



THE CHILD LURKS WITHIN

INSPIRED BY A DUET OF BROTHERS

JODI (APICELLI) GERSTMANN, LV 95-96

Last night I madly danced with my nephew to the sugary, soothing sound of Herman's Hermits "I'm into Something Good." A powerful storm had knocked out our power and cable, but luckily we were able to resort to some old-fashioned fun: listening to records. Parker, eight years old, had never before seen a record player; he just couldn't believe the technology of those grooves! Impromptu dance sessions seem like something we see only on the Disney Channel, but I have become a believer in the power of song and dance. Karaoke machines surely belong in every American home during these divisive times. You can't be mad at someone if you are singing a Journey song together.

Living room dancing and kitchen karaoke require a state of mind in which ego is deflated and childlike wonder is escalated. **Working and living with Christian Brothers taught me many things, but one enduring lesson is the ability to laugh at myself.**

I arrived at Miguel House in 1995, an English major from La Salle University who had just spent four years thinking deep thoughts. I was also convinced, with the wonderfully infallible mindset of a 19 year old, that I was meant to change the world, a serious job for a serious person.

Pop music? For lesser minds. Genre fiction? Gauche and unchallenging. Network television? If it wasn't French, and it wasn't 30 years old, it was a waste of time. Living with the



Jodi with her nephew, Parker Apicelli, at the Dino Dig!

dynamic duo of Brother Lawrence Goyette, FSC, and Brother Charles Kitson, FSC (1949-2016), certainly changed my mind about that. Charlie, the humble clown, and Larry, with his Sahara Desert-level dry wit, were different from most adults I knew. They were serious, they were accomplished, they were changing the world, but they were also... funny? Simple moments of laughing at the dinner table and watching mid-90s sitcoms taught me that life can, and should, be a celebration, even when it is at its most mundane or stressful.

In a year in which I witnessed miraculous moments of meditation, community, commitment, humility, faith and purpose, the memories I cherish are Charlie's face lighting up with laughter, Larry's eyes wide with sincerity to underscore an unbelievable story he just told. Embracing a child-like point of view helped these men I admired process and overcome the incredibly challenging responsibilities they faced every day. The work they did was demanding, and the laughter was a much-needed balm.

In some of my hardest times, when I am at a loss for how to proceed, I remember my time with Larry, Charlie, Brother James, and my wonderful fellow volunteers, Marty and Steve. I remember that I am not all that important, that a good song on the radio can help me to breathe, and that Herman's Hermits can make a scary storm seem like child's play.

Jodi (Apicelli) Gerstmann, LV 95-96, served at The San Miguel School of Providence in Rhode Island. She currently lives in Shark River Hills, Neptune, New Jersey. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of Lasallian Volunteers, this story is one in a series of reflections by LV alums on how the LV experience has impacted their lives. Additional reflections can be found at www.LasallianVolunteers.org.

