



Voice for the Hollers: A Journey Into Solitude and Solidarity in Appalachia

Jeanne McNulty

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Voice for the Hollers is about more than one type of holler. It entails an inner scream crying out to be set free from paralyzing fear and negativity in a father-daughter relationship. The other types of hollers were ones in the heart of Appalachia where the author went in search of deep solitude, simplicity of life, and solidarity with the mountain dwellers.

This is a true story of a soul's search for the place where she really belonged. It led through a convent, a cloister, and eleven years in the two huge drug-laced ghettos of Pittsburgh and Chicago before she discovered "home" to be in a little dilapidated cabin, sequestered by white pines in Colt Run Holler, Roane County, WV.

Her initiation and in-services to Appalachian life came from the folks up on Colt Ridge about half a mile away who came to help her learn more about country living and to share their wisdom, generosity, and expertise in her time of great need.

The long hours of silence in the mountains provided the space to listen intently to the voices of nature and the whisperings of the Creator in a stillness no cloister walls could emulate. In a world where so much noise, confusion and bombardment of the senses by technological inventions can fry our soul-space, the clean mountain air, star-bright nights, and misty mountains enveloped her, as it did our ancestors, the solitary desert fathers and mothers, in early Christianity. They too fled for awhile and sometimes for life from worldly cacophonies to find their own true, inner selves.

St. Francis of Assisi, his life, aspirations and way of following the Gospel of Christ in poverty and simplicity provided inspiration and stepping stones of learning for the author's own life as she ventured out of the holler and into other hollers to nurse the sick and poor in their homes.

Voice for the Hollers is a book that speaks of the local folks and true life experiences. It encompasses nearly twenty years of nursing in the hills. It is the hope of the author that these true vignettes (some names and locations are fictionalized for the sake of privacy), taken from the lives of mountain mamas and papas will help inspire others on their life journeys.

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Diana Johnson:

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