



My youngest child is a living pause button in my life.

At 6, he is too little to know the pressures and programming of homework and club sports, and too much of a little boy to be stressed out by a schedule. As he's ushered through his day's activities he somehow he maintains a space in his brain that is free, where he considers the best design for a Lego airplane, or which tree's leaves would fall to the ground first in a race.

He often invites me into this space. At the grocery store, as I am trying to get in, grab what we need, get out and move on to the next task, he stops dead in his tracks: "Mom, if this was a mine, I would use a pick axe and get that apple, because it's green like emeralds. What would you dig out? Do you like the apples that are red like rubies? Rubies are beautiful, you know. You could put them in earrings." Pause. Shift gears. Look down at his bright eyes, get into his curious mind... "I would definitely pick the rubies, Daniel. And look- bananas!!! They're gold! We should mine those too!" He lights up, "Yes, mom! We should mine the bananas to get gold to pay for our groceries!!!" Our chore became a treasure hunt.

"Busy with the ugliness of the expensive success,  
We forget the easiness of free beauty  
Lying right around the corner,  
Only an instant removed,  
Unnoticed and squandered."  
?Dejan Stojanovic

The world must be strange to my son, looking up at all the adults rushing about, glued to their cell phones, missing the fascinating world around them.

For grown—ups, a moment of forced pause, of silence, is uneasy. At each red light the invitation to solitude, to observation, to thought, is drowned by the distraction of a smart phone... so we can keep up with how busy everyone else is. What are we afraid of missing?

"Being busy is better than being bored. Bored left a long time ago. Busy is always around for me."?Tabitha Robin

When we're busy, we don't need to make time to give attention to others or confront problems. Busy is soothing, busy is productive, busy makes us feel accomplished...

An article about the decline of innovation in our time asserts that for centuries, 80% of people made their living using their hands, doing manual labor, which left their brains free to roam, to explore, and to innovate. Now, 80% of the developed world works using their minds. Most manual tasks are automated. We have lost the freedom to be bored, to let our minds wander and explore. Add on the instant entertainment from our cell phones when we have to wait or stop working and there is no space left for imagination.

Our schedules are crazy, but our minds are busier.

"I wanted to figure out why I was so busy, but I couldn't find the time to do it."  
?Todd Stocker

Busyness infects Christians too. We're tempted to believe that if we aren't hyper-busy, we neglect the urgency that the mission of serving God deserves. We look at the saints, but focus on what they did instead of who they were. We try to cram maximum evangelizing efficiency in every hour, instead of maximizing our presence and love in each hour. Taking corporate skills to the kingdom. Streamlining it. Multitasking it.

"One of the most convicting things I have recently come to realize about Jesus is that He was never, not once, in a hurry."  
?Mark Buchanan

Jesus never multitasked. Instead, he showed us that we are made to go deeply into our experiences and to be fully present to each other.

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her." -Luke 10:41

The multi-tasking myth has us so busy with "many things" (see above) that we neglect each other and do our work with less excellence than if we had given it our full attention. Knowing Christ demands pause. It demands silence. It demands holding His gaze and allowing it to penetrate us for as long as He wants. It demands that we live Holy Saturdays of questions with no answers and an inertia that becomes humility, prayer and surrender. Christ builds the kingdom in and through us. We just show up, with a FIAT. And that accomplishes the will of the Father in us. It shows those we touch that the way to God is not in buying his love with good activity, but by being with him and letting him love us.

"...caught up in our own busyness, frantically running from one crisis to the next in a cycle

that looks less like loving the Messiah and more like trying to become one.”  
?Phileena Heuertz

The whole point of our mission is to create spaces for Christ to love others through us, and for others to experience his transforming presence. That’s it. Yes, we strive for excellence, we do our best for Christ, but we do our best, to best be able to LOVE.

“What a pity if in the end you had carried out ‘your’ apostolate and not ‘His’” -St Josemaria Escriva

This morning as my 6 year old was putting on his shoes I sipped my coffee, picked up my phone and read a tweet from Pope Francis:

“Parents, can you “waste time” with your children? It is one of the most important things that you can do each day.” -@pontifex, twitter 10/27/2015

It dawned on me that though the pope knows that this is good for our kids, he is also asking us to live the way WE need to as children of God the Father. The Father loves to waste time with us. He lavishes his love on us with delight, unconditionally, without any other motive. Not only do we as parents need to waste time with our children, we need to waste time AS children of the Father.... In one of those amazing paradoxes that God is so good at, we see that spending time with our kids becomes a mutual exchange of love, a love that nurtures them and makes us more like children. As He said....

“Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” -Mt 18:3

And isn’t that the point?

So my takeaways from time wasted at grocery store:

Plan, but live in the moment. Organize time and priorities well, but when living them, live them fully. Be present in the moment and encounter God and others there.

Put down the phone. Schedule time to check email and social media and then have boundaries that exclude the phone from moments when God calls me to take a breath of solitude with him, to be Alone with the Alone at a red light, or be observant and present to others or ideas when bored in the car-pool line, at the check-out, etc....

Put actions and ministry at the service of Love. Make sure what I am doing creates a space for love to work, no more, no less. Live the apostolate of personal attention to others.

Let the Father waste time with me each day (i.e. prayer). Make the space, the pause, to let him lavish his love on me. He is waiting for it. Christ died for it.