

Andrea Bonilla Supplement

## A Retelling of the Greatest 48 Hours of My Life EVER!!!!

I used to think that all the things I wanted to do with my talents and with my faith was impossible. They felt like mindless dreams, but this weekend I think God took me by the hand and walked with me as He showed me what he is going to do with me one day.

It all started with a bad week at school. With me fighting for my faith and the Church and missing the one place in the world and the only people in the world that I didn't have to do that with. It was a hard week and I felt myself being emotionally drained. The last straw came when the one thing that was keeping me going, a trip to Dallas to see my Hero, Jason Evert do what he does best (and what I pray I can do one day), give a talk at the Pure Reality youth rally. My ride home fell through (not by any fault of her own) and I felt like I had my last drops of water in the dessert taken from me. I do a good job of staying tough in the battleground I live in, but for the first time I let myself be consumed by doubt and despair. I doubted God's plan for me and questioned Him.

When I was in the lowest point of my spiritual struggle, my father (the best father in the world besides my heavenly one, I'm convinced) vowed to bring me home to see Jason's talk on Saturday no matter what. I told him I appreciated the gesture, but knew the strain such a drive would put on him and therefore told him I would consider his offer but gave him no definite answer.

I turned to the advice and words of my mentor and dear dear friend, Monica Ashour, founder and director of the Theology of the Body Evangelization Team. She heard my sad story but encouraged me that the persecution I was going through was happening for a reason. I listened but did not feel comfort from her words until the next day when she sent me an email. She informed to that in addition to Jason's appearance at the Pure Reality one day retreat, he would also be giving numerous talks all around Dallas on Friday and may need a ride to one and asked if I would be interested in being the driver!!! I freaked out and told her I would walk to Dallas immediately if it meant having time to meet and talk with the person who has inspired me all these years.

In God's goodness however, Ms Ashour out did herself. It turned out Jason did not need a ride anywhere, because one of Ms. Ashour's friends, Pamela, was acting as the speaker Liaison for the Youth Rally and was the one entrusted with Driving Jason EVERYWHERE while he was in Dallas. Ms. Ashour had spoken to Pamela and fixed it so that I could shadow her all day. Meaning, I, little insignificant me, could go to all of Jason's talks, ride with them in the car, and eat dinner with them.

I won't even be able to describe the joy I felt. I could never. My father knew what such a meeting meant to me that he vowed me to be in Austin early, and get me to Dallas in time to make one of my dreams come true.

The entire way to Dallas my stomach was in knots and I was physically sick. I was so nervous. I kept telling my friends and family, "Dreams do not come true. My dreams can't come true like this. That just doesn't happen."

I was in disbelief until I got to Jason's third stop of the day, Ursuline Academy. I met Pamela and followed behind her as Jason and the School's principal walked briskly to the talk site. My heart was pounding in my chest until Pamela introduced us

"Jason," She said, "This is Andrea, she is a big fan and will be ridding with us today."

I shook his hand and squeaked out, "Hello, it's an honor to meet you."

"So have you seen the talk before?" He asked.

I merely answered, "Yes, at my parish a few years ago and online." But really in my head I was screaming "I'VE ONLY WATCHED IT A THOUSAND TIMES ON YOUTUBE!!!!!!!!!"

From there Jason was rushed away and gave his talk. Though I've seen it countless times I still laughed and cried at all my usual places and thanked God for this gift. Afterwards he walked up to Pamela and I and asked me, "Did you email me?" I stammered that I had. He said, "And the picture?" I was slightly mortified and ecstatic that he recognized me from a silly photo-shopped picture I made of myself standing next to him. "Uh...yeah...that was me," I said.

From there we walked to the car and Jason began talking to me about the differences between the Boys and girls talk. I soaked everything in, trying to memorize every word he said. He asked if I knew of Monica Ashour's ministry because he wanted to advise me to get in touch with her. I shyly told him I had actually worked very closely with TOBET and told him of all the progress that my little ministry I helped to found was making.

Once we got in the car, he turned to me and said "Here, check this out." And handed me a copy of his newly released book, *How to Find your Soul Mate Without Losing your Soul*. I hungrily soaked up every word on the page and nearly had a heart attack when I found his talk notes tucked inside the book's pages. After Jason made a few phone calls he turned to me and said, "Do you approve?" I said, "Of course! It's awesome!!" He smiled and said, "You're the first person to ever read it."

I shyly said something about that being really cool, while I screamed at the top of my lungs in my head. I, was the first one to see one of my heroes works, read the words

that would touch thousands of girls, before anyone else did. I felt tears well up into my eyes, but held them back with difficulty.

I told him of my failed attempt to lead a Theology of the Body study session and my hesitancy to try again. He said, "You go back there. Don't let them stop you. Who will teach those kids if you don't?" The ride from Urseline to UD was slightly awkward for me. I wanted to badly to blurt out a million things to him, but stayed silent and busied my mind with reading more of the book. Once we got onto campus he commented on the size of UD in Comparison to Franciscan. I mentioned I would be going there soon because I was thinking about a transfer. He said, "girl, if you can get there, GO. There are some things worth going in debt for." I thought, well that settles that decision!!!

His talk was brilliant and inspiring as always and upon getting in the car for the long ride from Irving to Coppell for our final stop at St. Ann He picked up right on our previous conversation and asked why I had started thinking about a transfer. I told him everything, how sometimes my professors are just flat out wrong and pretty annoying. The struggles I face defending the true church, everything. He gave me so much insight I could never even write it all here. He asked exactly what I had been taught and offered some great words about the nature of my professors and how they will try to teach me. He talked to me about the fellowship I will find at a place such as Franciscan and I talked to him about my dear friends in Lewisville and how I miss them so much.

He even asked what my plans were after college. I told him that my ultimate goal was to be a speaker and minister to youth. But otherwise I had thought about joining NET, "Good" he said. And that I will most likely need to start off doing basic youth ministry at a parish (again he affirmed that idea) "And then," I said, "My ultimate goal in Life, my dream, is to go to Africa and fight the Spread of Aids by giving chastity talks." "Awesome!!" He said. I thought my heart would burst at that point.

He talked me a little bit about what I would take to make my dream come true. As he ate his dinner on the run I told him about that stupid picture. I explained it was supposed to be a point of humor in a speech I gave about my dream job. He laughed and said he thought it was funny.

From there we arrived at St Ann and I watched him give a third talk. After wards I went up to him and had him sign books that He had written and got a picture with him. After that he said, "I have something for you." He went to his bag and pulled out a miraculous metal. "This metal was blessed by John Paul II, two weeks before he went into the hospital." My heart swelled and I thought I would faint right there on the spot. "He's one of my heroes," I gasped. "Mine too." He Said. "Thank you" I stammered.

"You keep doing what you're doing," He said, "We need people like you out there."

I stammered another thank you and told him today had literally been a dream come true and everything meant so much to me.

He nodded his head and said, "And who knows, maybe well give a talk together in Uganda someday."

I said one last goodbye and ran from the St. Ann Cenacle. I turned to my mother holding the blessed metal to my heart and began to cry.

Just when I thought my weekend couldn't get any better, my brother and friend told me that after seeing Jason give his talk at Pure Reality (though this was the second time I was seeing it I still cried and laughed at all the same parts) they went to talk to him. "I think you met my sister?" My brother said. Reportedly Jason said, "Andrea? Yeah she's a sweet girl. She's going to do amazing things for the church one day."

Icing on the cake to the greatest weekend on my life. All I wanted was to see my Hero give one talk. Instead I watched him give four and had personal one on one time with him. In one of his talks Jason quoted a nun who said, "Be careful, sometimes you ask for an apple and you get a whole orchard." And I feel that this sums up what has happened to my completely. I have done absolutely nothing to live the dream that I did on Friday. I am so unworthy to have God spoil me like this. I do not deserve to have such grace given to me. But he did. Its like I could see his hand reach right out of the sky and make everything happen. I felt him showing me so clearly that he has meant me to do great things. Like He was saying "YES all your dreams can come true, and here, Let me just show you what I can do for you to prove it if you don't believe me!" I have done nothing to deserve him to talk to me so clearly but I am so glad he did.

Now more than ever, I am ready to fearlessly fight with abandon for what I want, for what God has called me to. It's like he did take the water in the dessert away from me, but to throw me into and Ocean of love and graces.