

Believing IS Seeing

NEVER THE OTHER WAY AROUND! Isn't that what this season is all about? The ability to believe in something bigger than ourselves must FIRST begin in our hearts or that belief is sure to fail.

Believe in what your heart is saying

Hear the melody that's playing

There's no time to waste

There's so much to celebrate

Believe in what you feel inside

And give your dreams the wings to fly

You have everything you need

If you just believe.

We wrapped up our Christmas celebration at the home of my mother's sister. The last few days have seen sickness, some frustration, and I believe a LOT of love. Christmas Eve, we had our immediate family celebration. Alyssa was not feeling well but by the time the celebration began, she was well enough to eat a pickle and a deviled egg. Not my first choice after having a sour stomach but she kept it down. Alex also was feeling under the weather but came later and opened his gifts by himself.

Something new this year (prompted by the craziness of Santa's busy schedule) was the exchanging of names to fill each other's stockings. Some of us grumbled not knowing what to get each other but in the end, I think it worked out well and I hope the tradition continues. People just had to use their imagination (if they have one). I was pleased with my

stocking stuffers choices.

Christmas Eve mass was even earlier than the 11PM of years past. I was pleased to see some more male voices come up to the loft as Chad and I are typically the sole men in the choir. Cousin Dan from Sandusky, JJ (a wonderful tenor), and a few others joined us. Really glad for that because some of the rafter reachers would have drowned us out for sure.

Apparently, what must have been a traditional piece in years past was revisited. "The Bells of St. Mary" hopefully will become another fitting tradition along with "For Unto Us A Child Is Born."

After Chad dropped me off after mass, Mom came out and told us that she had to take Dad yet again to the ER. Complaining of stomach and chest pains and diarrhea. So we all headed to the hospital. I won't say "fortunately", but it could have been worse than dehydration. He had to have two units of IV fluids pumped into him. This year has been just a BIT scary and hopefully soon, we can get some answers as to what is going on. But until then, I personally need to really focus on stepping back when things get out of control.

After getting 4-5 hours of sleep, I had planned on attending services at the church being ministered by my pal who just continues to amaze me. I was so psyched that I did because he seemed to be surprised that I did. As an added present, he sang the beautiful "Mary, Did You Know?" Chris has such a tremendous voice that when he uses it gives each listener a extraordinary gift! It is also so inspiring to see how much he has personally come to accept his savior...a beautiful sight.

I was so thankful that I got to see the people I choose to include in my extended family on one of the most joyous days of the year.

Dinner Christmas Day was served at Jeff's kitchen. Before that however, Shelby sprained her ankle pretty badly when she climbed the stairs at my house in the dark. She had to be

taken to have it checked out for severity.

Today, the celebration continued at the Maxwell Country Estate where both of Mom's siblings and their families gathered. I always enjoy being regaled by stories of their youth and today was no exception. Jeff, Alicia, and I played Words With Friends via iPhone or in my case iPod. My oldest brother CHEATS with an app that actually says "Cheats With Friends."

Later, Dan and Carla tried to teach some of us how to play Mah'Jong. If I had been lucky enough to draw some good tiles in the three rounds we played... Of course, if we had had more time to play I might have caught on.

I hope you all are having a beautiful holiday season full of love and true belief.

A Break From The Chaos

So glad that I got to take in 2 SUPER shows last weekend amid all the hectic goings on otherwise. As I pointed out in my last post, *Nuncrackers* was hilarious, kudos once agin to to Mare for going the extra mile by steppin out on stage to fill the role of Sister Amnesia as well as serving as director!

Yesterday, I was lucky enough to take in my other home away from home's production of one of MY favorite holiday gems LIVE ON STAGE! I know that I have mentioned my family's extreme love of *A Christmas Story*. Each year to get a viewing in, I have to stay up after mass and catch one of the showings during TBS' 24-hour marathon while everyone else is all settled in for a long winter's nap. This year, Christmas Eve mass is even earlier so I should be able to catch the midnight show!

Seeing the show on stage ALMOST made up for that one viewing!

Things have been crazy around the house the last few weeks so I was not able (or did not take the time) to make reservations before all 6 performances were sold out. This has not happened for a scheduled WCCT show since the 1978 production of *Fiddler on the Roof!* I know of at least one NON-scheduled show that was a sell out, but I won't go there (something about a karaoke). In any case, my vocal coach who played Ralphie's mother made arrangements for me to attend. They had to turn 20 people away who had called the reservation line.

Almost everything from the movie was brought to wonderful life in front of our eyes. The tire changing episode, the rattle trap furnace battles, Randy's mummification with the arms that would not stay down, the "Fra-JEE-lay" leg lamp, the Bumpuses' dogs (unseen but heard), the "triple dog dare," and of course the "*official Red Ryder, carbine action, two-hundred shot range model air rifle! With a compass in the stock and a thing which tells time.*" My only qualm was the absence of the original soundtrack as Ralphie and friends are being chased by the notorious Scut Farcas. Everyone on stage perfectly captured the essence of the characters being portrayed from the adult Ralphie down to little Drew. But I have to make note of the two brilliant actresses. Tiff was her typical showstopping brilliant as Ms. Shields with her margin marking quill. Seriously, anytime she is on stage the audience is in store for a treat!

I had never before seen Kathrine on stage; however, she was extraordinary! Her total presence on stage was wondrous! Her facial mannerisms, her voice, each little quirk and nuance MADE Mrs. Parker a delight to see. Her chemistry with The Old Man was one of many highlights of the show!

Now here is a bit of some of my favorite scenes in the movie or the complete theatrical trailer which I have never before seen:

A Day of Performances

I was fortunate enough to take in two musical performances today. It began as I attended the dress rehearsal of my nieces's elementary Christmas program. *A Bug's Christmas* was adorable. 2nd Grader Alyssa had a speaking role as a wood nymph. Before the show began, she caught a glimpse of me from the risers and waved to me. Although it was at times difficult to understand what the 70+ kids were singing, it was quite fun. My favorite segment was the "12 Bugs of Christmas."

Tonight, I had promised Mare Mare that I would man the ticket table for the Village Players' production of [Nuncrackers](#). I had the opportunity to see and participate in a production of the original *Nunsense* back I still can't believe **20 years ago! on my high school senior trip!** I did not know that I would be making punch and setting up for the opening night after party as well. While taking the money from a couple and hoping they enjoyed the show, a gentleman commented in a rather gruff, opinionated tone: "We'll try." I said that sounded like a comment Mr. Potter would make.

I must say if you want to continue your holiday celebrations with a good hearty laugh then this show is for you. Nuns singing a grab bag of tunes. A scatter-brained amnesiac sister. A Julia Child-inspired cooking segment. A version of Tchaikovsky's classic ballet not to be missed. VERY strong singing! BRAVO Mare (who doubled as director and last minute actress), cast, and crew! A phenomenal production all around!

Soon, very soon. Fourteen months is FAAAAARRRRRRR tooooo L0000000000NG for me to be off stage. I hear that *The Sound of Muc (err...) Music* is coming for next holiday season.

But it was totally enthralling to settle down with many of my friends after the show and meeting some people that I have heard a lot about! Just walking into the theatre made me realize that I have been away too long. The Huber really is the gem of the area!

Monday, Monday

Don't you just hate when you run out of certain household staples and a trip to the store becomes imminent whether you planned it for that day or not? Happened to me today, and wouldn't you know, it was a cold December rainy day. Complicating what should have been a simple run to the store were my 5 kids and the fact that the rain decided to change over into sleet and ice during the trip.

As always, it took us almost an hour to get ready to go. It takes forever for the kids to listen well enough and to stop playing long enough to pull on socks, shoes, and coats. Since 2 of my kids are in diapers and one is being bottle fed, my diaper bag these days is huge and takes some time to pack every time I leave the house; especially when I have to take breaks from packing it to tend to the baby and the various needs of various kids. Finally, we were ready to leave the house, but somewhere in the melee I decided to leave my 2 oldest kids home. Contributing to my decision, Sammie was having a rough and crabby day, so I decided it would be most productive for the family if she and her brother were separated since that's where today's fights were centered. Except that meant that I had to come up with a home-schooling project for the girls to do while the rest of us were out, which meant further delay.

I get most of our family's staples at Walmart because they are usually cheapest and it's the whole one-stop shopping thing. Except that their milk prices are horrible, so today I found it worth the savings to unload all 3 kids (ages 2 mos., 3 years and 5 years) to make an extra stop at Rite Aid. Besides, I've had a hankering for some Combos and Rite Aid often has them on sale. But wouldn't you know it, today was a Monday and there wasn't a sale on Combos, nor was there any milk on the shelves at all! "The truck is usually here by now," said the clerk when I asked about the absence of milk, but his musing didn't help me any. So I re-loaded all the little kids and headed to Walmart – by now the rain was turning to sleet and the driving visibility was compromised. We made it across town safely with a quick pitstop at the gas station because it was coffee Monday, which meant all sizes of coffee are just \$.89. But they were out of 24 oz. cups. Which meant that I had to have a 20 ounce cup for the same price as a 24 ounce cup would have cost – the kind of stuff that normally gets my goat. No matter, I shouldn't have coffee greed anyway, but now I was cold, wet, and slightly irritated... and I had all these KIDS with which to deal... that extra 4 ounces of coffee could have served me well!

On to Walmart where I had to circle the lot 3 times to find a decent parking spot. Not that I'm lazy, but it makes me nervous to walk through the parking lot with so many little kids, at least one of whom doesn't listen well and tends to run off whenever he pleases. I got a break because my parking spot was next to a cart return, so I loaded all 3 kids into a cart – though it was a bit of a feat to fit them all in along with my huge diaper bag. We had plans to switch into a more kid-friendly cart once we got inside, but the kid-rider carts were all buried behind other carts, leaving me no choice but to leave my kid-filled cart in the path of every other shopper who entered the Walmart in that particular 5 minute span. The shopping itself was uneventful, unless you count the fact that my son tumbled out of the cart (did it have to be while he was

explaining to me how he likes Justin Bieber's songs just not Justin Bieber himself? And one wonders what that all even means when coming from a 3-year-old...) We had to stop a few times to nurse his wounds and to feed his brother, but then we were on our way. I didn't realize until my groceries were all bagged up that I forgot my wallet, meaning that I had to drag all the kids back out to the car in the now freezing rain (it actually made noises as it bounced against our cheeks) to get my wallet and then to return to the store to buy our groceries... not to mention maneuvering BACK to the car to load up all the kids and the groceries...

Following that, my intentions were good; I was going to bring Hubby a special half-price fountain drink from Sonic for Happy Hour, but I ran out of gas. Well, I didn't run out of gas and get stranded in the cold, so for that I'm thankful. But after all of the illustrations of Murphy's Law I witnessed on this Monday, I decided not to risk stopping at the gas station again for gas – coffee Monday or not.

In case you had the same sort of Monday and need a theme song:

Say... FART

No.. honestly, the photographer for our big Jamiahsh family portrait used that in an attempt to get a few of the more rambunctious models to cooperated. A certain young man chose to say "gingivitis" instead (bad teeth, Noah?). In any case, today was the big family portrait day. It probably has been a good 10 years since the last one. Looking at the old one, there are a few people it was deemed necessary to delete for one reason or other and Alex for one had those monkey ears hanging out and I still had a reasonable amount of hair on my head plus a few extra pounds (now it is the opposite on both counts). There have also been a few additions to the family so it all balances out. The last picture was more a photo of the children for the parents' Christmas present. This one included all 17 (or is it 18?) of us.

The day began at mass. I was not aware that the choir sang this morning (it is not the third Sunday of the month. Guess I should look at the schedule a bit more closely). The choir master came down and told me to come up to the loft. I was shocked to see Chad (who had just had gall bladder surgery on Thursday up there. Better than expected but he did not do much. I KNOW that the next time the choir sings is Christmas Eve at 9:30PM mass. A half-hour earlier than normal (hope the Children's mass at 7 is quick since we sing carols at 9).

Then it was off to break the camera. It actually went quacked than I thought i had. We arrived around noon and were finished by 12:20. I think the most troublesome one was my 15 year old godson who really was not appreciative of being torn away from his Fortress of Solitude. We asked him if he would do better if we showed him a picture of his girlfriend. Still amazes me that he has found the time to be social enough for a

girlfriend. Guess there is someone for everyone. Rather humorous with about 10 photographers offering placement suggestions. Not me... I just went with the flow. Wonder if she can photoshop a bit of hair to cover the glare that is sure to come. ☐

Today was also the combined three-store Christmas party. Not for me... not that I am not a sociable person, someone needed to stay behind and run the store. We now have Noble Romans pizza at the store. The sign out front says "Made Fresh Daily."

Apparently, we had a customer who took the sign a bit too literally as he called to place an order. We are NOT a pizza parlor and do not deliver. You have to buy and bake at home ☐

Kind of reminded me of the customer who called and inquired on our availability of breasts. As reward for staying behind, a pizza, 2 liter, and leftover cookies were delivered to me to take home. We also have a stand up mascot of Noble Romans at the front of the store to greet the customers. I do recall back in the day that there was a Noble Romans in the Fort and vaguely remember said mascot in television ads. I remember the tag for Godfather's Pizza which was the apropos "Pizza You Can't Refuse" but that is another chain.

Well... off to bed. Early start tomorrow.

Little Luke Likes Lights

Thought I would post a quick little update about our youngest child who is growing so quickly that I don't know if we can call him our "new addition" any longer! Luke James is almost 2 months old, and among his likes are being held, listening to music, and looking at lights. He's been especially impressed by the colorful lights on the Christmas tree. These things

are common favorites among many almost-2-month-olds, but Luke is a very special baby – he has been able to hold his head up for a few weeks and is extremely alert for a baby his age. His VERY FAVORITE thing to do in the whole world is to be held like this while his little hands open and close and his eyes bulge as he takes in the world around him:



Luke

doesn't sleep well at night, but we aren't really surprised because none of our 5 kids were very good sleepers as babies. But Luke doesn't sleep much during the day, either – he takes about one good nap per day about 3-4 days per week. And by “good nap” I mean him sleeping for over an hour without waking up. Actually, I thought of the perfect way to describe Luke the other day: he is an *intense* baby. He wants **what** he wants **when** he wants it, and he's not shy about asking. Don't get me wrong; it's not that he is a disagreeable baby, and he is very smiley. He's just very demanding, and since he is always awake... well, you can understand why my free time is down to almost none and the blog posts from me remain infrequent. Especially because he demands to have 100% of the available attention, whether it's eye contact while playing with him or using both hands to feed him – he is not a fan of a multi-tasking parent.

He's already able to play – he loves looking into the eyes of people who play with him, and he especially likes to exchange baby talk with “goo” being his favorite word. He loves when his sisters and brother play with him, but it's hard to tell

if he has a favorite yet. Christopher is 3 and Luke's only brother, but he doesn't play with him often – it seems like Christopher is afraid of hurting Luke, and he also seems shy about talking to him or playing with him. Disney likes to hold Luke (she's 5), but she loses interest in a matter of minutes. Taylor is almost 12, and she enjoys Luke's cuteness, but she is too busy with a life of her own to spend a lot of time with her baby brother. Sammie stands out as the remarkable sibling. 7-year-old Sammie just adores her baby brother; she's always asking to hold him, and she doesn't soon grow tired of it. She plays with Luke, asks how he's doing, expresses interest in his activities, misses him when she's gone, and loves seeing cute pictures of him. I'm looking forward to watching their special bond strengthen even further as they grow up together. His brother and sisters love their baby brother in their own ways, and any time Luke does something new, he is crowded by an admiring entourage that can rival that of most celebrities.



Luke also really likes baths. He smiles like crazy the whole time he's in the bath; he'll even throw out a couple of "goo"s and "gaa"s and doesn't seem to notice that he sounds different when his ears are under water.

Luke is also the tie-breaker in our family – we have 3 brown-eyed people and 3 blue-eyed people. Two months old is too early to tell what color a baby's eyes will be, so right now we don't know which "side" will win. It's interesting also

that our 2 blue-eyed kids are left-handed while our 2 brown-eyed kids are right-handed. Will Luke be a tie-breaker in only the eye color category or will he break the mold and be a blue-eyed righty or a brown-eyed lefty?

Even with his intensity, Luke is a wonderful baby and it's been nothing but a pleasure so far to get to know him as his personality develops – I wouldn't change any part of him or anything about him, no matter how far behind on stay-at-home-mommy-work I am! Here he is wearing the adorable camouflage hoodie someone got him – it's so cute! And here's an interesting bit of culture clash for you – where I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, Luke would wear this and we'd be trendy. Here in the woods of rural Northwest Ohio, I put the camo hoodie on Luke, and we heard no fewer than FIVE comments about hunting and him being a little woodsman ☐



Not As Good As Others

Well as I am often reminded after wishing customers a good day: “They are all good just (all together now) some are better than others.” I think that this year has taught me that there are times that test us but with the help of family,

the best of friends and the power of HIM above, we manage to get through them even (often times) better for the experience.

This past week, my Dad was back in the hospital. At least he was in the right place at the right time as he was at his doctor's office for a follow-up and ended up spending the next two nights and one day in the luxurious accommodations of our area hospital. After getting him checked out, I had to take him across the street to the medical center for his appointment with a specialist. I learned something new about his condition: one of the arteries in his neck is 60% blocked.

Unfortunately, physicians do nothing unless it is at 80% or more. I'm beginning to think that this just might be the crux of his problems. Not knowing how it feels physically, I can see where it is having an effect on his mental health. The specialist said he would see him in another year and sent him on his way. Seems to be the response of the day. In any case he had a CT scan done today, has a stress test next week, and to the VA on Thursday. Think that is why he asked his sister to come up from California who arrived last night ☐

Prayerfully, Chad seems to be doing well. Yesterday, he went in to have his gall bladder removed. His friend called here about 10AM before he went "under the knife" and by one, my brother was out of surgery, in recovery, and doing wonderfully. He got to come home a few hours after as well.

I received a Facebook comment yesterday from BooBoo who "Hopes that the Jamiahsh family has investments in the hospital."

After this year, I think we have our own private rooms with engraved beds. ☐

And thanks to my pal-brother who happened to be in the ER the other night and was there for them as he, himself, was checking on another friend.

King Praising King

Our new addition, Luke James, is almost 2 months old (already!), and he loves music. While I sit cuddling, feeding, and playing with him, I've been perusing youtube.com looking for music for us to enjoy together. Being the time of year that it is, we've really been appreciating Christmas tunes, especially Martina McBride and Celine Dion's versions of O Holy Night. How I love to sit with my little Luke and think about what the lyrics of these songs REALLY mean! I've also been especially appreciative of Elvis' gospel songs and praise music lately. My favorites are "How Great Thou Art" and "Put Your Hand in the Hand". Today it came to my attention that my friend's dad composed a praise song for Elvis and sang backup for the track with his music group, The Imperials! How cool is that! Thanks to Amanda who shared her dad's talent on this song, "If the Lord Wasn't Walking by My Side":

Black Friday Madness

I'm not even sure why most stores opened Thanksgiving night at either 9 or midnight. Did they think perhaps it would be less chaotic than opening at 4am? My brother and his friend hit Wal-Mart at 10. My cousin and her annual group headed out at 11. Me?! I traveled to our area Wally World about 8am to a half-full store. While there, I was even able to chat with a few of my former co-workers. It seems that the store was the place to be earlier. No less than 18 shoppers had to be escorted out. A co-manager stated that next year it would be necessary to rethink some of the procedures and have lines around more of the doorbusters. Seriously, it is **Not at all** worth rushing, clamoring, and FIGHTING to get that 32" LCD tv for \$200 (or whatever the deal was). I was able to find gifts for all but two people on my list (Cyber Monday sounds nice to me) and spend less than \$60 total after getting a decent night's sleep. I even picked up the *All-Star Superman* DVD for \$1.98. Perhaps it would be fun to go in and watch the lunatics have a free-for-all making every effort to get that last Tickle Me Elmo doll (ok... that was **\$0** 20 years ago) but not to go in and see 18 people be escorted out. That is lunacy at it's worst and this is SMALL TOWN U.S.A. "Peace on Earth, good will toward men" and Black Friday shoppers.

A Muppetational Thanksgiving

What a fun-filled day full of loving (if a bit wacky) family with so many blessings given to us from above. So thankful

that He has led me through this one of the toughest years I have had to endure with not only my own physical hurdles but hopefully within a few weeks those of my Dad and Chad's as well. Chad is having his gall bladder removed on the 1st and Dad goes to a specialist on the 2nd. I pray that both of them come out of these experiences better and stronger for the experience.

As tradition, I got up and helped set the table for the first of two feasts and then watched the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade getting a glimpse of some of the best of this year's Broadway shows and a sneak at the coming *Newsies*!!!! that would be EXTREMELY fun to see on stage.

Before we sat down to two long tables in the dining room and Mom joined a few of the littles in the kitchen, Alex provided the blessing. He is serving as chaplain in his Boy Scout troop. He says he is also bugler but has yet to get a bugle.

After the noon day feast, I stretched out and tried to nap... NICE TRY! Not sure what we did, just sat around enjoying each other's company and viewed Elizabeth's video she made for her honors English or Lit class (whichever it was) a faux trailer for a new version of H.G. Wells' (not Orson, Jeff) *The Time Machine*. And at 4, the annual Drug Cartel of Dallas football game. And around 5, the Swary contingent arrived for the second feast.

FINALLY, a troop of us headed to the movies to watch *The Muppets*! YAY!!!!!! Highly, HIGHLY recommended! I would pay to see it again! Everything that I love about the old series and the movies rolled into one and with nods to both. The new character, Walter stole the show he was S0000000 adorable.

Cameos, singing, dancing, fun for the ENTIRE family. It could have done with a bit more Statler and Waldorf but still great fun! Mahna Mahna! In an interview, Jason Segel (who plays Walter's human twin, Gary and served as a writer and producer) stated that every generation needs a Muppet movie.

No spoilers just plain, good, FAMILY fun!

Finally, Chad and Cynthia stayed to go to shop electronics at Wal-Mart for Black Friday while the rest of us drove home.

Hope all of you my friends AND family had a blessed Thanksgiving filled with love. Do D00 de Do Do! Mahna Mahna! I think that will be stuck in my head for a few days.

