

**CATHOLIC WRITERS GUILD  
MEMBER PROFILE – JANET KLASSON**

May CWG Newsletter

Janet Klasson is a freelance writers and regular contributor to the newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis. Her book: *Cling to Hope with Joy: Messages from Scripture* has recently been awarded the CWG Seal of Approval. You can find out more about Janet at <http://www.goldleafword.com/main.html>

**Maria:** How long have you been a member of CWG and how did you learn of it?

**Janet:** I first learned about the CWG when I saw an ad for the 2008 CWG Catholic Writers Conference Online. I was amazed to learn that this week-long conference was completely free to attend. It was a God-send. The more I learned about the CWG the more impressed I became. I joined that year, and recovered the membership fee on the first day of the conference alone!

**Maria:** How long have you been a freelance writer? Is writing something that has developed over the years, or did you always know you were going to be a writer?

**Janet:** I have loved writing since I could first string words together. I started writing stories and poems for children as an adult when my children were little. At that time I joined a local writers group and began to learn the craft of writing. It was wonderful to have mentors and other writers who shared my love of the written word.

**Maria:** When it comes to writing, what is your favorite topic?

**Janet:** For a long time I thought I would be a children's writer. As a school librarian it seemed a good fit. But God, it seemed, had other plans. Every time I try to write outside of his will for me, I come up against a roadblock. When I stick with the “program” the way opens up. I'm starting to figure that out!

God's “program” has led me in other directions. In 1997, after a profound experience of the Lord in the Eucharist (detailed in my book), I felt our Lord opening my heart to Scripture—in its depth and breadth and height—as He did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. I began to keep a Scriptural prayer journal (*Lectio Divina*), and that forms the basis of most of my writing at this time—at least until God decides to change the program!

**Maria:** How has practicing *Lectio Divina* helped your writing?

**Janet:** I have come to appreciate that the Lord speaks to us on every page of Scripture. The more I listen to the Lord in Scripture, the deeper I enter into the heart of the Creator, who condescends to share with unworthy sinners His creative power. God is the Source of all creativity. Through *Lectio Divina* one communes with that Source. It follows that one's creativity is nourished through that encounter.

**Maria:** Your website talks about ‘Pelianito Journal’ can you tell our readers a little bit about how this journal came about and its purpose?

**Janet:** As I said, I felt the Lord opening my heart to Scripture, and felt the still, small voice of the Spirit

speaking his words of love, hope, joy, encouragement, correction, and consolation into my heart. By being open to the still, small voice of the Spirit, I was given a pearl of great price, a collection of reflections and teachings that have helped me navigate through the treacherous waters of this age. From the beginning, I had the feeling the words were meant to be shared. In sharing the messages, first through my blog, and now through my book; I wished to encourage others to deepen their relationship with God, who is as near to us as our own breath.

At one point I felt the Lord giving me a new name—Pelianito, which he revealed to me means, “Sent.” As the blog took shape, this seemed to be a play on words for the electronic age. I think of it every time I hit “send”.

**Maria:** You’ve also started a book company “Goldleaf Word”, where did the name come from?

**Janet:** The full story is included in my book. The abridged version is as follows:

When I first started to feel the Lord speaking to my heart, I spoke to a spiritually mature friend, who gave me a couple of books to read that she thought might help me. In one of the books was a story of a man who had a vision of an angel on the roof of a church. There was a hole in the roof and the angel was shoveling what appeared to be gold leaves onto the congregation, but no one was picking them up. The man asked the angel what this meant. He replied that the leaves were God’s gifts and that no one was bothering to pick them up.

On the same day that I read that story, I visited the cemetery where my son is buried. Normally I am very unobservant, but as I walked among the graves I happened to notice something shiny on the ground. I picked it up, and to my utter astonishment, it was a gold leaf! It had been a woman’s earring; nevertheless, it was a gold leaf! A friend explained that this type was made by pouring molten gold onto a real leaf. The process burned away the membrane and left only the delicate gold-covered veins of the leaf. It was breathtakingly beautiful! Real gold and a real leaf!

I treasure this gold leaf as a beautiful symbol of the generous gifts our heavenly Father has given to this unworthy creature of his. It seemed fitting to name my book company Goldleaf Word. There is a photo of my gold leaf on my home page and on the back cover of my book.

**Maria:** How come you are not taking submissions currently—are you too busy or are you still organizing the submission process?

**Janet:** I am open to whatever the Lord desires for this company. When I published my book, everything fell into place. I have learned and discerned that it is best to leave it all in God’s hands. One of the recurring messages in my journal is total surrender to the will of God. So this company is completely at his service. In fact, I have made Our Lady my Chief Administrative Officer. She’s very good, and all she asks in return is that you “do whatever He tells you.”

**Maria:** I have to tell you that your website is beautiful. What has been the most difficult issue when setting up your book company?

**Janet:** I’ll pass your words on to my webmaster. As I said, everything fell into place, beginning with the CWG Catholic Writers Conference Online. I learned so much that first year! As I began to think I might publish the book myself, I realized how many of the pieces God had put into place ahead of time, including my good friend who is a webmaster and has a degree in marketing and communications.

The really difficult thing, honestly, was exposing my personal prayer journal to the world. Think about that! However, when I hear from readers how much it has helped them to grow in faith, hope, and trust

in the Lord, I am astonished and humbled to be used in such a way. I often think of this Scripture passage: Luke 17:10 “When you have done all you have been commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.’” If I hid my light under a bushel basket, I would have much to answer for; with every gift comes responsibility. He has not given me this gift for myself, although it has helped me tremendously, but for the building up of His Body, the Church.

**Maria:** Your new book *Cling to Hope with Joy: Messages from Scripture* just earned the CWG’s Seal of Approval. Congratulations! How did you go about submitting it for approval?

**Janet:** Thank you Maria! There are instructions on the CWG website. It's really quite simple for the writer, answer a few questions and supply book copies. The challenge I think is at the CWG end as evaluators have to be found. It's a bit of a process, but what a wonderful thing to do for each other! I am so grateful to the CWG and to those who volunteer their time and talent as evaluators.

**Maria:** What inspired you to write this book? Do you have plans for future books?

**Janet:** What started as a gift, grew into a call, and blossomed into a mission. I hope to publish more of these messages into other collections. In the book *Cling to Hope with Joy* I desired to lead the reader on the same journey our Lord led me on—a journey to His heart. Subsequent books may be organized into themes. I am thinking of publishing one called *Trust and Tribulation*. It's still in the concept phase. May God's will be done!

**Maria:** Tell us a little bit more about yourself, what do you like to do when you’re not writing?

**Janet:** Well, I have been married for 34 years and have one son in heaven as well as two adult children, one of whom is married. I worked as a school librarian for 18 years. Now I work as an Executive Administrative Assistant on a military base. Guess I needed a change! So far, the Lord has not led me to full-time writing. Perhaps some day...

I write a monthly column for the newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis (<http://www.bspenance.org>) of which I am a professed member. The BSP is a private lay association that follows the original rule of life that St. Francis gave to his lay orders in 1221. It is a life of prayer, penance, and increasing simplicity. Sounds difficult, but God makes it easy—one of those little paradoxes of the faith our Lord loves so much.

I am a lector at my parish and a leader of song, as well as serving on the Parish Pastoral Council. My husband says I go to church too much.

**Maria:** How has your membership to CWG helped you as a writer?

**Janet:** The CWG has been unbelievably helpful. At Mass, the prayer over the gifts talks about the “fruit of the vine and the work of human hands.” This is a beautiful synopsis of the CWG, the gifts of God combined with the work of human hands and blessed with prayer—the recipe for a miracle, isn't it? I have been abundantly blessed by the sharing that takes place on the website, at the conference, and through the newsletter. I need another lifetime to be able to use what I have learned already! Too bad I don't believe in reincarnation...

**Maria:** What are your future writing plans?

**Janet:** I find whenever I make plans, the Lord makes other plans. And guess who wins? I hope to publish more of my journal, but will pray and discern what God's will may be for me. God bless you Maria. Thank you for all you do for the CWG!