

# A daughter of the world

*Elizabeth-Katherine is set to learn that life is about stewardship, and not acquisitions*

**N**obody knew. Prior to the birth of our first child, two weeks ago today at St. Joseph's Hospital, Jean and I kept her name, Elizabeth, top secret from absolutely everyone.

"It's from the Bible and it's not Dorcas," is all I would reveal, before adding, "It and when we have a boy, we have a Biblical name for him too. And it's not Nimrod."

So imagine the confirmation we felt when, prior to our return to Canada for the delivery, some western friends in Yemen said good-bye to us by reading the Biblical story of Elizabeth.



**Thomas Froese**

*Letter from Yemen*

The gospel writers tell that Elizabeth was a cousin of Mary, mother of Christ. Barren, she was surprised after conceiving her son John later in her life.

It seems our friends wanted to remind Jean and I that while angels may not advertise it, the arrival of even common children into this world is a supernatural event. Indeed, in Hebrew, Elizabeth means "consecrated to God." Katherine, our newborn's middle name, means "pure" in its original Greek.

(Dorcas, by the way, doesn't mean "huck-toothed girl with big glasses," but "Gazelle." And Nimrod is not "he who can't tie his own shoes," but actually "hunter.")

The heritage of names has been largely lost in our culture, but not in the Middle East. That's why Arab names run as long as trains.

Take the name Ali bin Ahmad bin Saleh Al-Fulani. Ali to friends and family, his family name is Al-Fulani. The bin Ahmad bin Saleh means he's the son of Ahmad, (a common derivation of the prophet Mohammed), who is son of Saleh.

But I digress. The point is bright-eyed Elizabeth-Katherine is here, and she'll grow up at least for a couple of years in Yemen.

True, the developing world can be unkind. Some moms don't even survive childbirth.

Instead of Pampers, rural moms may have a few rags. You can imagine the infections. There's poor nutrition. And later, parents deal with the cold realization that their children will never escape their country's desperate straits.

Expatriate children, especially girls, also have challenges. How do you get them into, say, piano lessons or soccer if they're not available? And schooling? These are questions Jean and I will face as we continue our global work.

Yet cross-cultural kids are incredibly mature and aware of humanity in all its breadth.

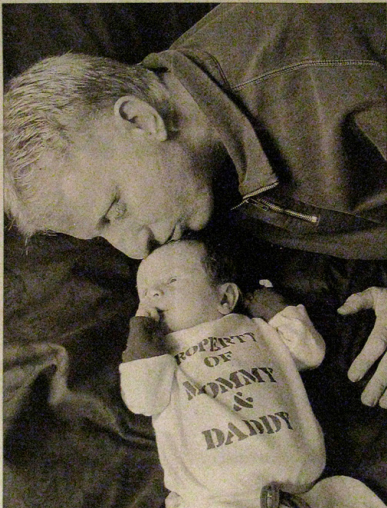


PHOTO BY DR. JEAN CHAMBERLAIN-FROESE

Spectator columnist and new father Thomas Froese, with his two-week-old daughter, Elizabeth-Katherine.

And really, for all the resources Canada's hurry-up, instant-Internet-connection culture offers, how are Canadian youth faring?

It seems they know that classic song from the 1970s, Cat's in the Hat, all too well, where the boy be-

baby boomers, a generation that's had success at everything it's done, to make their kids feel that life is about winning and acquisitions more than stewardship.

But what's worth more than bigger homes, designer clothes, a Disney va-

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comes just like dad in all the wrong ways. Harry Chapin's poignant lyrics cut to our culture's soul.

"Not today, I got a lot to do" ...  
"When you coming home, Dad?" "I don't know when. But we'll get together then, yeah. You know we'll have a good time then."

Consciously or not, it's also easy for

education, or even the finest of schools, is connecting with our kids, and passing values from one generation to the next, so they can then build their own futures on solid ground.

Giving that kind of intelligent love takes time, thought, and patience. As a father for just two weeks, I don't pretend to entirely know the way. But

I suspect it has something to do with becoming childlike ourselves, without resentment, prejudices or concerns for tomorrow, stripped of our veneer of sophistication that hides our true selves.

It seems that comes through the purifying influence that children themselves have on adults. Many children seem to carry that mysterious truth that sets us free. At least that's the message I get from Elizabeth.

I think it's something that will at least give me a chance. Now let's hope she likes flying.

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