

I have a distinct memory of sitting at my grandmother's kitchen table, supposedly doing homework, but actually reading a comic book I had hid in my textbook. My grandmother (on my mother's side) was a calm, quiet and patient woman; she cared deeply for her family and always ensured that we were cared for. As I was supposed to be working, she was baking cookies, chocolate chip my favourite kind. I thought for sure I had pulled a fast one on her until, with her back still turned she said, "You're not going to learn anything about math if you keep reading that comic." My grandmother had been a teacher, and so knew every trick of the student trade.

I put the comic book away and she turned and smiled at me. She was not angry, she did not scold me, or make a big scene about taking the comic away, she simply said her piece and smiled. It's been eight years since my grandmother died and I think of her and her smile often. Last week for example my own son tried to pull a similar trick with his homework. The difference though was that his textbook was replaced with a Chromebook open to his class work and the comic book was replaced by a YouTube video on video games open in an additional tab. When I would check in on him, he would open the homework tab and when he didn't think I could notice he would flip to the video.

As I stood outside his room, I had one of those moments where there is time to clearly think before you act. I had every reason to be upset, namely that he was breaking a rule in our house which greatly limits the amount of screen time our boys have during the week. Yet as I stood outside his room, my grandmothers smile came to my mind and so I walked into his room looked at him and with a smile across my face said, "You're not going to learn anything about science, while watching a YouTube video about Mario." He looked back with a smile on his face, but also the shocked look of getting busted. He shut it off and went back to work and I left the room.

I could have handled that situation a number of ways, most of which would have ended with me getting angry and my son also getting angry and then the two of spreading that anger around our home; yet the foundation of my childhood, namely in this moment my grandmothers smile and caring ways, pushed me to respond to my own sons' actions in the same way. After he finished his homework, we both laughed together about how I caught him, and I told him the story about my grandmother that I just shared with all of you. It was a great moment, one that was filled with joy rather than the animosity that it could have had.

All of us have foundations upon which we stand, live and move. Those foundations can be both positive and negative, they can be good lessons, but also lessons that remind of us of ways not to be. Our foundations can be influenced by family, the church, our education, even the friends that you played with on the playground growing up. Every lived experience, every smile, every painful word adds to the foundation of knowledge that we then use to respond to the world around us.

Knowing that I find myself so thankful today for the smile of my grandmother; that smile, and calm peaceful approach showed me a different way to deal with my own children a way that led to a wonderful moment of memory sharing and laughter.

Friends I invite you today to take a moment to look back on your own foundations and offer thanks to those who have added a positive and strong influence in your life. When you stop to think about

something as simple as a smile in a time that could be handled with frustration can and will influence our lives down the line. Take my story for example, my grandmother's smile twenty plus years ago changed helped build my relationship with my son, just last week. That's something to remember and to offer thanks for.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Adam Hall