

# Listen to the Children . . .



The last time I was visiting in Baltimore my 12-year-old grandson told me a story he wanted me to share with "everybody in your church and get it translated if needed." He talked about an incident on his school bus in which an eighth grader refused to share her seat and was loudly confronting the bus driver. Just when it seemed things were going to escalate further, another eight-grade girl came up, talked with the disruptive student gently and sat down next to her. Incident over-- the bus continued on its way." Grandma, she was a peacemaker," Sam said.

"Everybody needs to hear that story."

At this time of year when we often mark transitions in young people's lives—First Communion, graduations, and taking steps into adulthood—it seems a good time to listen to what they have to say, Pope Francis also seems to think this is a good idea.

One day after the March for Our Lives drew more than a million people to rallies around the world, Pope Francis used a Palm Sunday sermon in Vatican City to mark World Youth Day and encourage young people to lead.

The pope urged youths to make sure their voices are heard. "Dear young people, the joy that Jesus awakens in you is a source of anger and even irritation to some, since a joyful young person is hard to manipulate," Francis said. "The temptation to silence young people has always existed."

Francis warned that an effort would be made to make "invisible" or "anesthetize" young people who demand change. "There are many ways to sedate them, to keep them from getting involved, to make their dreams flat and dreary, petty and plaintive," the pope said. "Dear young people, you have it in you to shout."

"It is up to you not to keep quiet," the pope said in his sermon. "Even if others keep quiet, if we older people and leaders — so often corrupt — keep quiet, if the whole world keeps quiet and loses its joy, I ask you: Will you cry out?"

The pope's message reminded me of the same grandson as a toddler. His parents were on a retreat and expected their very active 18-month old to struggle with the extended quiet. Instead, he sat next to his dad on a bench for nearly 20 minutes—an eternity for him—listening to the sounds around him. "Birdies," he whispered, "Trees, bells." Then after several minutes of silence, he stood up and shouted, "Yeah, God!!"

The older we grow we seem to find fewer occasions to observe God's handiwork in nature or experience God's presence among us and shout, "Yeah God!" We miss out on so much and often forget that God walks with us in every moment of our lives. That's sad, but sadder still is how frequently we ignore God's nudge to speak up against injustice and follow that with action. The students' "Our Lives Matter" movement is breaking through the inaction of adults and inviting us to stand up with them.

I remember the excitement of standing with others for the cause of justice. As a college student I was involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960's. It was energizing to be with other young people and commit ourselves to working for justice. It wasn't easy, it wasn't comfortable, and to be honest, it was often frightening. But it was important. People listened and we made a difference.

The actions of young people have often pricked the consciences of their elders and changed the directions of nations. Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani girl who spoke out for the education of women and was almost murdered by the Taliban, was the youngest person to ever receive a Nobel Prize. She was 17 at the time. Her advocacy for the education of women continues today. Linda Brown whose attempt to enroll in an all-white school led to the landmark Brown vs. the Board of Education ruling helped open the door to school integration. Imagine the courage it took for a 7-year-old to walk into unfamiliar school doors and be met by people who didn't want her there. She persevered and many lives were changed as a result.

But there is still so much work to be done to decrease racism, fight poverty and hunger, to end violence and overcome divisions that keep us from seeing the spark of God's love and goodness in every person.. As any loving parent, I'm sure God wants all of us to love, respect, and play well together. Maybe our children can teach us how to do this.

—Angela Anno



## Join us on Monday, May 28th for the 15th annual Hunger Walk and 5K Run!

Your support of the Hunger Walk on behalf of the St. Leo Food Pantry is VERY important to our continued operation. Although all checks are made payable to Freestore Foodbank, ALL money (even shirt money) designated for St. Leo Food Pantry goes to our account. This is our "money in the bank." When we make purchases at FSFB it is deducted from our account.

Our goal this year is to have enough money at the FreeStore FoodBank to last us until the 2019 Hunger Walk! With your help we can do it!

**JOIN OUR TEAM:** <http://freestorefoodbank.org/hungerwalk-saintleo-join>

**DONATE TO OUR TEAM:** <http://freestorefoodbank.org/hungerwalk-saintleo-donate>

### SPONSOR A STUDENT

St. Leo's Youth Group would like to join the Hunger Walk, but some of our students can't afford the registration fee. **Please consider a \$20 sponsorship** to allow one of our Youth Group members to participate in the Hunger Walk. If you are willing to sponsor a student, please send a \$20 check made out to St. Leo the Great Church with the note: Youth Group Hunger Walk Sponsorship.

Mail to: St. Leo the Great Church, 2573 St. Leo Place, Cincinnati, OH 45225