

**BELIEF** By Kathryn Barlow-Williams

# Pictures don't show just how messy real life can be

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but it doesn't tell the whole story. For example, our children look presentable in a photo taken at my niece's wedding. But that was not the case a few hours earlier.

The day before the ceremony, the girls still needed shoes to go with their bridesmaids' dresses because they "forgot" they needed silver ones.

A few hours before the rehearsal dinner, the girls shopped for barely passable, never-to-be-worn-again shoes. Meanwhile, the oil light came on in my car, so I took it to the shop. Apparently, low oil was the least of my worries. A stern mechanic



**Kathryn Barlow-Williams:** We can't always enjoy perpetual bliss.

warned that I could die if I didn't replace the tires. An air bubble in the front was deadly, but all were bad.

With no time to spare, we managed to get shoes and tires. What more could go wrong? Our youngest child would soon tell us.

As we were leaving for the rehearsal dinner, Sam appeared in what looked like women's capri pants.

"These fit in the waist, but they are a little short,"

he offered.

Our 14-year-old son had grown about half a foot since he had last worn his suit two months earlier.

Shocked by the spectacle standing before me, I was speechless until my unsuspecting husband entered the room. Pointing to Sam's exposed calf, I frantically barked, "I don't have time to fix this. The girls and I will go to the dinner. You go buy Sam pants."

It was a natural division of labor, since I was doing the wedding.

The next round of chaos did not erupt until later that night. When I told the girls to lay out their clothes for the wedding, my middle daughter

looked as if I had slapped her.

In eight hours, she needed to be dressed for my niece's big day, and that is when she "remembered" what she "forgot."

"I need to get the dress altered. They didn't have it in my size, so I just bought it one size too small. The lady at the store said it would be easy to alter."

No answer would fix the dilemma, but the questions still flew out of my mouth: "Why didn't you just order your size? Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

In response, I got the teenage mantra, "I don't know. I forgot."

"Let's see what we can

do." Divine intervention is the only explanation I have for not exploding with frustration. Quite miraculously, I calmly enlisted the help of my older daughter, and we got the dress zipped.

"Can you breathe?" I asked.

"Yes. But it isn't comfortable."

"That's an important life lesson. We can't always be comfortable. We just have to deal with it."

We arrived at the wedding with zipped dresses, shoes on every foot, tires on every wheel and pants on a boy. Thus we have the lovely photo.

The problem with our media-driven society is that a picture doesn't tell

the whole story. Psychologists use the term "Facebook Effect" to describe the unhappiness we feel when we compare our lives to photographs posted. Everyone seems to be having fun while we slog through another day.

Between picture-perfect moments, though, real life is messy. We can't always be comfortable or enjoy perpetual bliss. But we can find the sacred in the ordinary and celebrate the love that grows as we manage the chaos of life together.

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