



FAITH: A FRESH TAKE



February 6, 2015



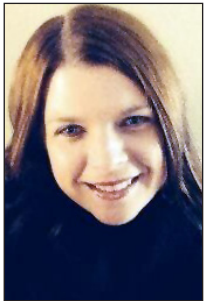
CNS/NANCY WIECHEC

SERVING MIGRANTS: Marian Enriquez, a member of the Kino Teens, serves deported migrants in 2014 at the “comedor,” the kitchen and dining hall of the Aid Center for Deported Migrants

in Nogales, Mexico. Pope Francis wrote a personal letter to the Kino Border Initiative’s executive director praising and encouraging the teens in their work for migrants.

Faith-Filled Independence

It’s no secret that parenting has its ups and downs. It’s exciting to see your child beginning to make decisions for herself, standing up for what she needs and wants and contributing to society as a leader. However, parenting a strong-willed child requires patience, and it is a definite challenge.



This afternoon, I spent a few moments talking with a colleague who looked defeated after a rough morning with his daughter. “She wants everything her way; she disregards everything I tell her to do, and she gets defiant over every little thing,” he said with slumped shoulders and a heavy heart. “I want parenting to be fun, but I just feel like I’m in a battle all the time.”

His daughter is 7. She is a beautiful replica of his confident wife. She wants what she wants when she wants it, he told me, and her confidence is overwhelming. I smiled and tried to stifle a giggle as I sympathized with his pain. I didn’t want to tell him that a strong-willed confident daughter at 7 is a breeze compared to a 16-year-old who craves and demands freedom every chance she gets. I know. I have a natural born leader in my home.

I used to think that my daughter, too, was being defiant when she made demands. I failed miserably at picking battles and instead, tried to take on each and every one, ultimately making the days long and the tears flow on a regular basis. I prayed about it endlessly and asked God for the strength to foster her strength without letting my daughter reign over my home.

Over time, and as she grew older and gained some maturity, I realized that a strong-willed child develops into a strong and confident woman who will impact the world around her. My daughter knows what she wants and works tirelessly to get it. I’ve watched her practice dance routines for hours to master a turn or a perfect split. I’ve observed her pour over algebra problems and write English essays well into the night so she is prepared for school and her future in college.

My daughter, although she is strong-willed, has more motivation than I see in many of my college students. Her desire to get what she wants comes with the knowledge that obtaining success takes hard work – and her strong-willed nature drives her to work hard.

Yes, it is difficult to parent an independent and confident teenager. Daily, I have to remind her that I am the mother and I will call the shots. I find myself repeating, “Are you asking me or telling me?” on a regular basis.

However, I know that she has faith in herself, faith in her abilities and faith in her future, which is a powerful combination for personal and professional success. I know that God blessed me with a child who can lead others by example and provided me with the challenge of guiding her and providing her with opportunities. I have to keep her grounded at times (both literally and figuratively), but in the end, I know that her faith-filled upbringing was the springboard to her success and her drive.

– 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.

Question Corner

Explaining purgatory

Q. So far as I know, the other Christian religions do not provide for a purgatory – only the Catholic Church – and I’m wondering where purgatory is mentioned either in the Bible or in Christ’s teachings. (I would like to be able to defend my faith with some clear references.) (Chesapeake, Virginia)

A. Speaking generically, Catholics believe in purgatory while Protestants do not. For Protestants, the atoning

sacrifice of Jesus is absolute, perfect and final. It had a once-and-for-all quality and, because of it, believers are cleansed, forgiven and declared righteous. To think that any additional purification might be necessary after



death would be, for a Protestant, to deny the sufficiency of Christ’s redemptive death and resurrection.

The Catholic belief, on the other hand, is summarized most succinctly in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (No. 1030): “All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.”

This Catholic position builds on the belief of God’s chosen people shortly before the coming of Christ. In the Second Book of Maccabees (12:46), written toward the end of the second century B.C., we learn that Judas Maccabeus “made atonement for the dead that they might be absolved from their sin.” To have prayed for his fallen comrades (who had worn in battle forbidden sacred amulets) showed his belief that the deceased could still be helped by the intercession of the living.

In the New Testament, arguably the clearest reference to purgatory comes in Matthew’s Gospel (12:32), where Jesus declares that “whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” – a statement that implies there are at least some sins that can be forgiven in the next life.

Exactly what this transitional state of purgatory consists in, how long it lasts, whether it might even be instantaneous, are, of course, beyond our reckoning as long as we are on this

side of eternity.

Who writes the pope’s speeches?

Q. Does the pope write his own speeches or, like the U.S. president, does he have a speechwriter? If he does not write a particular speech, would the pope edit its contents before delivering it? (It just seems to me that the pope’s busy schedule would not allow him time to compose all of the speeches he must give – both at the Vatican and when on a foreign trip.) (Edison, New Jersey)

A. I cannot answer with absolute certainty, since no one is designated publicly as “the pope’s speechwriter.” But I would think that, as with any modern head of state, there are people who assist the pope in drafting his talks.

The pure volume would seem to necessitate this; on most days, the pope delivers several talks, particularly on foreign trips when the speeches tend to be lengthier and more numerous.

I do know that some years ago when I was working in Rome as a journalist, I learned on good authority that an American monsignor on the staff at the Vatican had been charged with the initial drafts of the talks Pope John Paul II would give on an upcoming trip to the United States.

The pope, of course, would edit the talks before delivery, both for content and to impart his personal style to the phrasing.

In November 2013, the Italian daily newspaper *La Stampa* claimed to have identified the newly named “coordinator of papal speech and homily writing,” a Monsignor Paolo Luca Braidia, but I never read that the Vatican confirmed this and it would have surprised me if they had.

My suspicion is that Pope Francis may have more to do with crafting his own speeches than did previous pontiffs, because Pope Francis’ talks strike me as more spontaneous, conversational and unfiltered.

When Pope Francis, for example, just a few days before Christmas in 2014 warned curial cardinals against “spiritual Alzheimer’s,” publicity seeking and the “terrorism of gossip,” those words seemed to come directly from his heart and not from the pen of an anonymous speechwriter.

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, N.Y. 12208.

– Fr. Ken Doyle

(This column is a CNS column.)

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

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