



Finding God

Our Response to God's Gifts

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Too Big to Keep to Ourselves

When I was young and single, before I had ever given a thought to family prayer, I witnessed another family pray together. The unusual part was that they prayed together in church not as individuals, but as a family. The following story happened 40 years ago.

The first time I saw someone hold hands for the Our Father during Sunday Mass, I was sitting behind my best friend's family.

Her father had cancer, and at this point, the battle with the disease had been going on for a while. He was a private individual, so sharing a struggle like this one was not a natural thing for his personality to embrace. For many months, he had kept the cancer a secret before he revealed it to even his closest relatives.

By the time that this particular Sunday—the hand-holding one—came around, the cancer was not hidable any

longer, so everyone knew. I watched as he gently picked up his wife's hand and then turned and did the same to his daughter. They clasped each other's fingers through the entire prayer. I got misty-eyed watching them pray this way.

Today, it is common for people to hold hands during the Our Father in church. It never bothers me when someone reaches toward me because I think, "Maybe someone has cancer? Perhaps this is the last time we will pray in church together? Maybe this prayer is too big to keep to myself?"

Maybe our family prayer stories are too big to keep to ourselves, as well. ✚

Jane Knuth is the author of *The Prayer List and Other True Stories of How Families Pray* (Loyola Press, 2018).



Moments of Beauty

We live in a time of great polarization. Everyone seems to be choosing sides and is rarely merciful to the opposition, whoever they may be. Amid all the ugliness of accusations and recriminations, beauty seems to be a rare thing indeed.

Place your hands in your lap, palms up, as a gesture of openness. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in this meditation. Briefly review your day and recall moments of beauty. Pick one of those moments and recall as many details as possible. How would you describe it? How did it make you feel? Say a silent prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of beauty. Ask the Lord for the grace to share this beauty with others. ■

For a daily online 3-Minute Retreat, go to www.3MinuteRetreat.com.



RANDOM MOMENTS

Random Bursts of Joy

The great thing about parenting is that every now and then, you get a random burst of joy that leaves you breathless. There's the smile I get from Luke, a toothy coy grin, his coffee-colored eyes roguish and sweet; it pierces my heart like an arrow and more than makes up for having to scrub away the nearly indelible food stains on the baseboards by his high chair. You have to stack up a lot of dirty clothes to equal the electric joy I get at the end of a preschool day when Matthew runs toward me, laughing and calling, "Mommy!" You can't really describe those moments, and you can't quantify them either.

If there were a way to parent without the sacrifice, I'd be all for it. But the universe doesn't work that way. I've died to many aspects of my former self, and I continue to do so.

But there is a new me that is coming out of all of this death. It's the me who can be rendered speechless with joy by the touch of a small hand, still warm from the blankets, that instinctively reaches for mine. ■



Excerpt from *Random MOMents of Grace: Experiencing God in the Adventures of Motherhood* by **Ginny Kubitz Moyer** (Loyola Press, 2013).

LIVING OUR FAITH | A Well-Formed Conscience

Parents have a responsibility to help their children make moral choices—that is, to judge whether their actions are good or bad. In determining whether a choice is moral, we must consider the object chosen (What am I choosing to do?), the intention (Why am I making this choice?), and the circumstances (When, where, and how am I doing what I choose to do?).

Our conscience helps us determine if we are making choices for the right reasons, and it helps us evaluate the circumstances surrounding our actions. Forming one's conscience is a lifelong task. We can make sure that our conscience is properly formed by reading Scripture, learning what the Church teaches, studying the lives of the saints, and living the Ten Commandments.



Of course, we have free will. We might choose to do wrong even though we know the difference between right and wrong. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we examine our conscience to

identify those times when we chose to do wrong. We take responsibility for our actions, express sorrow, and experience the grace of God's forgiveness. That grace then empowers us to make better choices in the future.

Family Activity. As a family, decide on a few house rules that will help your family, such as don't go to bed angry. Display them on the refrigerator.

Faith on the Go. Ask one another: *Do you ever find it difficult to make a good choice? Why or why not?*

Family Prayer. *Heavenly Father, help us know right from wrong. Give us strength to act as we should and stay close to you. ■*

For more on living the faith with your family, visit www.findinggod.com/family.



Making Human Love Divine

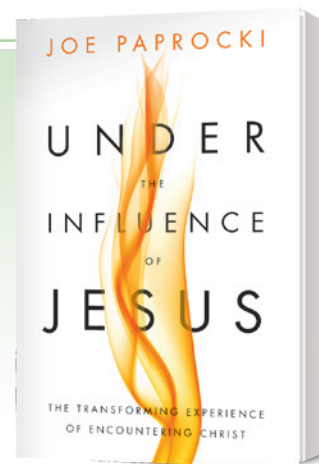
"When God's love takes possession of a heart, it transforms it, it makes human love divine, so to speak."

—SAINT TERESA DE LOS ANDES (1900–1920)

Living the Gospel

In *Under the Influence of Jesus*, best-selling author Joe Paprocki explains complex spiritual concepts with engaging discussion so that "everyday" Catholics can integrate and articulate their faith and live the Gospel in a way that is simple, compelling, contemporary, liberating, and life-changing. ■

Under the Influence of Jesus by Joe Paprocki (Loyola Press, 2014)



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For activities, quick tips, and other resources to encourage faith-filled family living, visit <http://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/family>.

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MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

Quat Trinh and her daughter, Thuan, live in Vietnam. Thuan has cerebral palsy and can't walk or move easily. When Thuan was young, her mother was frustrated and cried often. Quat wanted her daughter to learn, but Thuan wasn't strong enough to go to school. And schools in Vietnam often lack resources to serve students with disabilities.



Quat learned how to exercise Thuan's muscles and how to help her eat on her own. She wrote the alphabet on the wall near Thuan's bed so she could learn it. Quat also received help from a tutor who worked closely with Thuan. In the beginning, Thuan could not even hold a pen. With time, she was able to write many things, including math problems and even poems! Thuan's tutor was amazed at how much she accomplished.

Still, Quat and Thuan faced daily challenges because they didn't have much support. Quat helped organize a local parents association where parents shared advice about how to care for children with disabilities, celebrate their children's accomplishments, and comfort each other through difficult times. Quat is proud of her daughter—who she brags is very smart—and is grateful for all the progress Thuan has made.

Family Activity

As a family, discuss some or all of the following questions:

- **How did Quat's actions respect her daughter's dignity?** Every life is sacred and all people are worthy of respect, no matter who they are or where they live.
- **How did Thuan's disability limit her access to things we take for granted?** We are invited to live as Jesus did by treating other people with dignity in our daily lives.

- **How do the members of your family treat one another, your friends, and members of your community?** We are called to care for all human life.



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Family Prayer

Creator of all people,

We pray that we always remember that everyone is wonderfully made in your image.

Help us always treat others in a way that honors their dignity.

Amen.

Activity and prayer are adapted from "[Life and Dignity of the Human Person Lesson Plan: Vietnam](#)" by **Catholic Relief Services**. For more information on how you can help families who live in poverty around the world thrive, please visit www.crs.org.



I find myself constantly battling my kids over what they wear in public. Is modesty a thing of the past?



a: *Modesty is not primarily about fashion: it is about self-respect, self-esteem, and intimacy.* It begins with an understanding of beauty as an aspect of God, in whose image we are made. Modesty is not about hiding anything bad; it celebrates that which is good and beautiful. This is accomplished most effectively by veiling—not hiding—that which is beautiful. The goal

of fashion should be to draw people's eyes to you as a whole being so that people are invited to appreciate you for the person you are.

Modesty, unlike prudishness, seeks to guard that which is intimate and beautiful, "refusing to unveil what should remain hidden." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2521) When we teach our children to dress modestly, we teach them self-esteem and self-respect and help them mature with a solid sense of being in charge of their bodies. The best way to accomplish this is to accompany children in selecting and purchasing an appropriate wardrobe instead of facing daily battles over what not to wear. ■

Joe Paprocki is national consultant for faith formation for Loyola Press.

5
THINGS

Five Things I Learned From . . .

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

Cycling

I was an avid bike rider as a child. This summer, I have resurrected this pastime with evening bike rides.



1. Listen for surprises.

The sound of cicadas on a summer evening reminds me to open my ears to discern where God is calling me.

I remember that God loves us in all seasons, even uncomfortable ones.

2. Wave to those you pass by.

A friendly wave to a stranger almost always produces a smile, reminding me that God calls me to extend his hospitality in the world.

4. Take time to meander.

Riding without a destination keeps me focused on the simple joys God provides.

3. Feel the heat.

As I leave my air-conditioned comfort to go on a bike ride,

5. Work hard, rest,

and enjoy. Just as every uphill climb is followed by a joyful downhill glide, God will carry on the good work within me even as I need rest from my striving. ■

Kimberly Penrod Pelletier is a spiritual director and mother of three. She drinks a lot of kombucha to fuel her bike rides.

SCRIPTURE IN THE FAMILY

Love and Devotion

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

—1 JOHN 4:7–8

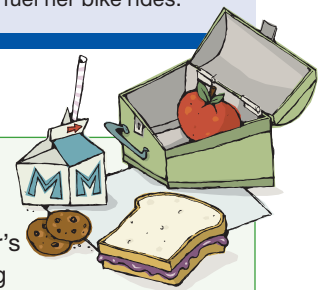
The Disney/Pixar animated film *Up* opens with a series of scenes capturing a relationship through the years—from a first early meeting through marriage and old age—and it is one of

the best illustrations of how love grows through simple acts and gestures given and received over time.



Piety, sometimes known as devotion, grows slowly and is nurtured by those small daily deeds that express our love—whether to God or to others—in the ordinary course of our days,

such as putting an encouraging note in a family member's lunch box, finishing a chore for a family member who's been having a tough day, or spending a quiet moment in grateful prayer. Such devotion grows naturally when we have our heart set on God, our families, our neighbors and coworkers, and even strangers that we meet. ■



Tom McGrath is the director of mission and identity for Loyola Press and author of *Raising Faith-Filled Kids* (Loyola Press, 2000).