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Sunday, November 14, 2021

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## Miranda Lambert and the Healing Grace of Home

Greetings!

Mega country star Miranda Lambert is one of those **feisty blonde bombshells** who bursts onto the country music scene every so often and takes it by storm. She has earned a reputation as a take-no-prisoners *femme fatale* toward all those lyin' and cheatin' losers of country music legend.

(If you doubt me, just watch Miranda's earlier music video "Kerosene". The name tells you all you need to know about what she does to **her two-timing beau's house!**)

Dramatics aside... I think Miranda has most of her values in the right order, and the best song in her repertoire proves it: "**The House that Built Me**".

### Seven Years to Craft

Normally, she writes her own music, but the team of Tom Douglas and Allen Shamblin wrote her magnum opus. According to [wideopencountry.com](http://wideopencountry.com), this one took seven years to write. Douglas wrote the first draft of it and then asked Shamblin to partner with him. They eventually produced a demo and pitched it to a number of country music outlets, **who ignored it**, for some strange reason.

Like all good things, it did not mature before its time.

After working on it for a couple more years, the writers thought it would **best be performed by a male artist**, so they pitched it to Blake Shelton, who was Nashville's hot male voice in the mid-2000s.

It was good timing because Blake happened to be dating Miranda just then. When she saw the demo on the counter and popped it into the CD player, **she broke down in tears** and knew it had to be hers. (Shelton, who valued his house, wisely acquiesced.)

It turns out that the **story line of the song was almost identical to Miranda's own story**. After a period of homelessness in her childhood, her family found refuge in an old abandoned house that her dad rebuilt to make their family home. Miranda's personal story even includes burying a 14-year-old dog on the property (reflected in one of the lines of the song).

### Healing and Grace

It's an especially powerful, almost heart-wrenching story for me since I once went back to "the old neighborhood" in the large city where I grew up and discovered, to **my utter horror**, that my family home *had been torn down*.

That **sacred space** where my parents nurtured their young family for all those tender years of childhood had been wiped off the map, the victim of the perverse "progress" of modern American cities that have decayed into shells of their former selves.

I've had worse traumas in my life, but not many. There's nothing quite like showing up in the old

neighborhood after years of being away, **eager with anticipation** to lay eyes on a house full of memories ...and finding an overgrown field instead.

Brick and mortar houses do not have the same value as living families. I understand that **Homes just give families a context** in which to live and grow and (hopefully) thrive.

The deeper value of family homes is that **they build us**, in a very real sense. They are the places where so many of the influences that create our personal identities come together for a season and then leave their mark on the doorposts and lintels of our souls, signs of faith and dignity.

Their unity and stability as structures stand as a reproach to **the later fragmentation of our lives**: the trials and sorrows and cynicism of the world sometimes make us forget who we are.

Happy homesteads give us the healing grace of roots, if we are so lucky as to have one to go back to.

## The Constant Theme of Home

Home is not just a secular reality, though. It is **a constant theme of faith**.

Every page of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation exudes a message of *home*. The references are too many to cite, but let's name just a few:

- God gave Adam and Eve the **Garden of Eden** to cultivate and make their own;
- **Abraham** left the land of his birth and was given a new homeland by God;
- The Israelites received their own **promised land** flowing with milk and honey;
- The **12 tribes of Israel** "grew up" in that land, you might say, and then built a dwelling place for God with the Temple as their center;
- Our **Lord Jesus Himself** was born into a family and was raised in a home in Nazareth, and his human father was a *carpenter*;
- Even as a child, Jesus called **the Jewish Temple** "my father's house";
- He later said that He was going to "**prepare a place for us**" in heaven, reminding us of the temporary nature of our homes here on earth;
- The **Book of Hebrews** says that we have a "better and more lasting home" (Heb 10:34) in the kingdom to come, and
- Revelation speaks of **an ultimate home: the New Jerusalem**, a place where "every tear will be wiped away" (Rev 21:4) – the place of final rest and ultimate peace!

In recent church history, no pope spoke more frequently about family life than **Pope John Paul II** did, so it was fitting that at his funeral in 2005, Cardinal Ratzinger announced to an international audience that John Paul had finally "gone home to the Father's House."

*Everyone in the entire world*, regardless of faith or culture, understood that image.

## Where the Heart Is

The concept of *home* resonates deeply in the hearts of decent people who value family and the grace of roots. Maybe that's why Miranda Lambert's love ballad to a family home became **an instant hit** when it was released in 2009.

Feisty cowgirl songs may have put Miranda on the charts, but "The House the Built Me" **won her an Emmy Award that year**, not to mention the country music industry's Song of the Year, Single of the Year, and Music Video of the Year, among others.

To say that the song "struck a chord" in the hearts of country music fans was an understatement. Home *truly is* where the heart lies, and everyone knows it.

## Don't Miss This Video

You don't have to be a country music fan to appreciate this amazing music video, but I have no doubt that the four minutes it takes to watch it will be **the best four minutes of your day**.

This video is brilliantly made. Here are a few things to look for:

- **Full circle**: When Miranda arrives at the rural home in her big country star touring bus, the cares of the world weigh heavy on her heart. At the end of the video, as she is returning to the bus, she looks back at the home with the deeply contented look of someone who has just been relieved of a great burden.
- **Healing and identity**: She sings of "brokenness" and "getting lost" in the wretched world as negatives that have left their marks on her, not for the better. The return to her roots provided healing at the very core of her being because she returned to the place that had left *deeper marks*

of human love on her, forces that created her deepest identity.

- **Memories of grace:** Every rung of the banister, every fixture, every board in the wall has meaning for her. As she walks room to room, her flashbacks evoke indelible memories of a more innocent time that formed within her the talents and inspirations of the life she now lives.

The culminating scene shows her walking up the stairs to her old bedroom. The adult Miranda opens the door onto an immediate vision of **the younger Miranda** diligently practicing on her first guitar in the room. To her surprise, her younger self looks up and smiles ever so sweetly at her older self. (I dare you to keep a dry eye at that scene.)

Undoubtedly, “The House that Built Me” will one day enter into **the hallowed halls of country classics**. It’s not just because it is a well written song with a perfectly executed video, but mostly because it plucks the heartstrings of those who know **the blessing of a happy home** or – if they were not so lucky – look forward to a better one to come.

[After you watch the video below, don’t forget to come back and read the project announcement at the end of this newsletter.]



## Feature Article

Everything we have ever learned about the world has come through our human senses, but it is so easy to take them for granted: **sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch.**

Our feature article, “[Babies hear their mothers’ voices for the first time](#)” offers two short clips (a minute each) that capture the moment when two hearing-deprived infants hear their mothers’ voices for the first time.

I’ve added **two additional short videos** of teenagers receiving the gift of sight – and the moments they realize *the gift* they have just been given. Bring Kleenex.

### [Babies Hear Their Mothers' Voices for the First Time](#)



## Sacred Windows First Anniversary

Dear Friends, we are just two weeks away from **the first anniversary of Sacred Windows!**

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, I am launching a new *Sacred Windows* project to commemorate our anniversary, and it **costs nothing**. It’s a gift in every sense.

I call it the “Mini-Windows” project. Not a very creative name, I know, but you’ll easily see the logic of it.

The mini-windows are **not articles**. They are **one-page, inspirational presentations** of our beautiful world and our blessed Faith. Little picture windows of beauty.

Busy people will be able to **read each of them in under 3 minutes**. Who doesn’t have 3 minutes to read a single page, right? They fall into these six mini-window categories:

**Architecture | Art | Mysticism | Nature | Radiance | Sculpture**

Have I got you interested yet?

Click on the image below to view the first mini-window I ever created, **Botticelli's Madonna of the Book**. I hope you like it. There are 17 others – currently three for each category above. Each month I'll add more windows to build the collection.

**Next week**, on the Solemnity of Christ the King, I'll send you an **e-book** – *exclusive for our readers* – with a few more examples, and you'll get access to all 18 windows at our launch on 11/28.

If you've enjoyed the *Sacred Windows* newsletter for the past year, perhaps you could **forward the e-book** to anyone in your circle of influence who might be interested in the project. No pressure or obligation here. I am just trying to grow our email list to spread the wealth.

In any case, we'll unveil all 18 of the mini-windows on the November 28<sup>th</sup>, First Sunday of Advent, for anyone who wishes to see them. **Can't wait!**

Blessings to you and yours as we come to the end of our liturgical year.



Many thanks and blessings!

Peter Darcy

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