



This Blessed Mess

Patricia H. Livingston

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Offering hope and encouragement in the face of life's chaos, Pat Livingston's good-humored stories are sure to resonate with readers, especially women. Growing up, she believed that if you work hard and --do the right things-- all will be well. Then chaos happened, nothing universal--just ordinary, everyday chaos. Now, with wit and wisdom in Pat's personal stories, she shares with us her lifetime of taming chaos. This Blessed Mess not only invites readers to do the same but assures us that in the midst of all the "craziness" we can discover as she did the seeds of creativity and hope. Introduction: This is a book about struggle. It is about how struggle overtakes us without our permission. It is about what lies within struggle and beyond it. It is about what we can do with struggle and what it can do with us. Material for this book has been gathering in me for thirty-five years, since I first faced reality as a young adult and strained to comprehend the dynamics of life's difficulty. I write out of my experience, recognizing clearly that my life has been far less painful than the lives of so many around the world and across time. This book is simply an expression of my effort to understand my own events, shared in the hope that it might speak to the lives of others. A collection of what is especially meaningful to me is offered here--insights and images from my own life, from study and conversation, from songs and books. Mostly there are stories. All of them point to the same thing: Life is filled with struggle. Struggle is filled with Love. Life is, as the title says, "This Blessed Mess." The first half of the book is an attempt to describe how this process reveals itself: "The Interplay of Chaos and Creation." The rest of the book is about dealing with the challenge, offering practical ways to resist being deadened by the mysterious dance. What helps? How do we hold on long enough to know--it ain't over 'til it's over? The second half is: "What Helps Us Move to Creation." These understandings, wrung from my living, have made a difference to me. I offer them in case they might be of some encouragement to you. As you read, I hope that my stories will remind you of stories of your own; that my insights will confirm your own conclusions; that my activities and prayers will connect with ways, transcendent and pragmatic, you have found for "heartening." Sometime, perhaps, you'll pass yours on to me.

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