



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



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CNS/L'Osservatore Romano, handout

Pope Francis celebrates the baptism of 13 babies from earthquake zones in Italy in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae at the Vatican Jan. 14.

Lessons Learned Through Activities We Love

Every person has their own unique interests. All of us think we are more diverse in our likes than those around us. The irony of that statement is lost on most.



My personal mix of interests could be combined into the most epic of weekends. In no particular order, I would sit behind home plate and watch the

Baltimore Orioles; I would stand at the 50-yard line and cheer the Baltimore Ravens; I'd get the closest seats possible to see U2 in concert, and I'd get front row tickets to a Broadway show.

I understand what you're probably thinking. One of those things is not like the other. I absolutely agree and there's nothing wrong with that.

In many ways, how we look back and recall engaging in our interests and hobbies helps us define the personal growth we make over time.

Two of my favorite U2 concerts were released on DVD and recorded less than three months apart – the first in Boston in June 2001, the second in Ireland in September the same year.

Despite the brief time frame, the performances affect me in different ways. In the first, lead singer Bono leads up to the song "Kite," one of my favorites, talking about how the song is about letting go of someone you don't want to let go of; when he sings, it feels like he's trying to hold on. In the second concert, the emotion of the song is much different; it feels like he's let go and is watching the eponymous kite sail away.

It was only after hearing the difference and wondering the cause that I learned the first concert occurred while Bono's father was fighting his final battle with cancer. The second occurred days after his father's death.

Reflecting upon that change in emotion has helped me countless times over the years. Life is a journey of joy and pain, and hearing it reflected in

music has helped me better understand the journey I travel every day.

Discovering similar journeys is also one of the reasons I love live theater. A staged show is also about the change of emotion between two moments, with each feeling heightened as the actors take you from moment to moment.

One of my favorite lines and emotional moments comes from the musical "The Scarlet Pimpernel." In the song "Prayer," the main character sings in anguish after learning his wife betrayed one of his best friends. He vows revenge for his friend, praying, "Lord, I'll fight my battles all alone but make me strong!"

When I first heard it, the line appealed to me. I used it as a battle cry. Pray for strength so you can overcome all obstacles. Today, I hear the prayer in a much different light. It's a prayer I now hope would go unanswered.

While battles are inevitable, my prayers for strength now contain a different message. I now pray for the guidance and strength of others to assist me. Since first hearing the song, I've learned strength comes from the support of those we love who believe in us, not from excluding loved ones to face fear alone. It's a lesson the main character also learns over the course of the show.

Maybe I should have paid more attention.

In the end, how we react to music we love, whether rock or musical theater, reveals insights that words themselves often leave uncovered. Applying those insights helps us become better people.

The same is true of sports and our reaction to the teams we love.

To explain in more detail, I need the Orioles and Ravens to win championships again. I'm sure the lessons I'll learn from their success will be equally life altering. If not, I'm sure celebrating their success will be a worthy substitute.

— Effie Caldarola

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

Fear vs. Faith: The Real Winner

Regardless of your parenting style, there are bound to be moments when you feel yourself consumed with fear.



It may be a fear of danger your child could experience or even fear of how your child will behave in various situations. In my case, it often revolved around fear OF my children.

I remember when my oldest was a toddler, I would walk into church silently praying that she would busy herself with the activity pack I had assembled. As she entered her "tween" years, I would say silent prayers each morning that her mood would not cause an explosive argument over something as simple as toothpaste or breakfast.

Even in the most disciplined family environments, there are moments when we fear not only for our children but also experience fear of our children. It's a game of "how will today play out?" when raising kids, but when fear overrides our faith, the outcome can ultimately negatively impact our relationships with our children and our overall family dynamics.

I will be the first to admit that I have let fear get the best of me when raising teenagers. It reminds me of the sayings "pick your battles" or "don't sweat the small stuff." When my daughter would roll her eyes excessively or my son would argue over what he viewed as an

unfair punishment, instead of tackling the issue head on, I would often let it roll off my back, refuse to engage in a negative confrontation and dismiss the behavior. Although I could defend my actions by saying I was "picking my battles," in reality, I did not have the energy to confront the situation out of fear.

I let my fear of an outburst override my faith in my parenting and confidence in my ability to tackle disrespectful behavior and punishments. I didn't believe I had the energy to get through a war when in actuality, a battle hadn't even started.

As I dug deeper into my faith, I realized that by fearing confrontation and disagreements, I was hampering my parenting and depriving my children of important lessons. Although battles did occur and still do here and there, I know now that my fear is not more important than the guidance my children need. I'm not afraid to correct my son when he gets a bit too sassy for my liking or approach my daughter when she struggles to keep her temper in check. If I don't continue to guide them toward strategies to become faith-filled members of society, fear wins. And, in this competitive-natured family, we are all about winning, as long as God is right there by our sides.

— 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/PAUL HARING

Cardinal Angelo Comastri pets a horse during the traditional blessing of farm animals and Italian military horses outside Peter's Square at the Vatican Jan. 17. The

traditional event is sponsored by the Italian livestock association on the feast of St. Anthony the Abbot, known as the protector of animals.

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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