

2017 - Issue Two

A Baker and His Wife Tell of Work and Home

RANDY AND LUCY HINES

Work in the family takes on many forms. There is paid work which sustains the family financially, the work of keeping house, the work of forming and educating the children... Every family must integrate all of these tasks into a whole which serves the true good of its members and, at the end of the day, leads to the flourishing of all.

We are grateful to Randy and Lucy Hines, parents of five children and small-business owners, for giving us an intimate glimpse of what this "integration" looks like in their home.

Tell me about the start of your day:

Randy: The alarm sounds at 2:30 AM, and I stir for a second, puzzled to be awoken in the middle of the night, but then I recall—it's time to bake the bread! I get dressed for the day as quietly as possible so as not to wake Lucy and the kids. I make the half-mile drive to our bakery, the Kolache Shoppe, and enter the kitchen to begin the daily routine. I remove the trays of pastries which had been prepared the day before from the refrigerators and let them rise. Once risen, they go into the oven and come out golden brown just in time for the first customers coming in at 6 AM for their breakfast.

I finish my baking shift around 9 AM and hand the remaining duties over to my staff. I then head home. I walk in the door shortly after nine and am greeted by the smiles and sounds of five young children and a warm hug from my wife, Lucy. She and I often joke about which task is more difficult: baking hundreds of pastries early in the morning or shepherding the children from wake-up through breakfast. We often agree that the one of us working at the Shoppe has the more tranquil task.

The rest of my day is filled with a mixture of paperwork, assisting Lucy with the children, and helping around the house. We both value the amount of time that we get to spend together as spouses—being able to discuss all the aspects of our shared life:—our common work, common home, common task of forming the children—much more than was possible with my former profession.

Ten years before, my morning routine looked quite different—waking up at 7 AM to get dressed for my office job, most notably in a quiet house with no wife or children. The path to my vocation was long and winding but also marked by the grace of God.

Lucy: Work begins very early for Randy, and not too long after his day begins, mine kicks off around 5:30... Sometimes quietly with a morning offering that lasts several minutes uninterrupted, sometimes with a cuddling baby accompanying me during my time of prayer. That point of contact with Our Lord in the morning is essential and is at the heart of my work for the rest of the day. My work is mostly hidden to the rest of the world: the care and education of the children, the order of the home and supporting Randy. To be honest, loving and realizing the real treasure of my tasks has been a work in

progress and I constantly seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be reminded of the goodness that is in the work of a woman at home.

How did you come to be a baker and small restaurant owner?

Randy: In college I studied accounting and information systems, and after graduation I began my consulting career in Houston. Four years and many travels later, I found myself becoming increasingly restless—caught up with questions about meaning and vocation and work. Was I doing exactly what I was called to do, best equipped to do? I pondered my alternatives, and eventually I was moved to follow my heart and study theology. I had learned about the John Paul II Institute and was very drawn to its mission and so I moved to Washington, DC in the summer of 2005 to study and to drink more deeply from the well of our Catholic faith. What a time of blessing and growth!

During that first semester, my heart was so grateful for the time of study and friendship, but I missed the many Texas foods that were nowhere to be found in the nation's capital, especially the kolache—a Czech pastry with a huge following in Texas, consisting of a slightly sweet yeast dough traditionally filled with sweet ingredients (and, in its modern incarnation, with savory ingredients like jalapeno sausage).

I was eager to learn the art of kolache making so that I could make them for myself and others while away from home. So, I called upon my Houston favorite, the Kolache Shoppe, which had been serving authentic kolaches since 1970, to see if they would teach me. Fortunately, the owner, Mr. Ahrens, agreed and invited me to spend some time with him that summer. This friendship with Mr. Ahrens led to an apprenticeship, and just eight months after our initial conversation, he told me that he had been looking for the right person to take over his bakery and that he would love for me to do it. So what started out as a simple desire to learn to make a kolache became an opportunity to completely change the course of my life.

So you could say that my studies in theology led me to being a baker and business owner.

Other areas of my life also took a change in direction. After many years of discerning the priesthood, I realized I was in fact called to the sacrament of marriage. My friendship with a longtime friend, Lucy, who was a widow at this point with three young boys, was led by the Holy Spirit to take on a different light and we were married in 2012.

In 2014, two years into marriage and eight years after my first conversation with Mr. Ahrens, he passed his Kolache Shoppe on to Lucy and me.

Lucy, what does your day look like and what is your involvement with the family business?

Lucy: In the first two years of owning the bakery I was more fully involved with Randy in carrying out the daily tasks of running the business, which now enables me to appreciate the work that he does at the bakery. This was one of our main reasons for going into small business ownership—to more intimately know the work of the other and to be able to help and support one another in our work.

Now though, with five children—aged 9, 8, 6, 4 and 1—my day looks a little different and my involvement in the day-to-day tasks in the Shoppe have curtailed. Randy and I still bounce ideas off one another and make high-level administrative decisions about the Shoppe together, but most of the daily decisions and actions are now in Randy's court.

Here in the home my work begins around 7 AM as I hear the stirrings of children and the morning chores begin. This is the only way I am able to fully care for the home...with the help of the children! At

this point, my job is making sure that the chores are done well—to remind the children (and myself!) that each little job done well is a delight to the Lord.

By 8 AM all beds are made, older children are dressed and have helped the younger children get dressed. They have made their way to the breakfast table. We are all in the kitchen getting breakfast and starting our day with lighting a candle and listening to the Gospel reading for the day. The simple act lighting the candle by the children allows them to participate in the symbol of the reality that “Jesus is the light of the world.”

We have the great privilege of homeschooling our children, and though the whole of our life is truly a living education for ourselves and our children, their academic studies kick off around 9 AM each day. The “order” of this time is very flexible, natural and rarely quiet. The toddler is walking about. The preschooler is asking for colors. The six-year-old is eager to read to me. The eight-year-old is drawing the newest bird he has seen outside our window. The nine-year-old is wrestling with his next math lesson. The cacophony that makes up our morning reminds us of the great lives that we are forming.

Are there many frustrations? Oh yes, every day! But by God’s grace I am able to remind myself that this work is indeed of great worth: The forming of children, the passing on of the light of Christ. All of it is worth it! I am edified by the words of St. John Chrysostom who said, “Let everything take second place to our care of our children, our bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If from the beginning we teach them to love true wisdom, they will have greater wealth and glory than riches can provide.”

How has your faith affected the way you run your business?

Randy: Lucy and I have always had the desire to more fully understand what a truly Catholic business would look like and to pursue that vision as much as possible. What began as a craving for a Texas favorite has evolved into a profession that encompasses the whole of our faith and challenges us daily to dig deeper into what it means to be truly human and truly Catholic. We have drawn from many sources, including many of the authors I was introduced to while at the JPPI Institute. One document that we have been referencing lately is the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace’s *Vocation of a Business Leader*, which was published in response to Pope Benedict’s encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. The following is an excerpt that we refer to often:

There are many obstacles that Christians face today, but chief among these obstacles at a personal level is a divided life, or what Vatican II described as “the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives.” The Second Vatican Council saw this split as “one of the more serious errors of our age.” Dividing the demands of one’s faith from one’s work in business is a fundamental error which contributes to much of the damage done by businesses in our world today, including overwork to the detriment of family or spiritual life, an unhealthy attachment to power to the detriment of one’s own good, and the abuse of economic power in order to make even greater economic gains. (10)

Lucy: We struggle like most to live a whole, integrated life, but the Church holds out for us the example of the Holy Family as the model of seamless sanctity. Another author who we frequently draw upon is

Wendell Berry, whose body of work is a great treasure and provides an abundance of thought on the meaning of work, food, the economy, etc. One quote that continually draws our attention back to the meaning of our food community is the following: “A community economy is not an economy in which well-placed persons can make a ‘killing.’ It is an economy whose aim is generosity and a shared abundance.”

These two interconnected themes, wholeness and community, are always focal points for us. At the end of the day, we attempt to place the person at the center of our business such that there is a true sharing in the common good and a pursuit of wholeness in all that we do.

At the end of the day...

Lucy: It is so important that we keep our priorities straight. As a small business owner it is so easy for the business to consume you and your entire life. We can say with regret that there have been times when we have allowed this to happen and our marriage and family life have suffered. We have spent much time over the last three years identifying our priorities, putting effort towards strengthening our marriage, and seeking to foster a healthy family life.

Randy: We constantly have to ask ourselves, why are we doing what we are doing? If we have not anchored our marriage and plumbed the depths of why we are doing what we are doing then we will have insufficient roots to weather these real life difficulties. Five years ago I couldn't have fathomed the pressures that running a small business would bring upon our family, and that is why I am grateful for the gift of the sacrament of marriage and the roots that it offers us to be anchored in Christ. He is our “Why,” now and always!

Lucy and Randy Hines are parents to five children and owners of the [Kolache Shoppe](#) in Houston, Texas.

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