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Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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Learning to Embrace Plan B

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on [DECEMBER 10, 2018](#)

When I plan to go out with a friend, we usually mark two dates on our calendars. That way, if something unexpected comes up, we have a back-up date already on our calendars. I learned long ago, that when making plans, it's always good to have a Plan B, just in case something makes Plan A impossible.

I have never kept track of how many times I have had to resort to Plan B in my lifetime, but it does happen regularly –in small and big ways. At age 16, for example, I planned to go to college and then get married and have kids. But then I began to feel this strong interior urge to enter the convent—an urge that wouldn't go away. After becoming a nun, I thought I would teach in Ohio, but then I got shipped down to North Carolina. As John Lennon supposedly remarked, "If you want to make God laugh, just tell God your plans."



That doesn't mean we shouldn't make plans, of course. Planning is one way we channel our time, energy and talents into activities that are necessary, worthwhile, and helpful for others. But when we make plans, we must not be so wedded to them that we are totally discombobulated when things don't go as we planned.

Scripture is filled with stories of individuals who changed their plans—because God asked them to. In going with Plan B, they were the better for it—and we are the better for it too. Abraham and Sarah, for example, were an elderly couple who were probably looking for a retirement community in their area. But God asked them to change their plans and leave their familiar world and journey to a land they had never even heard of.

About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

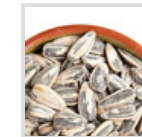
Sister of Notre Dame,
teacher, student, author,
speaker, listener, friend,
poet, farm girl.



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About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I'll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality—the everyday kind of spirituality that



includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.

Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we're all in this life—this spiritual life—together!

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After Moses killed an Egyptian, he fled Egypt, married, and planned to make his living tending his father-in-law's sheep. But God changed those plans when he called Moses to lead the Hebrews from Egypt to the Promised Land. Mary planned to marry Joseph and raise an ordinary family in an ordinary town. But God asked her to radically alter her plan and become the

mother of "the Most High." This single change of plans led to other changes of her plans: Jesus was born not in Nazareth, but in Bethlehem. Because of Herod's fury, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were forced to flee into Egypt.

Many theologians believe that Jesus, early in his public ministry, probably didn't know he would end up being crucified. When he gradually realized how his mission would end, he was terrified. In Gethsemane he begged Abba to change this plan for him. But then he added, "yet, not as I will, but as you will." In other words, "I embrace your plan for me."

When you were a child, what were some of the plans you had for your life? When I was a little girl, I wanted to do one of two things: be a professional ice-skater or be a teacher. My brother Pauly wisely said, "Why don't you just teach ice-skating?" Later on, I planned to be a teacher and a writer. When I entered the Sisters of Notre Dame, my teaching plan was fulfilled, but my writing plan was put on hold for about 15 years.

Today you might want to reflect on these questions: In what ways has life turned out as you planned—and as you didn't plan? Has Plan B (or C or D) ever been better for you than your original Plan A?

God of my life, give me the grace to alter my own personal plans when compassion or duty urges me to do so. And help me to realize that my entire life and all my plans are in your loving hands. Amen.



All our plans are in God's loving hands...

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Advent is a good time to reflect on Mary and Joseph, two people who were asked to change their plans. This song, "Joseph's Song," by Michael Card is one of my favorite Advent/Christmas songs. For me it captures Joseph's humanity, his great trust in God, and his tender love for Mary and her child-whom he raised as his very own.



I encourage you to share a thought or two about today's reflection or the song. We'd love to hear from you!

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Kathleen Magiera December 10, 2018 at 5:43 am



Good one Sr. Melannie!

I like to have a Plan B and C and D. Always like to know what is happening next.

I find in my retirement that is not always possible. God often has different plans for me just around the corner.

Yesterday, I read in an Advent prayer . . . letting go of the control button. A good prayer to remember for Advent.

God bless.

Kathleen

REPLY

John Hopkins December 10, 2018 at 5:49 am



Good Morning, Sr. Melannie...as a teacher – and I'm sure you can relate to this – I knew having a plan B was essential, and, as you've noted, having a plan C and D were pretty essential, too! To that point, in June of 2017 I thought I had retired, but God it seems had other ideas. I was called back to teach the following October (same school), and this past September to Thanksgiving, I taught at Fontbonne Academy, an all girls Catholic school! Go figure! As Sr. Bridget Hasse says, "Our God is a God of surprises!" Amen!

REPLY

Ed Johnson December 10, 2018 at 6:37 am



Sister,
My wife of 3 years and I certainly did not plan to birth a child born with Down's Syndrome. We were filled with many more questions than answers, and much anxiety. But Elizabeth, now 44 years of age, has graced Nancy and me with more love and joy than we could ever imagine; and her life has opened so many doors in our lives. In life, it is often easier to look back on God's plans for us and say, "Yes, God, you were right all along."
A blessed Advent to you and all of your readers.
Ed

REPLY

Chris Keil December 10, 2018 at 8:34 am



Well, I was planning to go to Boston to get my master's and nurse practitioner, but.....the application was late because they started in the summer! What's with that? So, my plan B was to go the following year.....well, that never happened because I met Kevin and we were married the following year. It took me 20 years to go back to school, but I did it! And now I have a family as well!

REPLY

Kate Arseneau December 10, 2018 at 9:17 am



I looked at my calendar just before I read your message for today. My calendar has absolutely nothing on it for the day. These are the days that I have to be open to Plans A, B, C, etc

REPLY

Therese Shaw-Jones December 10, 2018 at 10:15 am



Dear Melanie,
I had asked God to give me a plan of prayer for good and holy Advent
So the first day of Advent , I fell and broke my dominant left shoulder leaving me dependent on a lot of friends and therapists...and lots of time for prayer. Blessings of our God of surprises to you at this season of God's love....for God so loved the world that He sent His only Son. Thank you ❤️

REPLY

Jean December 10, 2018 at 10:47 am



I have often said like gone to plan b so often I don't remember what plan a was. Having my children, I have 2 born in a January. They were not planned for a January - I had a plan for a June and a September baby that resulted in miscarriages. Obviously my plan was not God's plan! My January children are wonderful people whose personalities are incredible.

REPLY

Mary Fran December 10, 2018 at 12:17 pm



December 10 is the day my much loved father was born and I am thinking a good bit about him today. He was a planner par -extraordinaire. I have memories of times his plan A was swept aside by circumstances out of his control. Upon later reflection he would connect the outcome, as you did with God's sense of humor. He said it helped him understand the relationship between our gift of free will and God, our always FATHER, getting us where we need to be.

REPLY

Jean H December 10, 2018 at 12:25 pm



Good Morning Sister Melannie,
Where would we be without our alternative plans?
My beautiful Mom always said that Plan B was meant to be. Yes, indeed.
Thank you for this meaningful start to the week.

REPLY

Carolyn Juenemann December 10, 2018 at 3:41 pm



One of my favorite songs, too!

Thank you for your inspiring reflections! I think of you often and remember the retreat. Keep up your special ministry.

REPLY

Mary M Nausadis December 11, 2018 at 8:12 am



I always wanted to be a mom, but I never put in to be a single mom....which I was for 16 years.

I certainly never had breast cancer on my wish list, but found I not only survived, but in the process met many wonderful people who never would have crossed my path otherwise.

And lastly, I never planned or wished for prostate cancer to finally have the last word with my husband, but there again, we entered into a special community of people who had to undergo chemo and all that entails and discovered some very heroic people along the way. There is always blessing if we but look for it.

Advent blessings to all

REPLY

Evelyn Allen, PhD December 11, 2018 at 10:27 am



Over my 85 years, there have been so many B, C, Dplans that I now just accept whatever, wherever, however and simply adjust to the next unexpected plan that occurs. It has been a great journey of life and I await more surprise plans of the Lord in the future.

REPLY

Joe Johnson December 11, 2018 at 10:44 am



I was blindsided by plan B- didn't plan to have 2 children with severe depression- but I'm a better person because of their mental health condition- the stigma beat me up as a teacher, but now I'm still teaching awareness and understanding of mental health conditions with 9th grade health classes for NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness). Now I'm beating up stigma! And I'm more spiritual!

REPLY

Barbara M Donahue December 12, 2018 at 12:14 pm



I loved Joseph's song. Beautiful words; beautiful story. We always have to have a Plan B. We need to listen to our hearts and hear what God wants us to do. Amen!

REPLY

St Lucille December 18, 2018 at 12:35 pm



Dear Melannie,
Living in a nursing home, I realize that it is important to expect a Plan B if I really want to be happy. Thanks for re-enforcing this thought Loved Joseph's song.

REPLY

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