

A FAMILY JOURNAL

by Rita Munn

Timothy 2:1 "First of all, then I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered by everyone, for kings and for all in authority that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity."

This month I wanted to take this opportunity to invite all those who read the Family Journal to join with myself and others in a prayer ministry. This simple prayer ministry is referred to as SOAP. SOAP is an anachronism for Sending Out A Prayer. Like those ideas which are wonderfully simple yet deeper in meaning, SOAP is powerful in its potential.

Many years ago I read an article in a Maryknoll magazine about a beloved and elderly Maryknoll priest serving in Africa. Upon his death, he was eulogized by those people whose lives had been enriched through his tireless work among them. He was described as "going like a block of soap." For these native people this was a very high term of endearment and respect. "To go like a block of soap" meant that his total embracement of his vocation was fulfilled until his death. His life was used by the Lord until his earthly life was taken from him by the Lord. His life was like soap in the Lord's hands.


Imagine for a moment a large cake of soap, perhaps resting next to the kitchen sink. Soap is not extraordinary yet always necessary. Soap does not apologize or lament for what it is not but is available for what it is and means to others. Soap waits to be used and then performs its service without fanfare. It is efficient and helpful no matter its size or condition. Soap quietly works until it is all gone.

Over the years I have contemplated this saying and its spirituality. I have prayed for the grace and courage to go like soap in the Lord's hands. Most recently, through my work with Catholic homeschooling families, I have witnessed the beautiful spirituality of dedicated parents who are striving to be "soap for the Lord." They work diligently in the spirit of soap where the Lord has placed them.

The Lord placed upon my heart a desire to pray for these families in a symbolic way. Each time I wash my hands I offer up a Hail Mary for all homeschooling families.

A dear friend, Lisa, reminded me that we are earthen vessels of the Lord's making. When she washes her hands, the Lord's earthen vessel, she imagines it is Jesus Who washes over her with His tender love. This love gives her the grace to go forward like soap in His hands.

My husband (the ever practical engineer) told me that when a bar of soap becomes a small sliver, we usually stick it to a larger bar of soap. He likes to think this is symbolic of our Christian witness in the world. Our witness as we go like soap in the Lord's hands



strengthens others and never really dies but becomes a part of the next generation's witness.

I like to think about the different bars of soap in our house. Though they may differ in appearance, price, texture, and scent all the bars of soap do what is asked of them until they are gone.

Please join with those of us who are SOAP. Let us lift up a prayer for one another as we wash these earthen vessels. There is such power in prayer. Prayer proves its strength in its simplicity. Prayer's power is far reaching because it reaches out to God. When we reach for God we feel His embrace because we realize, through prayer, that His arms have always been around us.


We are nearing the end of the school year and as such many of us are feeling a bit pushed or somewhat stressed concerning those details that are looming as the year closes. Let us SOAP for one another, asking for each other the graces, strength, and patience to continue until we reach the end of our duties. Together we will ask the Lord to guard us against the Tempter. The Tempter wants us to look backward at what we have not accomplished so that we will forget to go forward into the tasks at hand. It is the good Jesus that holds His hand out to us and encourages us to continue with His help.

I will be SOAP for each of you and I ask that you do the same for me. ☺

Jesus, I ask for the graces necessary to do my work in a spirit of peace and resignation to Your holy will. Lord, I ask for a fresh anointing of Thy Holy Spirit that I may go gently, quietly, and diligently into my days of service for You. Please embrace each home-schooling parent at this moment and give them Your peace. I would ask that You empower them with the resources necessary to complete their obligations in the home-school. We love You, Lord, and long to see Your face. Amen.

My friends and I who SOAP have gotten in the spirit of this ministry to the point that it opens up many opportunities for furthering the message. Now I rarely send a gift that I do not put a bar of special soap in the package with an explanation of the meaning behind the soap. I keep my eyes on the lookout for bargains on all kinds of specialty soaps. Recently I came across a sale on bars of soap (the expensive kind that is usually found in pricey hotels or spas). It is lovely, all vegetable, and fragrant. The colors were earthy. The scents ranged from lavender to vanilla. I found, in a small country store, a bar of Castile soap for sale among the laundry items. This soap was prized for its gentleness despite the many hardworking tasks for which it was used.

Having had two children who studied art in college, I am blest with a nice assortment of pinch pots. Pinch pots are made from clay and formed by the potter's hand alone without the wheel. They remind me of the type of earthenware that would be crafted by ancient peoples. In fact you are able to discern fingerprints and thumb strokes in the pieces. These we use to rest our soap in next to the sink. It is just another reminder of the deeper meaning in SOAP as it is related to the hands of the Father.



Perhaps you too can have fun in exploring the world of soaps and searching out just the right soap for a gift.

SOAP,

Rita

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About the Munn Family

Ronald and I were married in 1973. I had just graduated from St. Dominic School of Nursing and he from Mississippi State with a degree in Aerospace Engineering. The Lord was very generous when we prayed to have a family. He blessed us with 10 children and now 2 grandchildren.

We began homeschooling in 1996. Children are a gift from the Lord and He designed them to begin learning the moment they are created. It continues to be one of the greatest pleasures of my life to spend my days with my children. The Lord is so good!