

Embrace the fullness this summer

When I was a child, summer was the best. We would run down the street to play at our friends' house, play wiffle ball in the alley until it was too dark to see the ball, and spend evenings listening to the Orioles game in the living room with all the windows open to try to catch a breeze.

Today, I suspect our children feel the same way. They are absolutely loving their days with our summer sitter, eating snowballs, visiting the library, and taking trips to the pool.

I love summer, too. But I have come to see that summer is also a little chaotic. There's no homework, and I don't have to keep track of what's coming home in the folders, so that's wonderful. But there are four summer reading programs—including the one that was my idea—to track. Every week seems to be a little different.

Some children may love freedom and the lack of a schedule, but in my experience they need structure if the day is going to go smoothly. I say that as someone who loves spontaneity, who would happily postpone bedtime an hour or two, and who would be only too happy to serve ice cream for breakfast and scrambled eggs for dinner.

The other night I was feeling a little overwhelmed by summer. I always expect summer to be slower in all avenues of my life, and instead—especially as a family with both parents working—this summer has been a bit of a roller coaster ride. I don't see that changing, but I also don't want to wish the summer away.

Time is too precious.

I was driving to a friend's house for our monthly prayer group when I realized I was passing the cemetery where our little nephew Georgie is buried. I hadn't brought flowers or anything to leave at his grave, but I stopped anyway. Often when I go, at least one of my boys is with me. This time I was alone.

I spent just a few minutes there talking with Georgie, but it was so special. When I left, I felt more at peace with everything.

A little while later as I sat talking with my prayer group friends, one of them used the phrase “embrace the fullness.” I love that thought. It is so easy to be overwhelmed by all that we are balancing in our lives. But maybe like the wound-up child who is too excited to calm down for bedtime, I just need to wrap it all in my arms and sit calmly with it and be content.

Driving home, I thought again of Georgie and what a gift he is to our family, even though I won’t meet him on this side of eternity. I thought of how life is full of joy and sorrow, of people we love on earth and in heaven, of victories and challenges.

Summer doesn’t always match the picture-perfect image of summer in my mind. Often, instead, it’s full of dripping popsicles, scraped knees, and overtired children who are up way too late giggling under the covers. But it’s full. And there is a richness to that.

So let’s embrace the fullness. And maybe we can have ice cream for dinner, too.