



...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious...think about these things. - Philippians 4:8

□□□□□□□□□□ *Whatever* the title of this column, was named in honor of my father, Stanley A. Bikulege. Best as I can recall, my dad was saying “whatever” before it became part of California slang. It was a favorite response to a variety of comments and issues, and it marked his disinterest or disgust, signaling a desire to move on to the next thing. When I moved to Beaufort from the Chicago suburbs, still fresh in the loss of my father, I pitched the title to Margaret Evans, beloved LCW Editor, and she endorsed the moniker. It fits. You never know what you are going to read under my byline. Here goes.

The other night I couldn’t sleep. I believe it was mostly indigestion, the result of gulping a fried chicken breast sans chewing. And because it is highly discouraged by credible doctors, I ate the crispy skin. Later, after a one-hour Zoom call (yep, another one), I ate a Heath Klondike watching an episode of Schitt’s Creek and then vacillated between CNN and FOX trying to understand dueling perspectives on the impeachment vote by the House. Of course, I could not sleep.

I woke up at 11:00 pm. I moved to the living room and did my “daily” readings — yes, those kinds of readings. I took an Alka Seltzer. I retreated to a guest room, got into the trundle bed, and stared at a small charcoal portrait of me. I am 2 or 3 or 4 years old. I wondered if the little girl on the wall saw me. Remember, it’s about midnight now. The mind and darkness play tricks on a fried-poultry-chocolate-coated-vanilla-ice-cream mind.

I decided to listen to a YouTube video by Richard Rohr titled "Everything is a Gift," a kind of twenty-first century iPhone lullaby. My friend Judy encouraged me to give it a listen and this marked my third attempt. It brought me to tears.

Rohr talks about happiness coming from within. That *whatever* happens is okay and if I can say that and believe it, I can trust that life gets better. He repeated the old saying it's better to be happy than right. He encourages a person to focus on what is sufficient versus the never-ending pilgrimage to abundance: when I get that new car, new house, fall in love . . . check out Lauren Alaina's song, *Getting Good*.
(Thanks Lea!)

I would try to doze off and couldn't. I'd go back to YouTube, skipping ads for more wisdom. Father Rohr encourages his audience to live inside the moment, our own bodes and self, even with all of its problems. Let pain unpackage and repackage you in some other form. What's real is now *and* later, and how I choose to do things now is likely how I'll do them forever.

The day before my restless night, the President was impeached for a second time. I forgot to call my friend on his ninetieth birthday. I buried a dead squirrel that used to frolic on a tree beside my house. I was still lost in the grief of my dead friend. The outside renovations on my "new" house mounted. I continued the transition of letting go of various responsibilities and associations, and I'm turning 63. I'm always a head case around my birthday.

This week, I turned in my SC Drivers License and legitimized my North Carolinian residency by registering my vehicle, leaving the moon and palmetto. . . *While I Breathe, I Hope* . . .
Freedom State . . . *for the First in* T
o Be Rather Than To Seem.

Pretty heady stuff for the back bumper of a blue Ford Flex. Examiner Breeden was particularly nice and said I would love the picture on my driver's license in another ten years. He's right. It'll all look different ten years down the road.

During these days of confusing vaccine phases, a new 100-days for a burgeoning

administration, January weather and birthday cake, I reflect back on a prayer by Senate Chaplain Barry C. Black. I listened to Reverend Black just before 4 a.m. on January 7 as the joint session of Congress certifying President-elect Biden's victory closed. Why don't I just include the entire text in *Whatever*? After all, as my dad would remind me, this too shall pass. I'm just counting on it being a passage into hope, healing and better food choices.

REV.BARRYC.BLACK'S PRAYER:

Lord of our lives and sovereign of our beloved nation, we deplore the desecration of the United States Capitol building, the shedding of innocent blood, the loss of life, and the quagmire of dysfunction that threaten our democracy.

These tragedies have reminded us that words matter and that the power of life and death is in the tongue. We have been warned that eternal vigilance continues to be freedom's price.

Lord, you have helped us remember that we need to see in each other a common humanity that reflects your image.

You have strengthened our resolve to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies domestic as well as foreign.

Use us to bring healing and unity to our hurting and divided nation and world. Thank you for what you have blessed our lawmakers to accomplish in spite of threats to liberty.

Bless and keep us. Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to do your will and guide our feet on the path of peace. And God bless America. We pray in your sovereign name, Amen.

Vivian Bikulege shares her life with Mac & Trooper. Along with writing, her passions include faith, family, friends and the natural world. She holds an MFA from Queens University of

Charlotte and has contributed to Lowcountry Weekly for fifteen years.