

Dear Family,

I've started noticing that a growing number of blogging mothers refer to their children by pseudonyms rather than by their actual names. While this is by no means the *most* annoying aspect of many mom-blogs, it nevertheless poses a significant challenge to casual followers (me, for instance) who *haven't the faintest idea who you're talking about!*

I'm informed that this little annoyance is intended as some sort of safety precaution; that somewhere, somebody must have tested the hypothesis that unspeakable things are more likely to befall a child whose real name appears somewhere on the Internet. I'd be interested in seeing that research. For that matter, I'd also be interested in seeing unbiased research conclusively demonstrating that recycling actually benefits *anything* (other than government-subsidized recycling businesses).

I'm reasonably certain there isn't much evidence of either thing. But I separate my garbage anyway—and dutifully lug my three different trash containers out to the curb every Monday morning—not because I think it does any good, but because I don't want my neighbors (or my children) to think I'm an Earth-hating sociopath. Likewise I will dutifully begin referring to my children by made-up names in these letters. From this day forward I shall refer to my daughters (beginning with the oldest) as "Hannah," "Lucy," "Sophie," and "Grace." Bear in mind that these are not their *real* names. And don't bother going back to old letters posted on this site to try and figure out what their real names are. Nice try, Mr. Smarty Pants, but I've already updated the archives and changed all past references to reflect my daughters' new aliases. I'm sorry for having to do this and for all the frustration it is likely to cause the half-dozen of you who read my monthly letter. But it's a necessary step in my ongoing quest to create the impression that I'm *not* a bad father willfully seeking to endanger his children. I only hope it's not too late.

And with that out of the way, I'm happy to report that "Lucy" (not her real name) turned 10 this month. The event was marked by a "slumber" party to which several friends from school and church were invited. Many of her church friends left prior to the "slumber" portion of the evening because they have parents who believe that "slumber" parties (even at the bishop's house) aren't an especially good idea. I happen to agree with them, and I think Crystal does too, but we pick our battles, and this isn't one we've chosen to fight—yet.

Even with the reduced church-friend presence, the party conversation at one point turned to the temple. (The Washington, DC Temple is a well-known landmark around here and hanging a painting of it in your house—as we have done—is liable to draw some questions.)

The question Lucy got was something along the lines of, "What is that place, anyway." The question prompted Lucy to do what she always does when she gets a Church-related question she can't answer: She ran and got her Bible Dictionary, looked it up, and started read-

ing the answer to her friends. I keep forgetting that I need to give her a copy of "[True to the Faith](#)" which is an even better resource for answering "what-does-____-mean" sorts of questions.

(I add parenthetically here that I've been asked by colleagues whether I have an office in the temple by virtue of my position in the Church. This is usually where I have to explain that the position isn't nearly as exalted as the title may imply. I've been tempted to point out that while I don't have any special standing in the temple, my dad actually has his own locker stall there, and that's kind of a big deal. But I figure that'll just invite more questions that I won't be able to answer very well.)

Returning to "Lucy," she continues to enjoy her duties on the school's Radio Crew. This basically means that she reads the announcements every Friday and is somehow involved with a school TV show every other Thursday. I'm not sure how the TV program works, but I've heard her do the announcements and she sounds like she's having a good time.

She also recently mounted a run for the vice presidency of her school's student government. She ultimately lost to some floozy who she doesn't like very much. I never held out a great deal of hope that a group of children from [our county](#) (which went 72 percent for Obama) would be capable of making an intelligent electoral choice, but "Lucy" took it all much better than I would have and we're impressed by her gumption to make a go of it.

"Sophie," who presumably voted for Lucy, nevertheless remains a huge fan of the president's, and often asks when we're going to take her to the White House (a mere 11-mile bike ride if you do it right). Ever the hypochondriac, I've surmised that she must be in it for the free health insurance. Sophie's morning ritual consists of stumbling into her parents' bedroom, claiming to be sick, and finding the thermometer to take her temperature. At this point it becomes a little like watching someone try to hit the lottery. The thermometer beeps and she anxiously removes it from her mouth, hoping against hope that a number permitting her to skip school will somehow appear on the digital readout. Every day yields pretty much the same result: "97.4—well, there's always tomorrow." I think she actually does like school, though.

Sophie may eventually get her wish, though, as flu hysteria remains rampant. We're not sick yet, but I get that eerie feeling that it's just a matter of time. At a bank in Atlanta (where I've been a half-dozen times this year) they've installed automatic Purell dispensers in the elevator lobbies on every floor. At the Seattle bank where I spent this past week (only the second time this year there) I only saw one Purell station—in the break room next to the fancy-pants free Starbucks machine. The Seattle trip included dinner at Roland and Marci's Bellevue home with Crystal's (and Roland's) Uncle Don, Aunt Cara and cousin Jonathan, who happened to be in town (up from San Diego) as well. I had a nice time, but was pretty wiped out, so I'm afraid I wasn't very good company.

Crystal probably won't mind my telling you that she turned 39 (for the first time) last week. She seems cool with it.

Go Phillies!

Love, Tim et al.





“LUCY” TURNS 10.

Left: Delighting in her Birthday Ice Cream Cake on her actual birthday

Below: Contemplating her Birthday Pie (and wearing a *different* nightgown) at her birthday “slumber” party.



“Grace” checks out the jellyfishes at a new Baltimore Aquarium exhibit.
(She calls it “the fish zoo.”)



Right: Raggedy Ann
Below: “Lucy” as a jellyfish at the school Halloween party (with a girl I think I recognize from her birthday party).



(I lifted this picture from someone else’s website. I just can’t believe I didn’t think of it first.)