



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



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CNS/PAUL HARING

Pope Francis greets artists during an audience with circus members in Paul VI hall at the Vatican June 16.

A Cup of Coffee with the Champ

“Noooooo!” we thought. He’s not coming over here!

But he was!

Legendary boxer Muhammad Ali and a Muslim bodyguard were headed for our table in a restaurant deserted after lunchtime in the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington.

It was in the early 1970s when Alicia Victoria Allen and I, as college students, were attending a conference for editors from black college campuses. We had a break in between sessions and stole away for coffee and dessert.

Ali asked if they could join us. “Yes, of course,” we chirped.

Vickie and I tried to be cool, acting as if we were not smitten by the handsome bodyguard as well. But even then, I felt he and the twice-married Ali were off-limits to a good Catholic girl.

Men. They have no idea what enters the minds of single women who can do a split-second assessment of them without even blinking an eye! I do not remember whether they ordered coffee. I was thinking, “Gotta find something for Ali to write on! Gotta get his autograph!”

Somewhere during Ali’s questions about where we were from and what we were doing at the hotel, I took from my wallet a high school photo of my sister Barbara Joanne and slid it over to him, asking for his autograph on the back. He obliged.

When Vickie and I learned that his wife was in the hotel, we asked to meet her. So the champ sent for her. She was gorgeous in a flowing lime green attire, and she too seemed genuinely pleased to be a part of our impromptu gathering.

All too soon, it was time for everyone to move on. Vickie and I did not see Ali again until the next morning at breakfast when the hotel restaurant was packed. Vickie hissed something like, “He’s headed our way!”

I was nervous since I had ordered bacon and pancakes. So I stabbed my pile of pancakes and tried to discretely

shove the bacon under it. But I was too late.

“I see you trying to hide that pork! I see you trying to hide that pork!” Ali said, all loud. Everyone nearby turned to look at our table and my flushed face in particular. Ticked by the mischief he had stirred up, Ali paused briefly to acknowledge us before moving on to his own table.

Since then, I treasured my sister’s photo with Ali’s autograph. It never left my wallet. But in October 1975, Ali had done the unthinkable. Right before he fought Smokin’ Joe Frazier during the “Thrilla in Manila,” Ali dared to introduce his mistress, Veronica Porsche, as his wife to Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos.

It was then that I turned from the television, found my wallet and snatched out his autograph!

Only God Almighty knew the depth of my disappointment. That night, Ali may have won what many critics called the greatest heavyweight fight of all time, but he was definitely dethroned in my mother’s house in Baltimore.

But isn’t it funny how time has a way of healing wounds? During the more than 40 years that have passed since that incident, the three-time heavyweight champion of the world toned down his incendiary rhetoric and traveled the world to learn about its people, promote religious tolerance and support innumerable charitable causes.

When Ali died at age 74 on June 3 in Arizona after a 32-year battle with Parkinson’s disease, people worldwide grieved his passing.

I was heartened by what his ex-wife, the one we met, told a journalist, because her words echoed forgiveness and peace. If she could, she said, she’d tell Ali, “Thank you for the beautiful adventure and journey.”

Greene was an associate editor in CNS’ Special Projects

— Carole Norris Greene

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

Give an Inch, Gain a Mile

I’ve never considered myself to be a helicopter parent, but when I recently attended my daughter’s college freshman orientation workshop, I found myself panicked when the incoming freshman were separated from their parents. While I was led through workshops about financial aid, paying for college and the ins and



outs of parenting a child in college, my daughter was whisked off to register for her first semester on her own.

As a college professor, I felt that I could guide her well through the process of what classes to take, how to arrange a daily schedule and what electives to choose that would better suit her interests. I didn’t want my daughter to be misguided into taking classes that sounded like fun, yet were not geared toward her major. To be honest, I didn’t trust my child enough to make sound adult decisions.

I sat in the parent sessions stricken with fear, resisting the urge to text her with advice to guide her through the process. At precisely the moment I almost gave in to shoot off a two-page text, the workshop leader asked the 80 parents sitting in the room to share how they were feeling at the moment. The mother next to me raised her hand and said, “I am scared to death that my child is registering on his own right now.” There. She said it. I didn’t have to. We were all thinking the same thing.

The moderator smiled at the mother and the nodding heads surrounding her and asked, “Do you think you have

raised a confident child who is ready to enter adulthood?” The question made us all think long and hard. It made us look at our own insecurities versus focusing on what we thought our children were lacking. She assured us that the advising staff would guide our children in the right direction and that believe it or not, they may even know a bit more about the registration process than parents.

She was right. The college staff purposely separated us from our children to help them gain a sense of what it would be like to make decisions without mom or dad hovering over them. They separated us to teach the parents how to let go. We had to give an inch so all of us could gain a mile — our children included.

Although I do see that my daughter is blossoming into a confident and well-educated adult, it is hard to stop viewing her as that little girl who ran into my arms for comfort when she skinned her knee or was rejected by a peer. My hugs and nurturing has fixed things for her.

I can still support her during this journey, I can still pray that she makes strong and faith-filled decisions, and I can offer a supportive hand when she needs it, but as I learned during that very emotional day, I can’t rescue her like I used to do when she was a child. I can only trust that I have given her the tools to lead a life of faith and register for classes without me dictating what I think is right.

— 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.



CNS/SAM LUCERO, The Compass

A grandmother and her grandson light candles during a candelight vigil for healing and peace June 15 at St. Norbert Abbey Church in De Pere, Wis. The ecumenical service was in held remembrance of those killed in the mass shooting June 12 in Orlando, Fla., the worst such shooting in U.S. history. The abbey bells tolled 50 times, one for each person who was killed.

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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