



# FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



June 29, 2017

## Evaluating My Own Snack

Those who know me, know that it is hard for me to sit still for an entire movie, much less a 30-minute television show. However, when my husband suggested we sit down and watch "The Shack" the other evening, I told myself I would do my best.



I've read the book and was inspired by this tale of how

a man learned how to rediscover his relationship with God by tackling his worst fears and revisiting a painful tragedy. I was hesitant to watch the movie, though, because as an avid book reader, I was worried it wouldn't influence me the way the book did when I read it a few years ago.

I was wrong.

Not only did I sit still for the duration of the movie, I also found myself wanting to pause it and discuss aspects of this man's fall from grace and journey back toward the faith he never knew existed within him. The story line prompted hours of discussion that led me to not only evaluate how my faith has faltered at times, but more so about how I can work each day to continue to renew my beliefs.

Sometimes all it takes is a song lyric, a movie or a kind gesture to help us see that there is more to life than beyond what we see. We reminisce, we

wish and we find hope that our faith leads us to revelations that prompt change and improve our relationships with others and with God.

"The Shack" offered me the wake-up call I needed. Not only did the time I spent discussing my faith with my family afterward leave me feeling renewed, the gracious way the movie explored how discoveries of faith are different for each and every individual showed me that it is okay to find my faith each day in my own unique way.

Whether I find myself engaged in a private moment of prayer or launch into discussions with a member of my parish community, it is comforting to know that my own little journey or shack is always waiting for me when I'm ready to dive deeper into my role as a Catholic.

While "The Shack" has faced some resistance and stirred controversy regarding its portrayal of God or "Papa," the message is still clear for individuals of all religions or levels of faith. God never leaves you. God never wants for you to face tragedies. God is always right there enduring the pain with you.

And, that is the message I so desperately needed to hear.

— Shannon Philpott

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CNS/PAUL HARING

Pope Francis greets the crowd as he leaves his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican recently.

## 'Are Not Two Sparrows Sold for a Small Coin?'

A violent windstorm ripped through my town the other night, the kind that leaves you mesmerized yet humbled

at your own powerlessness. A tornado wreaked damage nearby, with 76,000 homes left without power, and 80 mph winds were the norm.

We were lucky at my house. Some bushes were partially uprooted, but we were able to sink them back into the soil and they're doing well.

The morning after the storm, I strolled to the elm tree to check on a robin's nest I'd been watching. Expecting it to have vanished in the maelstrom, I was amazed to see the mother robin sitting there, resolutely doing her duty.

How could that nest have survived? What architectural brilliance anchored that nest to the branch? I know that after storms, nests and dead birds can blanket the landscape. How much wind could this nest take?

Recently, the Gospel reading saw Jesus counseling people on fear and trust. "Fear no one," he tells his followers. "Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge."

As I read those words, I thought of my robin's nest. What kind of God do we have, who is conscious of a little robin? What kind of God permeates our lives and our world with such love and awareness? With such a God, how can I ever feel unloved or unappreciated?

Often, like most people, I want to be acknowledged, to be recognized for my gifts, my aches and pains, my needs. Instead, I realize my own smallness and lack of importance in this world.

On better days, I turn this realization toward an awareness of others, of

their pains, their needs, their effort. I seek compassion rather than honor. I rest in the assurance that as God watches the sparrow, God watches me.

But why would someone want to buy two sparrows for a small coin anyway, I wondered. A little research augmented my best guess. Poor people might find a sparrow or two could cheaply supplement a meager meal with a little protein. Similarly, in a world where offerings were made at the temple – pigeons, for example, or a lamb or larger animal if you were wealthy – two sparrows might be a sacrificial offering from the poor.

So, the little sparrow of which the Creator is so aware meets his end just like all of us. It's not that we believe in a God who saves us from everything we fear. It's that we believe in a God who is with us through all things, and therefore we should fear nothing. There's a big difference there, and it's where we make our leap of faith.

Years ago, I interviewed a good friend who was part of a program called "No One Dies Alone." He was on call to come to the hospital or hospice if someone was in imminent danger of death and had no loved ones. Perhaps homelessness or distance prevented anyone's presence.

My friend witnessed many a death, sometimes saying a rosary with a dying Catholic, sometimes merely holding a stranger's hand as he left this life.

But what happens, I wondered. What is this mystery of death?

"I don't know," responded my friend.

"All I know," he said with certainty, "is that I see people fall into the hands of a merciful God."

The honors and attention and wealth of this world fade away. But we believe the presence and mercy and love of God remains. This belief sustains us through life's storms.

— Effie Caldarola

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



CNS/KEVIN LAMARQUE, Reuters

A protester demonstrating against the Senate health care bill is escorted away by police outside Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's constituent office in Washington June 22.

### 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](mailto:cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org) with questions, suggestions or for more information.

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