

The Net Worker



CAN'T WE JUST TALK A LITTLE MORE?

by Pam Lobley

I tuck my son in his cozy bed. The typical day of being rushed, of yelling, fighting with siblings, struggling through homework, groaning at the dinner menu and sloshing through the bath is done. He is relaxed. I am exhausted. We say our prayers and snuggle and talk about things I can't remember. Nothing important.

Then I get up to go. I still haven't finished the dishes. He keeps hugging me. "Can't we just talk a little more?" he says.

I can remember my own mother having "talking time" with me at bedtime and how we would giggle and hug. It is such a sweet, special time. The closeness alone is worth it. But sometimes the small talk turns big when they ask what I think heaven looks like or they tell me a friend was mean to them or that they might want to be a teacher when they grow up or ask why we can't just buy a new car any time we want.

The talking then is easy because I'm not doing anything else. Normally, whenever I'm talking with my kids we are walking to school, or driving to errands, or they are supposed to be making their beds, or I am rushing them through chores. It's not really about the conversation. It's about getting through the day.

But they LOVE when we have conversations. When I pay attention to them and do nothing else. This is why bedtime can take so long. Because we finally slow down and pay attention to each other. And also, they're trying to stay up later.

The kids aren't the only ones who need some good conversations. We all do. Our friends do, our parents do, our spouses do. Remember that Martha and Mary story? Martha raced all around fixing dinner, but Mary sat and listened. She paid attention.

It is so hard, but so rewarding, to pay attention. I feel sometimes that this is the giant battle of my age, to go slowly enough not to miss anything. To stay focused on how the kids are growing, and learn what they are thinking. To stay in touch with friends so that you can be there for them during their struggles and joys, and to stay close to your parents as they age. But in my hectic days, good, connecting conversation is hard to come by.

Jesus never seemed to be in a rush. I am sure he didn't have a to-do list in his pocket, and he certainly resisted showing off. He moved carefully through his life and did things with thought. He wasn't concerned with meeting deadlines or expectations from the rest of the world, he was concerned with whomever was in front of him at any time. He took the time to have conversations — it was how he taught and how he connected with people. His words changed the world. How could some kind and thoughtful words — or listening — change the worlds of people that we know?

I have come to believe that Christ is found in the slowing down. The more you rush, the easier it is to get distracted by what is unimportant. I admit to being terrible at slowing down, but I won't give up trying. I have Jesus as an example, and I have friends and family who are always ready to talk a little more.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Have you ever thought about volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and building a house for someone in need? Steve Sahagin had, and he made it a reality for himself and other St. Peter's parishioners. I caught up with him to find out how it was.

Pam Lobley: How did you get started on this idea?

Steve Sahagin: I co-lead the Social Concerns Committee, so I have been involved in areas of social justice before. In college I helped build homes in Appalachia, and I thought this was something I would love to do with St. Peter's. I spoke with the parish council, and then approached Habitat for Humanity in their Hackensack office. When I advertised in the bulletin, I got a huge response. In fact, we got more people than we could use on that day.

Pam: How many people does Habitat use in a day?

Steve: They typically have 15 workers and then 3 or 4 people to serve food. So they need 18-19 people. I had to turn people down, and sent some of the volunteers to St. Martin's kitchen for that day. People who couldn't come donated paint, nails, lumber. Many people who were too old or confined to home wanted to get involved and simply prayed for us.

Pam: Where were the houses?

Steve: We were supposed to go to two locations: one in Englewood and one in Edgewater. In Englewood, Habitat is building a series of two-family homes, but on our day there had been a delay in pouring the foundation, so we couldn't go there. The Englewood location is a great story — there had been an old building there that abutted a ball field and had become a crack den. You can imagine what that did to the neighborhood and what it was like for kids wanting to play on that field. The building got condemned, and then Habitat bought the site. They tore that building down and starting putting up these two family homes. It is turning that neighborhood around. I think they are also planning a handicapped house there.

For our day, though, we went to Edgewater, where they are redoing two large apartment buildings and converting them into condos. Each building will eventually hold 18 families in each.

Pam: What was it like?

Steve: They break you into work crews — they had two paid general contractors and they split us into groups to do spackling, painting, or light craftsman work like framing. There was one finished unit that day, and people cleaned, mopped, and swept up plaster dust. There were some metal posts sticking up from the ground outside and some people were set to work sawing them down.

We even met the single mom who was moving in to that unit. The units are sold to buyers carefully selected by a board at Habitat. They have to earn some of the house with sweat equity and are required to put 100 hours of work into their home as part of their payment.

Anyone can be involved. We had workers that day ranging in age from 16-70. It is just a one day commitment, on a Saturday. They do not work on Sunday. We met in the parking lot at St. Peter's at 7:00 a.m. and were on the job by 8:00. At 10:00 we took a break and the Rosary Society provided baked goods for us. At noon we broke for lunch, at 2:00 Monsignor came and blessed the site, and at 4:00 p.m. we were done. They even gave us tee shirts.

Pam: It sounds great — and St. Peter's is organizing another day, right?

Steve: Yes, in fact, we are going to make it a biannual event. Our spring date will be May 3 and our fall date is October 18. However, Habitat needs people all the time, especially during the week. They have people working 6 days a week, and they get volunteers from all over. They have corporate sponsors, and employees get a vacation day to work with Habitat. The Saturdays fill up in advance but they always need people during the week. I believe Thursdays is Senior Day. You can go on their website: www.habitatbergen.org for more information. Any skill set is appreciated, even if all you can do is push a broom.

Pam: So we should watch the Bulletin for more information on May 3?

Steve: Yes. We are also going to have a donation drive for supplies like mops, brooms, gloves, etc. Parishioners can call me at 201 265-9657 with questions. Further upcoming projects for the Bergen Habitat include a rehab in Garfield and a house in Oradell. I hope we get a lot of volunteers!

EASTER STORIES FOUND AT ST. PETER'S LIBRARY

→ RED TAPE

THE EASTER GOD AND HIS EASTER PEOPLE

by John V. Taylor

It has been said of John Taylor that "His special gift is to open people's eyes to what they have not seen before". He helps us to understand what it means to live as Easter people. We are called to become witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. By reading this book we come to understand how this is possible.

The author's gift of communicating the God who is alive and makes us alive is a gift to us.

→ YELLOW TAPE

LET IN THE LIGHT- FACING THE HARD STUFF WITH HOPE

by Patricia H. Livingstone

The author shares wonderful stories of family and friends and of joys and sorrows. She opens up the world of kindness, laughter and gratitude.

The author is a well-known writer and lecturer. In 1990 she received the U.S. Catholic (Magazine) Award for furthering the cause of women in the Catholic Church.

We promise that this book will bring "light" into your life.

Happy Easter from The Library

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By Eleanor Grybowski

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