
Joy In Suffering by Rose Hu

The continued serialisation of a story of conversion and heroic practice of the faith in Communist China

CHAPTER 15 : TOO LATE FOR US TO MEET

In 1956, I was still imprisoned but was not given a final sentence yet. The prisoner cell was only 80 square feet. We had six to eight people staying together in there. There was a wooden bucket for human disposal. All of us slept on the cement floor. Definitely nobody liked to sleep near the bucket. So it was almost a rule that the newcomer had to sleep by the bucket until the next one came. The communist officer mistreated us Catholics more severely than others. They only allowed one Catholic in each cell, and didn't allow us to go out to do exercises or to have meetings. In each cell, there was usually one Catholic who set a good example as God's witness. So the Catholics often slept near the bucket.

One day the security guard brought in a pretty and seemingly well-educated woman to our cell. As a routine the one who was in charge of our group told her, "You sleep near the bucket." The woman complained, "I am not a newcomer. I was relocated from another cell." It was obvious that she didn't want to accept this arrangement. Then I said, "I'm used to sleeping there. Let me stay there then." After a few days she looked at me and asked, "Are you a Catholic?" "How did you know?" I replied. She said, "In the next cell, there was a young girl who always kept silent and took upon herself the toughest jobs. She was like you; always slept near the bucket." I guessed who the girl was. She was only eighteen years old and had been arrested twice. She came from a Catholic family. We Catholic prisoners were like lamps enlightening people who lived in darkness and consoling those who were suffering. When I received compliments, I attributed them not to myself but to Our Mother Church. The outstanding example of one person is nothing. One single tree cannot make the entire forest. One rose cannot bring spring. Only the good examples from every single Catholic make a difference. No wonder we prisoners, being arrested in the fifties, unanimously acknowledged the Catholics' great virtues.

The rule of the prisoner camp allowed families to bring in our basic necessities on a monthly basis. Those who were already sentenced could have fifteen minutes to talk to their families. Those who were not sentenced yet only got the material supplies. One day I received a parcel. At that time my mother was very sick in bed. My brother and sister-in-law had already published our broken relationship in the newspaper. Who else would send me a

parcel? Well, it was a long story. There were five maids working in my family when I was arrested. Among them, two had already served for more than forty years. In 1953, my mother took me to watch a Mexican movie, "The Right to Live." In the movie, the

main character not only had a biological mother but an adopted mother who loved him very much. My mother was very much moved. Our old nanny was approaching her sixtieth birthday.

My mother told my sister and me, "The old nanny has been with me since I got married. She came to our family when she was eighteen. It has been forty-two years now. Her husband abandoned her and she had no children. Her sixtieth birthday is about to come. I plan to let her be your adopted mother for both of you. From now on you should honor her with all your hearts. Never do anything to hurt her. There should be no difference between her and me. Otherwise she would think that both of you do not truly love her because she is just a nanny. You must promise me not to break her heart. I do not want her to think that she is neither in the same ranking nor as wealthy as you are." My mom

showed great generosity to her although my mom was not a Catholic yet. How could we refuse her request? On the old nanny's birthday, we went to watch the movie together. My mother presented both of us to the old nanny as a birthday gift. The old nanny broke into tears saying, "Your two daughters are the kindest people in your family."

Each time the old nanny sent in supplies to me in the prisoner building, she had to overcome many obstacles. First she had to get approved by the police station before she could bring in the supplies. Second, it was a long distance between the prisoner building and my home. She had to take two buses and wait at the prisoner building's entrance early in the morning. She was willing to do so much suffering for me. She suffered the most because she was not allowed to see me before I had my final sentence.

This time she brought in a pair of shoes. She had made the sole by hand stitch by stitch. Upon receiving such a precious gift from a beloved one, how could I not be grateful? It seemed that the well-educated woman whom I just mentioned earlier was observing me quietly. One day when others were going outside to do exercises, she pretended to have a headache so that she could stay and chat with me. She told me that she was Su-Ching, a contemporary writer, and she was the close friend of Chang-ai-lin, the



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most famous female writer in China at that time. Su told me that she had written many novels and plays. Now she was accused and arrested for having some historical background issues in her writing. In the beginning, she had suffered a spiritual collapse, and lost confidence in life. A few times she attempted suicide. After meeting many Catholic prisoners, she regained her hope in life.

The next day, a prison guard summoned me. I thought that it was probably a court meeting. The police took me to the city centre. I thought that it was a public trial meeting. After a while, I saw that my mother and brother came into the waiting room. Every time when I saw my mother, I had an indescribable sorrowful feeling. I had many setbacks in the prisoner camp, and God **whispered in my ears many times, "There is no man who hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who shall not receive a hundred times as much, now in this time . . . and in the world to come life everlasting."** (Mark 10:29-30) I had already made up my mind to follow Jesus and to keep the faith unto my death.

I was sure that my mother was in God's hands and under Our Heavenly Mother's protection. The court trial meeting began after a 10-minute chat. The judge asked, "Hu Mei-Yu, what do you think about the anti-revolutionist, Kung Pin Mei? Has he poisoned you?" I replied loudly and firmly, "He is my bishop; he has never poisoned me." On hearing this, my mother fell down and fainted right away. The judge suspended the trial meeting and ordered us to go to the waiting room. After a few minutes, my mother told me that at that time the policy was more flexible. Many people were set free and went home. The officer promised my mother that if I could confess my "crime" and would make my "reparation" in the future, I could be released immediately. I was still as stubborn as before. My mother told the judge that if he sentenced me with punishment, she would commit suicide. I was

not sure if my mother was threatening the judge or me. I recited the famous motto of St. Teresa of Avila; "Nothing is wanting to him who possesses God. God alone suffices."

What is active faith? It is to trust God even in dark moments. How can our Heavenly Father abandon His children at such a critical moment? I spoke to Mom calmly, "You have suffered so much for God. God will reward you. Don't give up. A good tree will never bear bad fruit." Finally my brother said, "Let me take Mom to Hong Kong for a while. She cannot be in peace if she stays here."

When I returned to the jail, my cellmate curiously asked me what had happened to me in the morning. I couldn't say too much. Later I found a chance to tell Su-Ching everything. She was very moved and said, "I have met a group of youth who give up everything for the sake of the faith. You, especially, are a university student who comes from a wealthy family. I can also see the extraordinary virtues in you after hearing your mom's and your nanny's story as well as about your trial today. As a writer, there is nothing worthier to write about than all this. Please write down my address. Someday you can come to my home, and I'll write a novel about you. I only regret that it is too late for us to meet."

I never thought that I was as perfect as she described. It is the faithful who showed her their good examples. I only stayed with her for about forty days and did not have enough time to teach her catechism. Some years later, I tried but could not find her at her address. Her neighbors told me that she had passed away a few years ago. Only her relatives were at her funeral without her friends and readers. I hope that when she was dying, she remembered what I had told her about how Our Lord died on the cross for us. How I wish to see her again if I may enter the kingdom of Heaven!

CHAPTER 16 : GOD HELPSTHOSEWHO HELPTHEMSELVES

In 1956, I was still imprisoned but was not sentenced yet. A school teacher stayed with me in the same cell. She was arrested because her husband was an "anti-revolutionist" (The Communist Government calls anybody who doesn't completely agree with their policy or ideas an anti-revolutionist.). She was accused of being guilty because she didn't expose her husband's "crime." Her husband was sentenced to seven years in prison. Her school director encouraged her to criticize and get divorced from her husband (translator's note: The Communists demanded people to criticize their friends and relatives publicly for their anti-communist acts so that they themselves could be released from jail.) The school had a very big public criticism meeting. She rejected all criticisms and said firmly, "My husband is a very honest person who has never done anything wrong to our country or to anybody. How

could I accuse him?" Later her school sent someone to her house to try to persuade her to divorce her husband. She said, "Seven years is not too long. I will wait for him." She was finally arrested for covering up her husband, an anti-revolutionist.

I was moved by what she had told me. People know that they should not be selfish but to show sympathy when their beloved ones are in trouble. But in reality, especially under the communists' control, I had seen many prisoners get two written trial documents simultaneously. One was about their imprisonment condition, and the other was about their divorce agreement. Some prisoners fainted right away as soon as they read them because of losing freedom and their families. Under the Chinese Communist Party's policy, being the relative of an anti-

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revolutionist meant that one would be ill treated, too, such as doing the heaviest job and receiving the lowest pay. Who was willing to live such a miserable life? So the only way out was to get divorced. The wife mentioned earlier was brave enough to face the big storm. She was really a good example.

Then, I told her a story, “God helps those who help themselves.” Once there was a young man who was climbing through the Himalaya Mountains with his companion. The weather was extremely cold. Thick snow covered the paths on the mountain. They walked with great difficulty. When they approached a cave’s entrance, they saw something black on the snow. When they came nearer, they found that it was a man. His body was nearly frozen to death, but he had a little breath coming out of his nose. The young man would like to help the dying person. Nevertheless his companion stopped him saying, “If we carry this burden, we can’t go through the mountain. Then we’ll lose our lives.”

The young man looked at the freezing body on the snow. He was not willing to ignore him. He thought that if he didn’t rescue him from the snow, the man was sure to die in the snow. The young man hesitated for a little while. Finally, he decided to carry the man. His companion said farewell and went on his own way. The young man carried the dying person on his back and continued his journey. He used all his strength to move on. Gradually his body temperature warmed up the frozen body. The dying man was alive again. Due to consuming all his physical strength to carry the dying man, he was not feeling cold but began sweating and felt much warmer. Soon both of them walked together. They kept on walking, encouraging each other, and warming each

other. When they caught up with their companion who left them earlier, they saw him lying dead in the snow.

The school teacher kept silent for a while after hearing my story. She said that she would never regret what she decided. She was getting ready to live a harsh life waiting for her husband’s return. I visited her more than twenty years later. Her husband was imprisoned for eighteen years. Although he was sentenced for seven years, he was not allowed to go home. It was the Chinese Communist Party’s policy. Those people were called “post-prisoners.” The differences between the prisoners and “post-prisoners” were that the “post-prisoners” got a low monthly pay and a ten-day vacation every other year.

During so many years when her husband was in the labor camp, she did all she could to maintain her family. She endured much hardship and had great sufferings in her life. Fortunately, her daughter was grown up, and her family maintained its integrity. I had seen many other families in which the wives divorced their husbands right away and they remained broken families. Their children blamed their mothers for breaking up their happy families. The school teacher had a stroke a few years ago. Her husband took great care of her. She remembered the story that I had told her. She said, “Yes, God helps those who help themselves... It is the same in our daily life. If I were not faithful to my husband, who would come to help me now?”

....to be continued.

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINA

China had been under a Qing (Ching) Emperor since the mid-1600’s, but by the 1840’s the decentralisation of power and the growing influence of foreign powers (Britain, Russia, Germany, France, and the United States) weakened their influence. Unrest led to the development of the People’s Nationalist Party, led by Sun Yat-sen. In 1911 the People’s Nationalist Party forced the emperor from power, caused untold chaos and created a republican government. The People’s Nationalist party, however, was unable to unite China or force out the various countries that were claiming land there.

When Sun Yat-sen died Chiang Kai-shek succeeded him. In 1919, after seeing German possessions in China granted to the Japanese, there was a split in the party from which the Communist party formed. 20 years of civil followed during which the Communists were almost defeated. In 1934, the famous Long March took place where 100,000 communists walked 6,000 miles to escape the Nationalist armies—only 8,000 survived the journey from the south to Yan’an in Northwestern China. During the Long March, the Communists found a leader, Mao Zedong.

In the turmoil left by the surrender of the Japanese at the end of World War II, the civil war flared-up again; the Nationalists, unpopular and corrupt, were driven by the Communists out of China and into Taiwan. On 1st October 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People’s Republic of China—a typical bloody Communist dictatorship.

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