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Family tree with Chilli (Mum), Bluey, Bingo and Bandit (Dad) from "Bluey" (Copyright: Ludo Studio 2019)

by Britt Luby

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I have a list of four or five episodes of "Bluey" that I share frequently — more frequently than the list is actually requested — with fellow parents. Have you seen this children's cartoon yet?

"Bluey" is an Australian animated show for preschoolers. Each episode is just five or so minutes long and follows the life of Bluey, a blue heeler puppy, and her family. To be honest, I don't even really like dogs that much. Or cartoons. But this show. These dogs. I'm smitten. The little episodes are just that good, that poignant, and I want every other parent of small children to see them.

My husband likes the show, but not as much as I do. "I can't be that patient! I can't play as much as he does!" my husband laments about Bluey's father, Bandit. "It sets unrealistic expectations for what it means to be a good parent!"

To his point, Bandit and his wife, Chilli, *are* incredibly patient and playful parents. But I cannot relate to his feelings of inadequacy. To me, "Bluey" has distilled what I want most out of my life as I parent young children: to see the sacred in the ordinary.

For years, when I led interfaith dialogue conversations with young adults, one of my favorite questions to ask was "What do you love most about being _____?" Muslims told me about breaking fast with their loved ones during Ramadan, for example. My answer was always this: I love the Incarnation. I love the divine light of God slipping into Earth in the form of a baby. A slimy, squirming baby in a dirty, smelly barn. In my work as a hospital chaplain, visiting babies in the neonatal intensive care unit reminds me of this messy, magical, seemingly impossible miracle even more. God became *one of us*. The sacred is here, *with us*.

In one episode of "Bluey" ("The Dump"), Bandit takes Bluey and her sister, Bingo, to the dump. On the drive there, Bluey asks her father where she was before she was born. He claims to know everything, but he asks for a pass on answering this particular question. They drive to the dump, asking silly questions and playing car games.

When Bluey notices her dad about to toss out some of her old drawings into a dumpster, she is crestfallen. "Hey stop! That's my drawing! Those are all my drawings!" she shouts. Her father, feeling guilty, relents and returns the papers to

the car. He explains that he was not putting the drawings in the trash but instead the recycling bin. There, the drawings would be mashed up and turned into new paper so that some other kid could draw on them. And then, when that kid's dad recycles the drawing, the paper will get mashed up and turned into new paper for *another* kid to draw on. "You can throw it away, dad," Bluey finally decides after a thoughtful pause. "I can do another one."

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My kids watch the show and laugh at the silliness. I watch with tears in my eyes, resting my hand on my daughter's tiny hand, wondering what I will say if she asks me where she was before she was born. I wonder if my children's scribbly drawings of monsters and stick-figure families are actually a sacred text. The animals made from handprints, the crooked, uneven, letters, the drawing of a tiger in a cage at the zoo: all of it sacred, all of it something to both treasure and recycle for another pilgrim to use.

This spiritual spiral is what "Bluey" does to me in 5-to-7-minute chunks. In another episode ("Rug Island"), Bluey and Bingo give their father a small gift after he spent the afternoon playing with them. The gift is simply a marker — literally just like the kind you draw with — one of many props they used in their game. "What did she give you?" Chili asks Bandit as he comes to stand next to her with his gift.

"Everything," he responds with a tender smile.

Each day, as the pandemic crawls past the two-year anniversary, I have to make decisions about what is safe and what is not safe for my children. This, on top of school drop-off and pickup, making lunches, unexpected fevers, birthday parties and working night shifts. This on top of laundry and meal prep, on top of a refugee crisis and systemic injustice, on top of political posturing and war.

But this is where you find the sacred drawing too, you know? The holy marker? If you are able to look and see the Incarnation, the presence of God with us now in our messy, dirty living rooms, our messy, dirty world. And you can hold onto this sacred light or recycle it or share it with your neighbor: There is enough for everyone, God is here for all of us, God is enough for all of us.

On the drive home from the dump, Bluey asks her father, "Dad, you know my drawing? Was that someone else's drawing before it was mine?"

"Well, what do you think?" Bandit asks.

"Yeah, I think so," she answers.

I think so, too.