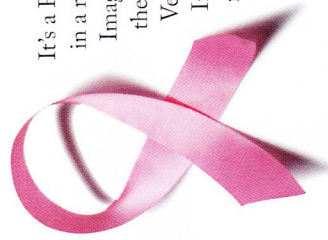


At The Crossroads

The pink cape reminds us that we are not alone



It's a Friday morning, and I'm sitting in a room at Regional Medical Imaging. I'm wearing the pink cape the technician gave me, with the Velcro closure fastened in the front. In the past year, I've had three mammograms, an ultrasound, and a breast biopsy. Concern that something is just not right with my left breast has sent me here again today.

Essentially I am alone, but I feel connected to the millions of women who have sat, like I am now, waiting for the diagnosis that will possibly change their lives.

The screen depicting my fibrocystic breast tissue looks like the surface of the moon. Moments ago, under the dimmed lights, I watched the technician find and measure an ominous-looking thing. Lying on my back, I looked toward the ceiling where one of those inspirational posters had been hung. It read, "VISION: The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

I wonder if that's the right sentiment given the crossroads I'm feeling in my life at the moment. I think of my family ... how bad news would throw us for a loop and make us feel like we are standing on unsteady ground. I think of the job that I love and wonder how I

would manage to be "on" during days I might feel "off."

But mostly, I think of my youngest sister Mary whose breast cancer has metastasized into her bones. She battles the beast head-on with grace, love, and fortitude, buoyed by hope. It's a battle I believe she will win; there's simply no other way for me to think about it. She's my baby sister, after all. If I could, I'd gladly bear her pain.

The technician returns to tell me the doctor has reviewed my scans and thinks everything is okay. "It's just hormonal," she says, hoping to smooth away my concern.

My sigh contains both relief at the news and a distinct awareness that millions of women, including my sister, have heard another kind of news that forced them to journey down a darker path. As I dress again, happy to be free of the pink cape, I realize that moments like these recalibrate our lives. They remind us that we are truly not alone. And they help us recommit to our life's true purpose: to love God and to love others, simple as that. ■

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Life's under no obligation to give us what we expect.

— Margaret Mitchell



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