

An Interview with Ellen Gable Hrkach

May 2009 Featured Author

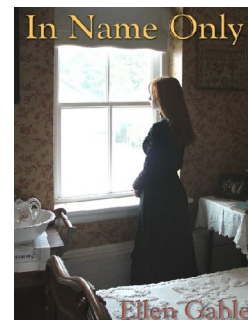
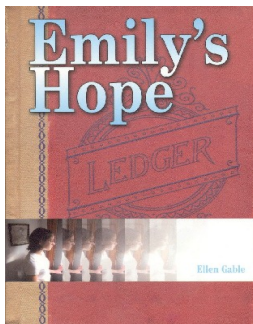
at

Time with Tannia

(<http://timewithtannia.tripod.com>)

By:

Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés



1. Tell us about yourself.

My name is Ellen Gable Hrkach and I am a wife to James and mother to our five sons, ages 9 to 21. I am also a part-time writer and while I have written many non-fiction articles for various magazines and websites, I especially enjoy writing fiction. My website is <http://www.fullquiverpublishing.com/>

2. You are from Camden, NJ while your husband is from Canada. How did you two met?

We met in a very unique way. When I was a teenager in the 70's, I wrote to many pen-pals from all over the world. One of my pen-pals lived in Canada and I traveled from NJ to visit her in 1978. While in Canada, I went to a rock band jam session. My husband was the lead guitarist. We fell in love and carried on a long-distance romance until we were married in 1982.

3. Based on your experience as a certified Natural Family Planning teacher, what are some of the advantages or disadvantages of the Natural Family Planning (NFP) method? Is this method also effective for woman with an irregular menstrual cycle? Where can our readers obtain more information about NFP?

NFP is a natural method of birth regulation whereby the couple charts the woman's signs of fertility and infertility and plan relations accordingly. Modern NFP is very different from the old calendar rhythm method because the couple charts current signs instead of counting past cycles which results in a much more effective method of birth regulation.

There are many advantages to using NFP. First, it's effective in both avoiding and planning pregnancy; it's morally acceptable; does not diminish fertility; enhances communication between the husband and wife, and does not have any harmful side effects. It's irreversible even within the same cycle. This method is quite effective for women with irregular menstrual cycles because observations are made during the woman's current cycle. Couples can learn more about NFP by checking out CCL's website: www.ccli.org.

As to disadvantages, some might say that the abstinence which is necessary when using NFP is a detriment. However, I disagree. Periodic abstinence has helped us, as a couple, to grow in our marital relationship.

4. You and your husband, James, have been NFP teacher for the "Couple to Couple League" for 24 yrs. That is a very long time. Why did you join this league? How can other couple benefit from the mission of this league? Where can our readers learn more about it?

We joined CCL when we first attended an NFP class before we were married (and we have been CCL members for nearly 27 years). Last year, we went through an extensive retraining program with the Couple to Couple League, and we have now been teaching NFP for nearly 25 years. We initially decided to become teachers of NFP because we wanted to share the information we had learned and there's no better way to share and evangelize regarding NFP than to teach it. It is also important when a couple is using NFP to be able to get support, fellowship and information from others who are using the method. Readers can learn more about NFP from CCL's website at www.ccli.org or from our own chapter's website at <http://www.cclcanada.org/>

5. Are the "Family Life" cartoons based on your family daily life? Whose idea was it? Where do you publish them and how often?

Yes, the cartoons are loosely based on our own family daily life experiences. For the past 18 years, my husband and I have created a homemade Christmas card with the cartoon versions of ourselves (my husband's the artist and I'm the writer). The editor of the magazine, Family Foundations, asked us if we would consider creating a regular cartoon for the magazine (published six times a year).

6. What motivated you and your husband, James, to launch Full Quiver Publishing? What type of books do you publish? Where do you distribute the books? Would you recommend this type of venue for other writers? Share with our readers the blessings, aches and pains of it.

When I initially wrote my first book, I did not realize there were so few Catholic novel publishers. As I became more emotionally tied to my novel (which is based on my own conversion story), my husband and I prayerfully decided to self-publish and launch a new publishing company with the hopes that someday, we would eventually publish other writers' works. Currently, we only publish our own material but we hope to begin taking submissions in the next year or two.

There are many blessings to running our own publishing company. First, we have 100 percent control and rights to everything we publish at present. As for the aches and pains, yes, there are many! Since we have 100 percent control, it also means that we have 100 percent of the financial responsibilities. That in itself could be a detriment to most people. It is also a tremendous amount of work to take a novel from conception to publication because not only do I write the novel, I also have to edit, polish, typeset. Currently I hire people to edit and copy-edit, but I have done all my own typesetting (as evidenced by the fact that I have rubbed most of the letters off of my keyboard).

Distribution is a whole other story. We've spent a lot of time and energy on book signings, table sales at conferences, fine tuning our website, creating e-books, etc.

7. You have published a variety of articles at different Catholic magazines. Are all these payable markets or a mixed bag of payable and non-payable work? Are the topics of your articles assigned by the editors or are they based on personal experience? Why did you choose these magazines?

They are a mixed bag, some payable, some not. Currently, I do receive a stipend for any articles I write for Family Foundations magazine and we also receive a stipend for the Family Life cartoon. Websites usually do not offer a stipend or payment.

Sometimes the topics of the articles are assigned by the editor or person who owns the website. With regard to my upcoming column, the editor of Amazing Catechists assigned me a topic and we have tentatively called the column "Sexually Speaking."

8. In your first novel, *Emily's Hope* you merge the past and the present as a family dark secrets are revealed when the main character, Emily, does a research paper for school. What do you consider your biggest challenge when writing this story?

My biggest challenge in writing this novel was to relive my own (sometimes painful) story of conversion. It was emotionally draining and, at times, it was necessary to stop writing for a while. In the end, though, it was a life-changing experience for me to write my story from a third person and fictionalized perspective. I not only learned a lot about writing during the process, I also learned quite a bit about myself and why I made certain choices.

9. Your second novel, *In Name Only*, has a mysterious title. It implies someone living by appearances and not by conviction. How would you pitch this novel to a potential buyer?

I have always wanted to write an historical novel, and more precisely, an historical romance, but not one with a specific formula like most secular romances. *In Name Only* is the story of a woman who is forced to enter into a marriage of convenience with someone she finds detestable. It is a story about trusting that God knows what's best and also about having the ability to be able to see God in the people you least expect to see Him. While the story is perhaps cliché, the themes of the novel are quite different from secular romance novels. That being said, I believe even secular readers will enjoy the story.

10. I noticed both of your book covers include a picture of a woman standing in front of a window looking outside. Windows are a symbol of secrecy, security, control, protection, and silence. Do you agree with this analogy? What do windows mean to you?

I love your analogy. Windows can also be a symbol of "enlightenment." In the first novel, I wanted to show the symbolism of the character's enlightenment. In the second novel, my intention is to show the character's reliance on the security of her dimly lit bedroom as well as her desire to protect herself from future emotional harm.

One of my favorite paintings of all time is Caspar David Friedrich's "Woman at the Window." I always loved this painting and often wondered what the woman was looking at or waiting for. This intrigue, I think, led me specifically to this image for the second novel.

11. Where can our readers buy your books?

Emily's Hope is currently available via our website www.fullquiverpublishing.com (Readers can receive a free e-copy of the book if they say that they have read this interview!) Also, my book is available from One More Soul, One More Soul Canada, Life Cycle Books and Amazon.com.

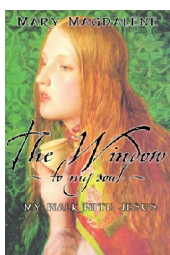
12. Are you working on new projects?

Yes, I am currently working on polishing and editing my second novel *In Name Only* (which will be published in the spring) and a third novel, "*Stealing Jenny*," which will hopefully be available by next Christmas. And, as I mentioned, I will be writing regularly for a new website called [Amazing Catechists.com](http://AmazingCatechists.com).

13. A word of advice to couples looking for ways to strengthen their relationship leading to a more healthy, satisfactory, and fulfilling marriage.

I try to live my marriage with a quote by Mother Teresa “Intense love doesn’t measure; it just gives.” This quote is perfect for marriages, not only in the day-to-day living of our sacrament but also with regard to the marriage bed. When we begin to look at marriage (or any relationship whatsoever) with the attitude of “How can I serve, how can I give,” and not “what can I get out of this,” then our marriage (or relationship) will be more joy-filled, satisfying and fulfilling. And most importantly, as a result of being self-giving in every aspect of our marriage, we as spouses can help each other to get to heaven.

As well, I would encourage all married couples to learn NFP. I believe one of the reasons our own marriage is so satisfying is because of the constant and ongoing communication that exists because of our use of NFP. As a woman, I have never felt used; instead I feel appreciated, loved and respected. As a man, my husband understands the effect that the female cycle and pregnancy have on me, making us both more intimately connected on all levels.



Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés, author of *The Window To My Soul; My Walk With Jesus* (ISBN 0975393359; 2004 Tate Publishing; www.tatepublishing.com).

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

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INTERVIEW COMMENTS:

Date Received: April 30, 2009

Name: Ingrid Waclawik

Email Address: (optional) MomWsix@gmail.com

Where did you hear about this interview? Through an e-mail

Comments: What a great interview! Both questions and answers are thoughtful and intelligent. I have read the book myself and thought that the interview did a good job in enticing others to get a hold of a copy and read it too. God Bless. Ingrid Waclawik

Date Received: May 1, 2009

Name: Ben

Where did you hear about this interview? My Mom

Comments: Psychedelic Mom! That interview was radical! :)

Date Received: May 3, 2009

Name: Laurie

Email Address: (optional) laurie81@jhu.edu

Where did you hear about this interview? an email from the author

Comments: Thanks for the interview! I enjoyed reading Emily's Hope and it was great to learn some new things about the author.

Date Received: May 3, 2009

Name: Timmy

Where did you hear about this interview? A very dear friend...

Comments: This article captures the essence of everything I believe. Thank you.

Date Received: May 3, 2009

Name: Kayla

Email Address: (optional) lilcherrygodess@hotmail.com

Where did you hear about this interview? The author herself

Comments: I've had the pleasure to read Emily's Hope, and now I've had the pleasure to hear her heart warming advice. For a young woman like myself, faith is something I struggle with. And this kind of advice in regards to a faith filled relationship is dear to me. I hope this author never stops writing, and pouring her love into her work and readers.