

Tender Tidings

A Magazine for INTENTIONAL CATHOLIC PARENTS



RAISING CREATIVE CHILDREN

FEATURED:

**Dr. Greg on why
creativity is good
for families**

Creative story time

**Ideas for a family
prayer table**



WINTER 2013

Tender Tidings

A Magazine for INTENTIONAL CATHOLIC PARENTS



This Issue:

- 4 WINTER GREETINGS
- 6 CONTRIBUTORS
- 8 OUR PARENTING MODEL
- 12 LIVE WELL



FEATURED: The Creative Family BY DR. GREG POPCAK
The benefits of family creativity time.



Making a Creative Home BY KIM CAMERON-SMITH
How to create the kind of home atmosphere that fosters our child's natural creative spark.

20 PLAY



Off to Dreamland BY MICHAELYN HEIN
Bring a creative twist to bedtime stories to inspire imaginative dreaming all night (and day)!

Ingenuity & Creativity Are Birthed in Boredom BY MELANIE JEAN JUNEAU

Boredom isn't a disease that needs a cure!

28 MARRIAGE MATTERS



Leaning In BY ANGELA PIAZZA
Relying on the strength of marriage to carry us through those rough spots of parenting.

34 FAMILY OF FAITH

The Creative Minority BY CHARISSE TIERNEY

Learn what it means to propel your children into the “creative minority.”



Making a Sacred Space in Your Home BY MARCIA MATTERN

Create a space in your home that fosters prayer and deeper spirituality.

Through the Looking Glass BY EMMA PIAZZA

How God reveals himself through theatre.



Winter Saints

Saint Brigid of Kildare

43 NOURISH

Cold Weather Breakfasts BY CHRISTINA KOLB

Nutritious and warm breakfasts for cold winter mornings!



Tender Tidings

Spring 2014

School Options

COMING early March!





Winter Greetings from *Kim*



This issue of **TENDER TIDINGS** is devoted to *raising creative children*. Don't we all want creative children who grow up to live creative lives?

I must say up front that I've never thought of myself as a particularly creative person. I can't draw, paint, or play any instruments — at least not worth anybody's attention. Wouldn't you know our dear Lord blessed with me one of the most creative little ladies I've ever known: my ten-year-old daughter Claire? She draws, paints, and even creates patterns for her own felt animals. She has an amazing eye for detail, and an ability to capture the emotions and whimsy of creatures in her art that astounds me even at her young age. She is already a far more capable artist than I ever was or will ever hope to be. Well, despite my shortcomings, and while it's probably true that I'm not particularly *artistic*, I *am* creative, just as every human being is creative because we are made in our Creator's image. Blessed John Paul II said once that all works of inspiration are infused with that "breath of the Creator Spirit" placed in man at creation. Works of inspiration include the fine arts, yes, but they also include building, making, and baking things, problem solving, tinkering, and even living an authentic, joyful life.

I hope you find something in this issue that inspires you to live a more joyful, creative life with your child. **DR. GREG POPCAK** challenges us to consider five reasons to set aside family creativity time, and my article describes some of the qualities found in a creative home. I was immediately fascinated by the concept of "the creative minority" in **CHARISSE TIERNEY'S** essay — ever heard of that term before? Check out **MELANIE JEAN JUNEAU'S** thoughts on why boredom is really a great thing for kids.

Intentional Catholic parenting as we explore it through our ministry is about living fully and joyfully with our families by imaging the love of Christ in our homes. This requires attention, intention, humility, and — yes — a LOT of creativity.

As you settle into winter with your families, I hope you remember the hope emerging beneath the cold earth. Christ is the True Hope, the Everlasting Spring. Please pray for us, as we do for you, and don't forget to visit us at our two websites: www.intentionalcatholicparenting.com and www.catholicap.com!

Kim Cameron-Smith

Claire Margot Cameron-Smith, my creative girl



CONTRIBUTORS



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Kim lives in Northern California where she homeschools her 4 children. Kim believes that Catholic theology perfects what is already just and beautiful in secular insights about how children thrive. She is a regular contributor on the topic of “intentional Catholic parenting” on Greg & Lisa Popcak’s radio program *More2Life*. 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.



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Melanie Jean Juneau

Melanie Jean Juneau is a wife, writer and mother of nine children who blogs at *Joy of Nine9* (melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com). The very existence of a joyful mother of nine children seems to confound people. Her writing is humorous and heart warming; thoughtful and thought provoking with a strong current of spirituality running through it. Part of her call and her witness is to write the truth about children, family, marriage and the sacredness of life, especially a life lived in God.



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OUR PARENTING MODEL

7 Building Blocks to a Joyful Catholic Home™



1. LOVE

- ♥ Children need unconditional love in order to thrive, but we can send them conflicting signals about how we feel about them. Our words, actions, and countenance can send them the message that they need to do the right thing or achieve the highest awards in order to earn our deepest held love.
- ♥ Loving our children intentionally and unconditionally requires 1) emotional openness, 2) a recognition and affirmation of their unique, unrepeatable value, and 3) our willingness to be changed by our children.

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 or her behavior.

3. PLAY

- ♥ All human beings need play in order to thrive, parents and kids alike. Children need plenty of uninterrupted time for free play both alone and with other children.
- ♥ 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. Try to see situations from your child's perspective, even if it seems irrational to you. We can't expect a 3 year-old to have the self-control of a 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.



Congratulations to
CHARISSE TIERNEY

on her appointment

to the position of

ASSISTANT EDITOR

at both Tender Tidings magazine &
Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner

Winter-Time

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding-cake.

Live Well

*“Creativity
takes
COURAGE.”*

— Henri Matisse





The *CREATIVE* Family

*The benefits of making
family creativity time part of
your regular routine*

BY DR. GREG POPCAK

The winter months present a great opportunity for family togetherness. Especially around the Holidays, families draw inward a little bit, and if you live in snowy weather there's an extra incentive to stay indoors and get some much needed family time. Rather than giving into cabin fever, maybe it's time to do some creative activities together. Crafts, games, telling stories or singing together are just some examples. If fun and family closeness aren't big enough motivators for you, then here are some other benefits creativity can give your family.



5 Benefits of Family Creativity

1. Family Creativity Reduces Stress and Burnout

Being creative together helps to take down family stress. It enables us to step outside our usual roles and just play together. Who couldn't use more of that?

2. Family Creativity Improves Your Brainpower

Creativity teaches and reinforces good problem-solving skills. It helps you learn to look at new challenges from different angles and be more willing to learn to benefit from each other's talents and ideas.



3. Family Creativity Boosts Confidence

As parents, we all want confident kids. Taking creative time boosts everyone's confidence by letting you showcase your gifts and ideas in a safe, accepting environment.

4. Family Creativity Saves Money

You don't have to spend money to have fun. Make a craft! Make up a game to play! Create a new tradition. Creativity makes it possible to make fun last by making real memories.

5. Family Creativity Builds Social Skills

Turning off screens and spending time together doing a puzzle or making a special meal or any number of things improves social skills by challenging family members to work together, learn from each other, and cooperate with each other.

Anyone Can Do It.

You don't have to be Martha Stewart to be creative. Everyone has a creative spark. Let your children inspire you to re-engage with your own sense of child-like wonder. Who knows, it might become a habit!



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 or by calling 740-266-6461.

Making a Creative Home

BY KIM CAMERON-SMITH

practical tips for real parents

All children are born with a creative spark – one that is unique to them in the way that it emerges and becomes fully expressed. That spark originates from Our Creator himself. As Blessed John Paul II explained in his “Letter to Artists,” all works of inspiration are infused with that “breath of the Creator Spirit” placed in man at creation. I think creative pursuits are part of being human and, thus, part of the task (and fun!) of raising our children with wisdom.

Let’s think about how we can make our homes more conducive to creativity — even if you don’t think of your family (or yourself) as super creative. Many folks equate creativity with skill at crafts or the fine arts, but creativity can be expressed in any topic your child is drawn to: building things, writing stories, preserving wildlife and nature, gardening, working on cars, or addressing social concerns. Creativity is at work when we bring our imagination and innovation to *any* project or problem. So, how do we encourage and nurture our child’s innate creativity?

TIME

Most parents inclined toward living a gentle, attuned lifestyle with their children are aware of the problem of overscheduling, but I’ll say it anyway: The children of this generation do not have enough open-ended time for free play and exploration — meaning, time that is not managed or directed by grown-ups. It’s critical to our child’s physical and emotional well-being that they have that kind of time. With time to mentally relax, imagine, and explore, our child will eventually bump up against the creative potential within herself.

SPACE & MATERIALS

What we’re talking about here is the *physical* environment of the creative home. How can we make our homes more welcoming to our children as those ideas start percolating in their little heads? Well, I can say for myself that nothing is more frustrating than having an idea, then spending an hour looking for the scissors or the fabric stash.



My Lydia at work!

“While we should observe our children so that we can respond to their creative needs when appropriate, we shouldn’t automatically jump in to fix a problem for them, offer our advice, or even point out the impossibility or impracticality of their plan.”



As much as possible, we can prepare a space that is specially geared toward our child’s creative endeavors, whatever that might be. If he’s a builder, we can have shelves with different building media in different baskets and sketch paper and pencils stacked nearby. If we have a crafter, we can empty a closet shelf to place materials that are easy for her to grab when she has an inspiration.

Children need space and permission to become lost in their creative projects. Let them have a table on the back porch, a corner of the garage, whatever is tolerable to you, but send the message that their work is *important* to you.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Now let’s consider the *emotional* atmosphere of the creative home. It goes without saying that we want to encourage our child’s ideas, dreams, and innovations even if they seem a little kooky to us. We can do this by not only avoiding the poo-pooing sort of comments that deflate creativity, but also by our own commitment and follow-through. Although children rarely need directions in how to be imaginative, they at times benefit from suggestions about how to get started on a project or what sort of mate-



rials they need to bring an idea to life. I've been keeping a notepad under my calendar so that I can scribble down what my kids need to get or to do to make their ideas move forward. That way, when I'm making my shopping list I can include my children's project plans along with my own meal plans.

Encouragement also comes through the example we set as grown-ups. Make creativity part of your family identity. Mom and Dad also have a God-given need to express their creative sides. Are you a crafter, a tinkerer, a builder, a baker? Honor that part of yourself as much as possible. Not only is it good for *your* mental health, but it sets the tone for how your children perceive their own creative impulse. You can even institute family creativity time one afternoon a week when you can all work on your projects together.

FREEDOM to FAIL

I recently read a wonderful piece of advice from a Reggio Emilia educator: While we should *observe* our children so that we can respond to their creative needs when appropriate, we shouldn't automatically jump in to fix a problem for them, offer our advice, or even point out the impossibility or impracticality of their plan. Brainstorming, trying different plans, and regrouping after failure provides children many lessons in using their imagination to fix a problem and coping with disappointment or setback. This is creative thinking at its best because it leads to innovation and a deeper understanding of a subject.

So, let's keep these few tips in mind as we invite that Creator Spirit into our child's life and into our homes.



Book Recommendations

Raising Creative Kids by Susan Daniels

Sparks of Genius: The Thirteen Thinking Tools of the Worlds' Most Creative People by Robert & Michelle Roote-Bernstein

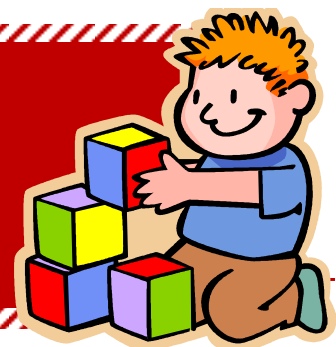
The Artful Parent: Simple Ways to Fill Your Family's Life with Art & Creativity by Jean Van't Hul

The Neuroscience of Creativity by Oshin Vartanian



My teenager, Aidan, making a wallet from duct tape

6 Easy Ways to Encourage *Your Child's Creativity*



1. Be creative yourself.
2. When your child asks you a question, don't give her the answer immediately. Instead, ask her questions about what she already knows; help her figure out the answer or where she can find it.
3. Have one day (or afternoon) per week without any technology or noise in your home.
4. Set aside a family creativity hour during which everyone works on their own creative projects together.
5. Take a walk in a natural environment, whether a nature reserve or park; allow your child to explore freely without your interruption or comment.
6. Honor your child's creations. Display her art, keep her poems in a notebook, take photos of those giant creations before they fall apart.



GREAT WEBSITES for *Intentional Catholic Parents*

Intentional Catholic Parenting

www.intentionalcatholicparenting.com

The home of *Tender Tidings* magazine, ICP explores intentional Catholic parenting through the 7 Building Blocks to a Joyful Catholic Home: love, empathy, play, radiant faith, gentle discipline, balance, and a strong marriage.

Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner

www.catholicap.com

Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner (CAPC) offers resources and support for Catholic parents interested in gentle, intentional, or attachment-based parenting. CAPC hosts a Facebook page and yahoo support group.

Couple to Couple League

www.ccli.org

The Couple to Couple League (CCL) is an international, Catholic, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and teaching fertility awareness (natural family planning) to married and engaged couples.

Positive Discipline

www.positivediscipline.com

Positive Discipline is a program designed to teach young people to become responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities. Recent research tells us that children are “hardwired” from birth to connect with others, and that children who feel a sense of connection to their community, family, and school are less likely to misbehave. Taking this into account, Positive Discipline has as its core tools mutual respect, identifying the belief behind the behavior, effective communication, discipline that teaches, and encouragement.

Parenting Science

www.parentingscience.com

Founded by a biological anthropologist, Parenting Science “is dedicated to families who want information based on the scientific evidence.” Not Catholic, but important and fascinating as we seek to parent prudently and intentionally.

PLAY

We shall walk

in velvet shoes . . .

Velvet Shoes

By Elinor Wylie

*Let us walk in the white snow
In a soundless space;
With footsteps quiet and slow
At a tranquil pace,
Under veils of white lace.*

*I shall go shod in silk,
And you in wool,
White as a white cow's milk,
More beautiful
Than the breast of a gull.*

*We shall walk through the still town
In windless step upon white down,
Upon silver fleece,
Upon softer than these.*

*We shall walk in velvet shoes:
Wherever we go
Silence will fall like dews
On white silence below.
We shall walk in the snow.*



Incorporate a creative twist into bedtime stories to inspire your child's imagination all night — and day!



OFF to dreamland

BY MICHAELYN HEIN

"Mommy, you're in the hot lava!" my son shouted as I mistakenly stepped off the kitchen mat and onto the tile floor. "Oh, no!" I responded and jumped back onto the mat. Then, he crafted me a bridge out of dish towels so that I could better avoid that pesky lava.

The kitchen tiles weren't always a dangerous obstacle to be overcome, and my son's imagination wasn't always so vivid. Instead, my husband and I witnessed this development over time, and nowhere did we see our son's imagination stretched as far as when we settled down for bedtime.

As in many families, reading with our son was always an important part of our nightly routine, which used to be pretty standard, from bath time all the way to story time. But, bedtime stories in our family aren't very straightforward anymore. Instead, we've naturally developed rather creative ways of reading and, at the same time, we've watched our son's imagination soar.

It began when I took the liberty of attributing a British accent to one of my son's favorite characters. He laughed heartily every time I did, and he began to call this "reading funny." Before long, reading funny included a variety of silly sounds and over-exaggerated character voices.

My son started to request such reading nightly. While I wanted him to get to sleep, I realized that our creative way

of reading the story helped my son better understand characters' personalities and emotions, while also stretching his imagination.

Bedtime reading is a fabulous opportunity to nurture a child's creativity. When we change up our routine with imaginative strategies, we encourage our children to think outside the box. We allow them one final opportunity — before they enter the creative world of dreams — to consciously enter and challenge their own creative minds. It doesn't take much preparation; just a bedtime book and some fresh ideas.

Interested in spicing up your routine? In addition to "reading silly," you might try some of these ideas:

CHANGE the STORY

Let your child choose a book (books with detailed pictures work well for this). Then, start small. Change a character's name to something silly. Add in details that aren't there. Make up and inject silly (not real) words into each page. Or, replace the characters' actions with funny ones. As you and your child get more creative, change more of the story. Use the picture as your guide. When you're feeling *really* creative, scrap the written story altogether, and use the pictures to guide you and your child into an entirely new story. Invite your child to make up the details (think *Madlibs*). You may just discover a hidden author in the little person beside you!

READ BACKWARD

Another way we used reading to foster our son's creativity was by reading stories backwards. You can read it as is, starting at the end and working back to the beginning. Your child will laugh at the humor of this "upside-down story"(as my son calls it). Or, you can incorporate changes to the story as you read it from end to begin-





ning that help make the story flow better. Ask your child to help you. Together, you may surprise yourselves by creating a tale that even makes sense!

DITCH the BOOKS

Return to the traditional bedtime story. Some nights my son won't want any of his books; he'll want Mommy or Daddy to make up stories about our family, or about him and his cousins. We'll ask him, "What do you think happened next?" and he'll add his own creative ideas. If your child is slightly older, you can encourage her to take the lead in the storytelling; your job, then, is to nurture your child's creativity by asking for more details, like what a certain place looked like or how a certain character felt.

At any age, a fun spin on the made-up bedtime story is to "choose your own adventure," where you offer your child choices for the characters in a made-up story and he'll choose what the character did. When we do this, my son likes to have me go back so we can figure out what would have happened if the character had taken the other "path".

However you seek to inject more creativity into reading time with your child, remember to make it fun. Let your child lead when he's willing, help nudge your child's imagination further when he's stuck, and be happy to return to the basic story when he's not in the mood.

Just don't be surprised when you step onto the kitchen tiles and your child yells for you to get off the hot lava.

“However you seek to inject more creativity into reading time with your child, remember to make it fun. Let your child lead when he's willing, help nudge your child's imagination further when he's stuck, and be happy to return to the basic story when he's not in the mood.”



A young child with curly hair is shown from the back, wearing a white sweater, holding a purple marker and drawing on a whiteboard. The background is a bright, slightly blurred indoor setting.

INGENUITY & CREATIVITY

Are Birthed in Boredom

BY MELANIE JEAN JUNEAU

When your children announce that they're bored, how do you respond? Do you rush in to fix this horrible state of affairs? Well boredom isn't a DISEASE that needs a cure!

All children need free time to discover who they are, what they are good at, and what they enjoy. Provide them with art materials, books, old-fashioned wooden blocks, cardboard boxes and a costume box; let them discover the joy of creating something beautiful out of nothing. Unplug your kids from all electronics every day and give them the gift of time — time to lie on the grass and simply look at the clouds.

I thank God that I learned early in my mothering career that children actually need time to be *bored*, because that is when creativity and ingenuity are born. Surrounded by babies and toddlers, I was not free to entertain my children nor did we have enough money to keep them in an endless round of activities.

At first, I frantically scrambled to run and help my kids, with a newborn in my arms and perhaps a toddler wrapped around one of my legs. I felt guilty that I could not enroll my kids in activities, but slowly I saw the fruit of giving them time to play like kids have played for centuries.

Take Grace, for example. She was a unique child with amazing concentration. While four-year-old little boys were struggling to print or draw, my second youngest daughter would cover *sheets* of paper with tiny, intricate drawings at 18-months old. Once she drew at least fifty tiny “eyes” while she stood on a chair and leaned over a piece of paper for half an hour. We bought her a chalkboard for Christmas, just before she turned two. Grace was so oblivious to everything but her art that she kept drawing her little designs off the chalkboard in a line on the wall and she kept going around the corner. We laughed with delight at that example of her quiet passion.



Nursery designed by Melanie's daughter

How did this toddler fall asleep? Why, by cutting tiny triangles out of magazines until she passed out, child-proof plastic scissors still in her hand. I'd gently remove the scissors and cover her with a baby quilt. Once a week I'd sweep up a whole overflowing dustpan of tiny triangles! When I called Grace to help around the house when she was a little older, she'd be so absorbed in a craft or art work that she would not even hear me.

I am grateful that our lack of extra cash gave Grace the freedom and opportunity to discover and develop her talents on her own. As a result, she is a philosophy/religious studies major and a gifted artist who still wears a tiny smile of contentment as she draws and paints. In fact, all my adult kids are self-motivated and creative with a variety of jobs and hobbies from Red Seal chef, cabinetmaking, photography to interior design. I believe most of their creativity was *birthed in boredom*.



How Innovation Happens



Whether your child is painting a landscape, building a Lego city, knitting a beanie, or writing a poem, there are 3 STAGES to the emergence of innovation:

1. PREPARATION

Whether you have a budding artist or an engineer, keep supplies and books within easy reach for your child (provided the materials are safe). Keep them as organized as possible so your child sees exactly what he needs when he has an idea for a project.

Talk to your child about his plans if you think he would benefit from thinking through his ideas. Help him evaluate his plan for his beanie or his Lego city. If he needs materials to follow through on an idea, be willing to make it happen. Make a plan together about when you will get these supplies.

2. LETTING YOUR MIND GO (Incubation)

Children need plenty of time for “flow” in which they can become so completely immersed in a problem or project that they lose all sense of time. Parents are becoming increasingly aware of the consequences of over-scheduling for the whole family, and children suffer most.

3. MAKING CONNECTIONS (Illumination)

With the right preparation and time for exploring, children begin to make connections between things in their environment, their experiences, and their play. This is where innovative thinking really begins!

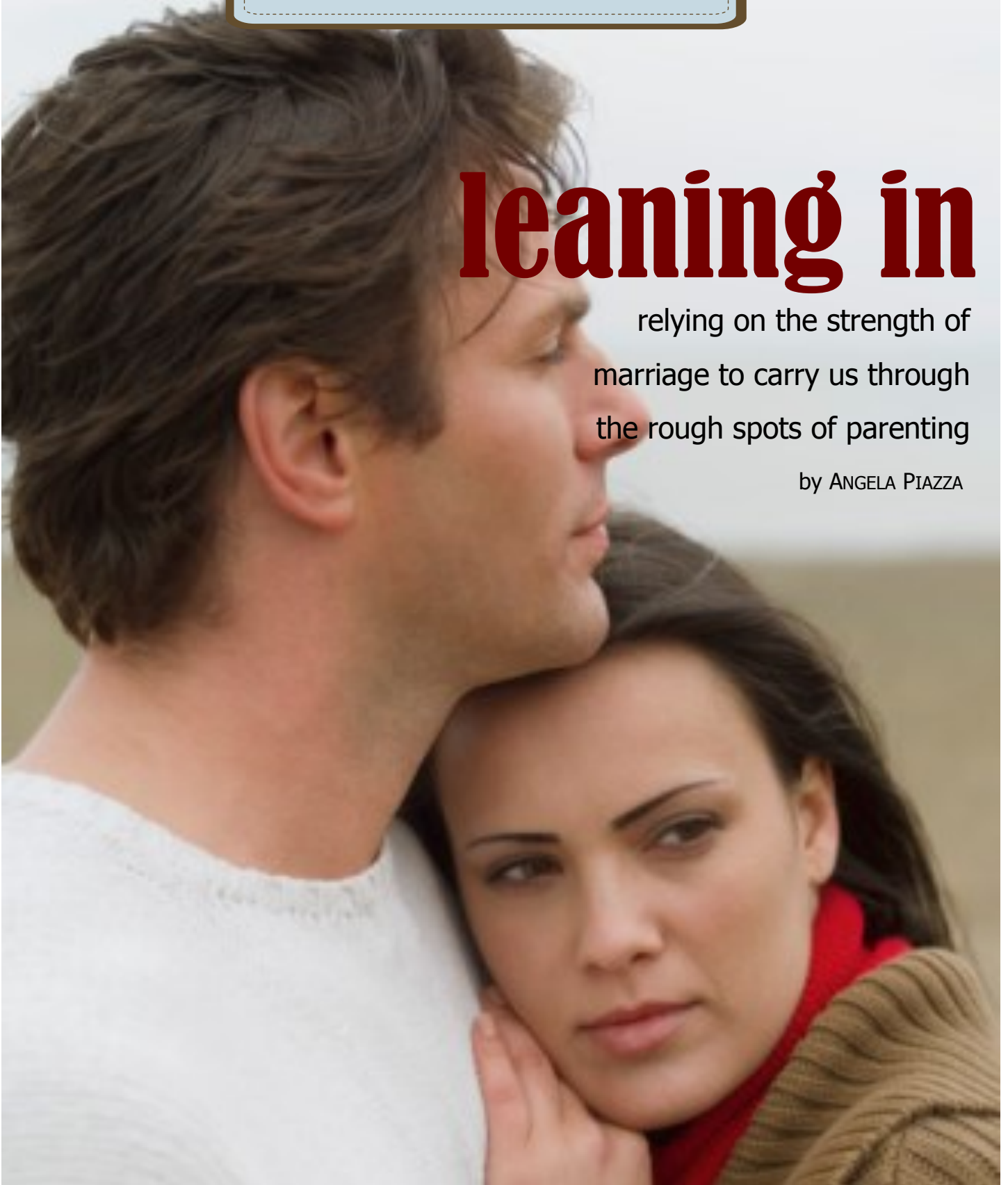
Marriage Matters



leaning in

relying on the strength of
marriage to carry us through
the rough spots of parenting

by ANGELA PIAZZA



He reaches over, grasps a small photo album and says, “You know what I’m reminded of when I look at these? I’m reminded that we’ve created a really beautiful family.” I nod my head in agreement, but not without a trace of discouragement in my eyes. Lately, I’ve doubted my ability to parent well. These beautiful children are stretching and shaping me in ways that I never could’ve imagined, and I question my resilience. My husband’s eyes reassure me that we’re in this together, and I know he understands.

The needs of our children are constantly shifting. My little ones’ hearts explore their immediate surroundings, and I am irresistibly drawn into their intrigue and exuberance. With the exception of an occasional sibling injustice, they radiate unremitting happiness. Soothing a wound requires a tender gesture of compassion, perhaps ointment and a bandage, and they merrily set about their business.

But with the older kids, the exploration turns unmistakably inward. I observe my teens trying to make sense of a mixed-up world — attempting to figure out what makes life, particularly their own, meaningful. At times, they want me to enter into their world; at other times, they push me away. I try not to take their mannerisms personally, and I can accept that this is a normal part of growing up. But it can still sting. I want to point them toward healthy introspection, which is a challenge, albeit naively, I didn’t expect to face.

Despite feeling well connected to my children, I’ve found the recent years of raising such a wide range of ages difficult. Meeting the whirlwind of demands has all at once proven joyful, gratifying, humbling and wearisome. This second decade of parenthood allows us an



“I’ve realized that my husband has a fatherly gift that I often take for granted: he never loses sight of the goal.”

incredible glimpse into God’s plans for each child, with the underlying principle that they belong to Him. We watch as their individual gifts flourish, and listen as their intellect sharpens and queries. But, we also witness their weaknesses, and bolstering them through these years requires incredible patience, love, creativity, and, dare I say, unwavering objectivity. While we pour our hearts and minds into guiding our children, an important aspect of carrying out that love lies in our ability to handle their emotional responses with grace. As a mother who prides herself on fostering sincere, nurturing communication, I’ve been distressed by some of the words uttered by my children.

So he lifts me up. My beloved husband reminds me that this era is necessary, and our children are counting on us. They’re counting on our strength, dedication, perseverance and creative effort to help them through this stage. He helps me to see that serving the needs of our children has taken on new meaning.

But what is it that my older children truly need? When they were young, the possible answers were so accessible – it was a matter of being cold, wet, tired, or hungry. Then a seemingly few years passed by, and the possibilities dramatically changed. While they can manage feeling cold, tired, or hungry, it might be loneliness, rejection, or regret causing the pain. How can I serve my children in those circumstances? If my own countenance lacks confidence and contentedness, how can I possibly cultivate those qualities in my children?

Then my husband assures me that I’m the ideal woman for the job. He invites me to lean in and rely on his support. When it comes to touching the hearts of our children, and binding our lives together, I’ve realized that my husband has a fatherly gift that I often take for granted: he never loses sight of the goal. He is ever hopeful and trusting, and reawakens those virtues in me. As I question my competence, he encourages me to look beyond the interlude, brace myself with his love, and cherish the inherent beauty of this wonderful family we’ve created.





Book Recommendations: Raising Respectful Teens

In her article, Angela touches on a few issues that are familiar to many parents of teenagers. If you're struggling with communicating with your teenager, here are a few titles that might help:

Hold on to Your Kids by Gordon Neufeld

Mothering and Daughtering: Keeping Your Bond Strong Through the Teen Years by Eliza Reynolds

Positive Discipline for Teenagers by Jane Nelsen

How to Talk So Your Teens Will Listen and Listen So Your Teens Will Talk by Adele Faber

Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain by Daniel Siegel (This much-anticipated title will be released January 2014.)

After the fall,
marriage helps to overcome
self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of
one's own pleasure, and to open oneself
to the other, to mutual aid and to self-giving.
— Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1609

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





I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields,
that it kisses them so gently?
And then it covers them up snug, you know,
with a white quilt;
and perhaps it says "Go to sleep, darlings,
till the summer comes again."

- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

The CREATIVE Minority

BY CHARISSE TIERNEY

Your child's funny (maybe kooky)
ideas and dreams matter more than
you know . . .

It's so hard not to laugh sometimes. The earnest look, the big serious eyes, the complete trust that you will respect their far-fetched words as a valid, completely original idea that will change the world.

Children love to be taken seriously. It validates their authentic, God-given value. It confirms that the whisperings of their hearts are meant to be heard. It brings their potential for greatness into the present moment.

I want to take my children seriously. But it's so hard to keep my eyes from dancing when they start to describe the home in which they will one day live with all of their friends--complete with an Xbox 360 and swimming pool, of course. And if my husband is in the room with me when my four year old tells me she will one day drive a pink motorcycle with white stripes, we both struggle to keep the chuckles in. Too often, when those chuckles escape, remorse inevitably follows. I see the light in my child's eyes dim a bit, and the flame of inspiration flickers in the breath of my doubt.



"Children love to be taken seriously. It validates their authentic, God-given value. It confirms that the whisperings of their hearts are meant to be heard."

--Rev. William G. Most

These seemingly silly bursts of inspiration and creativity give our children practice — practice for dreaming big with God. Dreams and desires are placed on their hearts, and they aren't sure what they mean or where they come from. So they turn to us, the people they trust, for guidance. They trust that we will take them seriously, listen, and support their creative process with sensitivity and wisdom. Discernment of our creative inspirations is a life-long evolution. We grow in our ability to discern whether our thoughts and ideas originated with the Holy Spirit or the devil, and God never wants us to stop dreaming with Him. He has big plans for each of us. We all have unique gifts given to us in order to carry out His plan for humanity. Let us not become discouraged and let us not be the bearers of discouragement for our children.

We can help our children be receptive to becoming "giants of courage and faith." Listen intently to the dreams you can see are important to your children. Help them to discern who placed those thoughts on their hearts and how their unique talents and abilities are (or are not) compatible with those dreams. Encourage this discerning dreaming, and their creativity will soar on the wings of the Dove. Your son won't be afraid to dream of living in that big house with his friends in answer to a calling to the religious life. The pink motorcycle could serve your daughter well as she fulfills God's calling to be a missionary. And most importantly, they won't be afraid to dream of becoming a saint and spending eternity in heaven with God.

"The great inspirations of society come from the creative minority; it has been so since Pentecost when there were only 120 followers ready to receive the Spirit of redemption."

--Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen

"It is a paradoxical but profoundly true and important principle of life that the most likely way to reach a goal is to be aiming not at that goal itself but at some more ambitious goal beyond it."

--Arnold J. Toynbee

When we squelch a child's particular idea with an immediate display of doubt, we eat away at their confidence to take chances for God. We risk gradually inching the door closed on the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit and pushing our children out of the "creative minority."

Allow your children's creativity to inspire them to dream big, preserve their place in the "creative minority", and they will end up right where God intended them to be!

"On Pentecost [the Holy Spirit] transformed [the Apostles], from selfish and timid men into giants of courage and faith."



Making a Sacred Space in Your Home



By MARCIA MATTERN

Do you find it easy to pray in your own home? Or are there distractions for you? Distractions that range from responsibilities calling your name, to media that vies for attention, to noise that is constant. I find them. They find me.

Have you considered carving out a physical space in which to pray in your home? Perhaps you have a favorite chair? A tree in the backyard? A closet?

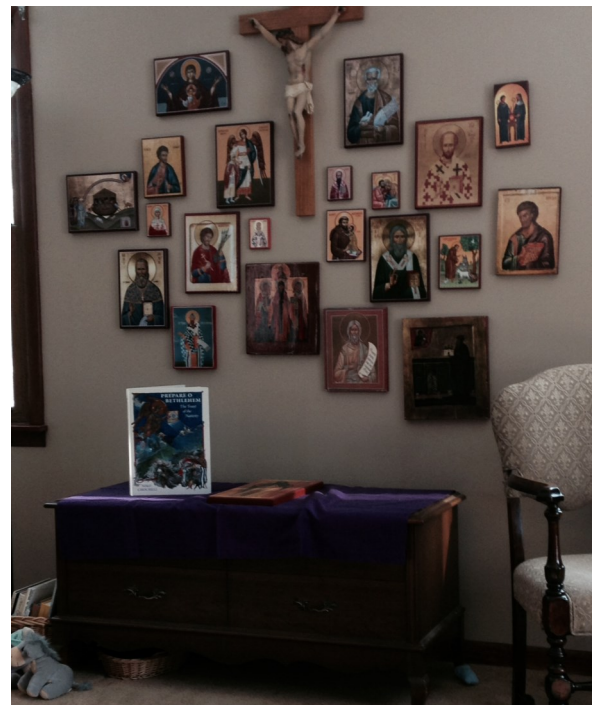
How might you foster prayer for your children, your family? Is there a designated place for family prayer? How might you go about evaluating where to create this space? And what to include in it?

In our house, a prayer space has been a small closet room, a corner of a living room and now in our current house it's a section of our larger living space. We have a low table which is easily accessible to our toddler. It is away from some of the busiest parts of the house, but also near where we spend much of our living time.

In this space, we call this low table our "prayer table". Four prayer cloths are found near it — one for each of the liturgical colors of the year. Purple for preparation during Advent and Lent. White for celebration of Christmas and Easter. Green for Ordinary Time. Red for Pentecost.

The wall above this table is covered in a crucifix and icons of the saints we hold dear. Saints after whom the children are named; saints for whom we have fond affection.

On the table currently is a purple cloth. There is also a book for preparing for the feast of the Nativity.



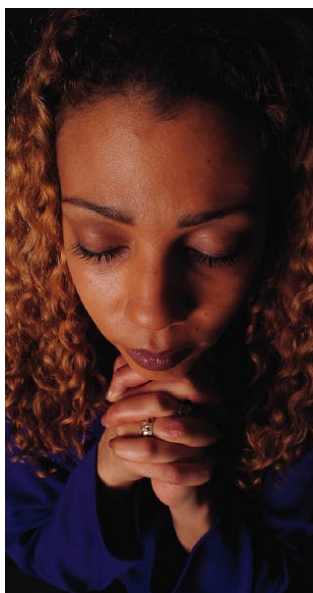
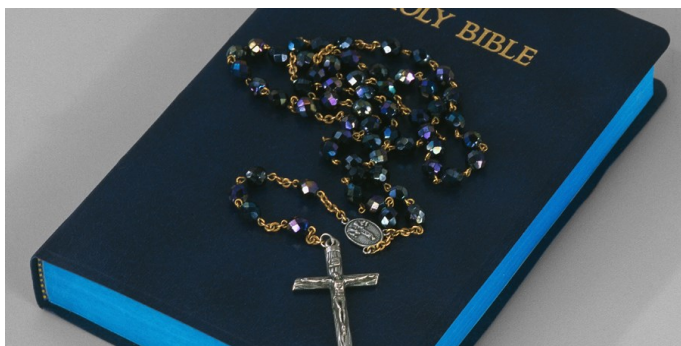
Mattern prayer table

Two baskets are on the floor waiting for a child to discover. You can find liturgically appropriate books which change from time to time with the season. There are also two children's Bibles of varying reading development, and right now we have one picture book about Advent and one about saints.

The other basket holds saint peg dolls, three rosaries, and a few prayer cards. The cards can be placed onto the prayer table by our children and contain simple phrases like "come, Lord Jesus" and "I am waiting."

We tend to give space to what we value most. The great cloud of witnesses surrounds us in the saints and their icons are kissed, held and quietly uplifted by our children. This area is a focal point for gatherings for prayer when guests visit.

Besides creating a space for prayer, a parent will



also strive to foster prayer. Perhaps by modeling postures of prayer at this space and through the daily habits of taking time, parents will give witness to a life of prayer. Maybe by inviting a child to join you for a moment of silence at the prayer table, a seed will be planted. Some families may find praying a rosary together at the prayer table to be a way to share prayer. I would encourage you to start small, to keep the space more empty than full, to open a space in your home to foster openness to God's work in our lives.

May you grow in holiness as you pray in your home with your family.





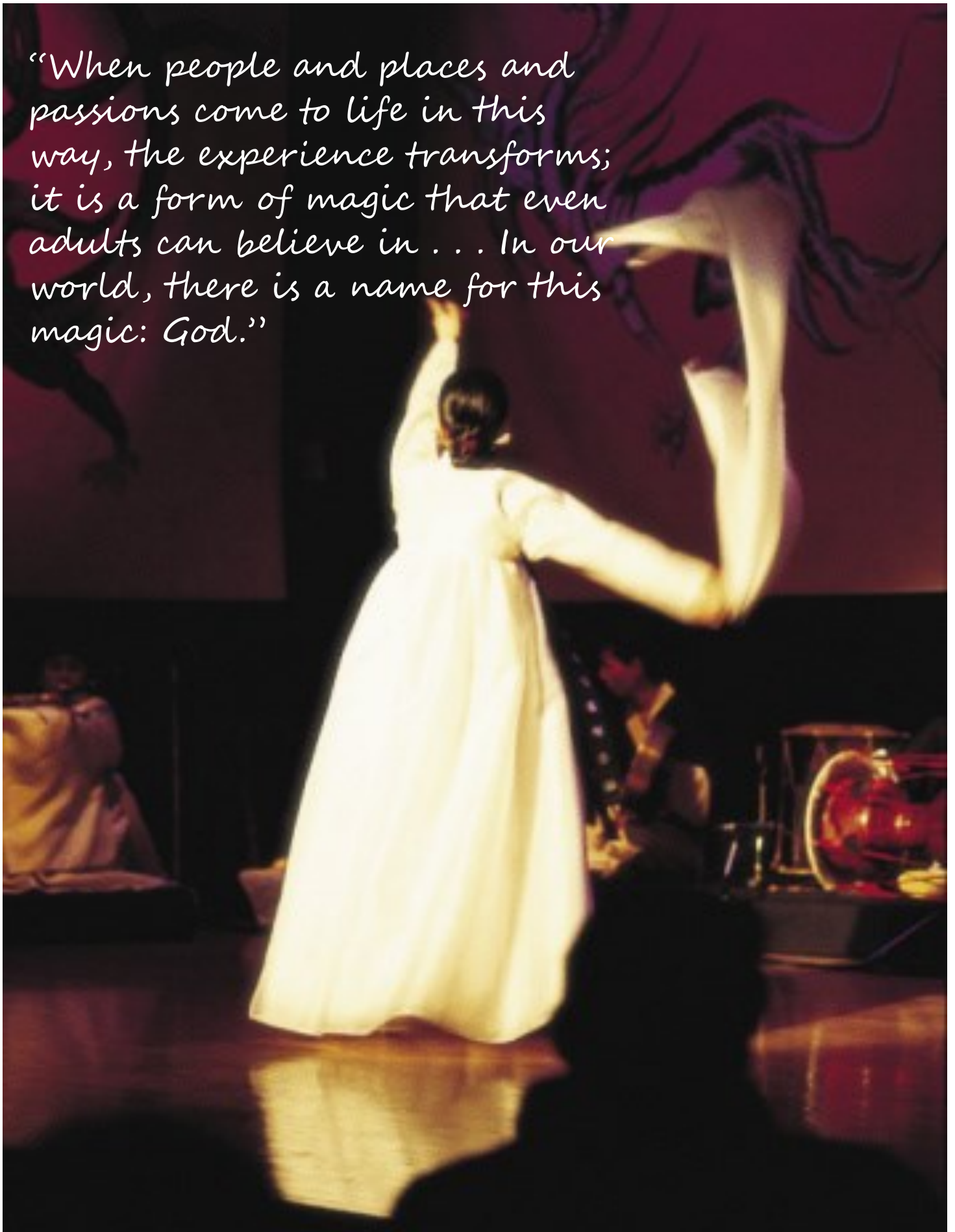
THROUGH the LOOKING GLASS

A Catholic teenager explores how God reveals
himself to her through theatre

by Emma Piazza

The door to the rehearsal building is propped open. The room smells fresh, with a hint of coffee. Black curtains line the otherwise stark walls, transforming the room into a black-box theater. I take out my script, trying to finish writing notes in the margins. But the voices from the middle of the room continue, and every few minutes I catch myself watching intently, elbows on knees, script forgotten.

“When people and places and passions come to life in this way, the experience transforms; it is a form of magic that even adults can believe in . . . In our world, there is a name for this magic: God.”



As a child, other worlds fascinated me. I dreamed of wonderful places, where animals could talk, people could fly, and anything could happen. In all of the stories, there was a door. Lucy found hers through a wardrobe, the Doctor through his TARDIS, Wendy through “the second star to the right.” As I learned of these magical places, I desperately wanted to find a secret passageway of my own: a doorway to a place where the world lived by a different set of rules...a place where anything could happen.

This room is that place. No scene happens the same way twice, no man or woman plays a character the same way twice, and no one may dwell on the past or on the future. In theater, there is only the now.

And what a wonderful “now” it is. As one of my mentors put it, “little black squiggles on white paper become real.” Suddenly, something that one could only touch in his or her imagination becomes tangible, actual. People, emotions, and humanity come to life in a whirlwind that combines all of the disciplines of art, touching both the intellect and the senses.

And, like in all fantasy stories, no one remains the same. Everyone, from the actor to the audience, leaves a different person. When people and places and passions come to life in this way, the experience transforms; it is a form of magic that even adults can believe in.

In our world, there is a name for this magic: God. He is the inspiration behind all art, the One who transforms. Beauty - which is only a fancy word for God’s Truth – can only proceed from Him. And, as would be expected, when one comes into contact with God through beauty, something wonderful happens. Far from being “a tame lion,” He does not shy from revealing Himself to the world, either by



blowing softly on the stone of people’s hearts or by roaring in their faces. He uses the enchantment of the stage to touch everyone precisely in the way He intends. Yes, it feels otherworldly, fantastic, and supernatural. But isn’t that what theater is supposed to be?

One of the most contented and thrilling moments of my life is to feel the connection between God and man, and to watch as the audience leaps back in shock, exclaiming with C.S. Lewis, “Look out! It’s alive.” With this thought, I step into rehearsal ready to become something more, to live for something more than myself. During the countless hours spent in that black-curtained room, I prepare to give people a glimpse of another world...not necessarily a better one, but always a human one, always a real one, always a Truthful one.



Winter SAINTS

SAINT BRIGID OF KILDARE, 453-524

Abbess

Patron saint of children born out of wedlock

Feast Day: February 1

Saint Brigid of Kildare was the daughter of a pagan chieftain. Influenced by the sermons of Saint Patrick, Brigid converted to Christianity when she was 15. She longed to enter a convent, but her father refused. Living at home, she became known for her generosity, distributing food to anybody who knocked at her father's door. Her father eventually let her enter a convent; she became the founder of many convents. According to legend, she made a cross for a dying pagan chieftain (possibly her father) from the rush strewn about the floor in his room. When the chieftain asked what she was doing, she explained the meaning of the cross. He questioned her and listened, and converted before he died. A "Saint Brigid's cross" is hung in many Irish homes, especially in the kitchen as protection against fires.

Family Story Hour

Brigid's Cloak: An Ancient Irish Story by Bryce Milligan

The Life of Saint Brigid: Abbess of Kildare by Jane G. Meyer (for older kids)



More Saints in the House:

December 26 St Stephen

December 27 St John

January 2 Mary Mother of God

January 3 St Genevieve

January 21 St Agnes

January 28 St Thomas Aquinas

January 31 St John Bosco

February 10 St Scholastica

February 23 St Martha

March 7 Sts Perpetua and Felicity



A PLUM PUDDING

Flour of England, fruit of Spain,
Met together in a shower of rain;
Put in a bag tied round with a string;
If you'll tell me this riddle,
I'll give you a ring.



cold weather breakfasts

by Christina Kolb

As the weather turns cold, and our schedules are busier than ever, sometimes a healthy, nourishing breakfast takes a back seat during hectic mornings. Hearty, filling breakfasts that you can make ahead of time (and get the whole family to help with!) are a great way to make sure everyone gets a nutritious and satisfying start to their day. Each of these recipes not only offers the convenience of preparing it ahead of time, but also can give you the opportunity to get your kids involved and make preparing meals a fun time for your entire family. And when children take part in making what they'll be eating, they will be proud of their creations, be more likely to try new things, and be sure to gobble them up throughout the week. So, this weekend, gather the troops to make some kitchen memories and a week's worth of great cold-weather breakfasts.

BREAKFAST COOKIES

The key to getting your kids excited about helping with this one is giving them lots of mix-in options so they can personalize their own “cookies.” And you might be surprised by some of the new things they’ll try if given the chance! This recipe also doubles easily.



Ingredients

- ½ cup mashed banana (about 1 large)
- ½ cup peanut butter
- ½ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/8 cup coconut oil (or butter)
- 1 cup rolled oats
- ½ cup flour
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ cup coconut

2 cups TOTAL of whatever mix-ins you’d like, per batch: Try dried cherries or raisins, nuts, chocolate chips, granola bits, seeds, etc.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease two cookie sheets; set aside. In a large bowl, stir together banana, peanut butter, honey, coconut oil, and extract. In a small bowl, combine oats, flour, milk powder, cinnamon, and baking soda. Stir the oat mixture into the banana mixture until combined. Stir in coconut and mix-ins.

Using a ¼-cup measure, drop mounds of dough 3 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets. With the back of a spoon dipped in water, flatten and spread each mound of dough to a round about ½ inch thick.

Bake for 14 to 16 minutes or until browned. Transfer to wire racks to cool completely. You can store these in an airtight container for up to 3-4 days or freeze for up to 2 months.

BREAKFAST BURRITOS

Adding the toppings isn't the only thing that your kids can help with. Let them try cracking the eggs into a small bowl before adding them to the larger one. Kids learn by doing, and even if it's a bit of a mess, they'll love that you're giving them a challenging responsibility. They can help beat the eggs, too, and of course, top and fold up their burritos.



Ingredients

12 large eggs
2 TB water or milk
2 TB butter or olive oil
salt and pepper to taste
8-12 flour tortillas
PLUS: cooked and crumbled breakfast sausage, chopped herbs, crumbled bacon, beans, shredded cheese, salsa, hot sauce, sautéed onions and/or peppers, mushrooms, spinach... the sky is the limit!

In a large bowl, beat the eggs and water (or milk) with a fork for about 1 minute, until well mixed and slightly frothy. Salt and pepper to taste.

In a large skillet, heat butter or oil. Add in eggs and cook over medium –low heat, stirring often. This ensures creamy, fluffy eggs. Cook the eggs until they are just barely cooked, but still creamy, then remove from heat.

Spoon cooked eggs, dividing evenly, onto the center of each tortilla. Top with your choice of toppings. (Just be careful not to go overboard...otherwise you won't be able to roll them up!)

When finished adding the filling, tuck the top and bottom of the tortilla over the filling and then roll up the burrito long-ways. Wrap each burrito individually in plastic wrap or foil (being sure to label each family member's creations), and then put them all in a Ziploc bag and into the freezer for future meals. When you're ready to eat them, remove a burrito from the plastic wrap, and microwave on high for 1-3 minutes, depending on your microwave.

WARM OATMEAL BAKE

The below recipe is very simple. It really is best when you add fruit and nuts before baking, so all the flavors meld, but if you have very specific tastes in your house, you can make a plain batch, and let everyone add their own toppings after it's baked up. This microwaves well throughout the week; just add a splash of milk when heating so it doesn't get too dry.



Ingredients

4 cups rolled oats
1/2 cup light brown sugar
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoon baking powder
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
4 cups milk
2 large eggs
6 tablespoons melted butter
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 cups chopped fresh or dried fruit, if desired
2 cup chopped nuts, if desired

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 9x13 baking dish and set aside. In a medium bowl, mix together the oats, brown sugar, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and dried fruit and nuts (if using). In another medium bowl, whisk together the milk, egg, butter, and vanilla.

If you're using fresh fruit, sprinkle it over the bottom of the baking dish. Pour the oat mixture evenly into the baking dish. Pour the milk mixture over the oats. Gently shake the baking dish to make sure the milk covers the oats evenly.

Bake for 45-50 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and oatmeal is firm. Serve warm. Can be covered and stored in the refrigerator and reheated in the microwave throughout the week.

Other ideas:

- Make up a big batch of all-purpose muffin batter, then let everyone add their own fruit, nuts, or granola to the batter for personalized muffins!
- If you're making pancakes or waffles over the weekend, make a double batch and freeze the leftovers. Both reheat well and can be topped with maple syrup, fresh fruit, or yogurt for a quick breakfast during the week.

(More) DINNER TABLE Conversation Starters

Our fall issue included some conversation starters for your family table. Well here are some more questions to keep the conversation going!

What's the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you?

What is your favorite animal and why?

Describe your perfect day.

What is your favorite vacation spot?

What is the one thing you couldn't live without?

If you could be any animal for a day, which would you choose and why?

What was the best thing that happened to you today?

What does it mean to be loyal?

What makes you feel better when you're sick?

What three words best describe our family?

What's your favorite dessert?

What do you love the most about the person to your left?



DON'T FORGET YOUR MASTERPIECE ...

*“All men and women are entrusted with the task of **crafting** their own life: in a certain sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a **masterpiece**.”*

-Blessed John Paul II, Letter to Artists

ICP

Intentional Catholic Parenting

Finding Joy in the Sacredness of Family

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