



*On April 23, 2014, my granddaughter Ellie was born. I wrote about that experience four years ago, and that reflection follows. My thoughts at that time came back to me recently for two reasons.*

*First, we celebrated Ellie's birthday with a little party last week – what an awesome little girl! (I have six grandchildren now, but she is the only girl...so she has a special place in Grandpa's heart.) And secondly, and more importantly, during the Easter season I am trying to be more aware of how God continues to bless me. I need to reflect on these blessings, and show my gratitude, more often.*

*My reflection from April 2013:*

As I write this letter on Tuesday afternoon, I am sitting in a hospital room. Fifteen hours ago, my youngest daughter, Laura, gave birth to our second grandchild. It was a little girl, Mariela (Ellie) Grace Garcia. Everything went smoothly. Mom and baby are doing great. New dad, Joey, is on Cloud Nine.

It is raining outside. The hospital room is dark except for a nightlight. The new parents are both asleep. My wife, Carol, is holding Ellie and both of them are asleep, too. I go over to check on them. Ellie's little chest is moving up and down with each breath she takes. Carol looks beautiful, as does Laura, as does Ellie - three generations of beautiful women with whom I have been blessed.

It is so peaceful. I don't say peaceful because it is quiet. Lack of noise does not lead to peace. I don't say peaceful because four out of five people in the room are sleeping. We are all exhausted, so sleeping makes sense. I say peaceful because in this snapshot of time all is right with the world.

There was a rush of excitement at the birth. There will be a series of other rushes when Ellie meets more of her aunts, uncles, and cousins as they arrive in town. There will be more excitement as she and her brand new parents experience many first time events: Ellie coming home and moving into her new room; sleeping through the night for the first time; the first time she giggles, or crawls; or when she jabbars some random sound that Joey will claim is "Daddy."

But for now, there is the peace that comes with knowing that all things are as they should be. These are the times that often get lost in the chaos, messiness, and unnecessarily fast pace of our lives. These are the times that should be cherished, but instead are missed.

I have never been more at peace in my life than I am now at the age of fifty-three. My peace comes from the simple recognition that Jesus Christ is with me at all times. He is at my side when things are going well, but also when they veer off course. He loves me when He should, and even more when He shouldn't. Jesus has made it clear to me that He is a part of my life and intends to be with me forever. And so, I am a more peaceful person.

If I had been in this same hospital setting six or seven years ago, I probably would have described it as rainy, too quiet, and boring because everyone was sleeping. But today, with the Presence of Jesus here with us, it is peaceful...and I can appreciate it and enjoy it while it lasts.

*I hope you will take time during the Easter season to reflect on how God has blessed you. These blessings come as a result of His continual and unconditional love for us.*

***God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. (John 3:16)***