

What my children are teaching me this Lent

Watching our sons encounter the world and their faith is such a source of inspiration to me. Our older son is learning the Stations of the Cross for the first time this year, and it is amazing to see them through his eyes.



But although I could teach our sons the Stations of the Cross, what surprises me is what our sons are teaching me this Lent:

1. Forgive quickly and completely.

The other day Leo came running to give a report on his brother. “He says he doesn’t like me anymore!”

As I was trying to decide how to mediate, I realized Leo was already running in the other direction, yelling to Daniel—the one who didn’t like him anymore—“Hey, wanna play bank robbers?”

And they were off, laughing together, any disagreement forgotten.

Why can’t I be like that, frustrated one moment and friendly the next?



2. Love as God does.

As Leo crawled into bed with us one morning, I said, “I love you more than anything in the world.”

“And my little brother,” he said.

“Yes, of course,” I said.

“Well, you love us more than anything in the world except God,” he said. “You love God the most.”

"Yes, but it's not really that we love God more than we love you," I said, still half-asleep. "We just have a lot of love for all of you."

"Yes," he said, "because when you love us you are loving God. Because any love you give to us you're giving to God."

How does a 6-year-old manage to make what feels so complicated so simple?

3. Care for all of God's creation.

Daniel's goal is to catch a bird. He wants so badly to hold one in his hands and see how beautiful it is.



Today he sat in the yard talking to the birds up in the trees.

Then he took one of our birdhouses off a hook and carried it around our yard saying sweetly, "Oh, little birds! I have a pretty little nest for you here! It is just for you!" For a half-hour he walked and called to the birds.

They flew away, of course, but he was not discouraged. He wanted to make sure they knew he had a home for them.

How much do I worry about whether others have food and a safe and comfortable place to sleep?

4. Trust that God is all good and all powerful.

To try to capture Daniel's attention during Sunday's Gospel, I leaned down and whispered, "Listen to the story. Jesus is going to bring someone who died back to life!"

"Right here? In the church?"

"Well, no. In the story."

"Who?"

"His name is Lazarus. He was one of Jesus' friends, and he died, but Jesus is bringing him back to life."

He thought for a minute. "Will the priest do it? And will it be a big man, and his head will touch the ceiling?"

"No, it will just happen in the story."

"What about Baby George?"

"Well, God did give Baby Georgie life forever in heaven, but this story is about giving this man life on earth again. So it's different."

I sat there marveling at our little boy's faith. He's right. God can do anything. Do I think of that often enough? And do I try to relate the Gospel to my life and to the people I know? Do I look for miracles to happen every day? Do I believe they can happen? Do I really think anything special could happen during Mass? And do I recognize that a miracle does happen, each and every time?

I do, but I don't know that I have the faith of our 4-year-old. I may think I'm teaching him our faith, and I am, but he and his brother are teaching me so much more about faith and life than I can discover on my own.

"Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

What are you learning this Lenten season?