

Thoughts as Lent begins, our final-final Chinese New Year celebration, Pancake Tuesday, and ballroom dancing (7 Quick Takes)

~1~

We really love Ash Wednesday, don't we? I love how it's not even a holy day of obligation, and yet churches fill with people who want to receive ashes. There's something about that mark of humility and repentance that feels so right.

When we arrived at our parish for Ash Wednesday Mass, an usher asked us to take up the gifts. In our six years in our parish, that has never happened. One boy carried the wine and the other the hosts. We made it to the altar, bowed in a haphazard way, and returned to our seats.

Afterward I was thinking that I like planning for Lent, but I also really like being open to the Lent God wants to send to me. It almost seemed like a sign that we walked into Mass and were immediately called into service in a different way. What does He want for me this Lent? What does He want for you?

~2~

After Mass a lady sitting behind us told us what a beautiful family we have. There is a special place in Heaven for people who praise children at Mass.

~3~



Last weekend we drove to Pennsylvania to meet our friends who live near Hershey for our annual Chinese New Year celebration. We have met halfway between our homes for nine years in a row. We land in on this unsuspecting restaurant with our children, order all this food, make paper airplanes, and send everyone to the restroom multiple

times.

We always have the best time.

Almost 10 years ago I met my friend when we both had blogs chronicling our China adoption trips, but we didn't know how close we lived to each other. It was only when I compared our hotel in Beijing to the Hotel Hershey that she realized we might live nearby. We each have two sons from China, and she has a surprise home-grown baby boy, too. Our husbands enjoy each other, and our sons are great friends. And we have so much in common.

Sometimes meeting people online works. Of course, it's also how I met my husband.

~4~

I'm not a big fan of breakfast for dinner, mostly because I'm not much of a breakfast person. But I do like to make pancakes on Pancake Tuesday, the day before Lent begins. I made chocolate chip pancakes, which weren't decadent enough, so our 9-year-old brought out the whipped cream. Everything is better with whipped cream.



He's the same child who picked out Peeps cereal at the store. I had never considered purchasing marshmallow-flavored cereal with marshmallow bits in it, but life is short and it was almost Lent. So why not?

~5~

We filled our Lenten prayer basket with intentions on Sunday, and the boys couldn't wait for Lent to start, so we drew our first name on Monday. Since then we have learned of some people in our world who really need prayers, so we've added their names to the basket, too.

Some people are carrying such heavy crosses.

~6~

Our third grader went on a field trip to the Baltimore Museum of Industry this week, and he came home bubbling over with information about canning and printing and the harbor and how horses used to go everywhere on city streets.

It made me realize what an experiential learner he is. I go on a tour like that, and I notice sights and sounds, but he takes in loads of facts and can recall them. He was so excited. I love thinking about how different people absorb and process information.

~7~



Around here many of the fifth graders learn ballroom dancing for one week of the year. Our week back in January was disrupted by snow, but the dance teacher came back to finish teaching this week, and parents were invited in to see the dancers performed. I was so excited to go.

It was so much fun. I got to do the Cha Cha with our son, and I had the chance to see him and his classmates dance. Many of them dressed up for the dancing, and it was so special.

This is, of course, written from the mother's perspective and not the fifth-grade boy's. But you knew that.

Find more quick takes at Kelly's blog, This Ain't the Lyceum, and have a wonderful weekend!