

# A Sacramental Moment

## Thoughts of a 55 Year Old Woman

*"I'm done with my homework"* he squealed as he peered around the door in Daybreak. This child of eleven had returned to our shelter with his family for the third time. I had watched him grow from an infant to a young child – eager to embrace life. He was the victim of two parents who struggled daily with substance abuse, and moved from shelter to shelter, year after year. I looked into his beautiful chocolate eyes – eyes which had seen so much violence and disorder in his very young years.

*"Would you like,"* I said, *"to learn a new dance? The music for this dance has a count to it – one, two, three, four. It is a very old dance which began in Europe"* – and I pointed to the globe. I put a Strauss waltz in the tape player, and began to show him the steps. He stepped on my toes and I stepped on his, and we laughed and laughed as we waltzed and bowed to one another in three-four time. Then I said, *"It is your turn to teach me a dance you know. Look through the tapes for the right music."* He put the tape in the player, turned up the volume many notches, and began to move his body with the music. I moved with the music too, though not as quickly or with as much agility. *"You're cool,"* he yelled, and at that moment I knew I had arrived – I had met the standard of his complex rock-and-roll dance. I desperately needed his affirmation. We both collapsed into chairs, and finished the afternoon with cookies and milk.

For about an hour, we left the sorrow of his childhood, and moved into the serenity that comes from embracing the moment, seeking that which comes from the inside and not the outside. I recalled the words of Saint Benedict: *"Joy comes from attending to every moment in a sacramental way."* Together, in the last afternoon, we had shared a sacramental moment, and we knew joy.

Daybreak, Autumn, 1996