



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



August 11, 2016

Is My Child's Faith Strong Enough?

Just like many parents were, this time of year I am a ball of nerves preparing to send my first-born off to college. My soon-to-be 18-year old is excited about this new journey; she is ready for the demands of college coursework, and she has worked hard for this opportunity.



However, I can't help but wonder about her faith. As parents, we raise our children with the values and beliefs we subscribe to and hope that our actions have illustrated our faith. Once they are on their own, we can only hope that they remember what they have been taught or that their faith is strong enough for the challenges ahead.

Many college freshman, though, struggle with their identity as it relates to faith. They begin to question what they truly believe versus what their parents believe. They struggle to find the answers, especially when thrust into new environments where faith may not be the norm for their peers.

Critical thinking is a skill that is absolutely essential in college. As a professor myself, I want my students to question the "how" and "why" of theories and think deeply about societal issues. I want them to resist the urge

to make assumptions based on what they have read online and dig deeper to find the truth to make decisions. College freshmen cannot just skate through classes hanging onto what their parents believe anymore. They have to think for themselves, and as scary as it may be to have them question how they have been raised, it is crucial to their development as adults.

While it may seem frightening for our children to question who they are or how their faith plays a part in their life, this is a process we have to let them sort through on their own. Just as my daughter will not have me there to do her laundry, pack her lunch or make her bed each morning, I also won't be right by her side to answer questions about her identity and her faith.

As my daughter begins this new journey, I have to trust her decisions, hope that I have set a solid example and continue to provide support for her, even if I am a few hundred miles away. I have to understand that my faith and her faith may differ. However, no matter how different, the fact that she has faith is what will keep me comforted during these college years.

— 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/courtesy Sydney Kings

Olympic basketball player Kevin Lisch poses for a recent photo before a game with the Sydney Kings, an Australian National Basketball League team.

Parenthood and the High Cost of Loving

Most new parents go through "baby sticker shock" when they start to realize the cost of raising that dear, sweet, precious little person – for 18 years.

Eighteen? Are you kidding? Try 22, with college. College! How much will a year at college be more than two decades from now?

The Class of 2038 rules!



Veteran parents calmly assure the rookies that there's no reason to panic. It's a little white lie, meant to preserve a newcomer's endearing innocence, like stories of the tooth fairy. They know the cold, hard fact

is there are a lot of reasons to panic ... but panicking doesn't help.

They tried that. Oh, how they tried.

Raising a child can feel like the economic equivalent of death by a thousand cuts. None of them in itself a mortal wound, but coming one after another, it can seem the household budget is hemorrhaging money.

It seems that way because it is that way. A train carload of diapers, a gazillion-dollar car seat, new clothes, new clothes and more new clothes – some worn about one day and then, poof, too small. My, how baby is growing!

– Health insurance, orthodontist, day care.

– Back-to-school items and school tuition or fees.

– Team uniforms and athletic shoes.

– Band instruments and music lessons.

– Plus, the annual fundraiser for the school, the team and the band.

And on and on and on. And on.

As the years go by, as hair turns gray and wrinkles deepen, a parent knows that at some point this no-longer-so-little little one will be out and on his or her own. With an education, with a job – not independently wealthy but not dependent on Mom and Dad

either.

To one degree or another that happens.

A sigh of relief, a self-administered pat on the back for a job well done or at least done as well as a parent can.

But what's this? Amid the euphoria is a tiny, cold trickle of ...

That's when parents from the senior generation drop the other shoe. They tell the new empty nester that having a child isn't just about the high cost of living. There's also the high cost of loving.

And they add – maybe you better sit down for this – it never ends.

Never.

Ever.

I remember when a veteran mom gave me the bad news. She was a generation older than I was and the mother of nine children.

"How do you not worry about your kids all the time?" I asked her after Mass one morning. She smiled. "I do," she said.

What! Well, that doesn't seem fair.

Bless her heart, she didn't mention the added concern of grandchildren. I would find out about that later.

There's a reason senior moms and dads talk of "prayer lists." To love one person includes praying for him or for her. To love more than one, to love multiple generations, means a lot of names, a lot of concerns and a lot of prayers.

But it's less an obligation and burden and more a privilege and blessing because we old-folk parents know: This is something I can do for that dear, sweet, precious little person who is all grown-up now and has his or her own dear, sweet, precious little person.

This is something I never want to stop doing. Not while I'm still on earth.

Not when I'm in heaven.

For a prayer for parents, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/PrayerForParents>.

— Bill Dodds

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



CNS/GREGORY A. SHERITZ

A statue of Blessed Teresa of Kolkata holding a child is seen in a prayer garden at Cure of Ars Church in Merrick, N.Y. On Sept. 4, Pope Francis will canonize Mother Teresa, who traveled the world to deliver a single message: that love and caring are the most important things in the world.

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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