

The thing about the inevitable is that it comes. Sooner or later, but it comes. There are many "inevitables" during the course of one's life – – dental work (my favorite…NOT!), taxes (yes, even for politicians), death of course, and a parent's first real separation from a son/daughter. The latter, my friends, is my inevitable at this particular time.

Lauren leaves to New York at the crack of dawn tomorrow. Her first outing without us. That's especially big for us because those of you who know us well, know that we've travelled in a pack since inception of this family. Even to do as mundane a thing as grocery shopping. Right. So the thought of our baby girl leaving us for a week is a bit unsettling. Don't get me wrong, we couldn't be happier that this opportunity arose for Lauren. Being part of this event is something she had been hoping and praying for since her freshman year at this school. She, along with 6 of her classmates, will be representing the State of Florida at this Leadership Retreat, where they will not only be injected spiritually, but also socially, as they will be meeting and interacting with teens from Salesian schools from other states.

It has hit her hard all this religion stuff. We noticed her interest when at the tender age of 8 she asked to join our Catechism staff to help out every Saturday. She's still doing that. And since her freshman year at La Salle, she has progressively gotten involved with various service clubs and with helping out during retreats given for other students, etc. She's got the fever in a big way. But before you go assuming that we think we have a daughter who's "all that," let me assure you that Lauren is not a "perfect teenager" — that being an oxymoron if I ever heard one. She's your typical attitude-filled teenager, with a wide array of moods, and who makes mistakes she later regrets (thank goodness for that because we all know that's when most of the lessons come). But yes, we are very happy that, at least for now, she has chosen this road. The other day she told me she had come to a realization. She said, "Mom, you know how I don't really like any sport and never been involved in any? Yes, I said (the girl is not sports-inclined at all, is she really our daughter?). "Well," she said, "it came to me that all this service stuff I do, well, that's MY sport." I like that, I said, that's cool. I can only hope and pray that this will be a life-time sport for her.

Meanwhile, back to the inevitable. “Now it’s your turn,” my mother said to me, referring to my first outing on a missionary trip when I was a teenager. “Preparate.” Prepare yourself, she said. I remember my mother’s concerned look at the airport that first time; and actually come to think of it, each and every trip that followed. I thought I knew and understood to a certain extent how she felt, and appreciated her letting me go. But no, I really didn’t. Not until now. This type of inevitable is hard to swallow for parents. Both of us will be going through some serious separation anxiety this coming week, I can assure you. Even as I write these words I think I feel the freak out mode kicking in.

Okay, forgive my restless tone. We are newbies at this type of preordained separation. Some people tell me it gets easier. Does it? Oh God I hope not. As much as I hate the anxiety it causes, I love the affection and connection it stimulates. Not to mention the faith it triggers, as we confidently put her in God’s hands.

My family and friends, may I ask that you keep in your prayers Lauren and the rest of the teens attending this event? That our loving Virgin Mary sees to their health and safety. And that the the grace of God instills in them enough spiritual energy to carry them through years to come. As I wrote to Lauren about this retreat: soak it up and breathe it in, so you can later live it out.

Thanks to all of you.

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