



# Sunflower Seeds

Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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## Winning the Lottery

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on SEPTEMBER 16, 2019

Beth and Bob have been married for 54 years. Together they raised six sons. Now they have 19 grandchildren. After morning Mass the other day, Beth stopped me and said, "Sister, I have a story to share with you." We sat down together in a pew where she took out a greeting card from her purse.

It was a card Beth and Bob had received—out of the blue—from their oldest grandson, Ben, and his wife Becca. The front of the card said, "Happy thoughts can make any day a sunny one." Inside was a lottery ticket. When they scratched it off, they were hoping to see three matching dollar amounts, indicating they were winners. No such luck. But under the losing numbers was another area to scratch. When they scratched off that area, this message appeared: "We're having a baby!"



## 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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I love this story. What a beautiful way to announce that a new baby is on the way! Inside the card, Ben and Becca had written: "Only the best grandparents get promoted to great-grandparents!"

The story puts things in perspective, doesn't it? Beth and Bob didn't win any money with that lottery ticket. But they won something far more valuable: the news that they were having their first great-grandchild!

The story got me thinking. Most of us will go through life without winning a major lottery. But on another level, we are winning lotteries all the time. What kind of lotteries? The lottery of good friends... a loving spouse... cherished children and grandchildren (and even great-grandchildren!). The lottery of a religious vocation... good health... the beauty that surrounds us every day... the blessings of clean air, ample water, delicious food. The lottery of freedom... a good education... talents of all kinds... meaningful work... and (of course) our precious gift of Faith.

What is winning a bunch of money in a lottery compared to winning a PRICELESS and GRACE-FILLED LIFE?



*What kind of "lotteries" have you won in life? In other words, what "prizes" have you received in your lifetime for which you are most grateful?*

*Has something that seemed at first to be a disappointment ever turned out to be a wonderful blessing for you?*

*What helps you keep your priorities straight?*

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ANNOUNCEMENT: I'm taking a break. I will NOT post a new reflection next Monday, September 23. If you miss "Sunflower Seeds" next week, you can go on the site and click on a post from previous years. Just type in a topic or a Monday date in the space on the right labeled "search," and an earlier post should come up. Thank you for understanding my need to step away for a week! I'll be back again Monday, September 30.

PS: Thank you to the wonderful people whom I met this past weekend for a retreat at Our Lady of the Pines in Fremont, Ohio. Special thanks to Sister Wanda who helped the weekend run smoothly!

PS #2: We Sisters of Notre Dame are holding our annual chicken (and ribs) Barbecue and Boutique Sunday, September 29, at Notre Dame Cathedral Latin High School at 13000 Auburn Road in Chardon, Ohio from noon until 5:00. I'll be at the Book Nook from noon until 3:00. If you come, stop by and see me!

The great Indian poet Tagore said: "Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of humankind." This song celebrates the birth of a new baby. It's called "A Mother's Song (Hannah's Song)," but it could just as easily be called a father's song, a grandparent's song, or anyone's song. It is sung by Rachel Aldous.



Do you have any thoughts on this week's reflection? If so, we'd love to hear from you below!

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**John E Hopkins** September 16, 2019 at 4:49 am



Sister Melannie, thank you for every Monday!

I begin each day with this prayer: "Bless my darling wife, Kerry, Lord, and my three beautiful children: Katie, Danny, and Brian." They are my winning ticket that keeps on giving!

Enjoy your rest. You so deserve it!

REPLY

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**Ed Johnson** September 16, 2019 at 5:59 am



Sister,

A Huge AMEN to this morning's post. My wife, Nancy, of 47 years...our daughters, Elizabeth (45) and Tricia (44); our precious granddaughter Kathryn, now 4 ( from Tricia).....I hit the jackpot with these gifts from God! When Elizabeth (Beth) was born in 1974, we were so excited. But, two days after Beth's birth, the doctor told us Beth had Downs Syndrome. We did not have a clue.....we were scared.....we asked Why Us, God?...How will we raise this child? Beth has been, and will always be, such a special gift to us from God. I tell people, and repeat it here, that I have probably learned more about life from Beth's example; than she from me....Appreciating the simple things in life; always having a pleasant disposition; smiling, smiling, smiling; loving others; lots of hugs.....well, you get the point. Thank you, Sister, for your thoughts, words, and prayers. Have a most pleasant week off !  
Ed J

REPLY

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**Kathleen Magiera** September 16, 2019 at 6:07 am



Good Morning Sr. Melannie,

I won the lottery when God gave me the best parents anyone could want. They are both shining examples of faith and love of God. Their 63 years of marriage is a miracle.

Kathleen

REPLY

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**S. Marguerite** September 16, 2019 at 7:06 am



Dear Sr. Melanie

Bless you for your insights so beautifully shared. Today's video featuring Rachel Aldous – Hannah's prayer – was beautifully done, but it struck me that only one of the newborn babies shown was a child of color. With our consciences being raised to new levels of awareness of racism, perhaps the creators of that video could edit in frames to represent the joys experienced by parents of color. They did that with children with disabilities like Down's syndrome. Blessings.

REPLY

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**Melannie Svoboda SND** September 16, 2019 at 9:26 am



Dear Marguerite, I had the same reaction as you did: only one child of color. But (as you say) our awareness of such things has been raised to new levels in recent years. That's the good news! Thank you for your response. Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Thomas DeFreitas** September 16, 2019 at 8:08 am



Sr Melannie and everyone, hello:

I've won the lottery by being able to live in my "suburb": close enough to the conveniences of the city, and far enough from its annoyances. I've won the lottery with my dear friends of many years' standing (two particularly, who, I like to say, "know more about me than God does"). I've won the lottery with living during the papacy of Pope Francis. I've won the lottery with recovering from a very dark time in my life, roughly coincident with my 20s and 30s. I've won the lottery by learning, slowly, in fits and starts at first, that I really don't need a drink in order to live life fully.

And I've won the lottery with poetry. Poetry? Yes, poetry! Reading it and writing it have made life something more vital than mere existence. My friend Elena, mentioned last week, is an excellent poet, as are friends Mary, Hilary, Linda, Victor (of blessed memory), Miriam, and many others. I was lucky to be part of the Bee Hive, a workshop of poets that formed during the term of Arlington (MA)'s first poet laureate, Miriam (vide supra)!

This is by no means an exhaustive list. If I included those momentary "windfalls" (the moon on a clear January night; fall foliage every year; the gentle exuberance of blossoms in spring), this list would run to several volumes!

Peace and light, all. Have a great week!

T

REPLY

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**Barbara** September 16, 2019 at 8:46 am



Thank you for bringing such joy and insight every Monday!  
I had the Sisters of Notre Dame in High School and they inspired many vocations. I will keep you in my prayers.

REPLY

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**Carol Kapostasy** September 16, 2019 at 8:53 am



Most "Lotteries" are relevant to timing & circumstances. Yes, God has bestowed upon me the winning combination for so many things I find myself taking for granted I'm ashamed to admit. Today's reflection reminded me to make a better effort to be still & ponder how to reflect these gifts.

However, a winning lottery ticket is based on chance or luck. So much of our lives are out of our control & are left to "fate". But thank goodness, God does not fall into that category.

REPLY

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**Jane** September 16, 2019 at 9:40 am



My husband would accuse me of being a hopeless gambler when I bought a \$1.00 scratch off every other week or so. He has gone for a face to face with his God. It is almost a year now. I know he has won the big lottery because he lived every day with joy and love. He was showered with that same love by his six children and their spouses; his 21 grandchildren and six great grandchildren and by a myriad of people who loved and respected him in return.

I miss him terribly but I know that I also won a big lottery by having spent 57 years as the object of his affection. You don't get much luckier than that! He watches over me still.

Congratulations to Beth and Bob.....greats are great.

REPLY

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**Ilene** September 16, 2019 at 9:41 am



For all that are made incredibly sad by this post this morning. Hold onto hope. You are not alone. God makes beauty out of ashes. I will keep all the tender souls in my prayers who through circumstances don't have this ideal. Keep your eyes open today. God walks with us. Let's pray for each other.

REPLY

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**Frances** September 16, 2019 at 1:17 pm



Thank you. The photos brought back so many memories of the hopes I had for my children. Though one has not found his way, I will forever love him and hold on to hope.

REPLY

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**Mary A Schneider** September 16, 2019 at 10:17 am



Sr. Melannie: It is very nice of you to let us know your next article will be on Sept 30, my 80th birthday. Enjoy your time off.

REPLY

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**Barbara Erdmann** September 16, 2019 at 10:29 am



I have been Blessed with 2 great grand children. Have shared this song with their mother. Thank you.

REPLY

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**Ellen** September 16, 2019 at 10:33 am



Dear Melanie,

I enjoyed your weekend at Our Lady of the Pines. So much to reflect and pray about. Loved the many stories. Please come back. Today's touched my heart especially what a beautiful way to announce a baby, a miracle. Enjoy your week off.

Happy Birthday and take time to celebrate yourself. Maybe you will get a piece of candy on your pillow!

REPLY

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**Jean Canatsey** September 16, 2019 at 10:44 am



My husband I & both agree that we won the lottery by finding each other 63 years ago & when each of our 8 children, 20 grandchildren and 8 great children were born. I won the lottery each time I met one of my very good friends and especially when I met Fr. Glenn O'Conner (before he was ordained) in 1979. Fr. Glenn passed away much too soon this year at the age of 66. Few are blessed with such a special friendship.

The "tragedy" that turned out to be a blessing was my husband's nearly fatal illness and resulting stroke in 1998. It put an end to our life as we knew it and opened the door to the past twenty years of traveling and time together which might never have happened if Plan A had worked out.

REPLY

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**Jean Shott** September 16, 2019 at 11:22 am



Enjoy your time off! Your post reminds me of all the times we went to "Chicken Sunday" when I was a kid. Hope it is successful and you have good weather!

REPLY

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**Wanda Smith** September 16, 2019 at 12:36 pm



Thank you Sr. Melannie! It was wonderful having you at Our Lady of the Pines this weekend. You inspired the retreatants with Wonder, Courage, Hope and Love. What a gift you are to all of us!

REPLY

**Tom** September 16, 2019 at 1:51 pm



Dear Melannie,  
First off, have restful week away from your blog. We will all survive!  
I feel like I have won the lottery every time I am enriched by members of a group that I have become a part of, not by my choice, but by some circumstance of my life. For instance, a recovery or therapeutic group where we are all engaged in the shared experience of coming or being restored to the fullness of living.

REPLY

**Annie** September 16, 2019 at 2:50 pm



We're so blessed. Thank you for putting "winning the lottery" into perspective. What a beautiful prayer that video was!

REPLY

**Mary Lynn** September 16, 2019 at 10:03 pm



You know Sr. Wanda. I'd say you hit the lottery there 😊

REPLY

**Bernadette** September 17, 2019 at 8:45 am



Sr. Melanie,  
I look forward to your Monday morning reflections and song each week. I always find my thoughts drifting back to your post throughout my day. Winning the lottery was especially moving and inspiring. Your beautiful song selection of the day brought tears to my eyes. I listened several times to the prayerful song then sought

to read the words. In reading the poetic words slowly and prayerfully, I cried again. Life is such a great and precious gift! Thank you.

REPLY

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**Nancy K Connor** September 17, 2019 at 9:42 am



Amen to all the daily lottery winnings you listed. Enjoy your well-earned break, Sister!

REPLY

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**Noelle Anderson** September 18, 2019 at 5:58 pm



I too won the lottery with the birth of my second great-grandchild, this time a girl. How wonderful and fitting that I would receive your reflection a day after her birth. She is beautiful and healthy and a blessing to our family. I loved the song. Thank You

REPLY

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**Christine** September 22, 2019 at 8:56 am



Hi, S. Melannie. I left the retreat at Our Lady of the Pines early and would like to get a copy of the handouts on Courage and Hope. Would you please email them to me? I consider meeting you one way I won the lottery in life! Many thanks and blessings.

REPLY

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**Melannie Svoboda SND** September 22, 2019 at 12:04 pm



I will do that, Christine! Thank you for coming to the retreat! Melannie

REPLY

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**Deb Carlin** September 23, 2019 at 9:28 am



Have a great break. Take time to be.. love, Deb

REPLY

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**Maureen** September 28, 2019 at 10:19 pm



Hello Sr. Melanie,

I just finished reading SND Network fall 2019 and saw your blog listed on ways to connect. Your blog is wonderful. I treasure the joy you shared as a young teacher my freshman year at NDA Chardon 1968-9.

Fast forward 50 years and our youngest son Patrick O'Hearn and Cassie Everts in October 2019 will be co-authors of "Nursery of Heaven"; "Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Loss in the Lives of the Saints and Today's Parents".

Your blog and song touched our hearts. On Facebook Michael Corsini posts the cover picture of the book. It is a beautiful print of Our Blessed Mother surrounded by the children of those who share their stories in the book. Prints by the artist can be ordered online.

Mary radiates her love for all children. I have faith that I will meet our 3 grandchildren waiting in the "Nursery of Heaven".

REPLY

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**Melannie Svoboda SND** September 29, 2019 at 9:21 am



Dear Maureen, How nice to hear from a student from my earliest years as a teacher. And thank you for calling our attention to your son's book, "Nursery of Heaven." I will check it out-as I hope many of my readers will too. My sympathy to you on the loss of three grandchildren. I can't imagine your pain. But I also am inspired by your faith and hope. Thanks again for writing, Maureen. God bless you and your family! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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