

7 Quick Takes Friday (Christopher Columbus, Angry Birds decals, and remembering the sandwiches...but forgetting everything else)

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Last week I mentioned that we made cheese sandwiches for a local soup kitchen, and then we forgot to take them to Leo's school. Instead my father took them to a park and gave them to a man who was hungry and happy to share them with others.

This week Daniel and I sat together and made cheese sandwiches. He had a lot of questions about who would be eating them and whether he could go see them and give them the sandwiches himself.



The day the sandwiches were due, two little voices kept reminding me to bring the sandwiches. I pulled into the parking lot feeling so proud of myself. I reached for the bag of sandwiches and then turned around for Leo's backpack. It wasn't there. We drove all the way home to get it and back again to school. (This is after forgetting Leo's belt on Monday, his water bottle on Tuesday, and discovering Wednesday that I've been sending him in the wrong gym shorts all year.)

But let's set the record straight. This week, for once, we remembered the sandwiches.

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Unpacking from a move is so much more satisfying than packing. Oh, it's daunting and frustrating and overwhelming. But it's also much more fun than boxing up everything you own. Discovering the box of juice glasses felt like opening a gift. Tonight when I realized the linen closet was clean and freshly painted and ready for towels and sheets, I was so excited.

And I am not someone who typically cares about closets or linens. In fact, a few weeks ago when we were visiting John's parents, my boys both stood open-mouthed while their grandmother explained to them what an iron is. I could tell she was having trouble understanding how we survived without an iron.

It's not that we live in slovenly disgrace. Daniel even mops the kitchen floor for me.



It's just that we don't buy clothes that need to be ironed.

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We are plugging away at getting our house in order, but we aren't doing much decorating yet. But we took seriously the advice that we should set up the boys' bedroom first, and it really is in great shape. We let each of them choose a cheap poster, my mother ran across some even less expensive red frames, and we let them pick which decals they wanted for their walls.

Last night right before bedtime we let the boys place their decals on the walls—Speedracer stickers for Daniel and Star Wars and Angry Birds Star Wars for Leo. They were surprisingly easy for the boys to place themselves, and then place again when they realized the stickers were crooked.



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How are you celebrating Columbus Day?



I'm realizing that part of the fun of having a kindergartener is that he fills you in on holidays and history you don't typically acknowledge.



This week Leo has become quite knowledgeable about Christopher Columbus.



His father, on the other hand, mentioned that he just read that the Chinese may have discovered America before Columbus did. You might think that would excite Leo, but we talk so much about Chinese inventions and contributions to history that more than once he has said, "Mama, tell me something the Chinese *didn't* invent," and then I scramble to come up with something like "French fries" or "cherry pie." It's harder to answer that question than you might think.

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We have joined such a friendly parish. The pastor actually called and left a voice mail welcoming us to the parish, but even more amazing to me are all the people who approach us and speak to us—and our children—and compliment them on their behavior. That would seem even more amazing to you if you had been sitting behind Daniel and me at Mass on a recent Sunday.

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A few weeks ago I realized that Daniel is the age Leo was when we adopted Daniel. For some reason that was really hard to get my mind around. Daniel seems so mature and communicative and opinionated, but I also have very different expectations of him than I did of his big brother at the same age.

Do parents always treat a younger child different from the older child? I was always so sure that I wouldn't be a mother who did that, but I do feel I hold Daniel to different standards than I held his brother to two years ago. I don't think I'm being unfair to Daniel. If anything, I think my expectations were too high for Leo. But somehow it's this realization that Daniel is the age Leo was when he became a big brother that is bringing this to light.

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Next year on his birthday John will enjoy a homemade cake. Last week he got a tray of cinnamon buns from Ikea. They are one of his favorites, but no one enjoyed them as much as Daniel, who licked the icing out of the tray.



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