

Hey baby, wanna wrestle?

By [Laura Kelly Fanucci](#)

February 10, 2012

Parenting has permanently changed my body.

And I don't mean the usual wear-and-tear brought on by [bearing, birthing](#) or nursing babies. That's all too obvious.

I'm talking about my nose. Specifically, the bridge of my nose.

Which, for the past few years, has been in a constant state of ache due to an infant, then a toddler, and now another infant, head-butting me so squarely that I see stars sparkle and twittering birds circle round my head like a Disney cartoon.

The soreness has no visible signs, though for all its throbbing I should look like a boxer with a permanent dent from every broken nose and punch taken in the ring.

I can't put a band-aid on this lingering ache. It almost heals, and then a snuggling baby suddenly reels back and snaps forward, or a toddler comes flying at me from around the corner. I'm right back where I started: nose throbbing, head wobbling, eyes glazed and dazed. Laughable at best, wince-worthy at worst - this tender nose is just going to stay painful for years to come.

I thought about my poor nose when I came across this wonderful reflection by [Ron Rolheiser on wrestling with God](#). The Scripture he cites - of Jacob [wrestling with God](#) - is one of my favorites. It's so real and raw and (literally) moving.

Jacob, left all alone, trades blows with a strange adversary all night until finally at daybreak, he is left with both a blessing and a final blow to the hip so strong that it dislocates from the socket. Jacob limps along with this lingering ache, a physical reminder of his encounter with the divine.

I always found the detail about poor Jacob's hip to be bizarre. Was it just a backwards means of explaining the Jewish tradition of not eating "the sciatic

muscle that is on the hip socket, because he had struck Jacob on the hip socket” (Gen 32:33)? Or was it one of those strange minutiae from Scripture that simply testify to their truth through their particularity?

But as I read Fr. Ron’s words about wrestling with God, my nose was throbbing from an afternoon head butt from my darling baby boy. And it made me think about my own wrestling with God, through the mysterious creatures of my children.

I wrestle with these two boys every day. I wrestle one out of diapers and wrangle the other onto the potty. I fight their flailing limbs to calm them down. I chase them around the furniture, sometimes squealing with glee, sometimes screaming in protest. At night’s end – or daybreak, depending – I’m often left exhausted, limping from the day’s tussles.

But I wrestle with them in deeper ways, too. The stubborn battles of will. The emotional drain of discipline. The sheer physicality required to care for young, needy children, day in and day out.

Ultimately this painful wrestling is a battle with myself – my own stubbornness, my selfishness, my desire for control. And I’m wrestling with God, too, who both blesses and challenges me through the gift of these beautiful children in my life. Parenting is physically, and emotionally, and mentally, and spiritually, the toughest task I have ever taken on. And I still thank God for it every day.

Maybe the bridge of my nose is just like poor Jacob’s hip socket. A tender reminder that’s not meant to heal. My own quirky battle scar from wrestling with both the human and the divine.

What’s yours?

*Originally posted at [Mothering Spirit](#)*