1979. Jan is my Rose of Sharon now more than ever.

