

Guess who's turning 5: A birthday for the blog

When *The Catholic Review* asked me to blog for them back in 2012, I had been writing a personal blog for a few years. Starting this blog, Open Window, seemed like a good opportunity to try something different. I liked the idea of writing about faith and sharing our journey and connecting with readers in a new way.

I'm usually good with birthdays, but somehow I lost track of Open Window's. And it was only today that I realized that this little space here is celebrating its 5th birthday.

That only happens because I show up now and then, and so do you. So thank you. Thank you for following along occasionally or regularly or maybe for the first time. Just for fun, I thought I'd share with you the top 10 hits of the past 5 years:

1. 10 Reasons we're choosing Catholic schools for our children. This post has had nearly 61,000 views. What I love the most, though, are the notes I receive from readers who are teachers or parents or principals who are responding to this post.



2. Finding God's grace at the funeral of a beloved child. I almost didn't write this blog. I went to Teresa Bartlinski's funeral as someone who was so touched by Teresa's passing, not as a writer, not as a reporter, just as a friend. We had waited as Teresa's family waited to welcome her home from China. We had prayed for her heart to be healed. We had prayed for her to receive a transplant. We had prayed for her to thrive. A few days ago, we pulled her name out of our daily Lenten prayer basket and I told our boys how we used to pray for Teresa all the time. They don't remember, but I do.



3. Remembering Teresa's life full of miracles. And it's not surprising to me that another post about Teresa is near the top of the list, too. Teresa brought together so many people, uniting them in prayer all over the world.

4. Guest post: 10 things a special needs mom learned the hard way. My friend Laura wrote this post, and I love that it has resonated with so many people—and continues to.



5. A letter to our son as he gets ready for kindergarten. Again here I wrote about why we chose Catholic schools and invited other bloggers to link up with me.

6. Inspired by Mother Teresa, gaining a brother for a day, the last of the Chinese New Year fun, and planning for Lent (7 Quick Takes). I love writing 7 Quick Takes every Friday, but I don't think this one is anything extraordinary—except that it mentions Mother Teresa, Chinese New Year, and Lent—so it must do well with search engines.



7. Remembering Monsignor Valenzano. I remember sitting down to write this post thinking that I had very little to say about a priest who had touched my life only peripherally. But as I wrote, I realized that it was in his small interactions with me—and important moments in my life—that he had made such a difference for me. I'm honored that this post was so well-read, though I know it is a testament to the man he was.



8. Adding color and prayer to your Lent: A Lenten coloring book. If you're going to create a coloring book, Lent is apparently a great topic. Sharing Lent with young children can be a challenge, and that was part of the reason I created these pages for my children two years ago.



9. Missing Baby Georgie. Ah, Georgie. Whenever I pull a list of blogs people read, there is Georgie. And that's how he is. So often I think of him during the day, in good moments and in hard ones. As I watch our children grow, I think of Georgie, our

cousin and nephew who is in Heaven. We miss him, of course, and yet we are so grateful he is in our lives. When we were writing names on slips of paper for our Lenten prayer basket, our younger son kept saying, "Write one for Georgie. Did you put Georgie in yet?" Georgie is always with us, a reminder that Heaven is far away, and yet not so far, and that we can love him from here, and he can love us from there. And we do love you, Georgie.

10. Ways to help your young children enjoy Mass. This is a post I never thought to write until a friend asked for advice, but it's an important one. We always focus on how to get children to behave during Mass, but a more important question is how to help them want to be there. I turned to an expert for this one, and I am grateful I did.



What I love about this list is that one of these blogs wasn't even written by me, one is an interview with an expert, and four of them are about people who are now in Heaven. It gives me hope that now and then I am doing what I try to do, being, as Mother Teresa said, "a little pencil in the hand of a writing God."

Thank you for stopping by. Hope you'll stick around for another birthday for the blog.