

All in the timing

The sky is still dim, and my bed is too comfortable. I'm lying there wondering whether I need to get up when I hear noises coming from the kitchen.

The freezer opens, a plate slides out of the cupboard, and the microwave beeps. Someone is making breakfast for himself.

Whoa.

So this is life with a 10-year-old, I find myself thinking. I remember the days when I had to get up as soon as the first child woke up, no matter how early that was. I recall the mornings when everyone was starving and needed to eat right now, and I had to start making breakfast even if I could barely open my eyes.

Fast forward to today when I can still be lying in bed, and breakfast happens on its own.

How did we get here? It doesn't seem possible that those toddlers who used to wake up needing clean diapers and constant vigilance of every move are so self-sufficient. They still have so much growing left to do, and my husband and I still have a great deal more to teach them. But they aren't the little boys they once were.

They still let me give them kisses in the morning before school, as long as I do it at home and not in the carpool line, of course. It's still mostly cool to have their mom chaperone a field trip or stop by for field day - but I know it won't always be.

Many days I long to freeze time. I don't want them to get any taller or more mature. But then I think of the joy of watching each minute that follows the last one. I realize how proud I am of the bigger boys they are becoming. Every age so far has been my

favorite age, and I marvel at how they continue to grow, even as I wonder where the years have gone.

Time is so mysterious. The days are long, but the years are short, people say about raising children. That seems to be true. But these days even the days feel short, especially when we have a child who can make his own breakfast so that I don't have to get out of bed before 6 a.m.

A few months ago our sons started asking me over and over what time it was. "Time to eat breakfast," I would say. "Time to turn off the TV." "Time to go outside." They weren't satisfied with those answers. They wanted to know the precise minute. So I gave them each a watch, and now they tell me what time it is - and we are always on time for school.

Maybe, I find myself realizing, we all long to understand time better so we can know how to make better use of it. Sometimes, when life is particularly challenging, we wish we could make it pass more quickly. Sometimes, when we are in awe of the joy of a moment, we want it to slow down.

But, of course, as I realize yet again every July when I turn another year older, it's all out of our hands.

"The past does not belong to me; the future is not mine," St. Faustina said. "With all my soul I try to make use of the present moment."

The present is what we have. And each day, each hour, is a gift and a blessing.