



FAITH: A FRESH TAKE



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CNS/ALEJANDRO ERNESTO, EPA

VIVA CUBA: A taxi biker carrying a U.S. flag over his shoulder drives in the streets of Havana July 2. The Vatican played a key role in restoring U.S.-Cuban diplomatic ties.

Making a Plan to Overcome Doubt

“Doubt”

They said I'd never be a leader
They said I'd never wear a crown
If I wanted to be someone
I should learn to settle down
You should know better
(I tell myself)
You'll never go further
(I warned myself)
You'll never be better
(Don't know me that well)

Refrain:

I made it to the end
I nearly paid the cost
I lost a lot of friends
I sacrificed a lot
I'd do it all again
'Cause I made it to the top
I can't keep doubting myself anymore
No, no.

I can't keep doubting myself anymore
Now you're looking at a leader
Now you're staring at a queen
You said I'd never be someone
But now I'm pulling those strings
You should know better
(Won't make me back down)
You'll never go further
(Can't turn me around)
You'll never be better
(There's no stopping me now)

(Repeat refrain.)

You think you know
But you don't know the half
You think you beat me down
But I'll have the last laugh
I'll keep getting up
'Cause that's what I want to do (yeah)
I'm gonna be the best me
I'm sorry if it kills you

(Repeat refrain.)

Sung by Mary J. Blige
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Doubt is a familiar visitor to all of us. What are the best ways to deal with it?

Mary J. Blige's latest release, “Doubt,” helped me consider this problem. The song's protagonist comments on messages from naysayers who express their doubt about whether she can succeed. They tell her that she will “never be a leader” and she “should learn to settle down.” But with effort and a commitment to “be the best me,” she has “made it to the top.”

Even when beat down, she says, “I'll keep getting up,” and now she is convinced that “I can't keep doubting myself anymore.”

It would seem that these critical messages have affected her. Many times, this type of doubt, one's own, is much more difficult to face. We all need effective strategies to manage doubt and reach our goals.

What should one do when confronted by doubt, especially self-doubt? The first step is very important – let time pass. This can be difficult, but you have to realize that doubt can be fleeting. When you're faced with a task, focus on getting it done and doubt will dissipate.



Also, become familiar with how doubt functions. Doubt tends to be inconsistent, only arising when challenges grow more difficult or disappointments occur. You may hear that internal voice: “Yes, I told you not to try, you can't do this.” However, as you work hard and conquer your goals, doubt dissipates.

Eventually, you'll face a new difficulty, and it will once again surface. Consequently, I would say that doubt is inconsistent and persistent. It appears, goes away, only to reappear once more.

Knowing this about doubt's nature helps you see that doubt is about certain thoughts that arise. Like all thoughts, it is not the voice of reality. You are not required to believe its messages, just note them, and then decide how to respond.

When you accept that doubt arises like many other thoughts and feelings, that it has no reality, it loses power. You can allow it, but then, move on.

But there are moments when doubt can be valuable. Its message can encourage us to re-evaluate our plans. For example, if you are taking a tough math course, and a poor test score becomes the source of doubt about your capability of passing the course, an effective response is to move beyond the negativity and fine-tune your plan for success.

Maybe you need to begin working with a tutor. Maybe you need to talk with the teacher or work on more practice problems. In that sense, doubt can be helpful, inviting you to alter approaches that will in turn enhance your chance for success.

Seek God's help in evaluating how to get past doubt. Ask for guidance to proceed in a way that helps you to move in a positive and potentially successful way. Then be open to surprises. God wants us to have successful and enjoyable lives. Taking on challenges and meeting them is part of forming a meaningful life. Yes, doubt probably will visit us throughout our lives, but we can make each stay brief.

Your comments are always welcome. Please write to me at: chmartin@hughes.net, or at: 7125 West CR 200 South, Rockport, IN 47635, or like this column on Facebook at “Charlie Martin's Today's Music Columns” and post a comment or suggestion.

— By Charlie Martin

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

The Freeing Voice of Knowledge

As summer winds to a close, I realize I've been teaching for more than 10 years and over time, it becomes



very obvious how students learn differently. Some are able to understand concepts through visuals; some prefer auditory lectures; while some need to be able to read through the materials to fully grasp an assignment or term. Observation is the key to discovering how others learn. Just sitting in a pew during Sunday Mass, it's clear to see that some people are listening intently during the prayers, while others are following along in the book, reading each word as if they were reading it for the first time, even though they have said these words thousands of times.

The reading material helps them learn about their faith; it reinforces their learning of the prayers and provides confidence as they navigate through the service.

As much as I've always dubbed myself as a visual learner, I realized this summer that if I had paid enough attention to my own learning style, I would have realized long ago that I am an auditory learner. I'm the one sitting intently listening to the homily message and absorbing each and every word without a book in sight.

My bookshelf at home is a clear indicator of my learning style. I love to read and I read essays from my students on a daily basis, but when it comes to reading in my free time, I avoid it like the plague, even though I crave to finish every book on that bookshelf. My books range from non-fiction

biographies I want to read so badly to inspirational, faith-based books such as “The Shack.”

Ironically, it is a challenge for me. As the words blur when my eyes get heavy or my mind wanders to my grocery list, I often give up on those books and jump into another task.

I had one of those “Aha!” moments when I saw an advertisement for an audio book app. I'm in the car for at least three hours a day running my children from practices and school and back and forth to work. Maybe an audio book would help me to finish those books and learn more information in the process, I thought.

I quickly downloaded the app five days ago and within 36 hours, I had finished a 12-hour book. It was so fulfilling to weave through these stories told by a pleasant British woman as she navigated me through the mystery and drama of the fiction book I chose. I made time to learn from the auditory books and found myself anxious to get in the car to listen to more or plug in my headphones while I was cleaning the house. I've purchased four books already — many duplicates of what is on my bookshelf at home — and I plan to continue to take this time to learn more about the wonderful characters in these books, the faith-filled inspirational messages waiting for me and the thrilling adventures the world of fiction and non-fiction provide.

It was a lesson as a teacher that I needed to learn about myself. Knowledge — in any form — is freeing.

— 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.

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 with questions, suggestions or for more information.

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