

THE PAIN AND THE JOY

by Miriam Adeney

God spoke to me during a seminary class. The professor was praying that we would discover the unique purpose He has for each of us, for which He formed us in the womb.

"I shivered with emotion. I felt that the Spirit was telling me that I had to give priority to writing, leaving other things aside, that my future ministry would be through publications, and that through them I would continue pastoring, exhorting, and edifying.

"I thought about the church, and my responsibilities. The faces of the people who needed me and absorbed my time passed through my mind. I cried, because I realized that truly I would have to make adjustments in order to fulfill my call."

Those are the words of Patricia Adrián de Vergara, a writer in Peru. In *La Aventura de Escribir (The Adventure of Writing)*, a book edited by Media Associates International (Lima: Ediciones Puma, 2003), she gives her testimony in an essay titled "¿Qué haré con lo que me has dado?" (What will I do with what You have given me?).

The professor allowed a five-minute recess. Patricia fled to the bathroom to dry her tears.

In the corridor, the school secretary handed her the printout of an e-mail.

"How strange!" said Patricia. "I never receive e-mail here at the seminary."

A pastor's wife in Chile had written the message. She had read Patricia's book *Yo No Pedí Ser Oro (I Did Not Ask to Be Gold)*. "With tender and beautiful words, she told me how the book had ministered to her," Patricia says. "She asked me to continue writing, and she told me that she would always be praying for me."

Patricia accepted this as "a beautiful confirmation from God," arriving just when her spirit was most receptive to His leading.

Patricia's husband, a pastor and administrator, has encouraged her too. "This is your ministry," he says. "God has given you this talent. You must not hide it. You must use it and be a blessing."

Together they have formed a publishing company called Verbo Vivo (Living Word). She has written books for children,

adults, and teens. "There is a great empty field in literature for adolescents in Spanish," she says. Two of her books are devotionals for teens. Each contains 100 lively devotionals.

Patricia's first book was poetry. The whole family promoted it. When they spoke in churches, they dramatized the poems with music and dance. Nonbelievers responded, confessing faith in Jesus. Patricia was not really surprised. "After all, art speaks," she says.

Bookstores were less enthusiastic. Some refused to take the books on consignment. However, when readers demanded Patricia's books, stores started stocking them. As Verbo Vivo has developed regular advance publicity and employed a distributor, sales have increased. Today Catholic schools are among their customers.

While raising three small children and serving actively in the church, Patricia has continued to sharpen her mind. For years, she has maintained a regular reading schedule, and a habit of filing interesting articles for later reference. A graduate of the prestigious San Marcos University, Patricia is completing her M.A. at the Facultad Teológica Latinoamericana. Her thesis is on God in modern Peruvian novels.

More than once, Patricia has been honored by invitations to take part in the annual poetry reading at her university. One year she read a poem that responded to the theory of evolution. She has also

shared poems on Jesus' encounters with the adulterous woman and with Lazarus. The audiences were not Christian.

Another year many poems from other poets had erotic themes. "I, too, sang of love," says Patricia, "but I transmitted values that the world had forgotten. It was a privilege to share my Christian worldview by reading simple, authentic poems." She read a series on conjugal love, as well as poems about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Joy and tears. Patricia Vergara knows them well. Both are key strands that color the life of a writer. ❖

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