



# Tender Tidings

Quarterly Magazine for *The Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner*

SPRING  
2013



FEATURED:  
Dr. Popcak on  
Shame v. Guilt

## Is Self-Care Selfish?

Moms Need Play, Too

*Marriage As the Best  
Home Project*

Nourish Mom, Nourish the  
Family

*A Teen Speaks on Vanity*

The  
Self-Care  
Issue

SPRING 2013

# Tender Tidings

Quarterly Magazine for *The Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner*



## This Issue:

- |           |   |           |   |
|-----------|---|-----------|---|
| <b>03</b> | <b>Editor's Greeting</b>  | <b>25</b> | <b>Marriage Matters:</b><br><i>One, Big, Wonderful Project</i>          |
| <b>04</b> | <b>CAPC Mission &amp; Parenting Model</b>   | <b>29</b> | <b>Family of Faith:</b><br><i>The Worthy Vessel Defined by His Love</i> |
| <b>08</b> | <b>Live Well:</b><br><i>Self-Care (so we can better care for others)</i><br><br><i>Healthy Guilt?</i> | <b>36</b> | <b>Nourish:</b><br><i>Nourish the Mother, Nourish the Family</i>        |
| <b>18</b> | <b>Play:</b><br><i>Resting in God</i>   |           |   |

# Tender Tidings

Summer 2013

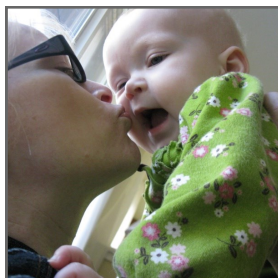
*The DADS Issue*

COMING early June!





## Spring Greetings from *Kim*

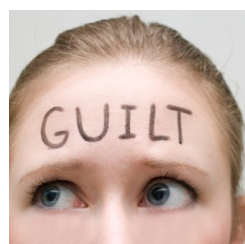
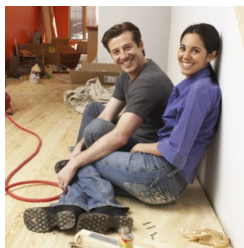


*Tender Tidings* is getting a bit of a fresh start with this spring issue: we're changing the description of *Tender Tidings* from a "newsletter" to a "magazine." What we do is meant to be more inspiring and encouraging than newsy, so this seems appropriate. In this issue our focus is on self-care. By caring for our bodies, minds, and spirits, we are giving God a greater opportunity to use us for His purposes, including in our parenting!

We've got a ton packed into this beautiful issue of *Tender Tidings*. Dr. Greg Popcak gives us the lowdown on the difference between healthy guilt and toxic shame in his article "Healthy Guilt?". Emma Piazza, teenage daughter of CAPC writer Angela Piazza, also returns in this issue with her very measured view of vanity & beauty. Charisse Tierney (about to deliver her baby any day as we go to press!) gives us insight into how her love of music has become play again for her. In the "Marriage Matters" column, Angela gets us thinking about how ordinary married life can be part of our experience of the Divine. Marcia Mattern offers us a fun article on nourishing ourselves during and after pregnancy in the "Nourish" section. In the "Live Well" section, I try to explain why self-care isn't selfish. Lisa Stack tackles how to deal with the competing needs of family members in the "Family of Faith" column. We hope you'll find something in these pages to make self-care a little more easy and your life with your family a lot more joyful.

Pray for our families, as we do for yours, and don't forget to visit us at [www.catholicap.com](http://www.catholicap.com)!

*Kim Cameron-Smith*





# CONTRIBUTORS



## Kim Cameron-Smith

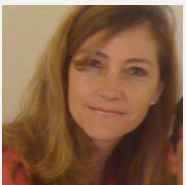
Kim lives in Northern California where she homeschools her 4 children. She and her husband Philip embrace the principles of attachment-based parenting as they seek to live a family-centered lifestyle. Kim believes that Catholic theology perfects what is already just and beautiful in secular insights about how children thrive.

Kim is a licensed attorney and a member of the California State Bar. She holds a B.A. in English from Wellesley College, an M.Phil. in Medieval Literature from Oxford University, a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard University, and a J.D. from U.C. Berkeley. Kim is a catechist in her parish and a leader of her local *Little Flowers Girls Club*. She is a regular contributor on the topic of “intentional Catholic parenting” on Greg & Lisa Popcak’s radio program *More2Life*.



## Marcia Mattern

Marcia and her husband Steve live in Central Illinois where they homeschool their six children. They first met attachment parenting when teaching and promoting NFP for Couple to Couple League in 1997. Marcia is a Registered Dietitian, a Doula, and Catechist for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. She embraced the Catholic Faith in 1997 after a childhood of Protestantism.



## Angela Piazza

Angela resides in Northern California with her husband Danielo and their eight children. The principles of attachment parenting aptly describe their approach to raising a large, dynamic, Catholic family. They continue to learn about love and joyful service right alongside their children. Angela’s interests include distance running, music and theatre arts, reading, homeschooling, and helping her family grow in virtue. She serves on the Board of Directors of San Jose Youth Shakespeare, a non-profit organization which produces full-length Shakespearean plays in original language.

Before focusing full-time on raising her children, Angela provided rehabilitative therapy in both pediatric and adult clinical settings. She holds a B.S. degree in therapeutic recreation, with graduate studies in speech and language pathology.



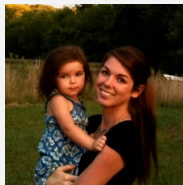
## Emma Piazza

Emma is 16 years old and the oldest in a family of 8 children. A homeschooled junior, she loves literature, theatre, and music. Her mother is Angela Piazza, regular contributor to CAPC.



## Dr. Gregory Popcak

Dr. Gregory Popcak is the author of many books including, *Parenting with Grace*. He directs the Pastoral Solutions Institute which conducts Catholic marriage, family, and personal counseling by telephone. With his wife Lisa he hosts the popular radio program *More2Life*, produced by Ave Maria radio.



## Lisa Stack

Lisa lives in New York with her husband, daughter, and son. Lisa practices Catholic attachment parenting while living a natural lifestyle. She also answers Pope Benedict XVI's call to stewardship and human ecology by planting seeds of both faith and harvest for her children on their 180 year-old farm. Lisa graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in theology. She is currently developing a method of mothering in Mary's image.



## Charisse Tierney

Charisse Tierney lives in Kansas with her husband and four children. She's expecting her fifth child in March 2013. She has lived the attachment parenting lifestyle throughout her eight years of mothering. Charisse and her husband, Rob, teach Natural Family Planning for the Couple to Couple League. They also teach Theology of the Body for Teens to high school and middle school students through their parish in Kansas. Charisse holds a Bachelor of Music Performance degree in clarinet from Wichita State University and a Master of Music Performance degree in clarinet from the New England Conservatory of Music. A professionally trained clarinetist and pianist, Charisse has also always held a deep love for writing and her Catholic faith.

## Tender Tidings

**Concept, design, layout:** Kim Cameron-Smith

**Advertising:** Contact Kim Cameron-Smith at [kim@catholicap.com](mailto:kim@catholicap.com).

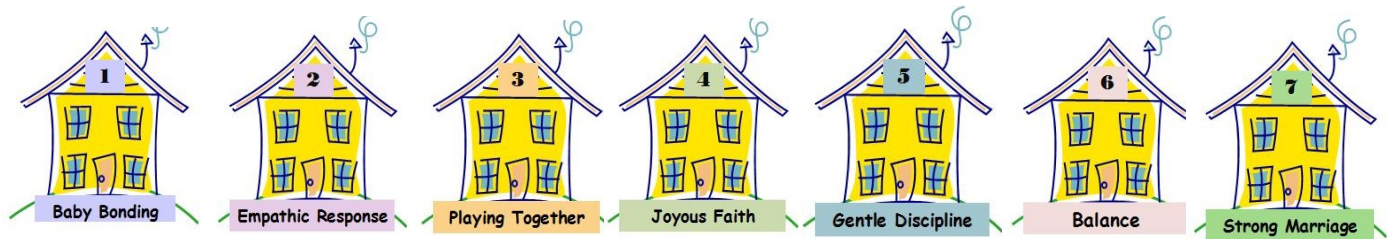
**Author submissions:** We are delighted to receive proposals for articles and short sidebar pieces. Drop a line with your idea to Kim Cameron-Smith at [kim@catholicap.com](mailto:kim@catholicap.com).

## CAPC's Mission & Vision

**CATHOLIC ATTACHMENT PARENTING CORNER** supports Catholic parents interested in attachment-based parenting by providing education, resources, and advocacy. Our attachment parenting model is neither child-centered nor parent-centered; it is *family-centered*.

- We believe Catholic theology perfects what is beautiful and just in secular insights about attachment parenting. In the daily life of the family, all family members learn to respond to the Church's call to self-donative, empathic love — including children as they grow and mature.
- When parents treat their children with respect and compassion, children learn to respond similarly to the needs of others. These children grow into adults who recognize suffering and feel compelled to respond, who are tender and merciful to those who are weaker than themselves, who are able to connect on a profound level with their loved ones, and who mirror in every facet of their lives the self-gift of Christ, the God-Man

## CAPC's 7 Building Blocks of a Joyful Catholic Home™



### 1. BABY BONDING

- ♥ Your infant's capacity for attachment is established early. She has an intense need for physical closeness, predictable comforting, and a sense of safety. Meeting these needs has a direct impact on her early brain development and helps her develop a sense of trust in later babyhood and toddlerhood.
- ♥ Explore different practices that encourage and strengthen the parent-child bond, such as breastfeeding on demand, staying physically close to baby at night by co-sleeping and during the day by wearing baby in a sling or other baby carrier.
- ♥ Respond to baby's cues consistently & tenderly (without resentment or anger).

### 2. EMPATHY

- ♥ Get to know each child as a unique human being.
- ♥ Understand what's behind your child's eyes and in her heart at each developmental stage.
- Recognize any of your old wounds so that you can parent your child appropriately and with awareness, and not from a place of fear or anger unrelated to your child.

### 3. PLAYING TOGETHER

- ♥ Recognize that play is one of the most important ways children connect to us, work through their fears and frustrations, and build their self-confidence.
- ♥ Enter a child's play world on their terms. Be willing to be silly and goofy on occasion!

### 4. RADIANT FAITH

- ♥ Every family can enjoy a shared faith life that's alive and downright fun! Such faith is a tremendous witness to other families, Catholic and non-Catholic alike.
- ♥ Allow your home to reflect the abundant joy and hope of our Catholic Faith. Explore and celebrate Feast Days and Saints Days with crafts, special parties and teas, and sharing books together. Develop a family prayer plan and pray together regularly.
- ♥ Children, especially young ones, will absorb our attitudes about attending Mass and growing in the Faith. If we're excited and enthusiastic, it'll be contagious! The heart of our Faith is love and hope, and the opportunity for transformation and renewal not a list of obligations we need to fulfill to be "good".

### 5. GENTLE DISCIPLINE

- ♥ The *heart* of gentle discipline is the connection between parent and child. Without a secure connection, discipline will be a frustrating power struggle.
- ♥ The *goal* of gentle discipline is for the child to build a conscience and self-control, not to break the child's will or to coerce obedience through threats. In an empathic, nurturing home a child is never humiliated and parents don't use their superior size and authority to intimidate children into compliance.
- ♥ Growing up can be confusing and frustrating. By learning what to expect at each developmental stage, you can empathize with your child better. We can't expect a 3 year-old to have the self-control of 6 year-old. Each developmental age comes with its struggles and joys. If we educate ourselves about child development we can understand our child's feelings and needs better, so the balance tips towards joy!

### 6. BALANCE

- ♥ Balance work, play, and prayer in your home. Do all these things as a family. Each family member contributes to the upkeep of the home as is appropriate for their developmental age. Even very young children enjoy being included in the routine with small jobs, like helping unload the dishwasher, mopping, or dusting.
- ♥ Every parent needs a little time alone to refuel. How much time you can spend alone and how frequently depends on various factors in your home, including the availability of your spouse or a babysitter and how young your children are, but remember that you will be parenting for many years. Don't run out of gas early on!
- ♥ Take time to exercise and eat well. This can involve the kids! Children love to ride their bikes with parents who might be running or biking. Make a hiking plan and explore different hiking trails in your region. Children love to help with food preparations, like making salads and kneading bread dough.

### 7. A STRONG MARRIAGE

- ♥ If you treat your child with respect and affection, but fail to model such respect and affection with your spouse, your child may still enter adulthood with a relationship handicap. Your marriage models for your children how to treat others in close, intimate relationships. Speak about and to your spouse with deep regard and love; perform little acts of kindness to make his or her life easier. Be willing to *serve* even in small ways.
- ♥ You and your spouse are called to help one another on your paths to heaven. See your spouse the way Christ does, as a precious and priceless soul on a journey to a Divine Destination.



Live Well



How do *you* find self-renewal?





# Self-Care

(so we can better care for others)

by Kim Cameron-Smith

My children and I sometimes take a lazy morning drive down a country road up in the hills outside our town. It's called Morgan Territory Road. We have friends that live up there, but occasionally we drive past their property and wander up higher into the hills to enjoy the quiet and beauty. (Okay, I go to enjoy the quiet and beauty; the kids go to collect cool stuff for our nature table.)

The road leads up and over the hills and down into a nature reserve. The views can be spectacular, with vast breathtaking drops opening up to rolling grasslands, rock outcrops, and old oak trees. However, the road snakes and twists and dips, and there's no guard rail on either side of the road. If you're not careful going around a turn, I imagine you could very well find yourself part of the scenery down below the road. It would be easy to underestimate the tightness of a turn or overlook an upcoming blind curve and oncoming traffic, especially when you're a little distracted by excited children or even your own thoughts. We enjoy these drives, but I'm always on high alert, knowing I have to keep a complete picture of my surroundings to have good judgment while I'm driving out there.

Gentle Catholic parents can be a little like a driver on Morgan Territory Road. We have taken the road less traveled, a road that's breathtaking and a little unpredictable.. It's pretty fantastic, we wouldn't

miss it for anything, but there are some challenges, too. To really enjoy our journey on this road, we need to be aware of our surroundings – especially our interior landscape. We need to attend to “where we're at” spiritually, physically and emotionally so that we don't head over the side of a cliff.

Your willingness to give your children whatever they need to feel loved and treasured, to arrange

your life so that your children build a sense of trust and rightness about the world, is a sign of your heroic generosity. But I hope that gentle Catholic parents can cultivate wisdom about what they need to thrive in their parenting vocation and how to best meet those needs amidst the demands on their time, bodies, and minds. God doesn't mean for us to suffer unnecessarily.

Given we will be parenting one or more children for many, many

years, it's important that we honor the limits of our human bodies and use prudence to know when we need help, need to step back for a few minutes (or hours) to refuel. While we're all called to self-donative love, we are also called to protect the gift God has given in us in our bodies and minds.

## *Self-Care Isn't Selfish*

Self-care isn't selfishness. It's a virtue. Parents have a unique responsibility to care for themselves so that they're better equipped to care for the children and others placed in their care. Through prudent self-

“Parents have a unique responsibility to care for themselves so that they're better equipped to care for the children and others placed in their care.”



care we can build resilience and strength to deal with the inevitable demands and struggles of our calling. Of course, as with any virtue, there are extremes on both sides of the virtue of self-care. Self-centeredness is one extreme. If we always put our own needs first, especially to the detriment of those we are called to care for, it's sinful. Our culture celebrates self-centeredness, even self-centered parenting. It honors somebody for putting his career first, his physical fitness first, or his girlfriend first, but they think it's weird when he chooses to put his children first. Very sad.

At the other extreme, though, is self-neglect. I'm afraid some of us more gentle, attachment-minded parents might slip over into the self-neglect end of the spectrum too often. Let me tell you, I'm guilty of this more than just occasionally. I'm currently in a "correct the course" mode, trying to bring more balance into my own life. I can become so caught up in home-schooling, reading to children, playing with children, cooking nourishing meals, creating a welcoming place for my family to gather, writing for CAPC, and doing other volunteer work that I become com-

pletely exhausted. (It made me tired just typing all that!) I develop neck strains, insomnia, fatigue, and anxiety. This isn't just bad for me, it's bad for my family.

Parenting requires a great deal of physical energy. It challenges us to handle stressful situations that can leave us strained emotionally and mentally. We need to heal from these demands so that we can give our children what they need. Of course if it were the right thing to do, we would parent ourselves straight to the funny farm, but it's *not* the right thing to do. God wants us to live vibrant, joyful lives with our children. He actually wants to reach our hearts through our parenting. We can only be open to that work if we're healthy and attentive enough to notice it.

### ***Caring for Ourselves Spiritually***

Self-care involves caring for ourselves *spiritually, emotionally, and physically*. Most of us have no problem recognizing that we need to nourish ourselves spiritually, but we feel it's difficult to fit in time for spiritual growth.

First off, recognize and celebrate the holiness of your vocation. Even the ordinary tasks of family life are holy because

**“God wants us to live vibrant, joyful lives with our children. He actually wants to reach our hearts through our parenting.”**

you are participating in the creative work of God. I've also found that in nurturing my children's faith through our seasonal celebrations, attending Mass, and creating special family faith traditions, my own faith has deepened profoundly. It's like I'm waking up to God's presence right along with my kids.

Secondly, you need to talk to God. He wants to hear from you. Really. I know it's hard sometimes. Just do a little to begin, especially if you have tiny children. When I have newborns, I have to keep my prayer life very simple or it seems to fade. I've enjoyed having the *Magnificat*, a subscription prayer book that has daily prayers and short meditations. I think it takes me all of 5 minutes to have this prayer time, but it helps me start my day more aware of God's presence in my mothering. Now that my youngest is three, I'm enjoying *The Better Part* by John Bartunek, a series of meditations on the Gospels.

We can fit in time for personal prayer at ordinary ol' times: when we're doing the dishes and come upon the same Thomas cup we've washed every day for years, while watching our children play together, or when bathing our toddler's soft skin while he sings to himself. When these simple moments meet our awe and gratitude, when we're awake enough to notice them for what they are, praise flows naturally to Our Creator.

### ***Caring for Ourselves Physically and Emotionally***

While we often do what we can to foster our spiritual health, gentle parents are usually more willing to neglect themselves physically and emotionally. Be aware of those moments when you're becoming really drained. If we recognize that we're nearing the limits of our physical strength, we need to honor those signals. If we have very small children, we can nap with them or just sit down while they're playing. Sometimes the laundry and dishes really *can* wait. Trying to stay reasonably physically fit is showing appreciation for the body God has given us. When you have small or many children, it's very hard to find time for fitness routines, but taking daily walks with the children or finding a good exercise DVD can go a long way toward sustaining our physical energy. I've recently started exercising again after taking several

## **Care for Yourself...**





months off and I'm amazed at how much more energetic and alert I am already. Nourishing ourselves with healthful and beautiful foods is an important way of caring for ourselves and it's also a great example to the children!

Emotional health is crucial for parents. We want to respond to our children with love and empathy, but when we become strained emotionally, our commitment to empathic parenting sometimes dissolves. We find ourselves doing things we later regret. Care for yourself emotionally. Ensure you are treated with dignity and respect, just as you treat your children. Sometimes loving your child means that you allow your child to care for you or younger siblings: ask older children to take on a day of cooking, develop a chore routine for your kids, show your kids how to fold their own laundry. This frees some of the demands on you and teaches your children about self-donative love and stewardship.

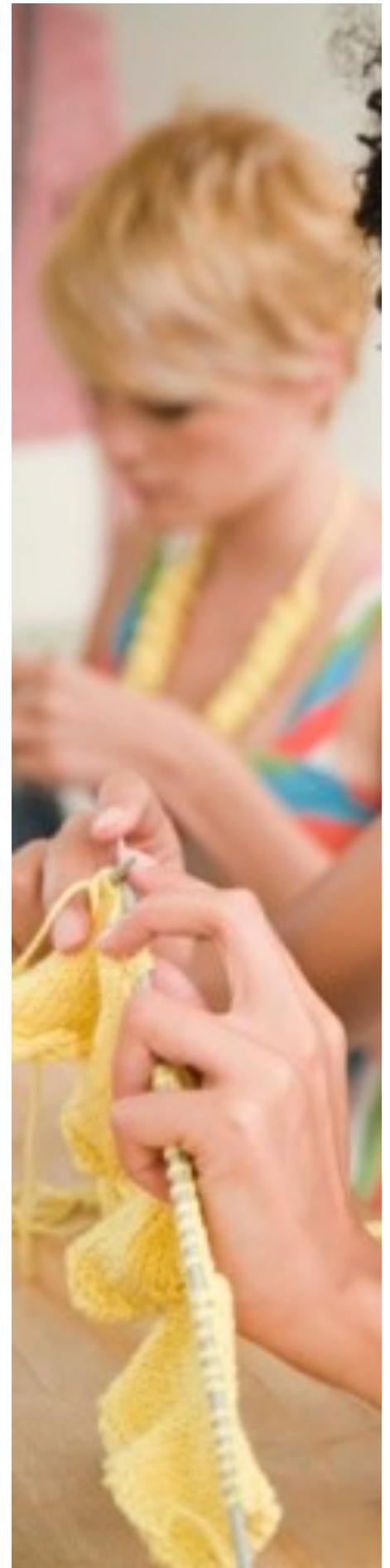


children to take on a day of cooking, develop a chore routine for your kids, show your kids how to fold their own laundry. This frees some of the demands on you and teaches your children about self-donative love and stewardship.

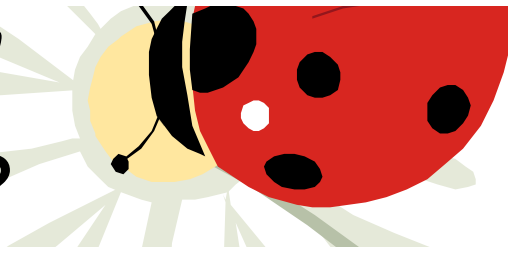
### *Keep It Simple*

Self-care doesn't require oodles of time and money. In fact, building a simple life filled with small blessings is one of the best ways to nurture your whole family and yourself. The little vase of flowers above your sink, the knitting project you're slowly working on, your favorite tea before bedtime, that single exquisite poem read over lunch, the stroll through your neighborhood with your dog and kids: These simple joys build self-care into your life and also create a joyful family atmosphere.

It isn't wrong to consider your own needs and how you can meet them. Yes, sometimes we put off meeting our needs in order to meet a more urgent need of a family member, but at some point there will be an opportunity to bring a little balance in. Take it. This is part of prudent parenting: knowing whose needs must be prioritized and when they will be met. Sometimes on this wild, fascinating parenting road, your welfare is the priority. Enjoy the view!



# Healthy Guilt?



By Dr. Greg Popcak

Many parents worry about causing their children to experience undue guilt. As Catholics we get attacked a lot for being a guilt-mongering people. Most of it is undeserved, but the bad press is enough to make many parents more than a little concerned about the potential for their discipline to be the source of unhealthy guilt in their children.

## *Healthy v. Unhealthy Guilt*

It might be helpful to start by looking at guilt in general. Is guilt ever useful? And if so, what separates healthy guilt from unhealthy guilt (i.e., scrupulosity)? The truth is, there *is* such a thing as healthy guilt, and healthy guilt can serve a positive role in leading a healthy life.

Guilt belongs to the family of reactions (like pain, fear, and anger) that we might call “warning emotions.” That is, these feelings tell us that something is amiss and that corrective actions may need to be taken if we

want to be healthy and happy.

I  
N  
T  
E  
G  
R  
I  
T  
Y

Just as healthy pain allows us to tend to a physical injury, and healthy fear alerts us to a potential threat to our safety, and healthy anger alerts us to a possible injustice, healthy guilt lets us know about threats to our integrity.

Research consistently shows that self-esteem and a positive sense of self-worth is dependent upon “being true to ourselves.” In other words, we can only truly feel good about ourselves if we perceive that we are living up to the values we claim to hold. That is, if we maintain our integrity. Healthy guilt protects our integrity, and by extension, our

identity strength and self-esteem.

### *3 Functions of Healthy Guilt* 🌸

Guilt can be thought of as healthy if it does three things. First, it *alerts* you to potential threats to your integrity (and, by extension, your self-esteem) as discussed above. Second, and even more importantly, guilt is healthy if it motivates you to take some *concrete actions* to address the offense to your integrity (and, by extension, your self-esteem). The function of guilt isn't really to make you feel bad. Its function is to help you do something to fix a problem that poses a threat to your healthy functioning. Third, to be healthy, guilt should *decrease* as you work to resolve the threat to your integrity.

### *Guilt vs. Toxic Shame* 🌸

By contrast guilt becomes unhealthy if it is free-floating and not tied to specific offenses to your integrity. It doesn't motivate you to take any action. Unhealthy guilt is just happy to make you

feel awful about yourself without giving you anything to do about it.



Unhealthy guilt doesn't decrease once you've addressed the perceived offense.

A better label for unhealthy guilt is “scrupulosity.” Interestingly, both psychology and religion view scrupulosity as problematic. For the psychologist, scrupulosity can represent a type of obsessive-compulsive disorder in which moral contamination replaces the more common germophobia associated with OCD. Likewise, for the religious person, scrupulosity is actually (and perhaps ironically) a sin, in that it separates us from the experience of God's love and mercy. By the way, that's the definition of “sin”: It's “a privation of the good” or, to put it another way, sin is settling for less than what God wants to give you.

### *Parenting and Guilt* 🌸

When parents use gentle methods of correction that teach the child what to do instead of punitive methods that simply communicate disapproval, the child develops a healthy sense of guilt; a gentle, internal voice that says to the child, “Hey! You messed up. *But here's what you can do to make it right again.*” That voice is actually a good one to have in our heads, because it allows us to turn failure into a learning experience.

By contrast, when parents use more punitive methods that simply communicate displeasure at the child's actions, the voice in the child's head is completely different. This inner voice sounds more like, “Shame on you! You messed up again! Can't you do anything right?”



## HEALTHY GUILT

- ♦ Alerts you to threats to your integrity
- ♦ Motivates you to take action to protect your integrity
- ♦ Decreases as you work to resolve the threat to your integrity

## TOXIC SHAME

- ♦ Not tied to any specific offense
- ♦ Doesn't motivate you to take action to protect your integrity
- ♦ Doesn't decrease even after addressing the offense



### *"Guilt" Is What You Make It*

So, to sum up, remember that healthy guilt is good because it facilitates integrity, which is an essential component of self-esteem. Unhealthy guilt is actually scrupulosity, which is viewed as a disorder by both clinicians and authentically religious persons. And finally, parenting methods are tools that can be wielded to different effects by the people wielding them. Just like hammers can be used to either build homes or bludgeon people, parenting styles can either affirm and build up, or cause hurt and harm.

The more we are committed to working for our children's good and teaching them the way they should go (instead of yelling at and punishing them for going down the wrong road) the less we have to worry about creating unhealthy guilt in our kids.



**Dr. Greg Popcak** is the author of many books including, *Parenting with Grace*. He directs the Pastoral Solutions Institute which conducts Catholic marriage, family, and personal counseling by telephone. He invites you to contact him at [www.CatholicCounselors.com](http://www.CatholicCounselors.com) or by calling 740-266-6461.



---

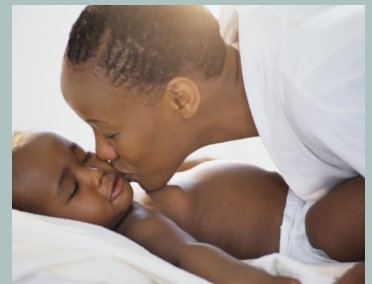
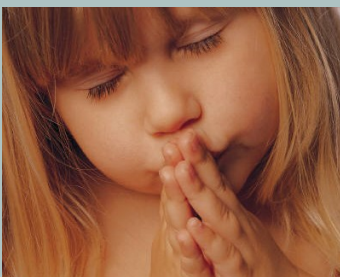
*Be astonished*

by the beauty

*around* you

and *within* you.

---







## Messenger

by Mary Oliver

My work is loving the world.  
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird—  
equal seekers of sweetness.  
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.  
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?  
Am I no longer young, and still half-perfect? Let me  
keep my mind on what matters,  
which is my work,  
which is mostly standing still and learning to be  
astonished.

The phoebe, the delphinium.  
The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.  
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all the ingredients  
are here,  
which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart  
and these body-clothes,  
a mouth with which to give shouts of joy  
to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,  
telling them all, over and over, how it is  
that we live forever.





**PLAY**

---

## Have You Played Today?

---

“Of all animal species, humans are the biggest players of all. We are built to play and built through play. When we play, we are engaged in the purest expression of our humanity, the truest expression of our individuality. Is it any wonder that often the times we feel most alive, those that make up our best memories, are moments of play?”

Stuart Brown, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul.*





# Resting in God

by Charisse Tierney

We walked light heartedly down the sidewalk, Hazel feeling like a grown-up, dressed-up, sophisticated young woman, and I returning to fond memories of my youth. As we looked expectantly up to the sky, hoping the scattered snowflakes would thicken into a winter wonderland, our ages seemed to meet somewhere in the middle, and we felt more like young girlfriends looking forward to a magical afternoon than a mother and daughter.

We were headed to a live performance of The Nutcracker Ballet, and I honestly don't know who was looking forward to the experience more, Hazel or me! As a professionally trained musician, I've always held a deep love for the arts. There's something about the mastery of a beautiful painting, the artistic athleticism of ballet, and the emotion of a well-performed symphony that nurtures my senses and heightens my awareness of God.

I used to think it was my calling in life to perform professionally with a symphony orchestra, but my audition experiences often left me feeling lonely, self-critical, and dissatisfied. The beautiful music that used to be such a pleasure to listen to and perform started to feel more like a prison cell than a playground. The competitive, cold nature of the orchestral audition world left me feeling as if my talent was only worth something if I actually won the audition. The ability to appreciate the truth and beauty of God through the great music that He gave us got lost somewhere between the warm-up room and the audition stage.



How easy it is to get caught up in something that strokes our vanity, promises worldly fame and pleasures, and allows us to shirk the responsibility of enjoying our talents and desires the way God intended. The dream of a large audience jumping to their feet in excitement over one of my musical performances was just so intoxicating, so tantalizing. I loved music for the aesthetically satisfying experience that it could offer, but rather than nourishing my soul in the way God intended, the beautiful music that I loved was turning my heart more toward the fleeting pleasures of this world.

Thankfully, God knows when our souls need saving long before we do, and I listened to His call to enter the vocations of marriage and motherhood. During my first year of marriage, I continued to audition for that "dream" orchestral position, but I always experienced that lonely, displaced feeling when I found myself alone in a hotel room in a strange new city. My desire to win the auditions was replaced by a feeling of indifference, and I even confessed to my husband that I often wasn't sure I wanted to be there. I wanted to be home with my hubby, and thoughts of starting a family were beginning to take root in our hearts.

The decision to follow God's call to conceive our first child clinched it. I always knew I would someday need to make a choice between the musical career I thought I wanted and the way that I felt called to live out the vocations of marriage and motherhood. When the time came to make that choice, it was easy. A weight was lifted off of my shoulders as I embraced the life that God wanted me to live. I started to simply enjoy my music again. I played my instruments for pure pleasure, and my husband and I enjoyed

providing music for our parish Masses. I also discovered great joy in teaching a studio of private piano and clarinet students, something I continued for several years until our growing family filled my heart with a desire to focus completely on serving them and nurturing their spiritual and temporal needs.

So now that I am a busy mom of four (soon to be five), and folding an entire basket of laundry uninterrupted or going to the bathroom all by myself feel like moments of luxury, how do I nurture my soul with those God-given talents and desires that have been a bit neglected for the past eight years?

In the *Theology of the Body*, Blessed John Paul II spends a significant amount of time reflecting on the “Works of the Flesh” and “Fruit of the Spirit.” *Theology of the Body*, 50-54. He writes: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these . . . The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-mastery.” (Gal 5:19-23; TOB 51:5) There are times when we all need nurturing, when we feel off balance, when the world feels too heavy on our shoulders. This is when we need time to turn our focus not to ourselves, but to God. It is by His guidance alone that we can propel ourselves into the bounty of the fruit of the Spirit rather than falling into the temptation of the works of the flesh.

If I am feeling angry with my kids, I try to take a deep breath and think of a way not to simply escape from them but how to transform that anger into a productive virtue like patience that will bring all of us closer to God as we work through a tense situation. Sometimes this means I do need some alone time in the form of a hot bath or a walk outside, but always with the intention of releasing every ounce of anger into the hands of God so He can give me the tools I need to return to my family a better, more loving mother. Falling into the temptation of simply stewing in my anger and making a long mental list as to why *I deserve* a bath by myself

“I always knew I would someday need to make a choice between the musical career I thought I wanted and the way that I felt called to live out the vocations of marriage and motherhood. When the time came to make that choice, it was easy.”





only leads me deeper into the works of the flesh rather than into the joy of the virtues that nurture me as I am actively living out my vocation.

The idea of nurturing ourselves doesn't mean that we throw God out the window for the time being and do whatever strikes our fancy. We are still called to seek Him by obeying His will even in moments of pure fun and rest. After all, if the goal of our earthly lives is to earn a final resting place with our Savior in heaven, shouldn't we prepare ourselves by resting in Him while still here on earth?

G.K. Chesterton wrote, "Catholic doctrine and discipline may be walls; but they are the walls of a playground." How free we find ourselves when we enter the boundary of those walls and realize we then have the means to soar to the heavens!

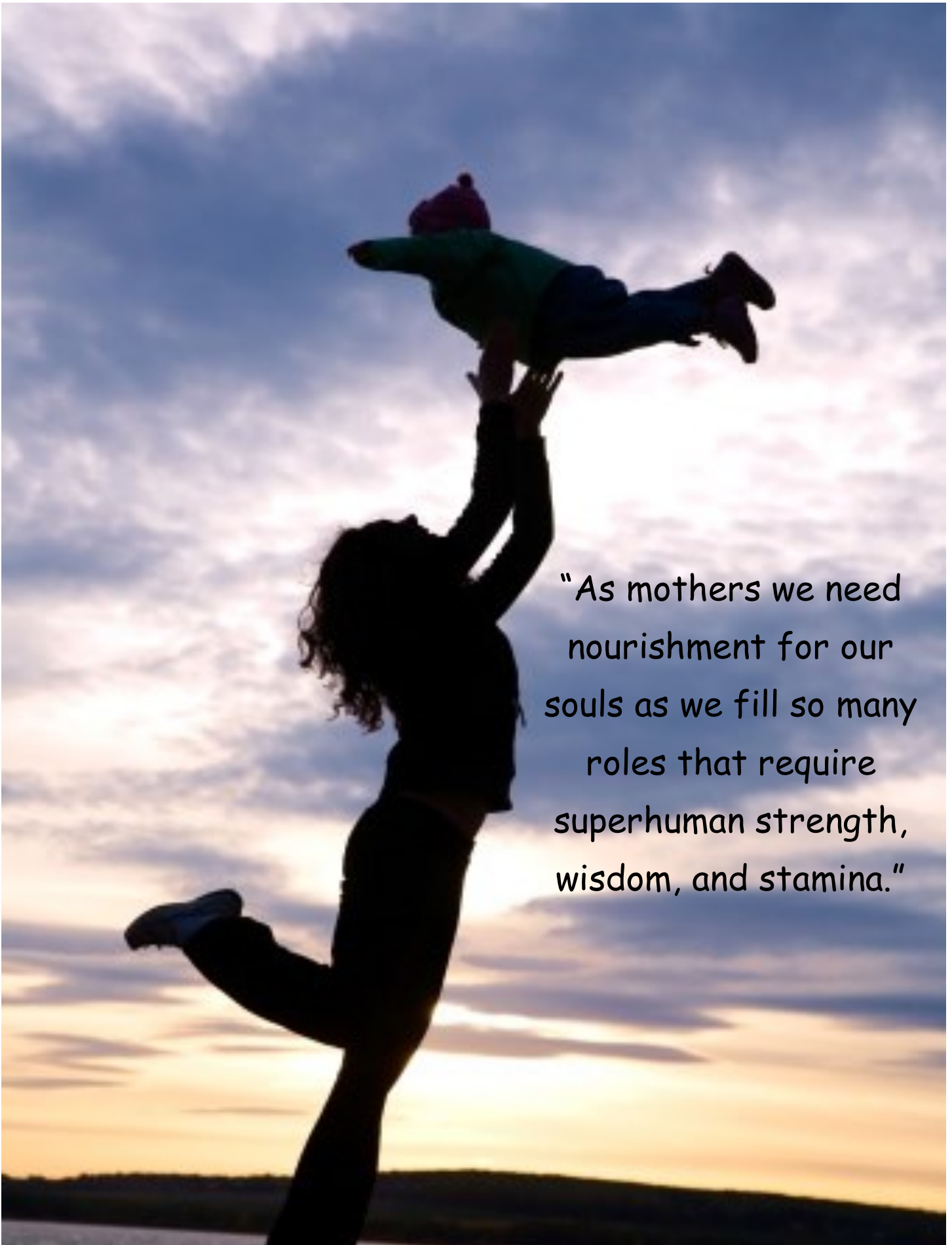
By combining those talents and desires that God gave me to nurture my soul with my vocation of motherhood, I hope to teach my children that they, too, will have great joy in their lives by blurring the line between work and play through the seeking of God's will.

Attending *The Nutcracker* gave Hazel the opportunity to see me relax and enjoy something that has taught me the virtues of self-mastery and patience, as well as an appreciation for the beauty that God has created in this world. She watched me as I browsed in a Catholic bookstore on the way home (another one of my favorite past times), and she saw me return joyfully home to embrace the responsibilities of my vocation again.

As mothers we need nourishment for our souls as we fill so many roles that require superhuman strength, wisdom, and stamina. While we often feel a need to escape for a moment from the noise and chaos of family life, it is when our time alone becomes time with God and our time pursuing our personal interests and delights can be shared with our children and spouse that we will find a new level of joy and peace in the life God has given us to live.

*"If I am feeling angry with my kids, I try to take a deep breath and think of a way not to simply escape from them but how to transform that anger into a productive virtue like patience that will bring all of us closer to God as we work through a tense situation."*





"As mothers we need  
nourishment for our  
souls as we fill so many  
roles that require  
superhuman strength,  
wisdom, and stamina."



**Take rest.**

**A field that has  
rested gives a  
bountiful crop.**

**Voltaire**



## Marriage Matters



### One, Big, Wonderful Project

by Angela Piazza

Soon after our youngest child was born, I began to worry about my husband's health. His work was particularly demanding, and between long hours and fatigue, his fitness routine had greatly suffered. Though my husband continued to be affable, he began experiencing physical symptoms related to stress. I was very concerned, but to a great extent, I felt incapable of helping him. His pressures at the office, lack of sufficient sleep, and





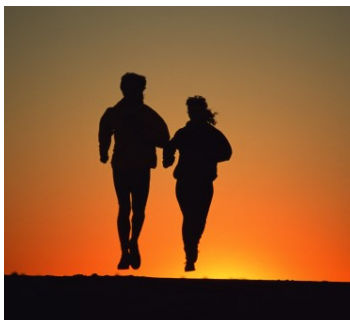
decreased exercise seemed beyond my fixing. All I could offer was a countless supply of encouraging words.

To more fully appreciate the situation, you must realize that for the majority of his life, my husband has been an avid long-distance runner. Running is his passion. However, over the course of our marriage, he sacrificed his miles to care and provide for our family. Instinctively, I knew that if he got back on the trails, he would be happier and healthier. When I asked if he'd like to start running together, with a slight grin and a quizzical look, he said, "Yes." This spontaneous project has kept us running ever since.

Projects are an integral part of our marriage. Even seemingly small projects characterize our life together. Within our first year of marriage, we welcomed the first of our eight smallish, yet noteworthy projects . . . we named her Emma. Everything about parenthood – from the sleepless nights to the utter delights – deepened our bond. We beheld each other in new roles, and established trust on an entirely different level.

Without exception, my husband and I trust each other. Living out that trust doesn't mean that we always agree, but it does mean that we can count on each other's sincerity and charity. I share with my husband the real, unadulterated me. He knows my perfectionistic tendencies, he knows my prideful stubbornness, and he genuinely loves me anyway. Likewise, despite his weaknesses, my love for him is equally profound. I guess you could say, I am his project, and he is mine.

Throughout our marriage, we've experienced highs and lows; times of elation and times of



frustration. On some occasions we're in perfect agreement, whereas on other occasions we feel like we're going crazy trying to figure out where the other person is coming from. But, again, we're talking about projects, and marriage is certainly an extraordinary one; we're supposed to help one another reach Heaven. It's a grace-infused endeavor that necessitates patience, tenderness and humility.

Remember when God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone?" (Gen 2: 18). Well, it's possible that He had been looking over our to-do list. There are holes to patch, walls to paint, floors to refinish, rooms to update, piles to organize, and yards to tend. Our list is practically endless. But, do you know what? Whether the work inspires our creative energy, or is unquestionably tedious, we enjoy the process. We rely on each other for physical and moral support, and I can honestly say that our marriage thrives when tackling any project. Together, we can accomplish anything.

While there is undeniable satisfaction in completing work, it's particularly so when achieving beautiful results. But, as much as we enjoy planning and undertaking creative tasks, most of our projects result from the ordinary wear and tear of family living. I'll be the first to admit that I'm inclined to allow little things, like dings in the walls and leaky faucets, to rob me of peace. Even though I'd like to wish away those defects, or hire someone to fix them for me, they provide perfect opportunities for exercising and imparting virtue. By cheerfully doing menial work, we practice perseverance. By taking the time to address repairs, we demonstrate gratitude. By working together to solve difficult, unexpected problems, we exercise fortitude. The condition of our house improves and simultaneously our souls benefit.

Some other souls benefit as well - our children. If you think they're not watching, think again. As they observe our interactions, their perceptions about love, fidelity, and partnership are naturally formed. How we conduct ourselves influences our children's abilities in forming and maintaining healthy, life-long relationships.



*"You see, projects shape us, and as we practice responsibility, trust, patience, tenderness, humility, confidence, perseverance, gratitude, and fortitude, we increase our ability to love."*



You see, projects shape us, and as we practice responsibility, trust, patience, tenderness, humility, confidence, perseverance, gratitude, and fortitude, we increase our ability to love. Our entire lives are a part of one, big, wonderful project – God’s project. In everything we do, He wants us, our spouses, and our children to grow closer to Him. In marriage, He unites two uniquely gifted individuals to nurture and strengthen one another, making it possible to, “overcome self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of one’s own pleasure, and [open] oneself to the other [in] mutual aid and self-giving” (CCC 1609). We’re here to smooth out our rough spots, mend our flaws, and prepare ourselves for unfathomable, abiding love. And He has blessed us with our spouses to do just that.



**Need marriage support?** Trained counselors sensitive to our Faith are available for phone counseling through *Pastoral Solutions Institute*: [www.exceptionalmarriages.com](http://www.exceptionalmarriages.com) or 740-266-6461.





The background of the page is a photograph of a family sitting outdoors at a picnic table. A woman in a pink shirt is on the right, smiling. A man in a blue shirt is on the left, also smiling. In the center, a young boy in a green shirt is looking towards the camera. The table is covered with a blue cloth and has several plates of food, including bread and oranges. The background is filled with lush green trees under a bright sky.

# The Worthy Vessel

by Lisa Stack

Every soul deserves a worthy vessel. This language is typically reserved for a discussion on Catholic burial, but in fact, a worthy vessel is needed at all stages of life. Our bodies are a living, breathing home to both our soul, and our Lord. This season is the perfect time to reflect on our ability to carry out God's will as we observe Christ's death, burial, and Resurrection. This Lenten season calls for a family reflection on the state of our homes, and how they are functioning in light of their mission to serve God. Are we actively weaving faith into our daily lives? Are we appreciating the wonderful gift of a healthy body, and caring

for it? Are we respecting each other's spirits, and fostering an environment where they can flourish? The respectful treatment of ourselves banishes the sleepy fog that tends to make us less patient, and nourishing food and proper healthcare allow us to feel well enough to love and serve others. Most importantly, a well cared for and peaceful body becomes God's instrument for good works.

Achieving health and wellness is a family effort. Being kind and respectful towards each other, encouraging healthy food choices, exercising together, and creating a peaceful home that welcomes rest is a mission for the whole family. When these many facets of self-care are tended to, you can almost feel your home singing. However, when something is out of balance, the dynamic in the home tends to shift. Not enough healthy meals and we begin to feel drained Little exercise and you're not feeling as strong as you



need to be to care for your family. A few disrupted rest periods, and suddenly everyone is short with each other. When these imbalances happen, the home takes on a role of grasping at a peace that has

been lost, rather than further exploring the family mission of faith.

As parents, you know that finding this balance takes work, all day long. Each member of your family has different needs, and they often must be met at different times! This is sometimes a great burden to carry, when you are also trying to give yourself a few minutes to take a deep breath and reset. It is important to remember that you are not expected to be everything to everyone at all times. This is a family. A family works together, is never perfect, is always full of love!



“Achieving health and wellness is a family effort. Being kind and respectful towards each other, encouraging healthy food choices, exercising together, and creating a peaceful home that welcomes rest is a mission for the whole family..”





The conversation on the importance of maintaining a strong, healthy, and kind body so that we may love and serve others as God wants us to, can begin at any age. Adults and older children can grasp this concept very quickly. Younger children will need the conversation tailored to their age, but as they grow, you may incorporate more information as necessary. In our home, my husband and I have our own unique needs for rest, exercise, nourishment, and activities we enjoy. I know that I can say to him, “I need to take a quick nap (go for a walk, work on this project, etc.) so that I may be the mom that I know that I am.”

It is not always easy for me to ask for help, but I am learning that our home is more peaceful when I do. Our children are still young, but they are involved as well. Our 3 year old has chosen feeding our 8 month old breakfast and a few snacks during the day as her way to help him (and me, too!). We have begun the discussion with her about how we feel after certain periods of rest, meals, and activities. She understands that she has more energy and likes to play more, when she ‘listens to what her body needs’. Our 8 month old, offering his part, never ceases to provide all of us with great laughter.

This Lenten season, ask that each family member take on a task that supports the health, happiness, and faith of another member in your family. A home full of laughter, healthy bodies, and kind words is the perfect vessel for God’s will. By working together to actively satisfy everyone’s self-care needs, you are creating a clean canvas to further your faith in God and love for each other. Remember that this seemingly elusive balance can be found when you abandon the idea of perfection, respond to your family’s unique needs, and work together.





**“A home full of laughter,  
healthy bodies, and kind words  
is the perfect vessel  
for God’s will.”**



## Defined by His Love

by Emma Piazza



When I first read Ecclesiastes, I laughed. “Vanity, vanity, all is vanity!” the prophet declaims. I found it quite ridiculous and comical.

When I first took a meaningful glance at the magazines lining the grocery store checkout aisle, I felt both amused and confused. “This is beauty?”

I was then 13 years old. Looking back, I now realize how vanity is very real and very normal. Often, we do not even realize it exists in our daily lives; disguising our real selves has not only become more and more accepted, but encouraged.

I am almost 17 years old and, by appearance, not your average teenage girl. Apart from the occasional dab of lip gloss, I don’t wear any make-up. I’ve never felt that I’ve needed to use it. Usually, the latest pop music makes me cringe; I prefer classical and jazz. My clothes are fashionable, but far from immodest. I don’t own a cell phone. I don’t have a Facebook account. I don’t have an iPod. The list goes on and on.

These days, my uniqueness doesn’t bother me. But at 13, walking through the checkout line at the grocery store caused all those lessons about intrinsic value to disappear. During times like these, logic and common sense did not matter. Yes, I knew that the images were photo-shopped. Yes, I realized that the models in the magazines did not represent the average woman’s figure. But that did not change the fact that, presented before me, was an unspoken standard. And I fell terribly short.

I used to use this analogy to try to explain my feelings. Imagine two boxes. One is beautifully wrapped, with crisp, shiny paper and a great, colorful bow. The other is covered in dirty newspaper and string. The first holds a rock. The second holds a golden ring. Which present is most likely to be opened? How will people care to know what the box contains unless the outside is appealing? In my mind, if I had something wonderful to offer to the world, it would go unno-



ticed because I appeared different. In order to shine, I needed to appear the same as everyone else. What I did not understand was that my insecurity stemmed from a desire to please the world, not God.

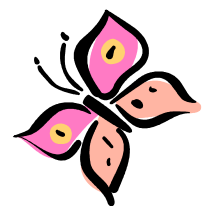
It is a part of the human genius to desire beauty. Mankind yearns for perfection. Beauty, after all, is God's Truth shining through His work. But without God, this longing becomes distorted. Advances in technology ensure that the images we glimpse on TV, billboards, and magazines are, literally, picture-perfect. At first glance, the actors and models appear flawless. Rarely do people care to take a second glance.

Now, the world is not evil. Far from it. When God looked at his creation, He said, "It is good." The world is very good. There is nothing wrong with wearing make-up, or having an iPod, or owning a cell phone. These things are not evil. Most likely, all three of the above will be a part of my life as an adult. But right now, I don't need them. And I am no less valuable because I choose not to have them than if I do. My intrinsic value is unchangeable. In God's eyes, there is no such thing as economics. He knows better than anyone who I am and what I need to be fulfilled in life. For God never intended us to be carbon copies of each other. He meant us to be different.

We all go through phases of questioning our individuality. Although I am wiser than I was at 13, I am in no way immune to insecurity. None of us are. But we must never forget that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. God made each of us beautiful. His children need not try to prove their worth in His eyes. They have always been eternally precious.

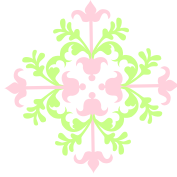
You see, I am not defined by the world.

I am defined by His Love.



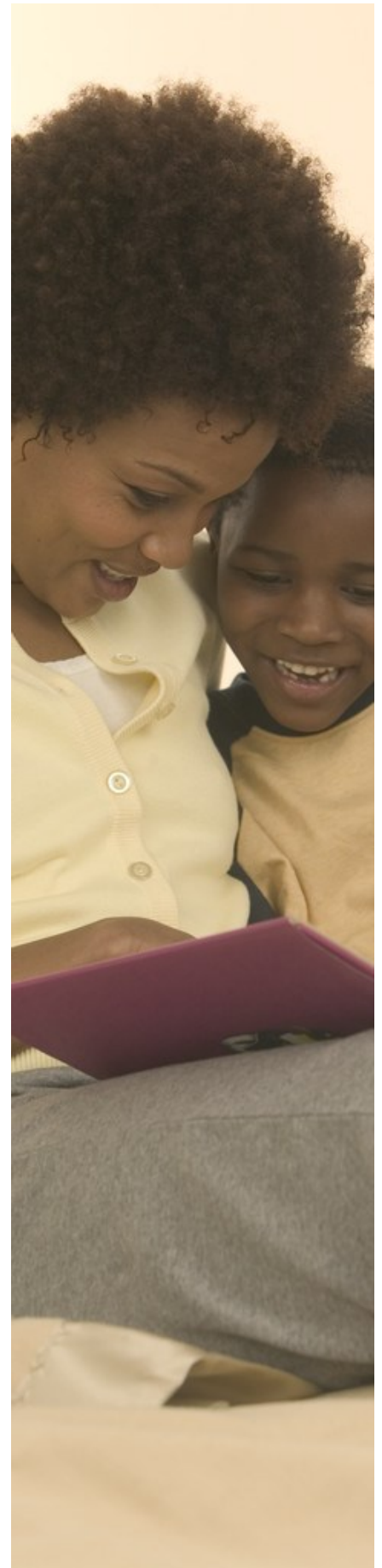
**Emma Piazza** is 16 years old (wise beyond her years!). She is the daughter of regular CAPC Contributor, Angela Piazza.





*“As the **family** goes,  
so goes the **nation**,  
and so goes  
the **whole world**  
in which we live.”*

Pope John Paul II



# NOURISH

## **Nourish** the Mother, **Nourish** the Family

by Marcia Mattern

*Since* I'm five months post-partum with baby number six, I've been reflecting on the struggle it can be to nourish myself (let alone my growing family). As I take the time to give care to myself, I am much better prepared to give to those in my home. And in giving this care to myself, I find deeper gratitude and connection to the greatest gifts God has given me: my children and husband.

There is much more to the care of a busy mom than just food. It must be good food. It must be simple to make. It must be delightful to look at and also wonderful to smell. A mother wants to



provide nourishment to her family, but she wants to enjoy that food, too. Macaroni and cheese from a box or frozen chicken nuggets on a daily basis just won't cut it for this mother.

### *I Need No-Knead*

During my last pregnancy I found two cookbooks helpful. ***Healthy Bread in Five Minutes a Day*** by Jeff Hertzberg and Zoe Francois was a revolution to bread making in our home. In the past, wanting to offer healthy grains to my family meant lots of kneading and several hours of work for a momma that just wasn't up to it. When the concept of using the refrigerator to store dough was ignited, I jumped at the chance. This book gives simple recipes based (mainly) on a one-bowl mix. Any time you want, hot bread is ready in about 30 minutes. The simple recipes start with a no-knead dough with plenty of variety in terms of ingredients and ways to bake the bread so that the recipes will meet your family's needs. I am able to make the dough up in several batches and then bake it each night for very fresh bread! The dough stores up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

### *Feed me well*

Michele Borboa's ***Make-Ahead Meals Made Healthy*** is full of truly amazing recipes! I typically made a double- or triple - batch of these recipes for my large family. I could freeze one or two and we could eat one that night. By the time my baby came, I had at least 20 meals in the freezer. These were healthy, good meals, and I felt confident we would not languish when my husband returned to work. My favorites from this book include Raspberry Lavender Coffee Cake and a Prosciutto, Artichoke, and Tomato Strata. This book is a great resource for a busy mom who's searching for ways to nourish her family and herself with healthy meals!



## *Pre-Prepared Meals Make for a Peaceful Momma*

If cooking yourself just doesn't sound appealing while you're pregnant, consider hiring it out. I have a friend who is a great cook, so I paid her to make me an additional 10 meals for my freezer in the weeks before baby came. I took an afternoon to consider what meals we like as a family and to print out the recipes. When my friend came for a visit, we labored over the meal plans and what she could offer. When she delivered the meals the week before baby came, I literally had a month's worth of very healthy meals waiting the birth of my child.

Another option may be finding a store that offers "Make, Take, and Bake" evenings. Cooking schools, dinner companies, and grocery stores do the shopping work and recipe finding, and then they provide the materials for you to prepare meals in their setting. You simply show up to put things together and then take home your meals to bake another night. I've done this in the past with friends. It's quite fun to cook together. The disadvantage of this for me is that the meals can be less to my family's liking than when I decide on the menu. Look for a cooking school or grocery store near you that offers this kind of help.

Planning a meal swap is still another way for a mom to get a home cooked meal. Years ago five of my mom friends and I would meet once a month to swap freezer dinners. Each mom would make six batches of the same meal and keep one. We would then meet in a scheduled place to swap the rest. This approach works great when you have families of the same size or that eat about the same amount of food and share the same tastes in meals. This can be a lot of work for the coordinator, but it's a great excuse to see your mommy friends who are busy with their families too.

As you pray around the table with your family, may you be grateful for the gifts of good food He has given you. And may you nourish yourself with delightful things to eat!



### *Pregnant or Nursing? Check Out These Nourishing Reads!*

**Beautiful Babies: Nutrition for Fertility, Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and Baby's First Foods** by Kristen Michaelis

**Healthy Bread in Five Minutes a Day** by Jeff Hertzberg and Zoe Francois

**Make Ahead Meals Made Healthy** by Michele Barboa

**Real Foods for Mothers and Babies** by Nina Planck



## Write for CAPC!

*Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner* is looking for gentle Catholic parents to write articles for our website [www.catholicap.com](http://www.catholicap.com) or for the *Tender Tidings* magazine. Share your experiences, wisdom, successes, and even failures with other families! We're also eager to receive articles from Catholic parenting and marriage professionals.

Topic ideas:

- 1) Explore one of *CAPC's 7 Building Blocks to a Joyful Catholic Home*. Offer your personal experience, lessons you've learned, books you've read.
- 2) Parenting the Older Child: Conscious attachment-based parenting isn't only for babies. What have you learned about the importance of rapport and empathy when parenting your older child?
- 3) Real v. Ideal: Attachment parenting is a wonderful ideal, but we all fail at times to achieve this ideal. We learn much about ourselves and our children in the process. What have you learned from tough times being an attachment parent? How has a rough patch affected your faith?

These are just suggestions! If you'd like to write on the above topics or have one of your own, put together a very brief summary of your idea (one paragraph is fine) and shoot an email to Kim Cameron-Smith. She will give you the green light or will help you refine your topic.

For more information or to submit article ideas, contact Kim Cameron-Smith at [kim@catholicap.com](mailto:kim@catholicap.com).





## **CATHOLIC ATTACHMENT PARENTING CORNER**

*Community & Inspiration As We Gather Our Children*

