

# Connecting with “Mommy bloggers”

By Jennifer Williams

[jwilliams@CatholicReview.org](mailto:jwilliams@CatholicReview.org)

Robyn Barberry describes parenting as “the hardest job there is.” The 29-year-old St. Joan of Arc, Aberdeen, parishioner has a newborn and a soon-to-be 3-year-old. She teaches English at an alternative school and is an English 101 instructor at Harford Community College.

She also makes time to write a “Mommy blog” for CatholicReview.org.

“Parenting is an incredibly isolating experience,” said Barberry, who came up with the name “Unconditional” to describe her blog. “It doesn’t seem like it would be, but it is. It’s hard to get the kids somewhere and as parents, we are constantly judged.”

With her blog, Barberry hopes to reach out to Catholic families, establish a connection with her readers and provide relevant material.

According to emarketer, 3.9 million women with children write blogs in the US. Technorati reports that of that 3.9 million, only 13 percent of them write primarily about parenting.

Rita Buettner, a 35-year-old mother of two boys adopted from China, is no stranger to the blog world, having blogged for Loyola University Maryland where she serves as a magazine editor. She also maintains a family blog and writes a Mommy blog for CatholicReview.org.

The St. Mark, Catonsville, parishioner said she thinks one of the reasons people follow blogs “is for the feeling you’re not alone, especially with mommy blogs.”

Buettner said initially, she and her husband felt the adoption journey seemed

daunting.

"It was very helpful to us to talk to people who had been through it and who said it's worthwhile," Buettner said. "We felt a blog could be a way to share and give a little bit of reassurance to say 'hey, we've done this and gone back and done it again.'"

To offer some privacy to her children, ages 4 and 2, she doesn't use their real names or photograph their faces.

Both Buettner and Barberry believe the best blogs are those that connect with readers.

"I think the bloggers who do it best give a little glimpse into their own life but they also touch on something that is broader than just one little moment," said Buettner, who writes the "Open Window" blog for CatholicReview.org.

Buettner said it's great to go online and see what other moms are trying. She believes blogs can offer "an extra layer of community" for stay-at-home moms.

Barberry said one of the challenges is knowing what to keep private.

"I don't put everything out there," she said, "but we have a family that works and I think other people could take some tips here and there from us."

She also looks beyond her immediate family.

"My godmother has four wonderful children and has been married 25 years," she said. "They are such a solid family unit and their Catholic faith holds them together."

As far as which topics work, Buettner said she had written about adoption and pro-life activities, which she thought were "hot-button issues," but it was actually a blog about taking her children to church that yielded the greatest response.

"I got so much feedback from those who knew exactly what I meant to those offering support to those who thought I was doing my children a disservice by not taking them to church," she said.

"You never know who is reading and watching," Barberry added.

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