

A few of our favorite things, advice to kindergarten moms, the Class of 2022, aunts, ants, and more (7 Quick Takes Friday)

—1—

As we were driving to preschool one morning, I heard Daniel sigh happily in the backseat.

“Oh, Mama, look,” he said. “There’s one of my favorite things.”

With our 4-year-old and his broad interests, it could be almost anything. A baby bird? A freezer pop? An acorn? An electric guitar?

“It’s a pickax!” he said. “And there’s a hammer. And look! Orange cones!”

I looked out the window and there it was: a truck full of some of our little boy’s favorite things.



If only we could all find joy in life so easily.

—2—

Leo’s kindergarten teacher asked each of the students to draw their family enjoying an activity together this summer. He could have drawn us at the beach, taking one of the many day trips we have planned, or playing in our backyard pool.

Instead, he drew a picture of us “getting a snowball.”

Because two of us have brown hair and two of us have black hair, you can probably pick out which figures are the parents and which are the sons. Just to clarify, I said to Leo, “So this is your brother on the right?”



“Yes, Mama,” he said, and then he broke into a big smile. “Did you see who’s holding the snowball?”

“You,” I said, realizing it wasn’t laziness that stopped him from drawing a summer treat for each of us. “So the rest of us don’t have snowballs?”

That’s when he started laughing. “No, Mama. You can have yours next week.”

—3—

When Leo brought home his school yearbook yesterday, we all enjoyed flipping through and finding pictures of students we know. Then I got to the page for his kindergarten class and saw this.



The Class of *what*?

“From high school?” I said, because math—or embracing reality, apparently—has never been my thing.

“From eighth grade,” John corrected me.

That means Leo will graduate from high school in 2026 and college in 2030. And Daniel is two years behind that.

I feel a bit shell-shocked. Anyone else feeling old?

—4—

Speaking of time flying, the school year is ending. You can reach out your

fingers and feel summer break coming. Kindergarten is just so full of sweetness and specialness you could cut it with a pair of safety scissors. But you wouldn't because it's just too wonderful.



First day of school photo: standing backwards was his idea.

All of a sudden our little boy is so, so much bigger than he was at the end of August when he didn't believe me that all the children would be wearing the same clothes every day, and when the only reason he agreed to go to school at all was because there was a Lego trophy on display in the hallway. God bless the students who won that trophy.

Leo has learned so much this year, maybe almost as much as his mother has. So if I could go back and offer some advice to First-time Kindergarten Mom Me, this is what I would tell her:

1. *Get ready for lots and lots and lots of snow days.*
2. *You won't believe it, but one day you too will master carpool.*
3. *Volunteer at school, but don't feel bad about not volunteering more.*
4. *You will never get an answer to the question "How was school today?" Keep asking it in a thousand different ways. Then become friends with some of the girls' moms who will know everything.*
5. *Set the timer for 15 minutes for homework. Some nights skip it entirely. Life is short. Kindergarten is kindergarten.*
6. *You are going to forget at least one thing a week. Just don't let it be the library book. Or the marble book. Or the lunchbox. Or the family project. Or which day is gym day. Or the check for the yearbook. Or the water bottle. Or, for goodness sake, the apple. Maybe by 2032 I'll be able to tell that story without crying.*



The seed grew into a...haunted tree (note the ghost). I love kindergarten.

John went to Leo's classroom last week as the Mystery Reader.

One of the books he read was *Chicken Soup With Rice*, and the teacher loved it because it teaches the months in order. So we decided to give her a copy for her classroom. I ordered it online and when it arrived, it seemed rather small. It is a small book, but it seemed particularly unsubstantial. I flipped it open and realized only half the pages were there.

No, I hadn't accidentally ordered an abridged copy of a tiny, 32-page book. We somehow received only half a book. I went online to contact customer service, and they told me to keep it. Apparently no one wants half a book.

Well, no one except us. John read it as one of the boys' bedtime books tonight and they were fascinated that it stopped in mid-stream. I figure I can bring it as a gift next time we're invited to a half-birthday party. Of course, the next one I know of is Daniel's. Maybe we'll wrap it up and celebrate.

If you live in the Baltimore area, you are probably counting the minutes to Saturday, the day when the Enoch Pratt Free Library's summer reading program begins!



The Pratt has programs for children, teens, and adults, and we always participate, especially because there are restaurant gift certificates the adults can win. We care not just because we love books but because our sons have two aunts who are librarians for the Pratt. So there's the disclosure, though it's free and marvelous and sure to be a good time for all.

So go sign up and happy reading!

Speaking of aunts reminds me of the ants we've had parading across our kitchen counters this week, or did before John got involved.

But it was one morning when I was trying to address the problem with a crumpled paper towel that Daniel walked in and said, "Mama, did you know ants are God's creatures?"

Oh, dear. They certainly are. But I hope God meant for them to stay outside rather than helping themselves to the bag of jumbo marshmallows our little boy had picked out at the grocery store.

And, for the sake of clarification and because if you've read this far you're either my mother or a reader so faithful that I should probably send you a gift for your half-birthday, I must admit that I don't actually pronounce aunts and ants the same way. But I do like a good transition between takes.

Bonus Take

Tomorrow is the Feast of the Visitation, when the Blessed Mother visited her cousin Elizabeth and their sons had a meeting of cousins while still in the womb. It's the birthday of the Hail Mary! How wonderful is that?

For more quick takes visit Jen's Conversion Diary.