

To everyone, a unique post

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It all started when Julie Hoy found her mother's guitar under the bed during a game of hide and seek as a 7-year-old. She asked if she could use it, taught herself a few chords and wrote her first song, "Love is a Word," for her 16-year-old sister and her boyfriend.

"My brothers and sisters gave me such a hard time for writing sappy songs, but it's where my heart was," Hoy said.

On Monday, students at Pacelli Catholic Schools heard how Hoy has used inspiration and faith to guide her to a career as a songwriter, singer/musician, author, storyteller, humorist and inspirational speaker, not to mention being a wife and the mother of two teenagers, Alex, 18, and Madeline Judith, 16.

The author of "Could I Paint the Sky?" spoke with groups of students throughout the day and gave a free concert in the evening. Hoy read her book to students, performed her music and talked about how the book came to fruition.

"I had no idea I would one day write a book," Hoy said.

The inspiration for the story came on a drive west toward the sunset with her daughter, who was then 14. Hoy said she is always amazed by the pretty colors in the sky. Her daughter remarked on how beautiful the sky was, saying, "God's a really good artist."

They talked about how cool it would be to have a job where you could paint the sky. That was all Hoy needed for the title of her book.

With a cup of coffee the next morning, Hoy sat down with a blank stack of paper and started to write. She said she didn't really know what she was doing, but when she compared what she had written with Madeline's other children's books, it was about the same length.

"I felt God was knocking on the door ... saying, 'I want you to write that story,'" Hoy said.

She eventually found a publisher. Currently it's only available through Hoy and Oregon Catholic Press.

The story is about a little girl, named after Hoy's daughter, who wants to work for God and asks him through prayer if she can paint the sky. After God says no, she discovers that God has jobs for everyone.

Hoy also wrote a song to go with the book, with the same title. The music and lyrics are at the back of the book, with an audio CD included. The story ends with Madeline Judith holding a sign that reads, "Will Work For God." The words from Ephesians 4:1 are written above that illustration: "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."

The humble woman said she is taking her next ventures one step at a time, listening to God along the way. It's that message that she hopes to leave with everyone with whom she speaks, that everyone is special and has his or her own job that God is calling them to do.

"I'm always amazed at how God works," Hoy said. "These kids are special."

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