



# FAITH: A FRESH TAKE



July 13, 2017

## Shaking Up Summer

Although summer offers plenty of sunshine, and in the Illinois area, plenty of humidity, the brightness of the sun doesn't always leaving us feeling so sunny. In fact, summertime is often difficult for my crew because the common routine of the school year is long forgotten.



Even though my children are teenagers, they still crave consistency and have trouble adjusting. In theory, they don't like change.

Change is an inevitable, yet children, tweens, teens and even adults struggle with it. It could be the uncertainty that comes when routines are thrown out the window or it could be the anxiety of not being able to rely on the same thing, same actions every day.

Summertime is a great opportunity, though, to embrace change and teach our children how to adapt to the curves that life throws us.

It's also a time to remind them that they are not navigating the changes alone. God is right there beside them, helping them to make choices about their daily activities, plights of friendship and sibling squabbles.

Take faith along this summer when navigating change with your children. If free time is plentiful, use this time to volunteer at a local food pantry, animal shelter, parish office or an outreach

agency within the diocese. Show them that their change is temporary during the summer months, but the uncertainty of where the next meal or place to sleep is constant for the less fortunate.

Make plans to spend time doing good deeds such as walking a neighbor's dog, making care packages for military personnel depolyed or compiling snack bags and sandwiches to donate to shelters teaches your children to think of others beyond themselves. This change of pace also ironically provides them with a bit more structure, if structure is disrupting their moods.

We all need a reminder once in awhile that our struggles and our changes are not nearly as destitute as the change the less fortunate are facing. I saw this firsthand while traveling with St. Vincent de Paul's mobile ministry this month. I encountered homeless people coping with 90-degree temperatures on a daily basis greet us with a smile. Not one ounce of negativity was apparent in their dispositions and the refreshing way they adapted to change was inspiring.

While it may not be feasible to expose your children to these type of situations, you can help enrich their faith by sharing stories of how others make lemonade out of sour lemons.

— **Shannon Philpott-Sanders**

*Shannon Philpott-Sanders is a freelance writer and college journalism professor, but most of all, a proud mom trying to keep the faith in a household of seven.*



CNS/ROBERT DEJON

Filipinos carry a victim following an earthquake July 6 in Leyte. A week after the magnitude 6.5 earthquake hit the central Philippine province, hundreds of residents continue to live in temporary shelters.

### Fresh Take: a way to look at faith from a different perspective

This is an online-only page dedicated to young adult Catholics, their interests, their needs, their challenges and their faith.

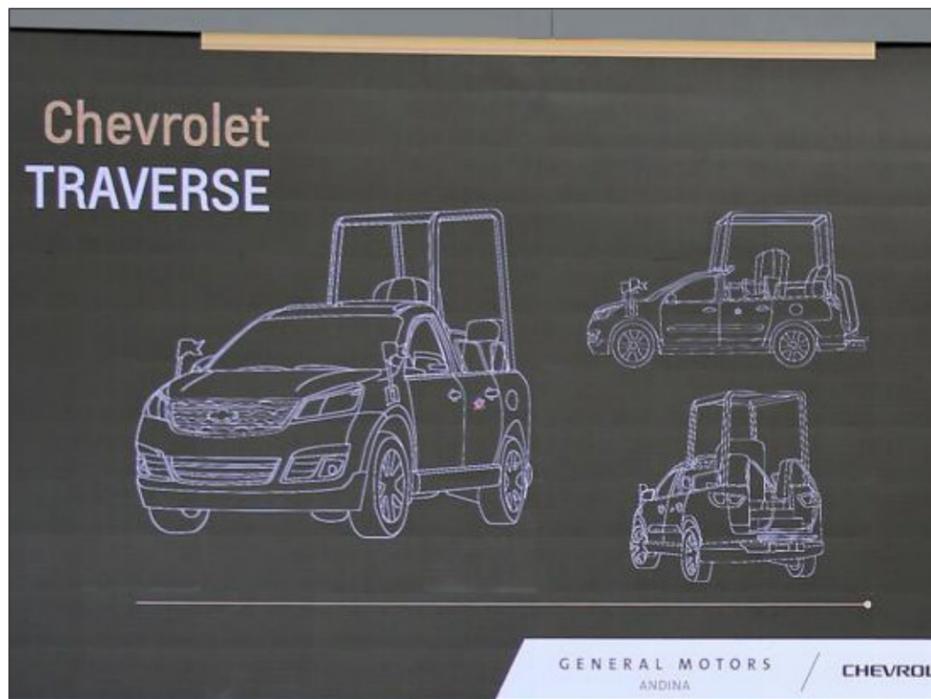
We want to give young adults something to "chew on," to think about when they're looking for something more than an on-line horoscope or the latest

star news.

This page offers columns we believe will interest our young adults. Let us know.

Email us at [cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org](mailto:cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org) with questions, suggestions or for more information.

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CNS/LEONARDO MUNOZ

Keyvan Rahmani, chief engineer of General Motors Andina, Colombia, speaks July 10 in Bogota about some of the details of the popemobile that the Pope Francis will use during his Sept. 6-10 visit to Colombia.

## Open Your Ears to Others

My grandfather used to say that "God granted us two ears and one mouth, so we need to listen twice as much as we talk." Through his interactions with others, he showed that



listening can be an act of selfless love because it shows that you want to understand those around you, that you genuinely care.

"People are looking for someone to listen to them. Someone willing to grant them time, to listen to their dramas and difficulties," Pope Francis said in the book, "The Name of God is Mercy."

Think about those few friends, mentors or family members who made a difference in your life. Chances are that they were good listeners. You could tell they gave you their full attention and tried to understand you. Do you do the same for others?

Pope Francis has often encouraged us to practice the "apostolate of the ear," to attentively listen to what others have to say.

Often, listening helps both parties to feel more connected to each other. It is the key to authentic friendships. Yet, sometimes we do much of the talking instead of listening, we interrupt or we listen to respond instead of focusing our energies on the other person to understand what he or she is sharing.

Genuine listening requires humility. Listening can also provide a safe haven for those who are often not heard. By sharing their feelings or realities -- without being judged or persuaded -- they can feel validated in their worth.

At times, we are distracted by our own worries or by our electronic devices, or are half-listening or half-thinking about our response. Other times, especially when arguing with people with different opinions, we can be defensive or quick to judge and contradict people. "Listening is much more than simply

hearing. Hearing is about receiving information, while listening is about communication, and calls for closeness," Pope Francis said in his 2016 World Communication Day message. "Listening is never easy. Many times it is easier to play deaf. Listening means paying attention, wanting to understand, to value, to respect and to ponder what the other person says."

Yes, learning to listen takes practice, patience and energy, but the fruits are many. When people are listened to, they feel understood, they feel accepted and cared about; it helps them to trust others and release tension in a safe way. Listening deeply can also help the listener since it fosters mutual trust, prevents misunderstandings and can uplift others.

How can you be a better listener? Let the person talk, ask for clarification to ensure you understand what the person is saying and ask open-ended questions.

An article on Scientific American suggests that if you think you know what the person thinks, you will "accept only information that agrees with your preconceived notions." But, the article continues, by suspending judgment and cultivating a genuine interest in the person's thoughts, feelings and opinions, you can understand where they are coming from.

Actively listening to their entire message, you might find that even when disagreeing, you have similar experiences, goals or intentions. That's the first step toward building bridges of understanding.

As the pope said, "Knowing how to listen is an immense grace, it is a gift that we need to ask for and then make every effort to practice."

Practice listening to your friends and peers, listening to your siblings, listening to your parents and grandparents, or listening to that person who may not have been heard in a while. Take the time to open your ears to them.

— Maria-Pia Negro Chin

(This column is part of the CNS columns package.)