



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



February 11, 2016



CNS/PERCIO CAMPOS, EPA

ZIKA: Ana Beatriz, a 4-month-old girl with microcephaly, is seen in a photo obtained Feb. 9 in Lagoa do Carro, Brazil. Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff met with members of the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil Feb. 10 in Brasilia to ask for their help in fighting the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmits the Zika virus.

"Abortion is not the answer for the Zika virus," Archbishop Sergio da Rocha of Brasilia told reporters during a Feb. 10 news conference to announce the bishops' Lenten Fraternity Campaign. "We need to value life in any situation or condition. Less quality of life does not mean less rights to live or less human dignity."

A Chance to Fill the Pages of the Book of Life

"Nothing is new under the sun."

You'd think that quote came from a jaded millennial or a baby boomer — someone who has seen it all.



Nope. That quote is from the Bible, specifically Ecclesiastes. That means that phrase was coined more than 2,000 years ago, from people who thought they'd seen

it all. Obviously, they were wrong. King Solomon in his gorgeous palace couldn't have imagined satellites and spy drones.

Or were they wrong?

Part of the criticism of the new "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" movie surrounded the fact that it wasn't entirely new, that the film had plot elements that were far too close to the original for it to be interesting.

Those critics complained that there was nothing new going on in that galaxy far, far away. Fathers and sons, family ties, good versus evil, rugged smugglers and plucky rebels, blah, blah, blah.

But I don't think that's boring at all.

See, there really isn't anything new under the sun. We're telling the same stories as the author of Ecclesiastes. Who hasn't struggled to understand their parents? Who hasn't felt betrayed by a friend? Who hasn't been under pressure from teachers of some kind? People have fallen in love and fallen into addiction and fallen down holes in accidents from the beginning of time.

But that's where the critics get it wrong. There's a difference between copying someone else's work and telling an ancient tale of humanity.

"Inception," a movie about thieves who traffic in dreams, was widely

praised as being wildly original, and it was, but, in the end, you could call it a story about a parent yearning to see a child again. It is as old as time itself.

We are all brand-new versions of an ancient tale, new paragraphs in the same ancient story, entirely original and entirely connected to our world at the same time.

As a teenager, your story is just beginning. You're still in the first chapter of it and facing a life full of possibilities. It doesn't matter what's already been written. The plot isn't set in stone. There are characters you have yet to meet. Every human being is wildly original, living a story full of heroes and villains, plot twists, beginnings and endings.

That's half the reason why we turn to stories like those in the Bible, like the ones we see in movies we watch and the advice we get from friends who've had similar experiences. We're all incredibly special, and yet we're all the same inside.

So don't close the book of your life before it's finished. Losing your story — to drugs, alcohol abuse or suicide — would be a tragedy on a galactic scale.

When it feels as if the world is ending around you, when you're considering that maybe it'd be better if you hadn't been born or if you didn't exist, remember that you are an incredible miracle, and remember all of the open pages to come.

Remember that you're not defined by the story you're thinking up in your head, but the story you're actually in. And that's a story where every human being is loved and cherished by God.

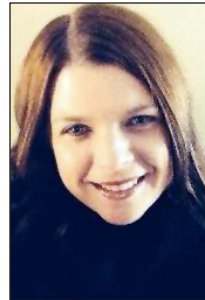
There's nothing new under the sun, except for you, and the wonderful things you'll bring to the future.

— Karen Osborne

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

Wants vs. Needs

Everyday it seems like my teenagers "need" something of vital importance immediately. I need new shoes, my son says as he is sifting through 10 pairs of name-brand shoes that apparently are not the right color for his taste. I need these \$100 shoes to match my prom dress, my daughter says casually as if money grows on the trees in our backyard.



My children are not selfish or greedy — they are typical teenagers who fail to see the difference between wants and needs. They are loving individuals who care for people deeply, but there are times when their perception of what they need is skewed.

As parents, we have an obligation and moral responsibility to provide our children with what they need.

Vital needs include clothing, shelter and food. This doesn't mean that my children require expensive take out for dinner every night or a \$250 pair of sneakers with the Lebron logo attached.

They need clothing that keeps them warm and covered, shelter that provides a place to sleep and food that provides nourishment.

It is understandable that we, too, as adults and parents, want to provide "wants" for our loved ones. Every generation of parents attempt to provide their children with more than what they were provided with at a young age. We want them to live a more comfortable life than we were afforded. We

want to surprise them with treasures, gifts and thoughtful gestures. But, wants are a privilege. Wants should not be required. Needs are a necessity.

One of the most pressing needs, though, is our faith. We need our faith to get us through the day, to challenge those wants that disrupt our logical thinking and provide needs to those who are suffering. We need our faith to ignite our love for others and often, patience for those who challenge what we believe to be morally right.

I remind my children each and every day that they are privileged. They have blessings beyond what many people can imagine — a warm home, family, food and clothing. They also have a faith-filled upbringing to rely on when temptations arise or difficult decisions must be made. It is difficult to parent a generation influenced heavily by constant exposure to advertisements that entice them to accumulate material possessions.

We have the responsibility to educate our youth and ourselves about the differences between wants and needs.

It starts at home. It starts with an explanation of why expensive prom shoes or outrageously-priced sneakers are not a necessity. It's not fun to be the "bad guy," but if we put time and effort into raising our children to see that their needs are taken care of, I can only hope that our faith will lead them to provide the basic needs for others.

— 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.



LIZ QUIRIN

LENT BEGINS: Father James Allen, OMI, visits with families after an Ash Wednesday liturgy at St. Damian Parish in Damiansville. The parish family celebrated a bilingual liturgy for the first time together, with Father Allen moving seamlessly from Spanish to English throughout the Mass.

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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