

That First Kiss and Other Stories
My Wish List and Other Stories
Better than Natural and Other Stories
Straight from the Heart and Other Stories
Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories

That First Kiss and Other Stories

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**Saint Mary's Press
Christian Brothers Publications
Winona, Minnesota**

We dedicate this book to the next generation:

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The precious gift of faith that we were given we now happily hand on to you—in fulfillment of Jesus’ desire: “The gift you have received, give as a gift” (Matthew 10:8).



Genuine recycled paper with 10% post-consumer waste.
Printed with soy-based ink.

The publishing team included Brian Singer-Towns, development editor; Cheryl Drivdahl, copy editor; Alan S. Hanson, production editor and typesetter; Stephan Nagel, cover designer; PhotoDisc Inc., cover photo; pre-press, printing, and binding by the graphics division of Saint Mary’s Press.

The acknowledgments continue on page 92.

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Printed in the United States of America.

Printing: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year: 2007 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99

ISBN 0-88489-589-0

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Preface

Life is filled with opportunities for sharing stories. We share stories with classmates at school, with friends at parties, and with relatives at family gatherings. We read stories in books, watch stories on television and in movies, and write stories for English class. We even read stories in chat rooms on the Internet and swap stories by e-mail.

Whenever we listen to good stories, we find ourselves responding in a variety of ways: we laugh and we cry, we tremble in fear and we sigh in relief, we throw up our hands in disbelief and we nod in agreement. We respond in these ways because good stories are like mirrors: they give us a reflection of ourselves. The joys and sorrows of the stories' characters reflect our own joys and sorrows: we laugh and we cry from the heart because we recognize ourselves in the tales being told.

Some of the most meaningful stories that people share focus on growing up. These are stories of going to school and playing sports, of losing friends and finding new ones, of falling in love and breaking up. These are also

stories that try to deal with the big questions of life: What kind of person do I want to be? Where is my life going? How do I relate to my family? What kinds of people do I want for friends? How do I make difficult decisions? What do I really believe in? Who is God?

This book is a collection of stories about young people. The characters in these stories experience wonder and struggle, hurt and forgiveness, failure and success, tears and laughter, learning and relearning. In other words, these stories are very much like your own. You are invited to use them as mirrors for looking at your own life.

After every story in this book, you will find a set of questions to help you take a deeper look at yourself. The title of this set of questions is “Seeing Your Own Story.” When you think about the issues and events in your own life that the stories reflect back to you, you can begin to see yourself in a new light and learn more about the unique person you are.

After the reflection questions is a section called “Seeing the Faith Story.” This section is designed to help you make connections between what you are discovering about yourself and what it means to be a believer in God, a Christian, and a Catholic. The questions at the end of this section can help you view your own life through the eyes of faith.

This book is one in a series of five. The other books in the series are entitled *My Wish*

List and Other Stories, Better than Natural and Other Stories, Straight from the Heart and Other Stories, and Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories. Each book in the series presents several opportunities for you to discover more about your own story, to examine your own issues, and to search for your own answers about life, God, and faith.

It is our hope that once you see your deeper self through the mirrors of these stories, you will continue to reflect on the important matters of life. We believe that life becomes happier and more meaningful when we take the time to be reflective. A word of caution: Looking into the mirror of a story may become an exciting, lifelong habit!

That First Kiss

Pete's Journal

Thursday, 2 June

Yesterday was the worst day of my life—ever! Why did I have to drop that tray of plates when the restaurant was full of people? And then why did I have to slip in the mess and split my pants when everyone was looking at me? Can you believe my luck? My boss told me that all busboys drop at least one tray on the job, but why did I have to do it in front of the most beautiful girl in the world? I guess I just lost my cool when I noticed Alexis in the booth with her friends. After trying for weeks to impress her, I ended up showing her my underwear!

Pete's Journal

Friday, 1 July

I can't believe that Alexis is in love with me—Peter T. Norrington! Wow! My heart races just thinking about her. Alexis is everything I've ever dreamt of—and more. When I saw her at Ten Flags three weeks ago, and

she smiled at me, I couldn't believe my eyes. I almost jumped over the park fence when she gave me her phone number and told me to give her a call. Didn't she remember the night I nearly exposed my backside to her?

"She's too pretty," my best friend, Isaac, keeps telling me. "She's just playing with you, Pete. When she finds someone better, she'll drop you like a wild pitch!"

"How do you know, Isaac?" I always challenge him, faking a confident smile and telling myself that he's just jealous. "Maybe she's stuck on me for good."

"Someone's stuck, for sure," he says, "like a fly in a cobweb. And you're the fly, buddy, not Alexis."

If it were only Isaac's voice that fed my doubts, I wouldn't be so worried. But last week, Dad also warned me about pretty girls. "Girls like her want to call the shots, Pete," he said. "Remember: if something seems too good to be true, it probably is." And Mom's always reminding me that I'm too young to get serious about a relationship. "There are a lot of fish in the sea, Peter," she tells me whenever I mention Alexis's name. "Maybe you should keep your eyes open."

Well, my eyes have been open for years, and I've seen dozens of pretty fish in the big sea, but not one of them was ever interested

in me. Why is it so terrible for me to fall in love with a beautiful girl who's also in love with me? I've never felt more alive in all my life! I can't wait to go through senior year with an honest-to-goodness girlfriend. It's about time for me to experience a little bit of the "good life" and not just talk about it!

When Uncle Frank gets home from his trip to Europe, I'm going to take Alexis over to meet him. Frank's always been a good friend, more like a brother to me than an uncle. He'll help me to understand why no one believes me right now. I'll show him the poem that Alexis gave me yesterday and dare him to side with those who think she doesn't really love me. "Like water on the lip of a red, red rose," she wrote, "you are life and refreshment to me." Frank will recognize true love when he sees it!

Yes, Frank will support me. When I was only nine years old, and he was a point guard on the local high school's basketball team, he used to come up to me after every game—win or lose—and carry me on his shoulders to the dressing room. He didn't have to give me all that attention, but he did. And even when the other guys teased him about his "runt of a friend," he didn't forget me after the next game. I think that's where I had my first taste of true friendship.

And isn't that exactly how Alexis is treating me now? She doesn't have to give me

so much attention or spend so much time with me, but she does. And even though Isaac called her a praying mantis the other night before the baseball game, she ran over to the dugout to congratulate me after my first home run of the season—and simply smiled at Isaac, who was standing next to me. I was so excited I hit a double the next time at bat!

What else can I say—except that what's happening right now seems too good to be true? When Alexis gave me that first kiss on 22 June, I knew then it was the real thing. And nothing since then has changed my mind. That's why I asked her tonight to go with me to the homecoming dance in the fall—and she accepted!

Can you believe my luck? The guy who nearly fell on his face trying to impress the girl of his dreams ends up standing square on his feet! Today's the best day of my life—ever!

Seeing Your Own Story

- Are Pete's feelings for Alexis true love or simple infatuation, or perhaps a mixture of the two? Why do you think so? Is there any wisdom in Pete's parents' words of caution? If so, try to express it in your own words.
- In the Bible, there is a love song—believe it or not! It's called the Song of Solomon (or

the Song of Songs). For centuries, both Jews and Christians have interpreted the Song as a symbol of the love between God and the human race. What similarities do you see between the thrill of young love and the age-old love of God for us? What differences do you see?

Seeing the Faith Story

Christians call the message of Jesus Christ the Good News. This message is that God loves us unconditionally, even when we don't feel especially loved or lovable. Like Pete, we sometimes wonder how we can be so fortunate, particularly when our own pain, feelings of unworthiness, and the unbelief of others cause us to doubt. At times we may wonder, Is the Good News just too good to be true?

For this reason, we read and reread God's "love letters" in the Holy Bible (often called the Scriptures), and we listen over and over again to the wonderful stories and teachings handed down by generations of believers (usually called Tradition). As a community of faith with deep roots and high hopes, we support one another in our efforts to believe and to live as believers.

This book focuses on the important teachings of the Christian faith that are highlighted in an ancient prayer called the Apostles' Creed. By looking at the various statements of this prayer, we can find out what is distinctive

and attractive about the Christian community of faith. Along the way, we may also discover—or rediscover—why those who identify themselves as followers of Jesus Christ have much to celebrate.

- Do you have any questions or concerns about the Christian faith in general or about the Catholic church in particular? If so, what are they? If you are a Catholic Christian, are you excited about your religious identity or do you rarely think about it? If you are not a Catholic Christian, is there anything about the Catholic church that appeals to you?

Let us profess our faith.

Appendix A: In Case You Want to Know More

That First Kiss and Other Stories is one of five books in a series based on the principal beliefs of the Catholic faith. You may have noticed the italicized phrase at the end of each story. This phrase, which may be familiar to you, points to the particular topic highlighted in the story.

The first story of this book, “That First Kiss,” has a concluding sentence that reads, “Let us profess our faith.” These words—or similar ones—are said at the weekend Mass to invite the gathered community to proclaim its faith by reciting the creed. Several different Christian creeds have developed in the history of the church. The particular one used with the stories in this book is the Apostles’ Creed.

Each story in this book is a mirror for understanding more deeply a particular aspect of the Apostles’ Creed. If you want to know more about the Christian beliefs embodied in the stories, you can consult the following table. In this table, four sections appear for each story except the introductory story:

1. the creedal statement that the story is related to

2. the faith concept that the story illustrates
3. a relevant citation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
4. a notation of paragraphs from the *Catechism* that provide background on the faith concept

“That First Kiss”

This story introduces the book. It also introduces the Good News of Jesus’ message, Scripture and Tradition, and the Apostles’ Creed as a summary of Christian belief.

“When You Care Enough to Give the Very Best”

1. “I believe in God”
2. the Trinity, one God in three persons
3. “The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life” (*Catechism*, number 234).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 232 to 260

“The Best of Both Worlds”

1. “. . . the Father almighty”
2. God as both Father and Mother
3. “God’s parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God’s immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature” (*Catechism*, number 239).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 238 to 242

“So, Big Deal!”

1. “. . . creator of heaven and earth.”
2. creation and stewardship
3. “Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator” (*Catechism*, number 338).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 337 to 349

“Seeing Double”

1. “I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.”
2. the Incarnation, Jesus as one person with two natures
3. “Jesus means in Hebrew: ‘God saves’” (*Catechism*, number 430).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 430 to 451

“Waiting and Listening”

1. “He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.”
2. the faith of Mary, the mother of Jesus
3. “Mary’s role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ” (*Catechism*, number 964).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 487 to 507, and 963 to 972

“A New Way to Live and Die”

1. “He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.”
2. salvation, being saved by Jesus

3. “Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful” (*Catechism*, number 539).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 571 to 628

“Back from the Dead”

1. “He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.”
2. resurrection, life after death
3. “Encounters with the risen Christ characterize the Christian hope of resurrection” (*Catechism*, number 995).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 638 to 655, and 992 to 1014

“The Light at the End of the Tunnel”

1. “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.”
2. judgment, being judged by God
3. “The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do” (*Catechism*, number 1039).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 668 to 679, and 1038 to 1041

“Enjoying the Differences”

1. “I believe in the Holy Spirit . . .”
2. the Holy Spirit
3. “The term “Spirit” translates the Hebrew word *ruah*, which, in its primary sense,

means breath, air, wind” (*Catechism*, number 691).

4. *Catechism*, numbers 683 to 741

“A Glorious Night for an Eclipse”

1. “. . . the holy catholic Church . . .”
2. church, the people of God
3. “The Church is like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun” (*Catechism*, number 748).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 748 to 865

“My Own Special Saints in Heaven”

1. “. . . the communion of saints . . .”
2. the community of all believers
3. “We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church” (*Catechism*, number 962).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 946 to 959

“A Little Bit of Heaven”

1. “. . . the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”
2. eternity, heaven
3. “God will then be ‘all in all’ in eternal life” (*Catechism*, number 1050).
4. *Catechism*, numbers 1020 to 1050