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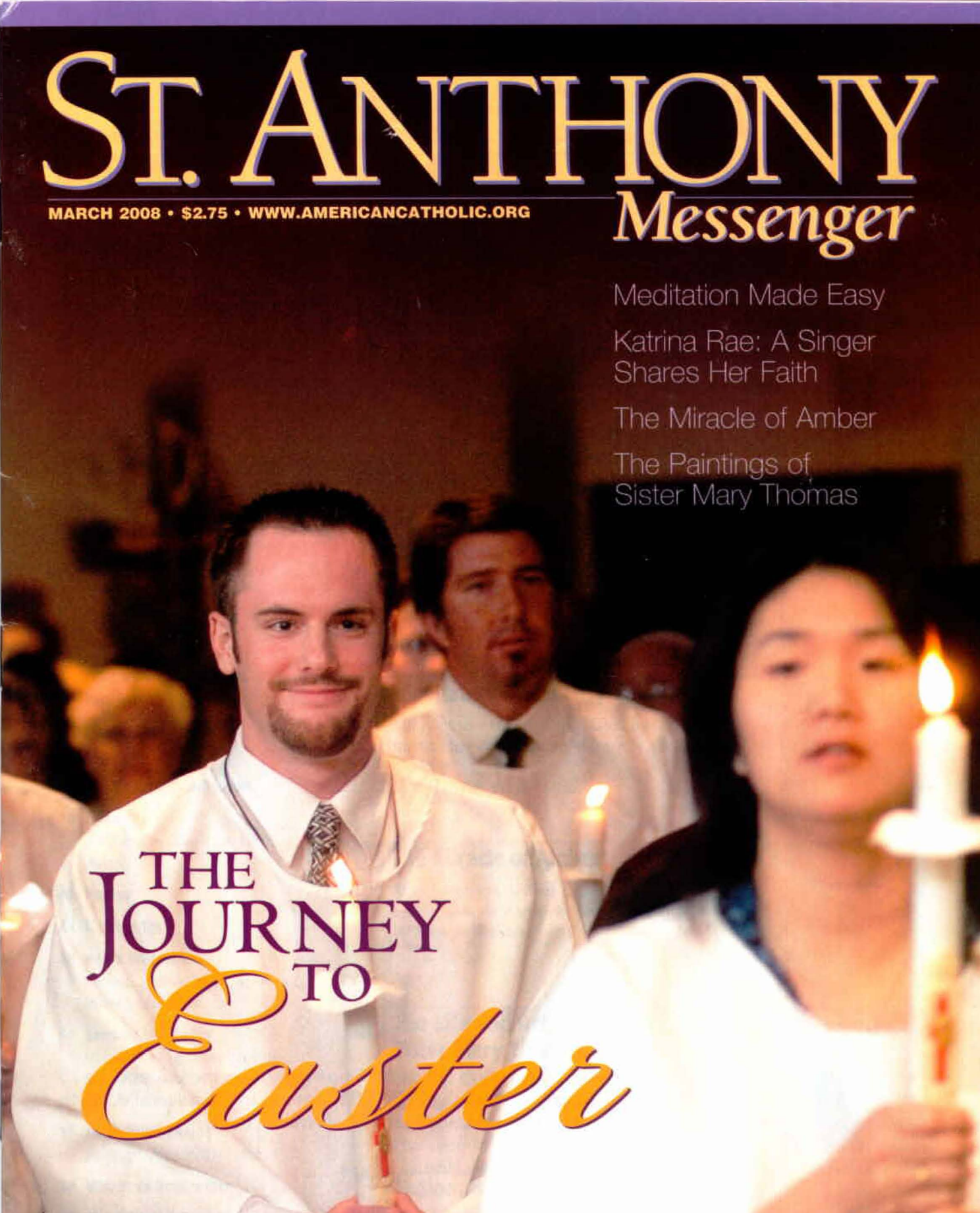
Messenger

Meditation Made Easy

Katrina Rae: A Singer
Shares Her Faith

The Miracle of Amber

The Paintings of
Sister Mary Thomas



THE
JOURNEY
TO
Easter

Katrina Rae

A Singer Who Shares Her Faith

For over 20 years, this award-winning Catholic singer has taken audiences on a musical and spiritual journey.

BY GERILYN HEROLD



IF THERE WERE a contest for Catholic singers, Katrina Rae would probably win. Her voice is a little bit country and a little bit gospel.

During concerts she engages the audience by telling personal stories and walking among the people, chatting with seniors and inviting children up to the stage.

Her stage is an unusual one, not

some major venue in a big city. It's the sanctuary in a Catholic church in any parish—large or small—in any American town. Katrina Rae (her stage name) prefers to sing in a church sanctuary, with the crucifix ever behind her. And her request is rarely refused.

Although theatrical lighting lines the first few pews and a slide show rolls during the performance, Katrina's concerts are not really about the show or

even her voice. In fact, they aren't really concerts at all. Her shows are a string of little lessons decorated with music and personal stories.

Surrendering to God

At a concert at St. Joseph Parish in Los Banos, California, Katrina's warm personality and soothing voice relax the audience as she invites them to come along on a two-hour journey. To break



band, sits behind the control table, manipulating the lights and the slides. Occasionally, they are caught passing glances and smiles to each other.

The concert wraps up with a song called "Touch Through Me." Katrina invites the people in the audience to use their gifts to become active witnesses in their families, Church and community. She then leaves the sanctuary while singing "Mizpah," a gentle song which imparts a blessing, as she shakes hands and shares smiles with her guests.

A Dream Fulfilled

Katrina's music ministry is a convergence of several journeys—musical, spiritual and, quite literally, a physical one. She could

have been a country-music recording artist, but the Lord directed her onto another path.

From the time she was three, Katrina could sing on key. Her desire to perform worried her parents, who were both professional musicians. "My sister and brothers were given music lessons," she laughs, "and I got art lessons."

By the time Katrina married, she had hidden her musical dreams. In fact, her husband didn't even know she could sing until a friend accidentally heard her singing at home.

"She thought it was the radio," Katrina recalls. "It reignited my desire to sing. I told John that night. He supported me and soon I was with a production company in Monterey, California, singing in nightclubs, dinner houses and at conferences."

From those evening bookings in the early '80s, her career progressed easily. She was spotted by a Nashville talent scout, who persuaded her to move her family from California to Tennessee.

Katrina, John and their four children (Jason, Celeste, Steven, and Candace) relocated. They had just lost a beloved adopted daughter, Dana, through a bad adoption. "We were so mourning her loss," recalls Katrina. "In more ways than one, that move was good for us."

Once they were settled in the heart

the ice, she launches into an up-tempo country tune called "Been There Done That." Soon, she settles into her first lesson.

Midway through the concert, the contemporary church fades briefly to darkness. Fog rises from machines cleverly hidden behind artificial plants. A pulsating instrumental plays. Red lights come up and focus on the crucifix behind the altar, on which the seven-

foot-long cross seems to float.

Katrina sings "Silent Weeper," then tells the audience of her own heartbreaks, including the freak death of her teenage son. She speaks of shielding her pain from the Lord by putting shells around her heart. Heads nod.

After a short time, Katrina provides the message: Surrender silent suffering. Trust the Lord to heal life's hurts.

John Daughenbaugh, Katrina's hus-

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of the country-music industry, things moved fast. Katrina opened for well-known singers in large venues. She was noticed by legends such as Conway Twitty and landed a country-music recording deal.

Unplanned Journey

But something was missing: "Country music began to feel empty," Katrina recalls. "The better you do, the more you have to put on the dog," she explains, referring to an escalating cycle of entertainment glitz.

That's when a spiritual journey began, one she hadn't planned on. A friend invited Katrina to sing for a large Baptist congregation. "I had no intention to sing gospel, ever," the Catholic singer explains. "I thought being invited was Southern hospitality."

Another friend, also a singer on the rise in the Nashville area, informed Katrina otherwise. Thus, Katrina hesitantly accepted the offer, attended a Sunday service and sang "Lord of the Harvest," one of three requested songs.

She admits, "I was singing for performance." When she sang the last words, "Show me the way to go," an "explosion" formed in her heart and went through her whole body. The message was, "Sing for Me," she says of the words that were laid on her heart from above.

(Above left) During a concert in St. Joseph Church in Los Banos, California, the seven-foot-long crucifix seems to float behind Katrina Rae as she performs.

(Above right) John Daughenbaugh, Katrina's husband, manipulates the slides and colorful lighting from the control table.

A producer for a gospel-record label heard Katrina sing at another large Protestant church and asked her to come to his office. Katrina knew it was the right direction: "I had this huge range of voice that I wasn't using in my country music," she says.

After nine months of negotiations, a recording contract was nearly sealed when the producers made a realization: Katrina was Catholic. She was firmly told to "re-affiliate."

"There was nowhere to turn but to God," she recalls. "I cried, I moaned, I groaned. I wanted to be a star."

She prayed deeply and an answer came. "I couldn't imagine committing myself to a church that didn't have sacraments and the grace they provide," Katrina says. "For me, if there are no sacraments, there is no church."

Katrina received an offer of help from her parish priest, Father John Henrick, who suggested a trial concert at Our Lady of the Lake in Hendersonville,

Tennessee. "After that initial concert," Katrina notes, "people wrote and kept saying the same thing: They had a feeling of *anointing* while I was singing. It kept coming up. That's how I knew it was the right decision to sing for the Catholic Church."

Still, Katrina wanted a big music career. "I made the right choice for all the wrong reasons, but God was able to use it," she laughs. "It wasn't until I became a broken vessel that I became usable and effective."

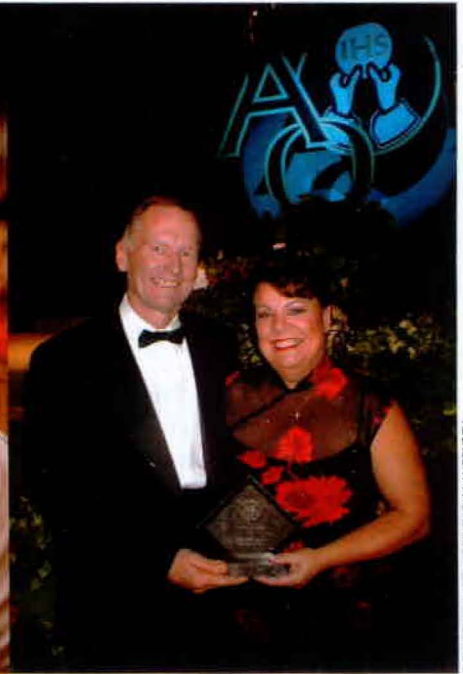
Ripple Effect

Thus, a new leg of Katrina's career began in 1985: a journey to bring contemporary Christian music to Catholic parishes in the United States. "I kept thinking the Vatican was going to write a letter and excommunicate me," she jokingly says. "There was just no place for gospel ministry in the Church at the time."

Her first bookings came in the Washington, D.C., area. Word of Katrina Rae's vocal talents rippled. Yet, sometimes her audiences remained few in number. One very disheartening evening, after much effort in setting up, a concert was attended by only 17 people.

Katrina later asked the Lord in prayer: "Why so few?"

She received an image of a priest raising the host at a 6:30 a.m. Mass with few in attendance. "If they don't



ADJACENT PHOTO COURTESY KATRINA RAE

come for this miracle,' the Lord seemed to say, 'why do you think they will come for you?'"

As Katrina's fledgling career continued, she found herself ill at home one day between bookings. "I was going through what I call my 'litany of complaints,'" she explains. "I was asking God: 'Why this? Why that? Why wasn't I more successful?'"

"Until that day, I thought I was a grateful daughter," she continues. "But I metered out how much I gave to him. I was willful and self-centered, like a child wanting to have everything my way."

Stories, Songs and Missions

At that moment, something extraordinary happened: Katrina received an image of herself that brought her to her knees. She got out of bed and fell prostrate.

"I couldn't get low enough, fast enough," she explains. "It was a moment of extreme grace. I gave my will to God. I told him I was willing to be a singer...in the back of a choir... without a microphone! I was terrified he would say O.K."

The Lord didn't take Katrina up on her offer. Instead, invitations to sing at Catholic churches continued to flow in. Soon came a new challenge: the cost of a sound and light technician.

(Above left) Katrina has brought contemporary Christian music to audiences in over 600 Catholic parishes in the United States and in Europe.

(Top right) John and Katrina proudly hold one of the 20 Unity Awards she has been presented with from the United Catholic Music and Video Association.

In an inspired moment, she "hired" her eldest son, Jason, who was 14 at the time. Together, they took to the road, setting up for concerts. Jason was homeschooled while they traveled.

Over the next decade, each one of Katrina's children joined her on the road, sometimes all at once. "It was good for the kids to be with me, good for them to see other Catholic churches," she recalls. "It was important for the parishes we visited to meet my children."

As the miles piled up on the family van, Katrina's repertoire expanded. During concerts, she began to segue naturally between personal stories and song.

Soon, she found herself teaching audiences how to develop a personal relationship with the Lord. Priests started to call her work a "ministry."

Over time, Katrina added weekend retreats and four-day missions in which she used her vocal gifts to enhance the messages she delivered.

Eight years into her ministry, there was a gap between bookings: "From May '93 to the following February '94, there was nothing," she says. She began to wonder if her singing had run its course.

Embracing a New Role

Then in June 1993, tragedy struck the family: Steven, a beloved adopted child with autism, was a teen when he was killed in an unusual golf-cart accident.

Katrina was unsure if she could continue. "I was deeply hurt," she recalls. "I couldn't breathe, I couldn't eat and I didn't want to live. I saw that February booking coming up and wondered if I could go back on the road."

Katrina credits the Lord for helping her to hand over her hurts and go back on the road. She also thanks the Blessed Mother for providing the grace she and her family needed to heal. "I've always prayed to be faithful to where I am called to minister," she says.

Shortly before Steven's death, a new word found its way to his mother's work: *evangelist*. "The first time I heard it, a bishop said it. It shook me up from my head to my toes," she says. "But the word kept coming back to me. Priests said it. Bulletins printed it. For a while, I was uncomfortable with it. I had to know that I wasn't taking a title that was undeserved."

Katrina fully embraced her role as evangelist when she heard herself explain the word during a concert she gave for grade school children. "It means using your gifts to serve the Lord," she informed them.

She delivers this key message to audiences of all ages as she travels from parish to parish, state to state. During the past 20 years, she has visited over 600 parishes in the United States and some in Europe, too.

Sometimes, people ask her if she is a "televangelist." She laughs and says no, although she has appeared on EWTN and Familyland TV.

In addition to her media credits, Katrina hosted a radio show of music and faith-sharing called *Changed by His Glory*, which aired for one year in the New Orleans area.

Since 2001, Katrina has been presented with 20 Unity Awards from the United Catholic Music and Video Association (UCMVA), including Artist of the Year (2005 and 2007) and Song of the Year (2002 and 2004). She was among those honored by UCMVA in 2002 for her contributions to *You Are Not Alone: Catholic Artists for Relief*, a music video that raised funds for families of people killed at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

'Itinerant Ministry'

John joined his wife's work nine years ago. While attending a Monday morning Mass, he heard the celebrant challenge attendees to do something "worthwhile" for the Lord.

"John felt something like arrows going through his heart," his wife recalls. He is now her technician as well as a retreat leader for their Mizpah Ministries. "John's personal mission is to do something each day for the Lord," Katrina explains.


John is a former Navy pilot with two master's degrees and had been flying corporate jets for Grand Ole Opry. "His friends teased him," Katrina says. "They couldn't believe he would walk away from a lucrative job to work with his wife and do ministry."

"We're an itinerant ministry," she says, referring to the fact that they're on the road 50 percent of the time. "My

Inspirational Music

Not only does Katrina Rae sing inspirational music, but she also writes it. She wrote the lyrics and music to "Best of All Loves," which was named 2004 Country Song of the Year and Song of the Year by the United Catholic Music and Video Association.

The verses and chorus, printed to the right, read like a prayer.



*Of all the sweet loves I've ever known
None can compare to what you
have shown.
Unconditional is all I can say,
The best of all loves has come my way.*

[Chorus]
*I could never gain eternal life without you.
I could never find such peace of mind
before you.
You're more than Lord and King.
You are my everything...it's true.*

*I've spent my whole life trying to find
This kind of love and peace of mind.
Now I can truly say,
The best of all loves has come my way.*

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husband likes to think of us as Catholic subcontractors."

Because music brings a fresh approach, Katrina and John often assist pastors in renewing sluggish parishes. They help congregations build relationships among parishioners and encourage people to use their gifts.

In between tours, the couple spends time at home. They "heal up" from time on the road and visit friends, play with the grandkids and participate in their home parish council, as time permits.

Rewarding But Tiring Service

Katrina and John receive many notes of praise on their Web site. And they receive hundreds of letters each year from both women and men who write to say they've received spiritual understanding or healing, sometimes from such searing hurts as abuse or loss of a child.

"That's not us," Katrina explains. "That's the ministry. If we stay prayerfully alive, we can serve."

In addition, Katrina and John enjoy many friendships with priests they have met. Pastors, in turn, enjoy the couple and exude thanks for their assistance in aiding their parishes to become Spirit-filled communities.

Although highly rewarding, their ministry is sometimes tiring, Katrina and John admit. They have clocked 270,000 miles on their most recent van, which they keep in tip-top condition.

Their work is not glamorous. If Katrina were a popular country-western singer, she and her husband would tour in a private bus. Instead, they often sleep in rectories and always do their own set-ups.

"When I minister, each face is so beautiful," she says. "Each moment is so special. I really couldn't put one above the other. John feels the same way."

The humble singer hopes audiences see her and John as ordinary people. "We try to do our work like the nuns," she says. "That is respectfully, quietly and with obedience." A

More information about Katrina Rae and her recordings is available at www.katrinarae.com; telephone: 615-822-4815.

Gerilyn Herold is a freelance writer who also taught at the University of San Diego's School of Nursing. She says she enjoyed writing this article "because Katrina and John's faith and dedication to the Catholic Church truly inspire me to use my gifts for the Lord."