

Photographic Memory

My last daunting summer task to be completed before Labor Day was to organize my photographs. My albums are my time machines, and my photographs are the force that amalgamates a moment into a memory. They are glimpses of God's presence in our lives. So, twice a year, I try to organize my pictures so that I can easily find them for a school project, a birthday or holiday present, or just because I want to remember someone, something, or someplace.

In the past, this process would've meant hours spent on my living room floor with the TV as my white noise, sorting glossy prints into piles. In 2015, this means compiling digital files into one (or three) central location(s) for backup. It's just as much work, except that I'm standing at my counter desk with my fingers are tapping on keys with my eyes are on my laptop screen while Pandora streams in the background.

But, there are times when the frustration level is the same. It almost always involves missing gaps of time. ("Did 2011 even happen?" "Why don't I ever seem to take pictures in November?") Worse yet is when I can't seem to find pictures that I know I took.

Frank's infancy was an overwhelming time for our family after a tree fell on our house. But somewhere amidst the chaos was a sweet baby. The only problem is that I found it so hard to remember what he was like as a newborn because the pictures I'd taken of his first few months at home had disappeared shortly after we were displaced. I did, however, have pictures from my old iPhone in my Apple online storage from when he was 6 months old and forward. So, I went to retrieve those. But my drive had been wiped clean.

I contacted Apple who affirmed that it was a procession error on my part. They tried and tried to retrieve my files, but said I needed to have the iPhone in my hands to try one last recovery strategy. When I looked for the iPhone in the safe place where I keep it, it was gone.

I prayed. I asked for the intercession of St. Anthony. I convinced myself that all that

was lost would be found – because it almost always has. Then, I set back to work on my photo organizing task.

In one of my backup locations, I discovered all of the pictures from the second half of Frank's first year – the ones I was certain I'd lost on my Apple drive. I thought there still might be some missing, so I went back to find my iPhone.

It wasn't there, but two of my older phones were. I tore off the backs and found two memory cards. My heart pounded as I inserted them into my laptop. There was 2011. Collin was a curious and hilarious two-year-old. I had just started a new job. I discovered I was going to have another baby.

And there was 2012. There was my newborn Frank who was more beautiful than I even remembered with cobalt blue eyes and peachy skin. I remembered his sweet, earthy smell. I remembered swaddling him and gazing in awe at him as he slept in his swing. I remembered how much Collin adored him. I remembered introducing him to our home. And I remembered spending the earliest part of his life there with him.

I thought that I'd lost the first year of Frank's life. I wondered what I'd tell him about his baby days when he got older. I wondered how I would console myself when he grew up and moved away and all I wanted was to hold him again. What would I share with his wife and kids? But, thanks to my good old friend St. Anthony, I now have tangible evidence that my son was once 8 lbs. 13 oz. and that he was loved.

