

*Touched By Grace: The Journey* began forty years ago in 1974 when Anna Maria heard a voice that told her she will write. Not convinced, she chose a path that led her away from writing. As she started a family, God's graces just became too evident for her to ignore.

In October 2014, she began writing about life events that she believed were an orchestration of circumstances that led her to a wonderful realization of God's grace. She asked God what she was going to do with her stories.

In February 2015, her first story was published online in *Guideposts* magazine. She now presents her first compilation of short personal stories. Everything fell quite effortlessly on her lap. She now believes her mission is to spread stories of God's grace as well as to nurture perseverance in prayers.

Her collection of true personal stories will inspire everyone to live his or her life knowing that God's grace is everywhere, from a seemingly trivial coincidence to some really awe-inspiring event. Her stories are also a witness to the power of prayer in everyone's lives, as long as we truly believe and are willing to Let Go and Let God.



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# TOUCHED BY GRACE

## The Journey

True Inspiring Stories of God's  
Simple & Extraordinary Graces  
in Our Everyday Lives

Coming soon to Barnes & Noble and Amazon

### EXCERPTS

Anna Maria De Guid

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# TOUCHED BY GRACE

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The Journey

Anna Maria De Guid

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Names of characters and some situations in the stories have been changed due to matters of privacy. The substance and message of the stories remain intact.

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# THE JOURNEY TO WRITING



*There are various ways God “talks” to us to let us know his plans for us. It could be through reading the Bible, through dreams, or maybe through whispering to the heart. God is all-knowing and since he figured that I am a clueless person, he had to let me know in no uncertain terms.*

1974.

**“Y***ou will write.”*

The words were as clear as can be. The thing was, those words were spoken in my mind. Only I “heard” them. I was staring at the slowly burning candle adorning the tombstone of my paternal grandparents in my parents’ hometown in the Philippines when those three words were spoken.

It is traditional Filipino custom to spend All Saints’ Day November 1 in the cemetery praying for the souls of the dearly departed. It is also a chance to see relatives whom we had not seen in exactly a year, in the same place.

I felt, as a teenager, that this tradition was an exercise in patience. After all, families usually stayed at the cemetery for half to the whole day and oftentimes until sunset. This was the pre-smart phone, iPod, and iPad era, so you can imagine what handful of things one could do within the confines of about a ten-square feet area.

“Me, write?” I sort of answered the “voice.” No response there.

I remembered we were having a creative writing class the following Monday at school, so I told myself I was going to give it my

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best shot. I was just so inspired by that voice. Maybe this could be my path. Maybe I was meant to be a journalist, maybe a novelist. I was a sophomore in high school, and I only had a vague idea of what college was about. Other classmates already had a sense of what they wanted to be: an accountant, an actuary, an architect... And that's just the start of the alphabet! I can't imagine what other careers and professions others had in mind.

The following day Tuesday, our papers were returned. "Ugh!" I grimaced at my grade, "That's it!" I was so extremely disappointed with my grade that the thought of becoming a writer was immediately tossed out the window. I expected at least an A-.

Well, I also got the lowest spelling score in the class, so I thought it was best to stay away from writing. (Thank heavens for Spell Check feature of word processors these days!) That's one path I sort of crossed out in my mind, among the vastness of choices open to me.

A couple of years later, an insanely embarrassing situation hammered the final nail into the writer's coffin. (I have kept this secret all these years. Not even my husband knows my mortifying story!)

And I did stay away from writing... except to keep in touch with family and friends and to write down recipes so I won't forget my culinary experiments.

### 1980s

I thoroughly enjoyed baking and wanted to enter culinary school, but never had the courage.

My dad had other plans for me. Don't get me wrong. I was thankful for his vision as I had none. I wanted to pursue home economics, but Dad asked me to remove the "home" part and just go for an economics degree. So I did.

During my single blessedness, I was arrogant and stubborn, thinking I knew everything. Those were the rainy and stormy days. Though I prayed about everything, I wanted to handle the wheel of the life I was living.

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1990s

After I got married and had children, priorities changed drastically. I turned over the wheel to Jesus, although I did occasionally ask him to lend me the wheel.

That was when unusual events that I could not explain with logic started happening more frequently. Initially I thought they were just coincidences, some wonderful, some painful but nevertheless always ending with a deep sense of awe.

2014

I started scribbling notes to remember these events and in early October of 2014, a relentless desire to share these stories overwhelmed me so much that I started to write about my experiences. It took me three weeks to finish thirty short stories with quite a number of still uncompleted ones.

At this time, I kept bumping into people whose careers were in publishing. I met a lady who edits articles for a Catholic publication. She offered to read my stories, and having read them, told me, "Prayerfully consider submitting your stories to a Catholic publication." She said my stories were very inspiring.

I was not familiar with any Catholic magazine that published short stories. Because I was an avid Guideposts reader, I submitted one of my stories to the magazine one fateful day in late October. Upon submission through the Internet, the magazine's general response was,

*"Thank you. Your submission has been received. You will only be notified if your article has been accepted for publication either in the magazine or on the site. If you have not heard from us in two months, feel free to submit your story elsewhere."*

As the two months seemed to drag and passed, I prayed to Jesus, "You know I submitted my story because I truly believe the story was

a grace from God. The only reason I wrote my stories was I felt God wanted me to share his message of love to everyone.” There was no hint of disappointment that my story was not accepted.

On the afternoon of December 31, 2014, my son Chris came running to me, “Mom! I forgot to tell you that someone from New York called about your story!” At that precise moment, I thought that a fire could bring our house down, and I would still be smiling.

Thank God that did not happen.

## 2015

Guideposts published my story!

I profusely thanked God for giving me the opportunity to share my story with so many people. That was what I needed to start polishing my other stories.

Months passed and procrastination got the better of me until a gentle nudge and an eye-opening push from above told me it was time to move forward.

I woke up around 4:00 a.m. on November 22, 2015. I pulled Mom’s *Daily Bread* prayer book, and I flipped to the reading for that day. It was from Romans 12:6:

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them.”

The narrative related to the reading discussed the life of C. S. Lewis, who converted to Christianity as an adult. He used his gift of writing to spread the gospel of Jesus.

Four days later, our family went to a Thanksgiving dinner upon an invitation of a family friend in Los Angeles. I had the fortuity of sitting beside an out-of-town guest. She was relating the challenges she and her family faced as they moved to New Mexico to fill a special education teaching post. As she mentioned that it was through God’s providence that they made it through tough times, I took the moment to share with her my story of grace.

I was just beginning to tell her about my son who won the first grade spelling bee when her eyes widened and she asked, “Are you the author of *that* story?”

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“Oh, you read my story in Guideposts!” I was delighted that I now knew someone outside my circle of family and friends who read my story.

“No... I heard your story from a speaker at a special education convention in New Mexico!”

I could not believe what I was hearing. Neither did she.

Right there, I knew I had to share my stories. C. S. Lewis was the gentle nudge, and meeting this woman was God’s eye-opening push.

### 2016

On New Year’s Day, I firmly resolved to finish my compilation of short stories by mid-year. Slowly and with a lot of subconscious hesitation, I completed my draft. (Who was I to write these stories? I had to remind myself that these stories were not mine. They were handed down to me to share.)

I was so excited that I finally finished the compilation and was going to send a copy to an online publishing company when the thought hit me, *What’s the title going to be?*

I spent the next couple of days brainstorming some possible titles: *A Journey of Grace*, *Grace Abounds*, *God’s Everyday Grace*, *Our Daily Grace*. Nothing seemed right. On the second day as I was thoughtlessly walking around the house, a picture of a book flashed in my mind: *Touched by Grace*. I saw the book in my head! Excitement and astonishment filled me, but only for a few days.

Weeks passed, and I put my plans of Do-It-Yourself online publishing on hold. Again.

In June 2016, I had the opportunity to visit the Philippines. My sister who was also in Manila submitted a manuscript to a publishing company there and was going to meet with the staff for final editing of her book.

“If you have time, do join me.” My sister’s invitation was a wonderful occasion to catch up on each other’s lives.

At the publishing house, while waiting for her meeting to finish, a family spiritual mentor asked me what I have been doing lately.

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I shared my stories of mysterious coincidences. The stories must have impressed him because within a few minutes, he called a publishing house staff member to talk to me. Before I had an idea of what was even happening, she presented me a copy of a contract!

All throughout this journey, there's been one grace after another, a grace within a grace, and just about a sprinkling of grace everywhere.

I once asked a friend "How do you know what God's plan is for you?"

She replied, "Wherever the road opens, that is his plan for you."

There was a road that was beckoning.

It just needed some time to reach.

1974-2014.

Forty years.

In God's time.

**"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you  
-Oracle of the Lord- plans for your welfare and not for woe,  
so as to give you a future of hope."  
-Jeremiah 29:11**

# JOURNEY TO PUBLISHING



*One of the many beautiful things with aging for me is the patience that has been nurtured through the years. I used to want things right away. Not anymore.*

**I** had been presented a contract to publish my stories in the Philippines in 2016. I was ecstatic!

Then came the waiting part.

“So what’s taking your book so long to publish?” my sister asked. “It’s been almost a year.”

“I have no idea,” I replied. “In God’s time.”

I have to admit, though, I was asking myself why it was taking longer than I thought. But then I didn’t know anything about publishing, so maybe that’s normally how long it takes to publish a book.

One evening, I was surfing the Internet to learn more about the publishing process when something popped out – “Free Publication Kit.” Being a freebie junkie, I pressed the button.

A literary agent from Christian Faith Publishing called the following day. I told her I had a manuscript that was being reviewed by a Philippine publisher.

“Have you signed a contract with them? If you have, we cannot work with you.” The agent wanted to clarify what was going on.

“Oh, no... I have not signed anything. They have accepted my manuscript for publishing but they have not gotten in touch with me for months now even after I’ve called and emailed them.”

The agent strongly suggested that I send them my draft, and a review board will go over my manuscript. She said that in five days they would let me know their decision.

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After praying for guidance, I submitted my manuscript.

In five days, on the one hundredth anniversary of the Feast of our Lady of Fatima, I received their email accepting my stories!

Shortly after, I signed the contract.

A few weeks later, I received an email from the Philippine publisher telling me to resubmit my manuscript and that they were ready to work with me. They said that many projects have kept them away from my book.

Had the Philippine publisher communicated with me their situation earlier, I would not have searched the Internet. I would have waited.

It was God's plan for me to publish in the United States.

**“your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.”**

**-Matthew 6:10**

# A SPELLING BEE M-I-R-A-C-L-E



*“A Spelling Bee M-I-R-A-C-L-E” originally appeared on Guideposts.org and is reprinted with permission from Guideposts. Copyright ©2015 by Guideposts. All rights reserved.*

“**M**om, can I bring *two* chicken legs for lunch?” my 6-year-old son AJ asked, smiling sweetly at me. I sighed. My son always made me proud—he’d recently been selected as one of two first graders to compete against two second grade students in the school’s spelling bee—but I wished he wasn’t such a picky eater. After all the delicious, healthy lunches I made for him came back to me uneaten, I’d finally given in and packed one of his favorite foods—a fried chicken leg. I was hoping he’d tire of it quickly—now he wanted two?

“Are you really going to eat two chicken legs?” I asked.

“One’s for Kyle,” he explained. His lunch buddy. Kyle usually bought lunch from the school cafeteria. How nice of my son to think of someone else! For the rest of the week, I packed him two chicken legs, impressed by his generosity.

Kyle’s mom called that weekend to thank me for AJ’s kind gesture. We got to talking about the spelling bee. “Does AJ know how to spell ‘beautiful’?” Kyle’s mom asked.

Beautiful? I had no idea. Why that word? Did she have some inside information? “No, nothing like that,” Kyle’s mom said. “It just popped in my head.” Amused, I called AJ over and asked him to spell it. B-E-U-T-I-F-U-L... he missed the silent “a.”

In the days leading up to the spelling bee, I drilled AJ on his words. I made a point to throw “beautiful” into the rotation. He kept

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getting it wrong. If AJ couldn't spell that word, did he have much of a shot at winning the bee?

The big day arrived. My husband and I took our seats in the school auditorium. I felt as nervous as AJ looked up on the stage. He spelled his first word correctly, then his second and third. His opponent had one word left to spell.

"The word is... 'beautiful,'" the announcer said.

I held my breath. AJ's eyes grew wide. Even wider when his opponent fumbled over the word and misspelled it. My son couldn't stop smiling as he finally nailed the word he'd been practicing all week.

All thanks to a chicken leg. One B-E-A-U-T-I-F-U-L act of kindness.

**"Gifts clear the way for people,  
winning access to the great.  
-Proverbs 18:16**

## GRACES FROM THE ROSARY



*I have petitioned so many favors from our Lord Jesus with the intercession of the Blessed Mother Mary. Blessings of safety, good health, protection, guidance, and so much more have been showered on me and my family.*

*And there were blessings that were not even asked for.*

**P**ets all over the world hold a special place in the hearts of those who care for them, and more especially so in the United States.

That's why I was horrified with every bit of my being and instinctively closed my eyes when Paul and I both felt the not-so-gentle hump as we drove over a Shih Tzu that suddenly crossed the hustling intersection of Seventh Street and Alvarado Boulevard in Los Angeles. The light turned green, and Paul stepped on the gas when the dog suddenly ran in front of us.

When I opened my eyes, I saw spectators' bewildered, shocked faces, some with hands on their mouths, as we feared the worst – to see the mangled body of the dog lying under the car.

“No!” I gave a muffled shout that only my heart could hear.

Then a couple of short seconds passed...

“Wait... I just saw the dog sprint from under our car and cross Alvarado!” Paul was just mystified by what he saw.

My heart leapt as I recalled the story of a couple who hit and ran over a young child who suddenly ran across their path.

“Paul, I can't believe this is happening to us. You see, there's a story about a couple who ran over a child, and the child had no

injuries whatsoever! They were praying the rosary when the accident happened.”

We were just finishing our rosary when we hit the dog.

How I wish I could remember where I read that story.

Two months later just before leaving for a trip, I grabbed a book that I had not finished reading. As I opened the book in the airport and started reading, I could not believe my “luck”! It was the very story I was looking for!

*He stepped on the accelerator to assume normal speed. Suddenly, a little girl, maybe less than five years old, darted across our path. She was hit and caught under our vehicle.... To our great amazement, however, the child rolled out from under our vehicle to the other side of the street, alive and seemingly unharmed... I realized that my rosary was dangling from my hand. Tita Babe and I had been praying the Rosary during the trip.<sup>4</sup>*

**“With all prayer and supplication,  
pray at every opportunity in the Spirit.  
To that end, be watchful with all perseverance  
and supplication for all the holy ones”  
-Ephesians 6:18**

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<sup>4</sup> S. J. Fr James B. Reuter, *Mama Mary and Her Children (Book 3): True Stories of Real People*, Mama Mary and Her Children 3 (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2011).

*If you feel that the stories here have inspired you to grow in faith, please consider sharing and gifting this book to family and friends.*

All profits of this book will benefit local, national and international charities.

Your support will help bring God to more people's lives.

If you have stories of grace that you feel will inspire others to grow in faith, please send your stories to [touchedbygrace.today](http://touchedbygrace.today) or to [anna.maria.deguid@gmail.com](mailto:anna.maria.deguid@gmail.com)

Thank you very much.