



Pope Awesome and Other Stories

Cari Donaldson

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Take a two-income, quasi-New Age, newlywed couple with two Greyhounds and the resolve never to have children or to embrace any form of organized religion. Add ten years of hunger for something more. What do you get?

A large Catholic family, of course. And one in which the second youngest, while watching Pope Benedict depart the Vatican, solemnly declares, "Now I'll be pope: Pope Awesome the First, with my Swiss Guard army. And if my army men don't give me any new video games, I'll punch them in the face."

In words often as sassy as those of her little Pope Awesome, Catholic homeschooler Cari Donaldson here relates how her best friend's newborn baby, a portrait of the Virgin Mary, and the words of the Miraculous Medal called her forth from a selfish, secular way of life into the welcoming arms of the Church.

Six children in ten years have banished all her hopes for a tidy secular life, and, in her upscale town, where "Cats, not kids" bumper stickers are seen, have raised countless eyebrows along the way. Undaunted, Cari declares that "If we're to be a traveling carnival freak-show by New England standards, then we're going to be a carnival freak-show for Jesus," although her husband has stopped her from airbrushing onto her van a mural of Our Lady of Guadalupe riding a unicorn over a sparkling river.

Above all, Cari tells of the awakening of her love for the Eucharist, the deepening of her love for her husband and her children, and the humility and faith these experiences have nurtured in her. To Jesus she confesses, "You taught me to be open to the lives You wanted to bring into the world through me. I rose above myself just enough to let You bring the blessings of these children into my life. I was sometimes scared and sometimes angry, and always at a loss about how I was going to mother these children, but I knew that it would be Your grace, and not my shortcomings, that would triumph."

Through Cari's remarkable tale of her conversion and the joy she's found as a Catholic, you'll be reminded of the many profound, lifelong blessings God gives you through your Faith, and, yes, even through life's small troubles and joys like little Pope Awesome punching his Swiss Guards in the face that come along every day. Cari's tale will help you come to share her conviction that we never know what God has planned for us tomorrow, but, for sure, it will be better than anything we could have planned, even in our wildest dreams.

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