

31 Days of the Little Way: Packing School Lunches

I am not a morning person.

If it weren't for our 8-year-old son, I'm not sure when I would get out of bed. But he wakes up early—just like his father—and comes in to get me up to start the day.

So I leave my warm, cozy bed and head to the kitchen to make breakfast and to take on my daily chore: packing lunches.

It's not my favorite task. There are mornings I wish I could hand the children each a few dollars and tell them to buy lunch from the cafeteria. But we don't have a cafeteria, though once or twice a week the children can get pizza or a hot lunch.

But even though some days you would hear me sigh as I put together two decent lunches, I wouldn't want to give it up. It's the most personal way I touch our children's lives while they are at school. Halfway through the day, I want them to open their lunchbox and think of home and family and know they are loved.



Chances are they don't think about that at all. By lunchtime, they are probably starving and excited to have a few minutes away from their schoolwork to chat with their friends. They inhale the olives and pickles and hard-boiled eggs and whatever else.

Or they say yuck when they see the sliced apples and bring them home to remind me that they do NOT like apples. That's when I remind them why I pack apples. And they say they still don't want them.

But packing lunches is my job, and though I know their favorites and ask their opinions, I get to decide. I pick some healthy stuff they might not eat, some healthy stuff they will eat, some not-so-healthy stuff they will eat, and something fun for dessert.

There's nothing grand about this task. I'm not changing the world by spending 15 minutes at the kitchen table each morning. But feeding our children, feeding one another, is essential.

This week, as I'm packing, I think of Jesus preparing food with his friends. He multiplies loaves and fishes to feed thousands, breaks bread with his friends, asks Peter to feed his sheep, gives us the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

All I am doing is cutting up strawberries and string cheese, putting some Doritos in a bag, and debating whether to add a Fruit-by-the-Foot for dessert.

But in my small way, I suppose I'm feeding the sheep God has entrusted to me. And

every day when I pack, I'm filling those lunchboxes and hoping they come home empty.

