

Catholic Girls Forever

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Dear Readers,

Well, Lent certainly flew by! I do hope it was a productive one for all of you. It always feels so good to have that spiritual reset, you know. That is how I feel about Lent at least. A good time to really take a good look at our spiritual life and step things up a little. It seems to me that God also loves this time of year and will be sure to add some things in your life for your own benefit that may not have been exactly what you were planning to work on during Lent. I distinctly remember a conference Fr. McBride gave on a retreat once that more or less stated “We like to pick our own penances and sacrifices, we like to choose something heroic that will make us feel good about accomplishing, but what God really is asking us for is to just accept happily the little crosses He sends throughout our daily lives.” I have always tried to keep that in mind, especially as I go through Lent and when I fail again on one of my Lenten resolutions, I remind myself that God is sending me exactly the right frustrations and opportunities throughout my day to become a great saint, so I should care more about accepting those with grace than I do about following my own determined penance or practice for Lent. Easier said than done! (See ‘Just for Laughs’ on the poetry page for a great example of missing opportunities sent my way ☺)

Life around here continues in its busy and wonderful way. Hal grows bigger by the day and loves saying “da-da-da-da-da” all day long. He can crawl now and has his first tooth which are both exciting and exhausting milestones. I have dubbed him “My Little Adventure Buddy” as I take him with me all over the place. There is rarely a day that I am not packing him into the car to go visit another mom, volunteer at a library or school, attend Mass or Stations of the Cross, go to a Ladies Meeting, or do some errands. On top of that, I have started participating in some 5k runs and he loves being my running buddy ☺ Not sure how much longer I will do runs as the temperature here is already pretty consistently in the high 70’s or 80’s and I am just not conditioned to it yet (being a Minnesotan). I am currently organizing our school fundraiser 5k Donut Run (yes, you get to eat donut holes along the way and then get a donut of your choice at the end, it is a great time!) and we had student kick-off a few weeks ago. I tell you, the joy on those kids’ faces when they saw the incentive baskets ☺ Gosh! It just warms your heart to see how something so simple can bring so much joy! One poor little kindergarten boy waited after my talk to speak with me directly. He was staring very determinedly at our largest incentive basket and asked, “How do I get that one?” I pointed out the label on the basket and informed him that once his family raised \$1,000 they would earn that basket. His face lit up. “Well, I know my family has that much money, so can I take it home with me?” It was a bit of a challenge to make him understand that his parents may have \$1,000 but they may not want to just give it to our fundraiser in order to get a basket.... But he went home determined to earn that basket and his family is well on their way to getting it! The things that used to motivate us!

My organize and declutter the house project is nearly complete and we are finding our rhythm again. I planted a cute little garden in our already small backyard and only planted a handful of things. Down here the growing season starts at the end of February and ends around May and I hope to get a few big juicy tomatoes in the next few months. Hal and I really do try to spend as much time as we can outside and he has the cutest little tan lines now ☺ Henry is extra busy with the schola preparation for Easter week, especially as he helps to sing the Passion on Good Friday as our priest’s voice is not up to the task. Thankfully he will be off work for Easter week as well as the following week and he can get some rest and time to work on some of his many hobbies. Now that Hal is partially weaned Henry has also been adopting him as his adventure buddy and their latest adventure was touring a local distillery. Hal was the center of attention of course and Henry got to be a proud daddy (I stayed home and enjoyed some peace and quiet). Life is good!

Well, that is all for now. I hope you are all doing well and ready for spring. Perhaps some of you are also planting your gardens and getting new tan lines. Whatever you are up to, you know I love hearing from you! Have a wonderful Easter!

P.S. I hope you are planning a lovely Easter dinner. Maybe you have a traditional meal already that you make? Baked chicken with mashed potatoes, asparagus, dinner rolls, and cheesecake, perhaps? Whatever it is, make sure you set the table nicely and maybe try one of those napkin folds from a few issues ago.

Challenge of the Month

Enjoy a sunrise. How is that a self-improvement challenge? Oh, I assure you, it is! There are few reasons I think this is a very healthy thing to do now and then, if not regularly.

- 1) It gets you out of bed at an early hour. We have all heard the phrase, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, and wealthy, and wise."
- 2) It is such a positive thing to look forward to in the morning. Instead of begrudgingly rolling out of bed to just another boring day, you are getting up to do something a little special. It brings that spark and joy for life, like waking up on Christmas.
- 3) It promotes meditation and reflection. Watching the sun slowly creep over the horizon and spread its glow is just so calming and you often just sit in silence, absorbing the scene. So often we get caught up in the busy crazy life we have and we don't set aside time to just sit and think.
- 4) It is beautiful. Do I really have to elaborate on this point?

Perhaps you get a few days off with the Easter season, pick one to get up early and watch the sunrise, or if you already wake before sunrise, set aside time in your morning to just watch it. It doesn't have to be long, but I would say 3 minutes is the absolutely MINIMUM and that 20 minutes is the ideal.

Pleasant Pastimes - Get a beta fish!

Seriously, this is one of the easiest and most relaxing things you can do. It takes a little prep and some maintenance, but it will bring joy to your life and conversations you never could have imagined 😊 Beta fish are the easiest fish to take care of because they don't need a tank, they breathe off the surface of the water so they are perfectly happy in a bowl. Here are the 3 easy steps to be successful in this pastime.



- 1) Pick a bowl. Get creative with this. I just go to Goodwill and look through the dishware aisle for something about a gallon size. It can be a vase, a bowl, a glass pat, whatever catches your eye and fits in your budget. My advice is don't settle for boring, make a few trips if you need to to find the perfect signature piece.
- 2) Set up your bowl. Clean it with a tiny bit of vinegar and lots of hot water. **DO NOT USE SOAP!** Then fill it with water. (I recommend you buy some water conditioner from a pet store or Walmart and add a bit to your water.) get some glass bead from a dollar store and add those to the bottom (rinse them before you put them in). You can buy a cute décor for in the bowl if you want, like I have a little pirate ship in mine.
- 3) Buy your fish and their food. This is the fun and hardest part. Go to a local pet store and look at their male beta fish (they are usually between \$4 - \$13) and pick the one you think is prettiest or who matches your glass beads the best. Buy a container of food (I get the flakes not the pellets). Take your new friend home, let them sit in their container for 3 hours before adding them to your bowl. Enjoy your new friend!

P.S. To clean their bowls, take any bowl (can be the one it came in) and fill it with water, let it sit for 24 hours, then scoop your fish into that bowl and wash the main bowl, refill and let it sit 24 hours before adding your fish back in.

Immortal Poets Society

This poem is a good reminder that you never know what someone else is going through and that often frustrations with others would be lessened if we just knew them a little better and didn't jump to so many conclusions about one another.

If I Knew You

by Nixon Waterman

If I knew you and you knew me,
If both of us could clearly see,
And with an inner sight divine,
The meaning of your heart and mine,

I'm sure that we would differ less,
And clasp our hands in friendliness;
Our thoughts would pleasantly agree,
If I knew you and you knew me.



*Be kind. For everyone you meet
is fighting a battle
you know nothing about.*



Just for Laughs

So, a few months back, just as I was finishing the last issue of this newsletter, I had quite a day to remember. It was a Friday after a long and sleep-deprived week. I had made plans months before to go roller skating with a good friend of mine that evening and I had been counting down the days. Henry was going to watch Hal and I was going to get some relaxing fun time before a packed weekend. I woke up and headed to school. I am in charge of the yearbook and we had been running into conflicts continuously for scheduling class photos and I was determined to get these DONE!

I was hoping to make the 7:15 Mass before our scheduled 8:30 photos when traffic hit. It usually takes 7 minutes to get there, it took me 42. That's okay, I am still on time for the photo, a little early even to make sure it is all set. I check in at the office to discover some confusion. "Father is expecting them at 1:30 this afternoon" Ummm... That was the original time planned and you told me 3 days ago he couldn't do that time and needed it first thing this morning.... "Oh, right, he will be here soon." Waiting, waiting, waiting. "Oh, Father is at the

airport and will not be back until later today, the picture should have been scheduled for later in the day. Come back around 11:00am” Sorry, that is not going to work... “We can take it for you then.” Okay.

I left the camera with clear instructions on where to take it, the set up we needed and that I would retrieve the camera that afternoon when I came in for yearbook class. I headed home. 2 hours and some odd minutes later and I had nothing to show, but hey, the pictures would be ready for me this afternoon. I do my household chores and take care of Hal who is fussy and head back to school at 1:30 for yearbook class only to find..... it was determined that the camera I use was too poor quality so another one was used. (A kind thought but there are no SD card readers in the office or on the yearbook computers for us to retrieve the images and once I did they needed to be resized before they could be utilized.) And, they decided the format I chose and place I determined were not good so they chose their own and only did one of the two class pictures I had needed. UGH! I was frustrated. This was supposed to be easy and became way more work than it needed to be! I calmed down and looked forward to skating at 5pm.

I went to start class and found out that we had to use a different classroom as the one we usually use was being used for a party. The alternate classroom has a total of one outlet and there were no extension cords or power strips to be found. Well... we have 6 computers that are usually plugged in and used and now we were done to 2 and I have 8 students in the class.... Okay, I guess we aren't getting much done on the yearbook this week!

Class was over, I headed home, ranted a little to Henry, and got things ready for the evening. Realized I had left my purse at the school! So, I headed back through rush hour traffic and an hour later returned with my purse. By now it was time to rush out the door for skating and boy was I ready! I check my phone as I am hopping in the car and... message from my friend... “Just checked the skating rink hours and it says closed from 5 – 8pm.” WHAT??? What skating rink closes on a Friday from 5 – 8pm??? And that was the EXACT time we had planned to be there as we both had early morning commitments. UGH! We decided to reschedule skating for another day and I went back inside. My one thing I had been looking forward to and that had been getting me through a rough day and it was gone, just like that. I was not taking it well. I am not usually like this and obviously God was trying throughout the day to send me little reminders to be patient and not let silly little things disturb my peace but I was just not learning. I cried. Henry encouraged me to reach out to other friends and still take the night off. I reached out to a few but they were busy. I decided a movie sounded good, in theatres.

Antman was the only thing that looked somewhat interesting but the closest theatre was booked for the time I wanted so I looked on Google for showtimes at other theatres. I found one at 6:15. Perfect time. I can unwind a little then head over, grab some comfort food, and enjoy a light-hearted film. I was a little worried that I was going to end up in a car crash or something with the luck I was having but I went anyhow. Arrived safe and sound, went in, scanned my E-ticket I had purchased, no problem, grabbed some nachos and a water, found the theatre and settled in. The theatre was almost empty which seemed strange, but oh well, I was there to enjoy myself. A family came in and sat right behind me. They proceeded to talk and kick my seat quite loudly and frequently and I was trying hard to just focus on the screen and ignore the overstimulation. If the movie started and they were still being loud and boisterous, I would just move to another location. I had found inner peace and was ready for a good ending to the day. 40 minutes of commercials later and the movie began..... it was in SPANISH! I almost cried! I stayed about 10 minutes into it and decided it just wasn't worth it. I slipped out and headed home.

Henry was surprised to see me back so soon and I explained my dilemma. It was printed in small letters on the e-ticket that this showing was in Spanish and I had simply not thought to check that it was in English, because who expects anything different?? The showtime had been listed with all the other ones and not in a separate category or anything....Yeah.... It was a day full of frustrations and sadly, I missed EVERY opportunity to accept the change in plans and go peacefully about my day, instead, I let the frustration build and it got me nowhere. A week later I could look back and laugh at it, but at the time it just felt unfair. Like, for real, how could every plan in the day NOT going as planned. None of them were big things and though we are still trying to get that last class photo scheduled and I haven't gotten to go roller skating yet, these are all things that don't really matter. Looking back, I know I missed those opportunities to 'offer it up' but I can still change my attitude now about that day. I was frustrated and now, I just laugh about it.

Girls, You're Important

Sewing, like cooking, is part of a woman's work. While many men do much of the tailoring in our day, a vast amount of even commercial sewing is done by women. Certainly the kind of sewing done in the home is definitely a woman's work.

Happy the girl who can truthfully say, "I can sew." She has entered upon one of the happy hobbies of a girl's life. Sewing, like many other skills, is learned by doing. Not every girl has the knack or can acquire the artistry necessary to create clothing that will surpass the garments which can be bought in the better shops; but many a girl can gain such skill. It has been done; it is being done. And many are complimented by their friends for having done it.

A girl who finds it difficult to keep herself supplied with suitable dresses and other clothing ought to convince herself that she can do much to remedy her sad plight by learning a thing or two about the feminine art of sewing.

It will mean a real saving in your allowance to be able to make some of your own clothes. You may also learn that sewing can be fun. Many girls have learned to enjoy sewing. It is high-type recreation, which will profitably occupy many hours that might otherwise be wasted. Later on in married life the girl who has developed as interest in sewing will many a pleasant afternoon at her sewing machine. A woman never seems more a woman than when she is engaged in a particularly womanly task or pleasure, such as cooking or sewing.



It is wrong to look upon these womanly tasks as mere work. They are useful, and profitable, but at the same time they can be a source of great pleasure. A busy girl will likely be a happy and a good one. The growing girl who keeps her mind and hands busy with something as wholesome as sewing, whether it is merely for fun, or partly by necessity, will have a great aid towards living a good, virtuous life. To be always busy has for centuries been the accepted rule for anyone who wants to keep good. Sewing is an excellent way to keep from being idle.

A busy girl will likely be a happy and a good one.

But I thought you said that we need to slow down and are often too busy? Yes, we can fill our days with running here, there and everywhere, but this is connected to our inability to fill our time with useful and wholesome projects. It always surprises me to hear my friends say they are bored. How can you be bored??? I have 5,000 things I would love to do! Letters to write, baking to do, deep cleaning and organizing, filing paperwork for our growing family, inventory our growing library, make scrapbooks for each year, practice drawing and painting, learn to knit, sew more napkins to match my placemats, make a dress for myself for Easter, turn Henry's old T-shirts into a quilt, plant an herb garden, redo my fairy garden out front, and the list could go on forever! I am so thankful to have learned these skills that allow me to fill my days with productive tasks and create meaningful things. I realize that many people were not taught as I was, and I am so grateful for what I have.

Growing up, I remember my mom making things such as swimsuits and nightgowns for us, and encouraging me to buy a sewing machine at a garage sale when I was about 9 years old. I loved that sewing machine! I used it so often! It was my faithful companion until I got married when my husband bought me a new and upgraded one. Once a month I set aside a week for sewing projects. That week I use any down time I have to work on whatever sewing is most needed. There are always a few things to be mended, and then the hard part comes, which project to do next. I spent a few months on Hal's baptismal gown and bonnet before he was born, after that I worked on turning some of my old clothes into dress-up pieces for my nieces and nephews. Skirts can become some awesome capes or flowy princess gowns with just a few cuts and new seams. It feels so good to create something new. I highly recommend you try it!

