

A Picket Gate and God's Love

Sheila Schiedler
541-547-4746



“Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in His great love for us, has brought us to a new birth.” (1Peter 1:3)

My name is Sheila Schiedler. I was born on June 22, 1944 in Miller, South Dakota to my parents, Viola and Herman Martinmaas. I am third to the oldest out of my seventeen siblings – seven brothers and ten sisters. The gift of my Catholic faith and my family are a solid basis in the formation of my faith and of who I am.

We lived on a small farm near Ree Heights with circumstances pretty much akin to those of Laura Ingalls in the “Little House on the Prairie” series – no running water or indoor bathroom – we did have electricity. We weren’t rich in material things, but we were blessed with everything we needed including an overabundance of love and joy. On Sunday mornings, we all piled into a four-door Dodge sedan and headed ten miles in the opposite direction from Ree Heights to attend Mass at St. Ann’s Catholic Church in Miller. Mass and Holy Communion were the focal point of our week. We loved attending Mass! The “Angel of God” prayer, the “Before and After” meal prayers, the various novenas prayed when family needs or concerns arose all culminated in the family evening recitation of the rosary. On a few occasions, our mother would sit in her rocking chair, gather all us children round her and read to us from the family bible.

One special event that occurred when I was seven years old happened on an ordinary sunny summer day as I went strolling out of our front yard into the dusty driveway in front of our home. On this particular day, I had no more than closed the picket gate behind me when all of a sudden, I found myself completely surrounded in a beautiful cylinder of God’s love – God’s Fatherly love. I was aware of nothing else or anyone else. I only experienced this complete satisfying love embracing me. Certainly, this was a “taste of Heaven”. I believe it was then that God gifted me with a loving heart and a deep ability of understanding. I aim to keep utilizing these gifts in a generous service to God, my family, my church, and my community.

This Presence of God is a reality we all share in at every moment of our lives. We all need to embrace God’s love and share it with each other. Jesus said, “I am with you always”. (Matt 28:20). St. John tells us that “God is love.” (1Jn 4:8) And so He is! Just think! God Loves You!