

Week in My Life 2013: Monday


I could either spend my spare time this week trying to figure out how to make a huge brownie in the shape of Darth Vader holding a red light saber for my son's 6th birthday celebration—or I could try to give you a glimpse into our daily life as a family. Somehow I can't resist this kind of blog challenge, and I have a few weeks to master the Darth Vader brownie.

Besides, one of my favorite Catholic mother bloggers is participating in this "Week in My Life" link-up series. She's a mother of five with her sixth on the way. There's no way I'll manage to do this every day, but I thought it would be fun even if I just did it once or twice during the week.

So buckle up and here we go: **Monday with the Buettner family.**



My morning starts with a proud little boy running into my bedroom yelling, "I stay dry all night, Mama!" His brother is hot on his heels, and they are up on the bed with me talking about the day and begging for iPad time. They know to ask when Mama is at her weakest, and that would be any time before 7:30 a.m. Their father, who's the early riser here, is already in the shower.

 The boys have chicken noodle soup for breakfast almost every day. It heats quickly, has protein in it, and they love it. For years I argued that soup wasn't a breakfast food. Then one day I realized it was easier than scrambling eggs or discussing which kind of cereal we wanted and didn't have. Soup. And yes, from a can. It's what's for breakfast.

While the boys eat, I pack lunches and assemble what we need for the day—a backpack and lunch and water bottle for Leo, a bag of napping stuff and a lunch for Daniel, my work things, and always some extra school form for Leo that I have forgotten to fill out the night before.

John and I try to slip an illustrated note into each boy's lunch, so when I'm supposed to be showering, I'm searching for blank paper and trying to remember how to draw a super star destroyer. I scribble a spaceship-like shape on Leo's note and a race car on Daniel's. Their father is more likely to draw Jabba the Hutt's palace, but he's in the shower.

The lunches are packed before it's my turn to get myself ready.



Then we're looking for shoes and grabbing armloads of bags to run out the door. There is condensation on the van windows, so Daniel wants to draw a smiley face on his way into the car. I lift him up so he can make the eyes with his finger. Then we're

off.



As we listen to the Star Wars soundtrack on our short drive to school, Daniel notices every truck on the road. “A car carrier! Mama, did you see the car carrier? You missed it! But I saw it!” We do that for every vehicle we see—and I love it. I was sorry when his brother moved out of that phase.

At Leo’s school he climbs out, refuses to wear his jacket, and heads up the school steps. I roll down Daniel’s window so he can yell goodbye to his brother—one of the sweetest moments of my day. Leo turns back to wave, but he’s focused on getting to his classroom. I am so grateful that he is happy to go to school. I do not take that for granted.

Then Daniel and I are off, on our way to his preschool. Immediately he starts telling me he doesn’t want to go to school today. This is rare. In fact, I don’t think it has ever happened before.

“I no want to go to school,” he says. “I want to go to work with Mama.”

Everyone wants to go to work with Mama because I have a colleague who loves Star Wars and Transformers. Leo even promoted Mr. Brian to Uncle Brian the other day.

“I just have boring meetings today,” I tell Daniel.

“I like boring meetings!” he says.

And so we go through a long conversation.

“You don’t want to play with your friends today?” No.

“You don’t want to swing on the swings?” No.

“You don’t want to have snack time?” No.

“You don’t want to play with the wooden trains?” No.

Hmm.



When we get to school, he doesn’t want me to leave. He has a cold, and I worry that he’s not feeling well, even though minutes earlier he was smiling and building Trio spaceships on our living room floor with his brother.

Finally I lift him under his arms and bounce him into his classroom, and he’s laughing, and I’m running for the door so we can see whether he’ll get to the window before I’m on the other side. He always wins. And I wave, walking backwards, and then flash my headlights as I drive away.

Then I’m off to work for a busy day of writing and responding to requests from colleagues. We’re brainstorming ideas for a new undergraduate viewbook, but the biggest item on our plates is a lecture from Gen. Colin Powell Tuesday night. There is a lot to do to get ready, even though my role is minor.

The workday flies by—and as fascinating as my work is, I think I’ll spare you those

details (though I might share a bit of the Gen. Powell visit tomorrow).

Then I'm leaving the office just after 5 to go get our boys—one of my favorite parts of the day.

I go for Leo first, and he is proudly carrying a paper Halloween windsock he made. In the car he starts telling me that it's picture day tomorrow and he can wear "whatever his Mommy says he can wear." I have read the guidelines—no denim, no fads—and I am worried that the Lego T-shirt we just received, handed down from friends on Sunday, doesn't comply. So I have emailed the teacher.

We go to pick up Daniel, even though Leo's personal rule is not to make appearances at preschool while in uniform. Daniel is happy and energetic and has a stick he saved for me from the playground. Leo insists on carrying all Daniel's stuff to the car—victory!—and we climb in and head home.

Daniel has a sandbox at school and he brings a gallon of sand home every night. So we always try to remember to stop on the steps to take off his shoes.



At home Leo sits down to do his homework—cutting, pasting, counting, and coloring candy corn pictures. I start making dinner, chicken Parmesan, linguine, peas, and corn.



When John gets home, he takes the boys outside to spread green cobwebs on the bushes, because Daniel has been asking, "When will we spook our yard?" So they do.



Not many of us are excited about dinner, except for the noodles, which are always a hit.

What we are excited about is that Leo's teacher has written back to say the Lego T-shirt will be fine. It's a Ninjago shirt, actually, and Leo desperately wants to wear it to show his friends. I'm as happy as he is. I have low expectations for professional shoots because Leo is at his most handsome when he is caught in a candid smile. I figure he's most likely to smile in a favorite shirt.

After dinner, the boys relax and watch a Clone Wars episode—a hand-me-down DVD from our friends, the ones who gave us the amazing Ninjago shirt. Then we do baths and brushing teeth and books and prayers and bed. Daniel creeps out of bed once—his cold is bothering him—so I hold him for a few minutes and put him back to bed, where he falls right to sleep. If I were a betting person, I'd have my money on a trip to the pediatrician before the end of the week.

I clean the dishes (I leave them until after bed so I can spend more time with the boys), John does the laundry, we fold clothes together, I blog, and then we're off to bed.

What glamorous lives we lead! And yet I wouldn't have it any other way.