

I SAY By Melissa Walsh

# The boat ride



**T**raveling port to port in my family's powerboat filled my childhood summers.

And still today, in my 50s, I prefer being on water than on land in summer. So I have a powerboat and also sail with friends. I find the most joy in sailing, a passion I

share with my boyfriend. Over dinner Saturday, my dad, curious about our love for sailing, shared an observation from his 50-plus years of power boating around the Great Lakes.

"We would see a group of sailboats leave port early in the morning," he recalled. "Then after spending the day in port, we'd take off for the next port about 4 (p.m.). And sometimes we'd see the same group of sailboats coming into port late that night! I never understood why they'd want to give up the whole day just get-

ting there."

"Because it's about the boat ride," my boyfriend said. "They love the boat ride."

I thought of a piece of art my oldest son made when he was 4 years old at Grosse Pointe Nursery School. It's an 8 1/2-by-11-inch sheet of paper with pasted pieces of construction paper on it depicting a sailboat in rough water. A teacher wrote my son's name — Shane — at the top with this Bible verse:

"I will be with you always ..." Matthew 28:20b.

Shane made this little masterpiece in fall 2001. I framed it and have kept it next to my bed all these years. It ministered to me while raising my four sons through rough and still waters, fierce and favorable winds, with me alone at the helm.

Reading this small piece of scripture through my American lenses, for a long time I perceived it to mean God will be with ME — Melissa, struggling single mom — always. However, the translation, using plural "you," means God will be with me IN COMMUNITY always.

Few sail single-handed. Most sail in community. Though powering

through the current and chop of Lake St. Clair from point A to point B can be fun, it does not render the same working-together community required for the "good sail."

The powerboat captain looks straight ahead, his passengers behind him holding on to something when the boat hits white-capped waves. The engine runs too loudly to have a conversation. Open beers get spilled. Yet the forces of Mother Nature are overpowered by the fiberglass hull pushed by ample horsepower.

With sailing, a community of skipper and crew works together beating close to the wind to reach

their destination. Crew members feed the skipper information about puffs coming and boats about to cross while he or she steers from the helm calling tack.

The power of the lake is respected and the skipper is minded while crew members cooperate to find that awesome groove sailors love.

Then confidently set on course cruising to port with the sails trimmed and sheets cleated, the sailors can relax, enjoying the boat ride. They chat. They have a meal. They sit in awe of God's beautiful world all around them.

And sailors like me feel that promise: God is with us.