



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



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The Beauty of Adulthood

On a daily basis, as a college professor, I interact with 18 and 19-year olds who teach me new terms and lingo.



Lately, the word “adulting” has been thrown around in verb form. At first, I was perplexed by the idea of adulting, because to me, acting your age is a normal and necessary part of life.

However, the term has much more meaning for this new generation – that includes my children.

Adulting refers to acts that, plain and simple, adults are obligated to do. Whether it is filling up your gas tank, paying your rent, cleaning your home or filling up your pet’s food dish, adulting refers to tasks that are required to function productively in society.

However, after really looking into the definition of the term, I found that my students are referring more to a mold of what adulthood should look like. It’s a way of conforming, a way of doing what my students think is what they should be doing versus what they really want to do.

Adulting is a hard concept to wrap your head around if you aren’t interested in the 9-5 way of life or the traditional family unit. My students are creative and they want to pursue innovative passions and live their lives to make themselves and others happy.

This isn’t a unique concept to adulting, but their path is much different. Instead of remaining in a traditional job setting for 20 plus years, they want to travel, volunteer, voyage off on mission trips and rely less on a steady paycheck. They want to see what the world has to offer to determine how they can contribute.

The traditional part of me balks this idea and stresses the need for responsibility, but the carefree part of me appreciates this unique approach to adulthood. While I want my children to know how to support themselves, do their own laundry and pay their own bills eventually, I also want them to feel like they have lived a faith-filled life that brings personal fulfillment.

The lesson I’ve gained from conversations with my students is that balking the idea of this new way of “adulting” can lead to judgments that are unnecessary. I may not adopt their path to adulting, but judging it doesn’t make me more superior, more responsible or any more of an adult.

I can only hope that those immersed in or those approaching adulthood rely on their faith and take the path that is led by God that brings happiness to those around them for a lifetime.

— Shannon Philpott

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CNS/TYLER ORSBURN

Homeless people in Washington pack their belongings June 22 after police told them they had to move. Faith leaders in the Circle of Protection group have pledged to organize their congregations to contact Congress to head off proposed deep spending cuts in vital social service programs.

I Didn’t Sign Up for This — Or did I?

Stripping soaked sheets off a child’s bed for the third night in a row. Scrubbing vomit out of a carseat. Listening to a bedroom door slam with an angry “I hate you!”



“This is not what I signed up for.”

In the years since I became a mother, the tempting, selfish thought has sneaked into my mind a thousand times, dark and brooding.

But every time a quiet voice responds gently: “Are you sure?”

Before we had children, the prospect of parenthood played in my mind like a movie montage: the joy of holding our baby, watching a toddler take first steps, spinning around with a laughing child, playing soccer together at the park, tearing up at graduation.

I daydreamed about the highlight reel. I did not imagine any ugly moments on the cutting room floor.

I smile now at my naivete. What parent wouldn’t? We grow into this calling as it polishes our rough edges smooth over time. Our tolerance for noise, mess and chaos increases as our younger impatience fades.

But after late nights or weeks of sickness or one more exasperating argument, I still hear the temptation creeping into my mind: “This is not what I signed up for.” The sin of pride, taunting me to believe myself better than the work before me.

Back when I was a bright-eyed college graduate, I signed up for a year of service in France with the Sisters of the Assumption. What better way to put my newly minted French degree to good use?

I found myself working in a L’Arche home for adults with severe physical and developmental disabilities. Every morning I stripped soaked sheets, washed them and remade the beds. Every day I helped residents go to the bathroom, get dressed and eat lunch.

I remember ironing the same stack

of clothes for the 12th time that week and muttering to myself: “This is not what I signed up for.”

No one cared if I could analyze a French novel brilliantly. No one gave a glowing grade to my work. No one knew if I’d gone to a great university or had some all-star resume.

What I had signed up to do was to serve. With love. Which meant setting aside my own ego and expectations and humbling myself to the place God had called me, where the people I came to serve were the ones who taught me everything.

Turns out that year at L’Arche was the best preparation for parenthood.

Today none of my children care that I have a graduate degree. None of them have ever asked to see my resume. What matters to them is that I show up each day and love them. This is exactly what I signed up for when I became their mom.

Whenever I’m tempted to think otherwise, I hear the quiet, gentle voice I have come to recognize as God’s. That peaceful voice reminds me that the work of love is my vocation.

Sometimes it means washing stomach-churning laundry. Or comforting a crying newborn for hours. Or working through the daily conflicts of a house full of humans.

It’s not always what I pictured, glamorous or enviable. But callings don’t come with promises of bliss and self-fulfillment.

God asks us to give our lives to each other in sacrifice and love. Whether we are parents or priests, single or married, professionals or caregivers, we all grow into the hard work that comes with vocation. This is where God calls us.

This is exactly what we signed up for.

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CNS/JORGE ADORNO, Reuters

A soldier from Paraguay’s National Anti-Drug Secretariat carries a package of evidences June 15 after following an operation that led to the seizure of marijuana in Asuncion.

Fresh Take: a way to look at faith from a different perspective

This is an online-only page for young adult Catholics, their interests, their needs, their challenges and their faith.

This page offers columns we believe

will interest our young adults. Let us know.

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