

My birthday celebrations, arcade wins, praying the Rosary, and more (7 Quick Takes)

~1~



Yesterday was my birthday! Birthdays are the best. I typically take my birthday off, but I ended up working on my birthday this year. I was surprised to discover that working on your birthday is actually its own kind of fun.

My friend Father Tim Brown, S.J., came by with a bouquet of roses and a pineapple upside-down cake for me, my colleagues on my team surprised me with flowers and a Starbucks gift card, and another colleague gave me a beautiful brooch she brought back from Ireland. There were cards and greetings all day.

At lunchtime I slipped out to go to my sister Treasa's house for a mini-party with my nieces and nephews. My nieces treated me like a celebrity, "reading" me books and chatting with me. My youngest niece called me "Aunt Ree." How cute is that?

~2~

We hadn't made any plans for dinner, but my plan was not to cook my own birthday dinner. I suggested Little Italy, which we hadn't introduced our boys to. We picked up my parents and went to Chiapparelli's for a wonderful meal. My goal was to go to Vaccarro's for a free birthday dessert



afterward, but after dinner and a plate of cannolis, I couldn't even think about Vaccarro's, or eating ever again.

Maybe next year we'll go for the Chiapparelli's salad and then go straight to dessert.

~3~

You learn something new every day, and what I learned while eating out with my family was that Baltimore City passed a law that says restaurants can't have sodas on the children's menus. So if we wanted our children to have soda, we had to order them as the grown-ups we are.



So...we did. I'm sure this is one of those well-intentioned laws. But it makes this stubborn, rebellious mom more likely to order soda for her children, rather than the opposite.

Besides, one of our boys had been feeling car sick from the ride to dinner, and we knew a ginger ale would help settle his stomach.

And it did. Then he polished off a cup of Italian wedding soup, a bowl of spaghetti with a meatball the size of an apple, and a mini cannoli.

I just hope some government official somewhere thought there was enough spinach in that soup to meet his daily requirement for iron.

~4~

Our sitter brought me a cake pop to start the day, which was so very thoughtful. And then our boys had the idea to decorate the driveway with birthday greetings for me to see when I came home. I was so touched.



Does everyone get as excited about their birthdays as I do? I have this theory that summer birthday babies are especially into their birthdays, maybe because summer is a time of relaxing and celebrating in and of itself. But I could be wrong.

Whatever it is, I love birthdays—mine and yours and all the little ways in which we can celebrate the people in our lives just for being who they are.

~5~



I've been thinking so much about the passage of time and trying to enjoy the moment while not fearing the next one...or grieving that time is passing so quickly. That's why I wrote this piece.

I really try to notice the little things our sons do that they won't always do, like climb in my lap after a meal or ask me to walk down the basement steps with them because it's still a little scary to be alone down there or wear crocodile slippers.

It's the slippers, really. I love the slippers. One day they won't fit him, or they won't be cool enough, but I can't get enough of these alligators or crocodiles that are eating his feet every morning and evening.

~6~

Even though we got plenty of arcade time at the beach, we hit yet another arcade this week because it was rainy and we went on a special outing with friends and there was the arcade.



As I stood there waiting for my sons to select their prizes, I couldn't help but think—as I have so often—what tremendous patience some of those employees have who wait an eternity while the kids pick out fuzzy dice and three Tootsie rolls and a top and a little plastic dinosaur.

When one of those employees says, “You have 24 tickets left,” I almost want to cry.

Waiting is not my strength. But if my wait in Purgatory feels even a teensy bit shorter than the time it takes my kids to make their selections at the arcade prize counter, I should make it through.

~7~

Our younger son is on a Rosary kick. One night a few weeks ago, he got out of bed and came to the living room and found me praying a Rosary. I let him join me even though it was way after his bedtime. I can't figure out whether this is inspired by religious fervor, bedtime delay, general curiosity, or special time with mom, but I'm embracing it because he's helping me on my faith journey and this can only be good for his.

The other night when we were finishing our Rosary and I started listing our current intentions for our family and friends and others we've been asked to pray for, he added, “And for the poor man we saw near the hospital.”

Last week we gave a few dollars to a man we saw downtown who had a sign saying he was homeless. Since then Daniel has been praying for him. I don't know what that man's needs are and neither does our 8-year-old, but I love that he is on Daniel's heart.

And, just to keep things in perspective, a spontaneous baseball game in the living room this week broke one of our St. Michael statues. So it's not all rainbows and Rosaries here. But it's still pretty wonderful.

Read more quick takes at Kelly's blog, This Ain't the Lyceum, and enjoy your weekend.