

31 Days of the Little Way: An Evening When Baba Works Late

I used to dread nights when my husband worked late. Feeding everyone and getting everyone to bed in a timely way alone seemed extra stressful, especially once homework arrived on the scene.

One night six years ago or so when we just had Leo, I remember asking my parents to drive 30 minutes each way to help me give him an antibiotic one night—just because John was working late.

I was a new parent. What can I say? And they came, of course. That's what parents do.

I've come a long way since then. And these days I try to see these Baba-less nights as opportunities for us to do some things we might not do when he's here. Sometimes we have a picnic on the living room rug. Sometimes we run to the library and catch Pokemon—he's not a Pokemon Go player himself—and then have a late dinner. And sometimes—because it's not Baba's favorite dinner—we cook fish.

When I picked the boys up from school, I offered to take them somewhere for a bite to eat and some Pokemon hunting. They considered that, but they didn't seem excited.

"Or we could have dinner at home," I said. "We could make fish."

"Yeah!" I heard from the back of the car. Fish is a favorite. So home we went, and the tilapia came out of the freezer and went into the oven. We could have started homework immediately, but I decided to be easy on everyone—including me. I let the boys play an iPad game while I cooked, and we saved homework for after dinner.



I don't always cook a dinner worth photographing.

I know there must be holiness in homework, in the midst of the frustration and the challenge and the struggle between parent and child—and sometimes even between child and child as siblings try to distract each other from the work.

For now, homework is just part of life, a part I'd happily cast off forever. Still, I am trying to see the benefits to the nightly struggles. I'm not entirely sure what the advantages are for our children. For me, I have the opportunity to have some sense of what our children are learning and to grow in patience.

The best I have been able to come up with is that sometimes homework makes us closer as a family because we share a mutual dislike for it. And, I suppose there is

holiness to taking on something which is not easy or not your favorite task and getting it done. St. Therese certainly did her share of sacrificing without complaint. Homework isn't anything close to that. And we are so fortunate to be able to offer our children an education that challenges and prepares them, and where they are learning our faith as well as their academics.

So I was trying to be upbeat as Daniel was writing sentences with his spelling words in them and he came to the word "much." He couldn't think of a sentence for a while.

"You could say, 'I have too much homework,'" I said, sort of joking.

"Yes!" Leo said. "You have to use that one!"

So Daniel did—even though it took an extra 20 minutes to convince him to write the last two letters in homework. I loved that so much I wouldn't have cared if he had left it as "I have too much homewo" but I suppose it's nice that it's finished.



Just as our evening was winding down and we were thinking about bed, we realized that the Halloween upgrade for Pokemon Go, which was supposed to begin Wednesday, had started on Tuesday night. And...well...we had made it through dinner and homework and all the other nightly tasks we had to perform. Why not treat ourselves to a little Pokemon Go?



So we did. The Pokemon came in a steady stream, and we caught them all—or...well, most of them. It was fun and made the boys and me feel like a little team—just as it always does.



In case you are wondering, there are more ghostly Pokemon around and Pokemon are worth more over the next few days.

Throughout the evening, even during our Pokemon hunt, we missed having John here. The boys wondered aloud several times when Baba would be home. And I especially wished he had been here during homework time, which he has much more patience for than I do.

But I was struck, as I often am, by how smoothly my evening with my sons went, and by the fun, wonderful moments we found in the midst of the list of tasks we had to complete. It wasn't all easy, but I feel certain that our children went to bed feeling loved.

And that matters more than the spelling words or the multiplication tables and, yes, even the spooky Pokemon.

