

Doing nothing for Lent, the best dinners in the world, my dislike for half-days, and more (7 Quick Takes Friday)

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Over the years I've done a variety of things for Lent. I've given up iced tea and said the Rosary every day. I even made it to daily Mass one Lent a thousand years ago before we became parents.



This year I was still deciding what I should do for Lent. Then I had one of the most chaotic weeks ever, Ash Wednesday came and went, and I realized maybe this was the year not to do anything specific. I just have this sense that God doesn't want me to add to my life right now.

So that's what I will do—try to find some peace in the hectic days of normal life, carve out my own moments of solitude in the desert, and use that time to come closer to Jesus. But I won't do it with a sense of obligation. I'll do it with a desire for quiet and rest.

I'll also look for opportunities to go to Mass, take the boys to the Stations of the Cross, and pray more frequently, but I am going to approach Lent without pressure and a sense of burden. And, despite how it may have seemed this week, I am not giving up blogging during Lent.

That said, I did enjoy reading this piece on giving things up for Lent.

And here's a not-at-all-serious quiz to advise you on what to give up. My response was "Nothing." It also said I should call my mother more frequently. That's a lot easier than giving up iced tea.

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On Ash Wednesday Daniel tasted his dinner and broke into a huge smile.

“Mama,” he said, “you always make the best dinners in the entire world!”

The magnificent meal on his plate? Tuna salad. I am happy to discover that my son appreciates canned tuna the way his Mama does. Maybe I can get away with serving tuna sandwiches again soon.

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I didn’t grow up doing chores, but I would like to see Leo and Daniel do a little bit around the house-minimal tasks such as hanging up their coats, carrying their backpacks to and from the car, and maybe sweeping the floor.



At their ages I don’t want to require chores, so we are giving them stars on a chart for helping and tying it to small allowances at the end of the week.

Leo is eager to earn money, and Daniel likes seeing stars on the chart. We’re just starting this, so I’ll have to let you know how it goes. Does anyone have advice on how to do this successfully?

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Leo’s school has a half-day today, and the home school association organized a roller skating event for the afternoon. As a mother who works full-time outside the home, I don’t have the option of going roller skating with him on a Friday afternoon in March. I was a little sad about the invitation.

I don’t particularly want to go roller skating, but I was worried that Leo would feel he was the only one of his classmates not going.



Flickr/jronaldlee

I also don’t like half-days because I feel it shows that there are two different groups of students, the ones who get to leave with their parents and the ones who stay in the after-school program. Leo really enjoys his after-school program, but half-days make that time really long. When there is a half-day, I try to get Leo at noon and take him to Grandma’s house or work from home for the afternoon, but it’s not always possible.

I just wish there weren’t school-endorsed events happening at a time when it’s almost impossible for working parents and their children to participate.

Leo wrote and illustrated his first book without any prompting this week.



For the first time this week the boys and I ate in a cafeteria together, and we got to experience the wonder of a tray return.

Doesn't sound exciting? That's because you don't realize that the trays went down a long conveyor belt to reach the washroom.

Still doesn't sound exciting? Then you should have been there. Leo and Daniel both had to be lifted up so they could watch the tray inch its way down the belt. As we were watching, a man came up beside us to leave his tray.

"I'm sorry we're in your way," I said, and the boys moved a bit so he could place his tray on the belt. "It's just that we're fascinated by this."

"So am I," he said, smiling at the boys. If there had been enough room, maybe he would have stayed to watch, too.

I love when our sons force me to appreciate something I could so easily have taken for granted.

Do you have any advice for how to help children enjoy going to Mass? A friend asked me this question earlier this week, and I am planning to write a blog post responding to her. But I thought I'd throw this out there for your input in advance. She's not asking how to get your child to behave during Mass—though we are all wondering that and would welcome tips on that, too—but how to help him like going. Any ideas?

See more quick takes at Jen's Conversion Diary.