

31 Days of the Little Way: Just What I Needed to Hear

One day last week I was home with our children when the phone rang. It was a man from our health insurance company, offering to call me every month to discuss how our family could make healthier choices.

"That's great," I said. "I just can't think of any time we could have that phone call. Today you only caught me because I happen to be home while my children are off from school."

"We could talk on your lunch hour," he said cheerfully.

"I don't really take a lunch hour," I said.

"Oh," he said. "We could talk while you're driving home?"

"No, that won't work because I have the children in the car, and they get pretty noisy."

Just then my younger son ran through the kitchen and yelled, "I'm eating marshmallows!" And his brother ran in behind him yelling, "Then I'm having barbecue chips!"

I wasn't sure if the man had heard. If he was, I imagined he was making a note in our file.

"Well, you must have some time for yourself," he said—and I could tell he was getting a bit desperate. "When do you take time just for you?"

"Oh...well...sometimes late at night," I said. I didn't have the heart to say, "But that's when I blog."



After I hung up, I thought that maybe that phone call should get me down. I mean, apparently I have no time for myself. Every hour of the day is claimed. But when I look at how full my life is, I really can't complain. Everything and everyone I give my time to is worthwhile and rewarding. And really, it is my time. For the most part, this is how I want to spend it. But his question was nagging me a little.

Then yesterday, in the midst of a busy work day, I joined two colleagues for the annual fall luncheon run by the Women's Education Alliance (WEA). WEA provides scholarships and other support to children in the four Catholic community schools in Baltimore City.

The keynote speaker was Carolyn Woo, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services (CRS). She spoke about the work that CRS does for people around the world, and she focused on refugees, particularly children who are refugees.

“The reason that children are so important to us is that No. 1, children do not choose their circumstances. Second is that children are a gift from God,” she said. “Children are not just blessings to their parents. They are blessings to their whole community.... Our children are our community’s bridge into the future. Their lives are sacred and holy.”

Dr. Woo described meeting a boy in one country—I forget which—who had shrapnel in his swollen abdomen and no hope of a cure. At a time like that, she said, you ask, “God, where are you?”

Then she said, “The answer that always comes back is ‘Well, you are there. Your colleagues are there. Go do your work.’ He does send Himself through us. And what a privilege. What an incredible sense of confidence that God made us part of his promise, that indeed we are each other’s keepers, and it is an honor and a privilege to be each other’s keepers.”



I was so struck by Dr. Woo’s words. I thought of the days when I feel stretched thin, when I wonder whether I can handle all that I am balancing. Working full-time—and caring about that work—while being a wife and mother is not the easiest thing I have ever done, but it’s the best.

If Dr. Woo can see God in a distant land where a child needed medical help he would never receive, I should definitely be able to see God every day in my life. And I do.

But I welcomed that reminder that God’s work is mine, and mine is His. And doing that work—especially for my children—is truly a privilege.

And I might be wrong, but I imagine I would never have heard that message during a phone call with someone from the health insurance company.

