

7 Quick Takes Friday

— 1 —

I have been overwhelmed with the love and support and promise of prayers from so many of you who read about the passing of our infant nephew and cousin Georgie. To know that my sister and brother-in-law and our family are being wrapped in prayer brings more comfort than any words anyone could offer. Thank you.

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Because we received such very sad news on Halloween afternoon, I felt as if I was just going through the motions that evening. I am trying to remember that part of grieving is picking up the pieces and celebrating life—both Georgie’s and his cousins’—so I will reassure you that we did not skip Halloween this year. That would have been my preference in the moment, but obviously not our boys’.



Darth Vader and a construction worker trick-or-treated through our new neighborhood, though the construction worker discarded pieces of his costume as we went. For part of our journey we joined some older boys, the grandsons of our next-door neighbors, and Leo and Daniel loved that they were part of a group.

At one house on our block we complimented the owner on her St. Joseph statue and introduced ourselves. “Oh, I didn’t know whether you had children, but I made something for you, just in case. I make something special for all the children on our block.”

She came back from her kitchen with this.



The boys were impressed. I hope we’re nice enough people to live in this neighborhood. Everyone is so wonderfully kind.

The jack-o-lantern baker also mentioned her grandson had played with Leo the other day. I wondered how she knew and then I realized—he probably came home and said, “I played with a boy who was wearing a Darth Vader costume.” We really have gotten our money’s worth out of that costume.



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The Darth Vader costume may get another wearing this weekend since Leo is turning 6 and he pleaded with me to have a birthday party—and at our house, which is still not quite together after our move.

“Would it be a bad parenting move to tell him we’ll give him \$100 if we don’t have to throw him a party?” I asked John. John, being the better and wiser parent, said we

should have the party. And so we're having it—even though Leo's parties the past two years have gone poorly because he hates the attention a birthday party creates. He also dislikes cake. So there will be no cake and no singing—but lots of fun, we hope.

If you have visited this blog sometime in the last six months, you can probably guess the theme: Star Wars.



Almost every night at dinner for the past month Leo has a new idea for something we can do at the party. And we sit and listen to him describe elaborate Jedi training courses he envisions offering in the yard, and I sit there thinking of how to convince him that's a lot like sitting in a circle and playing "Hot Battle Droid." Luckily he is excited about the Star Wars cookies we're making.



The very last thing I want to do right now is throw a party, but I am trying to see it as a welcome distraction—both for the boys and for us.

— 4 —

We have a mouse in our house. And I am told that if we have one, we probably have several. I'm trying to keep everything in perspective, knowing that this is a minor inconvenience. But Daniel has picked up on my fear of mice, and now he won't let me leave his side.

Meanwhile, both boys have been asking about our old house now and then. The other night Daniel told John he missed our old house.

"What do you miss?" John asked.

"The good food," Daniel said.

That's a bit of a mystery to me because the kitchen may be different, but the cook is the same. He might be onto something, though. John offered to pick up take-out on his way home last night, and the boys were really excited.

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Earlier this week I attended a luncheon for the Women's Education Alliance (WEA), an organization that raises money to support Catholic education in Baltimore City. They raise funds to help make it possible for students from lower-income families to attend Catholic schools, and they also help in very hands-on ways, volunteering in the schools. It is incredible the difference they have made for a young group. This was only the second time they held this annual luncheon.



It's a hat-turned-wishing-well. Isn't that clever?

The two things I took from that event were quotes that I think will resonate with me for a while. One was when one of the WEA leaders spoke of the desire for education

to transform the students so they can be “everything God has designed.”

The other was when former Maryland Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick said, “Education is what makes every other profession possible.”

I’m sure others have said that before, but it was new to me. It made me realize that that is one of the reasons I love working in education—though I’m not a teacher. I love the limitless possibilities available to students as a result of their learning.

— 6 —

I found this video to be extremely moving, as it shows children in orphanages in China discussing their understanding of what adoption means.

This reminds me that I want to write more about National Adoption Month. If you have any topics you’d like me to address related to adoption, please let me know.

— 7 —

A few months ago the boys were playing in our friends’ pool, and I mentioned that I wanted to sign the boys up for swimming lessons. One is nervous in the water and the other is a daredevil, so I think they are both equally in need of learning. But I don’t like pools, swimming, or really water.

My friend—whose house we were visiting—is Daniel’s godmother, and I jokingly said, “I think it’s the godmother’s job to teach a child how to swim.

About a month ago she asked if she could take him for lessons. We had laughed about it at the time, but when she thought about it, she realized it would be fun. So once a week she picks Daniel up from preschool and takes him for a swim lesson. He’s having a wonderful time, and they’re getting some quality time together. And this week he got orange ice cream after his lesson, and he talked about it all night.

I tell her she’ll get all the credit when he wins his Olympic gold medal. And when he does, I’ll try to make some good food.

For more quick takes visit Jen’s Conversion Diary.