



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



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Expanding Your World, One New Perspective at a Time

Once there was a goldfish who lived in a giant fishbowl. He happily swam around and all of the other fish loved him.



One day, a net entered the fishbowl and scooped the goldfish. While flopping around in the net, the goldfish saw a new world beyond the boundaries he knew.

Soon after, the fish returned to the fishbowl. While he still swam, he was no longer happy and the other fish asked why.

"Once I swam with joy because I knew where I belonged," he explained. "Now, I've seen outside the fishbowl and I know the world is far larger than what I imagined. What if everything out there is better than what I have now and I'm missing it?"

The other fish, having never left the fishbowl, didn't understand what he meant and left the goldfish to swim alone.

When that goldfish had a limited view of his world, he was happy. When he learned there was more to see, he wasn't excited by what he'd discovered. He was sad because of what he was missing.

All of us are like the goldfish. We have a limited view of the world around us. When we see something different, our perspective changes and it's up to us to decide what we do with that new knowledge. Do we give thanks for what we have, or do we worry about what we don't?

There's a similar story. It's about a boy and his father. Their family had a lot of money, and both had all they thought they needed and more. The father wanted to teach his son that not everyone was as lucky, so he sent his son to spend a week living with a family of farmers who were poor.

After the week ended, the father

asked the son what he had learned. "We have a pool with walls to keep the water in," he explained. "They have a stream where the water never ends. We have a fence to separate us from our neighbors. They have fields as far as you can see. We buy our food, they grow theirs. We pay people to serve us, they provide service to others."

Then the boy demonstrated his understanding that not all wealth is financial. "Thanks, dad, for showing me how poor we are," he said to his father.

Seeing the world from a different perspective is a valuable experience. Although what we see is the same, each person interprets things differently.

The boy and his father saw the same farm and the same crops, except the boy saw the wonder and the father saw the difficulties. Neither is correct, nor incorrect. It's all a matter of perspective.

Think back to the goldfish. He learned that there was more beyond the fishbowl, and the knowledge caused him pain. He became so frustrated by what he was missing that he forgot to continue enjoying what he had.

Discovering the world beyond our comfort zone, our fishbowl, is exciting but also a little scary. What if we start questioning what we believe to be true? Fear of the unknown is not an excuse to hide from knowledge. If belief can't handle scrutiny, it wasn't strong to begin with.

Increasing your perspective and knowledge is like being seated at the world's biggest all-you-can-eat buffet. Sampling new food doesn't lessen the enjoyment of your old favorites. Combining what you already enjoy with an increased palate gives you a greater set of delicious choices.

Never pass on the opportunity to experience something new. The world outside your fishbowl is filled with never-ending vistas waiting to be explored.

(Column is part of the CNS package.)

— Erick Rommel

Parenting Lessons: The Teachable Moments

As a teacher, I crave those teachable moments in life. From a tidbit online to help with my writing to an



eye-opening experience in the classroom, I've committed to be a lifelong learner.

What I never expected, though, is that parenting offers me the most opportunity for those

'aha' moments and I've learned more about love, life and faith as a parent than in any other role in life I have.

My children will be the first to share that I love to teach. When we are sitting down for dinner, I ask them to evaluate their day, think critically about the events or lessons in school and share the positive experiences. When we are driving in the car and they seem upset about something, I try and ask questions to get them thinking about how to handle the situation. As they often tell me, it's annoying to have a mother who is both a teacher and a reporter. The questions never stop.

As much as I strive for my children to learn from these teachable moments, the irony is that I have learned much more from my budding teenagers than they have probably learned from me.

Here are just a few tidbits I have learned this week alone:

Timing is everything: I can ask my daughter the same question at two different times of the day and get the same answer, but in two very different manners. For example, if I ask her what is wrong when she returns home from school and she is stressed

and tired, she is more likely to utter a "Nothing, mom. Stop prying," whereas if I ask the same question later in the evening while sprawled out on the floor in her room with the television on, she is more likely to tell me what tragedy or triumph she had to cope with during the day.

Know When to Stop: My son often reminds me that I am not a reporter at home. My endless questions drive him crazy. So, I've learned that two questions at a time is the limit and I have to make those questions count. A simple "How was school?" will prompt a one-word response whereas a "How was the algebra test?" may help me to gather more information and reduce his level of irritation with his nose mom.

Trust Your Instincts and Your Children: It's difficult to sit back and watch your child suffer when a friend has betrayed his trust or a boy doesn't text her back, but I have realized that I can't fix every little obstacle for my children. I've learned to trust my gut and have faith in my children's abilities to navigate through dilemmas. If I feel they are in danger, I will definitely step in, but as they get older, I've learned to let them navigate the rough waters on their own, always knowing I'm here for support when they need me.

The lessons are fast and fierce and the 'aha' moments have opened my eyes to ways I need to trust my faith and my children more. But, as a teacher, it's refreshing to sit back and take on the role of the student as the parenting lessons continue to grace my life. I wouldn't have it any other way.

— Shannon Philpott

Shannon Philpott is a freelance writer and college journalism instructor, but most of all a mother of two teens. You can see her work at www.shannonphilpott.com.

Food for Thought

In September 2015, the United States will be the setting for the church's World Meeting of Families. It will provide an occasion for the church to present, on a world stage, the importance it places on what Pope Francis has called the "fundamental cell" of society.

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Vatican Pontifical Council for the Family, spoke on May 15 to the United Nations on the topic. Family is "at the very heart of human development," he said.

Unlike the friends we choose or a favorite channel we tune into, the family cannot be changed when we stop liking them. This teaches us to live with someone who is

different, "the 'other' cannot be ignored," Archbishop Paglia said.

In that sense, the family is "a very special school of education in 'otherness' and in love for another." As a school, it teaches us many lessons we will need because it mirrors society, since a family is "a delicate but stable community of life among different persons," the archbishop said.

Our experience in a family allows us "to foster and protect the sensitive relations between individuals and diverse social realities, thus allowing for the harmonious development of society as a whole," Archbishop Paglia said.



CNS/VICTOR ALEMAN, Vida-Nueva.com

MIGRATION ISSUES: A woman holds onto her children during a special Mass in Los Angeles July 20 honoring immigrants. Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles and several other bishops and

priests from Southern California concelebrated the Mass to focus attention on the humanitarian crisis of tens of thousands unaccompanied migrant children surging across the U.S.-Mexico border.

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.

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