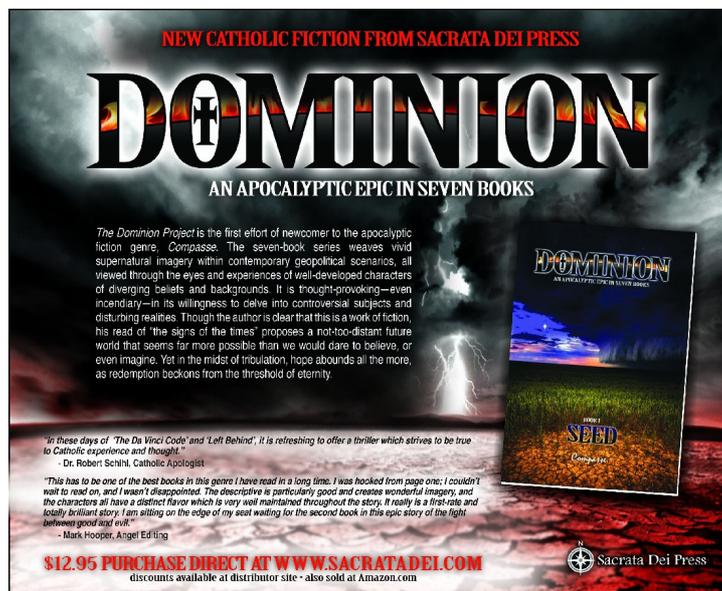


An Interview with Compasse

April, 2010 Featured Author
at
Time with Tannia
(<http://timewithtannia.tripod.com>)

By:

Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés



1. Tell us about yourself.

You begin with the toughest question for me to answer...for reasons I am sure we'll get into in this interview!

I was baptized into the Catholic Christian family as an infant, and my childhood experience of God was very positive. Sadly, despite being from a stable family, my catechesis in the Faith was very weak and unable to withstand what seemed at the time to be reasonable arguments against the Roman Catholic Church and Her “antiquated teachings and ways.” Like many, I strayed, and it was not until my late twenties, after a number of years of self-induced struggles coupled with newly emerging difficult life circumstances, that I finally recognized God’s attempts to get my attention. At that point, things really moved like a whirlwind, and I can honestly say that every year of my life since has been better than the last.

From the outset of actually writing the Dominion series—which began before my “re-version,” I had a clear sense that my name was not to be attached to the project, though at the time I was not

exactly sure why. Years later, it has become clearer—especially in light of the subject matter—that it would be neither in my family’s nor ministry’s best interest to have my identity public, thus the pseudonym, *Compass*.

2. You chose the intriguing and mysterious pseudonym of “Compass” to publish your apocalyptic fiction series, *The Dominion*. Does this name represent your professional and spiritual development? If not, why did you choose this pen name?

In the pseudonym, I wanted to emphasize something that I feel our society generally seemed to be lacking, or probably better put, *ignoring*: a “compass” which points to that which is true, that which is beautiful, and that which is good. Truly, this is the Sacramental nature of our Church, yet it seems we have permitted our Adversary to influence the masses into asking the wrong questions: “Why should I have to submit to such an authority?” “What business is it of this archaic institution as to what I do?” and “Doesn’t God accept me just as I am?” The Church has provided very *reasonable* responses to these and even more significant questions—responses that do not require a degree in theology to grasp. Yet a wall has been established where it seems people now close off any discussion if religion—especially the Catholic Church—is brought into the discourse.

So a compass for those who are stuck in this erroneous thinking might need to function more like a GPS—not only pointing the person to their ultimate destination, but providing a route to get around societal “hazards” and politically correct “traffic.”

The secondary dimension of the name is drawn from the word “compassion”, which in its root form, literally means “to suffer with.” As Catholic Christians, we understand the absolute necessity in being united with Christ, not only in His glory, but in His suffering (Romans 8:15-18). Our society has become so suffering-avoidant (which, ironically, ends up causing greater and deeper suffering) that we consistently miss out on many opportunities to grow closer to our Redeemer and even become agents of grace for a world in desperate need.

So I suppose the pseudonym is less what I am, but more what I am striving to be, with God’s grace, in this role as a writer. I believe there are many exceptional compasses out there; most of whom quietly and humbly continue to point those within their sphere of influence toward our loving and merciful God. Really, what greater role—what greater calling—could there be?

3. In the Author’s Note of your book, *The Seed*, you described the tale as having a cathartic effect during your conversion. Can you share with our readers that process? How did writing the series prove itself to be a blessing to you?

Though the basic concept of *Dominion* had been evolving in my mind for nearly fifteen years prior, I did not actually sit down to begin writing until 1993. By general world standards, I would still have been considered a “basically good guy” at the time, though looking back now, I realize how spiritually vulnerable I was in those years. I had made a choice back in my early teens—two choices actually—*against* God, though I would not have framed it as such at the time. It is clear as day now that my spiritual and moral life began to spiral out of control from then on, which also opened my spirit to many vices and addictions—less the “typical” ones—drugs, etc., but more *fascinations*; fascination with the New Age, fascination with rock music stardom, and even fascination with the occult/devil. Yet perhaps due to my cowardice, I always was a man who would hedge his bets, so I still attended Mass two to three times a month... *just in case*.

So here I was, living a life of self-deception and only mildly tempered indulgence, and my fascination with the spiritual realm and prophecy brought me back to the eternal story—perhaps less due to a concern for my fellow man or even my own soul, but for the general intrigue. I began (and ended, thanks be to God) with more familiar ground—Christian prophecy, and especially the *Book of Revelation*. Most have described the first book of the *Dominion* series as the “darkest” of the seven, in the sense that it dwells the longest on matters of the occult, which I was also researching at the time. Though the final version of *Seed* has had many revisions—including theological corrections—I do not feel it has lost that interior struggle that was within me at that time.

The second book, though continuing the ongoing thread, had a major emphasis on my fascination with popular music stardom, the third on the attraction to new-age spirituality, and the fourth, the indulgence of the appetites. So, though not intentional, the first four books delved into each of my fascinations at the time, taking them to a much deeper level than I had ever permitted in my own life. I believe it was within this process that I began to see—more subconsciously at first—the general “end game” of each of these paths that I was personally embarking on: a life without real purpose which would come to a complete close with my final breath. When that realization merged with difficult circumstances that God in His mercy was permitting in my life at the time, it became clear not only that a choice had to be made, but what (or perhaps *Who*) that choice needed to be. In fact, in some of my earlier musings while writing, I considered changing the name of the series to *The Choice*, which in the end is really what *The Dominion Project* is about.

4. Your quote from the book of Daniel: “They suppressed their consciences; they would not allow their eyes to look to heaven, and did not keep in mind God’s just judgments” summarizes perfectly the world we are living in and appears to serve as a preamble to “Seed”. Do you agree with this statement? If not, how do you explain its similarities with Vanya’s vision about Jesse?

It is amazing that whether we are talking about today or 2500 years ago, humanity is still struggling with the same overriding problem; our capacity to relate to God, each other, and even ourselves has been wounded. Even though many of the “game pieces” may have a different look today, we are still trying to play the same game with God and His creation, making up our own rules as we go along. Yet the existential human condition has not changed! We still experience loneliness, we still crave communion with something greater than ourselves—yet we also still try to fill all these perceived voids with “temporal candy” that leaves us even emptier than before.

We see how our corporate fallen natures have created a world that attempts to snuff God out. If you think of it, if we *do* suppress our consciences, divert our thoughts from dwelling upon eternal realities, and refuse to even acknowledge the natural law, we can pretty much justify any act to ourselves. When eternal truths are ignored, and even philosophical truths manipulated and distorted to fit our own agendas, devastating ideologies will arise, each one more insidious than the last. As terrible as the ideology of the Nazis was, I would argue that Marxism/Communism, though perhaps more subtle and with a prettier package, was worse. And this current atheistic secularism—fueled by what Pope Benedict XIV referred to as “the tyranny of relativism”—I think will do more harm to souls than either of the previous two; it denies any form of moral compass, and under the guise of “liberation”, really draws each soul into the quiet desperation of self-absorbed addiction.

The character of Jesse (as with most of the Characters in *Dominion*) is a metaphor. In describing himself in the various visions, he makes the claim, “I am the Fruit of Humanity.” The question that is then played out in the series is, “And what is the state of that fruit? Is it good fruit, or rotten?”

5. When I was first asked to review your book, I was skeptical. I thought to myself, “it’s probably just another version of the popular Christian saga, *The Left Behind* series.” However, after reading the book synopsis, curiosity took over and I decided to review the book. I must admit you exceeded all my expectations. I was scarily glued to the story. What is the difference between *The Dominion* series and other apocalyptic fiction books in the market?

Through the many revisions and in its final form, I have tried to avoid two pitfalls which I have found in Christian apocalyptic fiction: one-dimensional characters and the standard evangelical Christian version of how the end-times are going to play out. Certainly, I desire devout Catholic characters to act devoutly Catholic, but I do not want to suggest that they are in any way immune to the draw of evil... and even in their moments of weakness, able to succumb to it. In writing, I had to struggle with the difficult decision of how to best portray the baseness of evil in our world. I have attempted to navigate (with fear and trepidation) the intricate path between the over-sanitization of sinful situations, characters, and language—which could divorce the story from the reality of the

current human condition, and an overly gratuitous portrayal of evil—which often becomes more about horrifying the reader than exposing a painful reality.

As far as what potentially makes *Dominion* different than other apocalyptic fiction books on the market—both those that are faith-based and those that are secular, I think is my attempt to, in essence, “marry” these two perspectives. John Paul II was very deep in the philosophical approach known as *phenomenology*, which in short, focuses on the human person’s *experience* of reality and existence. I began with trying to present the most farfetched end-times scenario I could think of, while still not being contrary to Catholic Christian theology or thought. Then, I have attempted to delve into how different characters—the nominal Christian, the agnostic, the devout Catholic, etc. — *experience* these dramatic and often terrifying events, and explore their *response*; in a midst of the maelstrom, do they turn towards the Divine, or retreat into the abyss of self?

The book itself has been described as “A supernatural thriller with religious and geopolitical themes,” which I think is a bit more descriptive than solely the Catholic Fiction genre.

6. How has the power and mystery of music lured you to create such a complex, well-balanced, twisted, and wicked tale?

Twisted and wicked? Well, I suppose this is true because that is exactly what evil is—the twisting of something good with wicked intent. But in reference to the mystery of music, this series includes my own search for the deeper reality that exists within this medium, which truly is a universal language of its own. Has anyone not had the experience of being moved, not only emotionally, but *spiritually* by this series of sustained sounds, arranged in certain sequences and patterns, that we call music? From the “Song of Moses”, to David’s soothing harp playing for Saul, to Christ’s closing of the Last Supper (“*And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*” Matthew 26:30), it is clear that music has its part to play in God’s creation, and perhaps even within the *Mystery of Redemption*. I would argue that the gift of music itself has been “twisted”, even if unwittingly, to serve a more “wicked” intent in the modern day than ever before. I find it intriguing as one reads C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*, that Lewis was right on target, even prophetically so, in describing the way evil distorts and encroaches upon good. The one area that he appears not to have foreseen accurately, however, is the corruption of music. *Screwtape* states “*Music and silence—how I detest them both!*” then claiming that they had no place in Hell, leading the reader to presume that they could not be touched by evil. Today, we could suggest—at least in the case of music—that the deformation of music is arguably one of the Adversary’s *greatest* weapons, especially, though not exclusively, with our youth.

One byline we do use in promoting the series is “*The secret language of music has been discovered.*” If a man were able to decipher this mysterious language and harness its power, he would no doubt be a force to be reckoned with.

7. How many books are in the Dominion series? When do you expect to have them published?

There are seven books in the series, five of which have been completed in 2009, and the final two we hope to complete in 2010. We have also published, on reader request, a series of “InterMissions”, essentially reader companions in between the books that, due to the complexity of the story and the multiplicity of characters, can be used to assist the reader through fuller character sketches, scenario/concept descriptions, and definitions (primarily for the secular reader) of some “peculiar” Catholic Christian traditions and beliefs.

8. Where can our readers purchase your books?

Our primary (and preferred) distributor is lulu.com, which can be accessed for purchase through our websites www.sacratadei.com or www.thedominionproject.com. The first three books are also on Amazon.com, bn.com, and other general online sellers.

9. You will donate 50% of the books sales proceeds to the Catholic missionary organization, “Missioners of Christ” (www.missioners.org). Tell us about this mission and how can our readers get involved or support this organization, too.

I have had the privilege of working with this Catholic lay missionary organization over the years, which strives to be authentically Catholic and fully submitted to the Church’s Teachings and authority, and I have myself been to its mission in Honduras a number of times. The relationship between the Missioners and T.C.C./Sacrata Dei Press is informal and unofficial, though we do share some administrative resources. Within Sacrata Dei Press, we have set up essentially a “donation schedule” to the organization, beginning at 40% of the book sale proceeds while we pay of the production cost of the series, then moving up to more than 60% as sales (God willing) increase.

I would definitely encourage any readers to go to the Missioners’ website, or contact the apostolate at info@missioners.org. One of the Missioners’ greatest needs right now is sponsors for the children they minister to in Honduras.

10. Your publisher, Sacrata Dei Press, is a division of The Compasse Corporation. How do these two entities interact to further your missionary work and writing career? Is it the sole purpose of this press to publish only your work? Or is it available to other writers?

Right now, the only active division of The Compasse Corporation is Sacrata Dei Press, which itself is newly established and is intended not only to produce Catholic fiction but also Catholic formation resources. I am the only writer in the fiction genre, and we have several, including our president, Dr. Robert Schihl (a Catholic Apologist and one of God’s primary instruments in leading me back into the Faith), who are developing works to be published on the formation side. In discussing this with Dr. Schihl and acknowledging our limitations, we are in agreement that we do not yet have the necessary internal infrastructure—or funding for that matter—to expand the list of writers in the near future, though we will see if God’s plans are different than our own!

11. What is your ultimate goal by publishing the Dominion series? Who is your targeted audience?

Well, *ultimately* my goal is the salvation of the entire world... *but*... in trying to put my ego in check and being more cognizant of what small part God may be asking of me in His greater plan; I want to get people to once again start asking the “big questions” of existence, because I truly believe that God will not remain “hidden” from the person who sincerely seeks truth without prejudice as to what he/she may discover in this quest. As such, our target audience is primarily the nominal/lapsed Christian. Each book begins with a philosophical question, and my hope is that, as the reader sees the work of redemption unfolding within the series—in many ways presented in reason-based scenarios as opposed to being defined in overtly religious language—he/she may recognize the small voice of God and conscience speaking within them to go further in their own faith journey.

We see with the success of such novels as *The Da Vinci Code* and even the *Twilight* series that there is an inherent interest in the supernatural and even the Divine. We want to offer something that taps this instinct and directs it towards the One Truth, as opposed to the distortions and manipulations currently presented as truth.

And as mentioned above, the ability to better fund the inspired work of the Missioners of Christ is also a goal of ours.

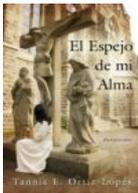
12. A word of advice to those seeking the light amidst darkness and chaos in their lives.

I definitely do not want to in any way be trite in offering advice to the many people in the world who have suffered much more greatly than have I. Yet ultimately, the “solution” is the same, as God is still God no matter the circumstance or season. The chaos and darkness that surround us is real—

it is the result of humanity's communal "no" to God—and sometimes through no fault of our own we can find ourselves in the midst of this gloomy maelstrom, beginning to believe it will never end. This is truly a lie of the Adversary. *God will never leave us defenseless...* and in sharing from my own life, in addition to the Sacraments, one of the greatest weapons He has provided to battle all sorts of sin and darkness is His Blessed Mother.

We must utilize the resources God has given us—especially in the moments that we cannot so easily sense His presence. All things of this world will pass, and an eternity greater than we can possibly imagine awaits those who, with God's grace, endure.

"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Romans 8:17,18



Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés, author of *The Window To My Soul; My Walk With Jesus* (2004 Tate Publishing;), *El Espejo de mi Alma* (2010 Pleasant Word) .

Author's websites: timewithtannia.tripod.com, www.shoutlife.com/tanniaortizlopes, and www.myspace.com/tanniaortizlopes The author also has a blog at www.amazon.com

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READERS' COMMENTS:

Date Received: April 5, 2010 6:34:31 AM EST

Name: Gerard Webster

Email Address:(optional) websterjerry@hotmail.com

Web site URL:(optional) <http://outskirtspress.com/insight>

Where did you hear about this interview? Tannia's Face Book page

Comments: Wow! What a great interview! I'm fascinated by the author's ambitious goal, his own life-experience that motivated the work, and his angst in trying to portray evil realistically while at the same time avoiding glorifying it...a delicate balancing act that many conscientious authors, I'm sure, struggle with. SEED sounds like a novel comparable to FATHER ELIJA or PIERCED BY A SWORD. Although I haven't read the novel yet, I'm ordering it and anxiously awaiting being able to delve into the first book of the series. Thank you, Tannia, for another intriguing interview. And thank you, "Compassse," for the gift of your talent and your multiplication of it for the Lord.

Date Received: April 6, 2010 12:22:00 PM EST

Name: Denise Turney

Email Address:(optional) rcampb3422@aol.comwww.chistell.com

Web site URL:(optional)

Where did you hear about this interview? Email

Comments: Great interview, Tannia and Compassse. Denise

Date Received: April 19, 2010 2:58:22 PM EST

Name: David Murdoch

Email Address:(optional)

Web site URL:(optional) <http://davidmurdoch.weebly.com/>

Where did you hear about this interview? Tannia told me about it

Comments: No matter where one goes, however long one takes and wherever one searches, the truth will remain that there is nothing out there that will fulfill the deepest questions of our existence except Christ. As Peter exclaimed (John 6:68) 'to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life;' A wonderful reversion story! Thank you both for giving us this interview. God Bless,

Date Received: April 28, 2010 12:11:10 PM EST

Name: Ellen Gable Hrkach

Email Address:(optional) ehrkach@xplornet.com

Web site URL:(optional) <http://ellengable.wordpress.com>
www.fullquiverpublishing.com

Where did you hear about this interview? Tannia

Comments: Wonderful and fascinating interview! Thank you, Compassse! And thank you to Tannia for posting it! Compassse, you are like many of us who are cradle Catholics but who had a "weak catechesis" and experienced "God's attempts" to get your attention. Your pseudonym seems to fit your mission statement perfectly! You are so right when you say the sacramental nature of the Church is that it points to that which is true. And the

analogy of a compass to a GPS is so clever! When you say that your pseudonym describes more what you are striving to be in the role of writer, this attitude is becoming so much more prevalent nowadays as more and more Catholic Christian writers are striving to be a compass and to be compassionate to their readers. Thank you for writing these books. I truly look forward to reading them. God bless you...

Interview Contest:

“The author has agreed to give away copies of “Seed” to the three most thoughtful/insightful comments listed on this site in the month of April.

Also, Sacrata Dei Press has pledged to donate an additional \$1 to the Missioners of Christ for each book sold in April (this is in addition to the proceeds already supporting the Missioners).”

List of Winners

Gerard Webster
Ellen Gable Hrkach
David Murdoch