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I remember a time in my life when I could do what I wanted when I wanted. I was still teaching. If I wanted to stay and work in my classroom until midnight, I could. If I wanted to eat chicken alfredo three nights in a row for dinner, I did. If at 9 pm I decided I needed something from Mt. Pleasant, I’d get in the car and go. Those were the days before I had a husband and children.

Now I have to pay more attention to the clock to make sure I get home in time to make supper or take a kid to soccer practice. No longer do I concern myself with only my own food preferences. In fact, I now make tuna noodle casserole without peas, chili without beans, and I’ve given up on getting a pizza ordered with just the toppings that I like. And now I live much more by a routine. Weekdays, I wake up at 5:30 am. Nobody is allowed to sleep past 10 am even on a Saturday! Sundays are for church, Faith Formation class, picking outfits for school for the week, and prepping a weekly menu. Bedtime for the girls is 9 pm.

But why did I change? Was it out of obligation? Was it just a matter of submission to societal ideals on what “the mom” was supposed to do and how she’s expected to run the house? Is it because I’m a control freak (who alternates with being lazy?) Maybe. But mostly, I changed out of love. I changed for love. You can’t have love without sacrifice. You can’t be a part of a real relationship without giving up your selfishness and thinking first of others.

As spouses, we make sacrifices. We adjust the foods that we cook, the music we listen to, and the kinds of movies we watch. (Why don’t rom coms have more shoot-em-up action?!?) We modify the activities in which we engage. (Yup, I went with them to Monster Jam!) We even alter what we tolerate (snoring, dirty clothes on the floor *next* to the hamper, poor parking in the garage, and hair in the shower.)

As parents, we sacrifice even more! We give up our time, personal interests, money, emotions, and freedom for our kids. We make sure they get to their games and recitals. The first choice for dinner out is always McDonald’s. We forgo new clothes or household furnishings so we can afford their clothes, school supplies, and sports fees. Our vacation destinations become places like Disney World instead of an all-inclusive resort or a relaxing spa.

Now I am not complaining about making these sacrifices (ok, maybe I am a little…) but I really don’t see them as major sufferings on my part. I choose to try new things and give up old ones out of love. I get enjoyment from honoring my husband by making a meal the way he prefers. My satisfaction comes from seeing a smile on my daughters’ faces when I’m there to watch them perform or compete in a game.

And that’s how it is with God. God created us out of nothing. He had no reason to make earth, day and night, animals or people. He did so because He loved us. Nothing more. There is nothing we can do to impress Him. There is not a “best gift ever” that we can give Him because He is the creator. There is not a prayer that is worthy of how great He is. But we can worship, and we can sacrifice. We should converse with God on a daily basis. It could be by attending Mass, through formal prayer, or in just an informal conversation. We should present our best selves at Mass- in dress, reverence, and participation. We should share our gifts- time, talent, and treasure. We should be willing to do His will openly, confidently, and happily because that is how we show our love to Him.

Blessings,

 Julie Gould

This Week: faithformation@ctknsf.org

* Sunday, March 24, 3 pm at CTK Church, Howard City: Reconciliation Service
* Sunday, March 24, 4-6 pm at Fellowship Hall: Faith Formation classes- GIFT, bring a dish to pass
* Monday, March 25, 7 pm at Fellowship Hall, Howard City: Adult Enrichment Class
* Thursday, March 26, 9:30 am- 10:30 am at CTK Church: Holy Hour
* Friday, March 27, 9:30 am at SF, Lakeview & 7 pm at CTK, Howard City: Stations of the Cross