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## Remarkable

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### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The search for his name took almost the entire pregnancy. My husband Joe and I had discussed, thought over, and imagined over a dozen names for the little one that was to make us a family of three. One website simply described "Massimo" as an Italian name that derived from the Latin name "Maximus" and that translated to "Max" in English. Another website stated that "Massimo" meant "remarkable". When Massimo was finally born, we grew to appreciate (and still do every day) how fitting his name and its meaning is for him. Of course, our pride and *slight* bias as Massimo's parents may lead us to find amazement in almost everything he has done in the nine months of his life, but he has also been a driving force in many aspects of each of our personal and professional lives."



From Our Guest Essayist

## Remarkable

The search for his name took almost the entire pregnancy. My husband Joe and I had discussed, thought over, and imagined over a dozen names for the little one that was to make us a family of three. One website simply described “Massimo” as an Italian name that derived from the Latin name “Maximus” and that translated to “Max” in English. Another website stated that “Massimo” meant “remarkable”. When Massimo was finally born, we grew to appreciate (and still do every day) how fitting his name and its meaning is for him. Of course, our pride and *slight* bias as Massimo’s parents may lead us to find amazement in almost everything he has done in the nine months of his life, but he has also been a driving force in many aspects of each of our personal and professional lives.

I had looked forward to taking on the role of motherhood for some time, and as the due date approached, fears of the unknown crept into my thoughts. How could I possibly handle the responsibility of caring for and raising a child? Could Joe and I continue to nourish our relationship and keep it strong enough to provide enough stability, love, and guidance for a child? How was I to balance a family and completing my graduate work? It had been some time since I consistently engaged in prayer, but my pregnancy motivated me to pray for the baby growing within me and for the strength to face the challenges ahead.

The months following Massimo's birth contained a number of significant life changes for us, including adapting to parenthood. Joe was finishing up residency and began a new job. We also moved from Philadelphia to Rochester, from an apartment at the heart of the city to a house in the suburbs. In the meantime, I was wrapping up my graduate work by writing my dissertation, which followed me to Rochester and led me to feel as if I had left half of me in Philadelphia. During the writing process, I was keenly aware of how little I could interact with Massimo. I spent nearly two months locked up in the office in our vast new house that I couldn't take a moment to enjoy. Yet, throughout all of this, each time I spotted Massimo in his father's arms, smiling at me through the window of the office door, I was pushed to work harder to finish. Moreover, Massimo was a constant reminder of how amazing the world could be. As Massimo grew and began to interact more, soaking up the world and all the information it contained, it was hard not to notice his absolute wonder with all that surrounded him. This was the kind of curiosity and interest that led many people, including me, to investigate the world around us and to pursue a career in science. The innocent wisdom that Massimo possessed reminded me of the genuine interest in biomedical research that got lost under the pressures of my program requirements.

Joe and I agree that despite his young age, Massimo is full of personality. One smile or laugh can erase a bad day or change the mood of a room instantly. We look forward to what he has to teach us, and how he'll remind us of the important things in life. We also have had wonder reawakened within us. For Joe, Massimo's birth and growth are unique and amazing, no matter how many other babies he has delivered or seen in his practice. For me, the mysterious process that allows two cells to come together and develop into this beautiful little boy will remain just that—no matter how much scientific research reveals about us.

**Cristina Cozzo Picca, Ph.D.**