

The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY



WINTER 2007-2008

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Provincial Perspective

Dear Readers,

The Season of Advent and that of giving and receiving is upon us. It is a time to examine our giving and the many blessings received from the perfect and ultimate Giver: God. As we reflect on the presence of God's love in our lives, we must remember that love is not a thing to be taken lightly. We cannot earn God's love; we cannot buy it; we cannot demand it; we can simply accept it and offer it to others. This is what God does. God shows us how to love and be loved. He asks us to do works of mercy, with no consideration for what we will gain. This is how we can come to a better understanding of God's love for us. May God's love be with you always.

With prayerful best wishes for the coming holidays, I am

Sincerely in J.M.J.,



Very Reverend Philip Sosa, M.S.F.
Provincial



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HOLY FAMILY LIFE

Making “I Do” Work

by Mary Jo Pedersen

Marriage & Family Spirituality, Archdiocese of Omaha

I love weddings! It’s a good thing because we’re going to a lot of them lately! It never gets old for me... that courageous and touching moment when the beaming couple faces each other and says “for better or worse, for rich or for poorer, in sickness and in health until death...”

Of course, they haven’t got a clue about what that means. Few of us, standing there lighting up the church with smiles on our wedding day, really understood what that promise meant. The promise to “love and honor” one another slowly unfolds over time as we learn to adjust to the fact that our spouse talks excessively in the mornings and we prefer quiet, or that he/she consistently leaves the cap off the toothpaste.

Observers of the annual flurry of weddings sometimes ask... “Who in their right mind would ever make a promise like that?” “Why marry?” The not-very-serious response is that you are not in your right mind when you decide to marry... you’re in love and the first stage of love is blind, though

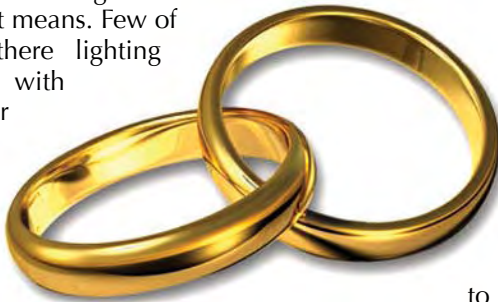
sight returns swiftly in the first couple of years.

The more serious response from the Christian perspective is that we believe people choose marriage because God calls them to it. We regard marriage as a

vocation, a call to holiness not unlike the call to priesthood or consecrated or single life. Every baptized person is called to be “holy,” to


become an image of God and ultimately to reach heaven through whatever pathway they choose whether it be marriage, religious life, ordination or the single life.

Marriage is one way God chooses to continue our development into more patient, loving, self-sacrificing and life-giving people. Marriage is a life laboratory in which we discover the real meaning of faithfulness, belonging, forgiveness and unconditional love. If you have kids, you know that they speed up the learning curve on all these things.



At a recent conference on marriage, I discovered that marriage therapists and academicians who have thoroughly researched marriage have concluded that marriage is also good for you personally, not to mention its many benefits for children. In their book *The Case for Marriage*, based on authoritative research, Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher argue that being married is actually better for you physically, materially, and spiritually than being single or divorced. Married people live longer, have better health, earn more money, feel more fulfilled in their

lives than people who remain single, cohabit, or get divorced. The book outlines numerous other advantages of marriage both to individuals and to society.

Celebrating wedding days take on a deeper meaning when one realizes that a couple's success in married life has vast repercussions not just on them but on all of church and society. In addition to giving gifts and throwing showers, we might all benefit from a more intentional effort to continue our support for married couples long after the wedding. How to do that? 

Here's a list to get you started:

- Remember to celebrate anniversaries, your own and other couples.
- Read a good book or watch a video program on marriage and share it with another couple. The library has dozens of good titles.
- Take your own marriage in for an annual checkup... like attending a retreat or workshop to improve communication skills
- Support married friends during their difficult times.
- Trade baby-sitting (or dog-sitting for empty-nesters) so couple friends can get away alone together now and then.
- Pray with your spouse, and ask for God's help. Recent research shows that shared religious practices are predictors of marital stability.

Sage advice from a couple with 48 years of marriage...

With a Little Help From Our Friends

By Winnie Honeywell

Wally and I realize that probably the most important learning we've had in our marriage of 48 years is that WE are the sacrament... and that a sacrament is a public commitment, to be nurtured by and shared with others.

“We are convinced that no couple can live their vows of lifelong love and fidelity all by themselves.”


We are convinced that no couple can live their vows of lifelong love and fidelity all by themselves.

We recall an incident years ago when we had a huge argument as we were driving to a meeting of our Marriage Encounter circle of friends. One of us (we can no longer remember which one!) yelled at the other, “Why are we going to this meeting when we’re in such bad shape?” The wise reply from the other was “Where else can we go when we’re like this?”

We recall an incident years ago when we had a huge argument as we were driving to a meeting

We sensed then - and know now - that we could never last - much less grow and thrive - as a sacrament without inviting others to help us stay married. In the worst of times, that meant agreeing to go to counseling, but it also meant pleading with others to pray for us and to give us faith and hope in our vocation when we could find none.

In these later years of appreciative companionship our primary ministry as a couple is to just “be there” for other couples... most especially those struggling to hold their marriages together through the “for worse” times. We are convinced that no couple can live their vows of lifelong love and fidelity all by themselves - nor should they even try.

Our experience is that the marriage covenant is a sacrament for the wider community - and also a “co-creation” of that community. 

Making “I Do” Work & With a Little Help From Our Friends, Reprinted with Permission from...

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(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)


FOR YOUR
MARRIAGE



MISSION REFLECTION

Adventures of a Missionary Priest

Contributed by Rev. James Lienert, M.S.F.

The Churches, Chapels And Communities Of The Parish Of La Esmeralda



Cristo Rey (Christ the King) Chapel in Salinas del Sur near Laguna del Rey, Coahuila, Mexico. Chapel measures 60' x 19'4"



Fr. James Lienert, MSF is best known as Padre Jamie because of his 33 years of service in Mexico. He served as pastor for the parish of La Esmeralda in Coahuila, Mexico which was roughly 5,500 square miles! (~50 miles by 110 miles). The main church was in La Esmeralda, but the numerous communities in the parish also needed pastoral care and many did not have a place of worship. During his years in Mexico from 1967 to 2000, Padre Jamie led the construction of 28 chapels. Each chapel, like the community it was built for, has its special endearing attributes. Since his return to the United States in 2000 Padre Jamie has learned the technology of the computer. He is an avid email communicator and now has documented about the communities he served in Mexico. Samples of these vignettes will be featured in the Messenger Magazine. Full versions will be available at our website. Enjoy!

The very first chapel that I worked on in Mexico was in Salinas del Sur (Southern Salt Works). When I first arrived there in 1967, this community had the largest group of salt workers in the Laguna and there were maybe a 150 persons, men, women and children, in all of the Salinas del Sur.

One of the many who had small businesses here was Mr. Jorge Flores. Mr. Flores had a small salt business in Torreón. It was

walls of the chapel were finished several years before I arrived, and were starting to weather from the infrequent rains.

When I first started going to Salinas del Sur we celebrated Mass in private homes or out in the open in someone's patio. At



the same time we started some fund-raising projects and events. In the end there were enough funds to buy the lumber and the corrugated tin for the roof, and cement for the floor. In La Esmeralda I made the altar and a table for the sanctuary. The chapel was blessed under the title of Cristo Rey (Christ the King) because it was located in Laguna del Rey. Later I made simple benches for the chapel.

Soon after the chapel was finished Mr. Jorge Flores, who was very involved in

he who initiated the building of a chapel here by providing the material and labor for building a brick arch for the entrance. The walls were made of adobe. The lintels above the openings for the windows were used railroad ties. Mr. Flores' business was small and, with a young family, he could not contribute heavily toward finishing the chapel so it stood with no roof. The

the Cursillo Movement in Torreón, organized a Cursillo for the men in Salinas del Sur. There was a shade made of tarps where the lectures were given, and where the men slept on the ground at night. The meals were cooked in homes by the women and delivered to the participants. About twenty men participated in the Cursillo.

We continued to work to put in windows and a door, and plaster the inside and out. We also installed a false ceiling of stretched cloth to hide the rafters. The cloth that is used is sort of like a cheese cloth. Once the cloth is in place it is completely 'painted' with a much diluted animal glue. When this dries it shrinks and pulls the cloth taut. Just the right solution must be used or else the cloth will tear. Once it is dry it can be whitewashed or painted. Several years later a violent storm ripped several sheets of tin from the roof and tore the ceiling. When we repaired the roof we replaced the ceiling with insulating Styrofoam sheeting. The original wooden windows were in bad shape, and so were replaced with metallic windows.

A small sacristy was added. Later on I wired the chapel for electricity and bought a small portable generator and a solar panel plus battery for the sanctuary light. Next came a modest bell tower with a bell. A cement-tile floor was laid over the first cement floor because it was starting to deteriorate. Finally a low wall of lime bricks was built around the church to keep at bay the burros and goats and pigs. Inside the wall several trees and oleanders were planted. All of this was done over a period of many years.


There were several years when another priest took over the care of the Laguna area, though I was always the pastor. One of these priests was from the southern part of Mexico. The area in which he had lived had heavy drug trafficking. Apparently he knew too much, and maybe he had reported it because his life was threatened. One afternoon several of the parishioners became concerned that they had not seen

Padre all day. A lady rapped on the rectory door, but there was no answer. The lady's little girl heard Padre's dog give a low growl. They forced their way into the rectory and found Padre Cuauhtémoc neatly laid out atop the bed. He had been hand strangled.

“Padre Cuauhtémoc... had been hand strangled”.

In the early 1990s I was again taking care of the laguna area while the other priest was on sick leave. In the meantime Salinas del Sur had prospered and grown. The chapel, even though it was repaired several times, was showing the effects of the salitre. The people approached me with the proposal of building a larger and better chapel, and using the old chapel for meetings and catechism classes.

So, a new chapel was planned and begun just a few yards to one side of the old one. This chapel would be built of cement blocks and with a structural asbestos/cement roof using the longest ones available. I agreed to cover the cost of most of the material for the chapel itself; the community would cover the cost of the façade, towers and vitro tile floor.

The people, directed by a very active and capable lady, were well organized and I had very little to do with construction. In fact the other priest came back shortly after the foundations were started. In the picture above, both the old and the new chapels are shown. It can be seen that the top part of the bell tower on the old chapel has been demolished so as not to detract from the new. To the left of the old chapel is seen the sacristy. 

The complete vignette which includes stories of the community is available at www.msf-america.org



YOUTHFUL OUTLOOK

St. Gabriel

Editor's Note: For this 'Youthful Perspective' we are pleased to provide the writings of St. Gabriel - the patron saint of Students, Young People and Clerics.

"I will attempt day by day to break my will into pieces. I want to do God's Holy Will, not my own."

"My life inside here [the Passionist house] is bursting with joy!"

"Love Mary!... She is love-able, faithful, constant. She will never let herself be outdone in love, but will ever remain supreme. If you are in danger, she will hasten to free you. If you are troubled, she will console you. If you are sick, she will bring you relief. If you are in need, she will help you. She does not look to see what kind of person you have been. She simply comes to a heart that wants to love her. She comes quickly and opens her merciful heart to you, embraces you and consoles and serves you. She will even be at hand to accompany you on the trip to eternity." [To his brother]

"With sin, O Jesus, I gave you the death, but I do not despair of your forgiveness. Those scourges call me, those arms extended invite me, that injured Heart offers me a secure shelter."

"Who it will be able ever to repeat the pains, the strains and the sufferings that Jesus suffered in such little time. We see Jesus in the garden of the olives, after being separated from His Sorrowful

Mother, how he is pale and trembling with fear, his face to the ground!"

"Mary, dear Mother of mine, come fast!" [On his deathbed]

"You [O Mary] answered with the "fiat" to the announcement of the angel, do not want our ruin; show love and pity."

"My life is a continuous delight; what I experience inside these sacred walls is almost inexpressible; the 24 hours of the day seem to me like 24 short instants; really my life is full of delight."

"Our perfection does not consist of doing extraordinary things but to do the ordinary well."

"My sole merit lies in Your wounds."

"Father, tell me if in my heart there is something that does not please God, because it I want to rip it out." [To his spiritual director Fr. Norbert]

". . . fidelity in little things must be the basic rule in striving for holiness." [M]



These writings of St. Gabriel (born Francesco Possenti) have been translated from his original writings in Italian. Bro. Rupert a Passionate, translated the documents and provided the biography. More about St. Gabriel Possenti can be found at www.stgabriel.wordpress.com .

Life of Saint Gabriel

Francesco Possenti was born in the Italian town of Assisi on March 1st 1838. He was baptized the same day in the same font in which St. Francis of Assisi was baptized. St. Gabriel's life would mirror that of Francis - turning from the excesses of this world to the glory of the next. Francis would be the eleventh of thirteen children born to this mother Agnes and father Sante. Sante was a legal assessor in the town of Spoleto, then part of the Papal States under Pius IX. Francis was just like every young boy and teenager. He became popular for his warm and outgoing personality, his love of dancing, hunting and the theater. He endangered himself more than once on his hunting expeditions, and during a childhood illness had promised to become a religious if he was healed. Twice he was healed, twice he delayed. Francis did well in school, despite a childhood which included the death of three siblings and his own mother. Like a normal boy of his age, Francis attracted the attention of the girls of Spoleto, where the family had moved from Assisi. He is even said to have been engaged to two at the same time!

During a procession of an icon of the Mother of Sorrows, Francis felt Our Lady call to him that he was not meant for this world and he was to become a religious. On the night his father had arranged for him to become engaged, Francis left for the Passionist novitiate. The Passionists were founded by St. Paul of the Cross and are a religious community devoted to the living and preaching of Our Lord's passion and death. The

Congregation is active on all continents and has the motto 'We preach Christ and We Preach Him Crucified; the habit, with its Passionist heart, is distinctive.

Francis took vows in the Passionist community and he took the name of Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, reflecting the devotion, planted in his childhood home by his mother's image of the Pieta, he always had to Our Lady of Sorrows. Gabriel attained holiness in a very short space of time; he was consumed with love for Christ, through Our Lady of Sorrows. Indeed, as well as the vow made by all Passionists to spread devotion to Christ Crucified, Gabriel took an additional vow to spread devotion to Our Sorrowful Mother. He would wake up every quarter of an hour to say the Hail Mary as part of his very special and close relationship to Our Lady. He would seem 'on fire' when he spoke of her. All those who lived with him were eager to spend time with him and learn from him. Yet it seems others thought him a pain and a 'holy-Joe.' There have long been stories circulating that one confrere even gave him a slap.

Despite being struck with TB, he maintained all the severe sacrifices that made up his life. He begged to be carried to Mass and he maintained his cheery disposition despite the painful illness. He would go on long walks into the country side, where the locals would see him kneeling before an image of Our Lady, his arms outstretched as if in ecstasy. Brother Gabriel would often teach catechism to the children of the nearby villages and make special sacrifices for

Life of Saint Gabriel

(Continued)

the poor. Indeed, much like the Little Flower St. Therese, he would find that his work would be done through doing little things in an extraordinary way. All who knew him would testify to this. But Gabriel was in love with God; it was a love which consumed him; he was not meant for this world but belonged to the other. It was then after an illness bravely borne, despite the evil one throwing temptations even on his death-bed, that Gabriel reached his end. He died in the presence of the community, hugging close an image of Our Lady of Sorrows. Indeed, as he died a smile spread across his face and he tilted his head to the

left, where he saw Our Lady coming to take him to heaven. He expired before he could be ordained a priest and died on February 27, 1862 in the Passionist monastery at Gran Sasso in the Abruzzi region of Italy. The region of which he is now patron.

Pope Benedict XV canonized Gabriel in 1920 and declared him a patron of Catholic youth. In 1959, Pope John XXIII named him the patron of the Abruzzi region, where he spent the last two years of his earthly life. Through Gabriel's intercession many miracles have been obtained and many have been brought back to the True Fold of the Redeemer.



MSF MISSION STATEMENT

*W*e, the Missionaries of the Holy Family of the North American Province, are united in religious community according to the purpose of our Founder, Father Jean Berthier, who dedicated our future and ministry to the ideals of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Guided by the Holy Spirit we respond to the missionary task of the Church and contribute to the evangelization of all for the coming of the kingdom of God. Our Mission to evangelize encompasses far away places, different cultures and wherever the Good News needs to be proclaimed. According to the gifts and talents of our members, we are moved to:

- Draw Others Close to the Gospel
- Promote Vocations
- Stress the Pastoral Care of Families

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, enlighten us, help us and save us.

Amen

Missionaries of the Holy Family



We invite you to a life fully dedicated to the apostolates of the family, vocations and wherever God directs us.

Servants of God

Builders of Family



Charism

The Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family was founded in 1895 at Grave, Holland by Fr. Jean Berthier. He dedicated the community to the Holy Family which is "the perfect model of every religious community and of every Christian family." We seek out and foster vocations, particularly among mature adults and the poor. Our community strives to live as a family while bringing the Gospel message to areas of need.

Apostolates

Throughout the world we promote and serve the needs of Church, family, local community and our Congregation. In the North American Province (Canada, United States and Mexico) we are involved in many types of pastoral service. As priests and brothers we work in parishes, schools, hospitals and homes for the aged. Our work reflects the concern and respect we have for family life.



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Families as a Building Block of Vocations

by Fr. Kyle Schnippel

Catholics are now mainstream. The “Catholic Ghettos” such as Price Hill and Mercer County which were supported by classics such as “The Bells of St. Mary’s” or Archbishop Fulton Sheen’s “Sunday Night Catechism” no longer exist, and have a certain mystery to people of my generation. One aspect of that “Ghetto” culture that we no longer have is full seminaries and convents, as the culture itself supported the idea of religious vocations. It does not take a rocket scientist to recognize that this support is now missing!

So, what is our reaction? Certainly, we cannot turn back the clock. Therefore, how can we as Catholics promote vocations to the priesthood and/or religious life in a culture that no longer overtly supports the idea? I see a few steps that we can take to help reverse this trend and encourage our young people to realize that they are called to follow Christ throughout their lives — regardless of their specific vocations.

First, families must recognize that they are the basic building block of the Church. The Domestic Church is where your chil-

dren learn to pray, to give thanks to God for the many gifts He gives, and to share their talents for the building up of the Kingdom of God. Aspects of this Domestic

***“Do you have Crucifixes in your homes?
Do you pray before meals?”***

Church can be simple to build, too. Do you have Crucifixes in your homes? Do you pray before meals? My family had a tradition of praying the rosary together every Monday evening. It helped bring the faith alive to me. Some families celebrate the patron saint of each child, in addition to birthdays. As children become teens, help them to engage their faith. We had

“...give reports on the homily each week...”

to give reports on the homily each week: What were the readings about? How did Father apply that in his homily? What would I have said differently? In order to answer these questions, I had to pay attention, to listen to the readings and see how they impacted my own faith. (This certainly helped in my transition to the seminary as well!)

The second aspect of rebuilding a Catholic culture is being willing to overtly share your faith with others, especially your own family! This is something that our Fundamentalist brothers and sisters are much more willing to do than we


Catholics, but we can model our faith in very simple ways, such as reminding your boss that you have to leave early from work today because it is a Holy Day of Obligation. I have many friends that willingly wear a crucifix, and are not afraid to talk about Christ Crucified, or where they attended Mass during their vacation, to simply inviting co-workers to come to the parish festival, mission or retreat. Many people are waiting to be invited. Be that person who extends the invitation.

“pray... that my son or daughter may be open to following Christ as a priest or religious”

Third, show your support of vocations by giving a public display of support and encouragement to your pastor and any religious that might be serving in your parish. The greatest testament and witness for vocations to the priesthood are happy priests! We often hear only the worst news: Father, pray for my wife who is going into surgery, my father who has

cancer, my cousin who is having a difficult pregnancy. These are all things we gladly accept and offer our prayers for, but do not forget to share the good news with him as well.

Finally, I challenge families especially to pray not just for the generic “increase in vocations,” but also to add “that my son or daughter may be open to following Christ as a priest or religious.” Priests do not fall out of the sky; they are raised in families just like your own. When I

see the poster of the 33 men studying for the priesthood here in the Archdiocese, I also see the families that helped prepare them to respond to this call, and what a wonderful and joyous call it is. Do not be afraid to support your sons and daughters to follow where God may be leading them. I am convinced that this is the secret to happiness. 



Ordained in 2004, Fr. Kyle Schnippel is a priest for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and has served as Director of Vocations since 2006. He moderates two blogs to further the cause of vocations in the church:

www.fatherschnippel.blogspot.com
and
www.cincinnati vocations.org/wordpress/

AROUND THE PROVINCE

Once every 6 years the leaders and selected delegates from each of the 15 Provinces of the Missionaries of the Holy Family gather for a 3 week meeting called the "General Chapter". This meeting was held from September 30 – October 18, 2007 in Rome, Italy. These photos are a glimpse into the meeting.



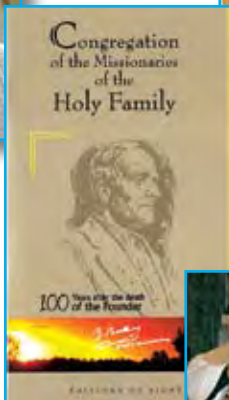
◀ The General Chapter has attendees from around the world who speak various languages. All the presentations and discussions are translated, so speakers must use microphones and participants wear headphones to hear the translations into English, Italian, Spanish, French or Portuguese.



◀ The Chapter was no stranger to technology. Provincials and others often made presentations using PowerPoint and other types of software.



▲ Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F. gives his report on the North American Province to the Chapter.



A new booklet ▶ is available which honors Fr. John Berthier in anticipation of the 100 year anniversary of his death on October 16, 2008. It has a short biography, information on the Missionaries of the Holy Family, along with prayers and reflection. Contact the Provincial Office for a copy.



▲ A vote is held on a measure proposed at the Chapter. Looks like this one passed!



▲ Fr. Gene Ronan, M.S.F. (left) and Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F. (center) concelebrate Mass on one of the days of the chapter.

AROUND THE PROVINCE



◀ On Tuesday, October 16, 2007, the Chapter commemorated the death of the Founder, Fr. John Berthier by going on a pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica at Monte Casino. They recited the rosary in multiple
▼ languages and celebrated Mass.



▲ Very Rev. Edmund Michalski, M.S.F. (Poland) was elected as the new General Superior for all the Missionaries of the Holy Family.



▲ Fr. Edmund met briefly with Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square where the Pope bestowed his blessing on Fr. Edmund and all the members of the Missionaries of the Holy Family.



▲ After the election of Fr. Edmund, four other members were elected to the General Government. Pictured concelebrating Mass is (L to R) Very Rev. Santiago Fernandez de Campo, M.S.F. (Spain), Very Rev. Edmund Michalski, M.S.F., (Poland), Very Rev. Itacir Brassiani, M.S.F. (South Brazil) and Very Rev. Paulinus Yan Olla, M.S.F. (Kalimantan). Not pictured is Very Rev. Patrice Ralaivao, M.S.F. (Madagascar).



PARENTS TIME OUT

Apathy - Kids Work At It

Contributed by Dr. Ray Guarendi

Dear Dr. Ray,

Our ten-year-old son accepts discipline pretty well. In fact, he accepts it too well. Whenever I discipline him, I meet with an "I don't care." I'm frustrated by his total lack of reaction. What can I do if he really doesn't care?

- I Care

Apathy—kids put a lot of effort into it. They deliberately work hard to convince you that discipline doesn't faze them. In other words, they care that you care that they don't care.

There are two basic parent-tested tactics kids use to convey apathy. Each sends a surge of frustration up parents' spines. Some kids will proclaim loud and clear, "I don't care"; for example, upon hearing that their phone privileges are disconnected until they pay off a phone bill listing 2,724 call-in votes (at 50 cents apiece) naming their favorite green-haired rock star. Other kids elevate feigned indifference to its purest form. Barely giving you a listless shoulder shrug or mouth twist, Joy wants you to know she doesn't even care enough to tell you she doesn't care.

Most, if not all, I don't care messages are facade. If Nielson truly didn't mind losing TV until his room is clean enough to find the window, why would he spend time watching

TV in the first place? If Penny genuinely wasn't bothered about paying you 25 cents for drying the dishes she "forgot" about, she'd walk up and hand you a quarter every so often, just out of gratitude that you're her mother.

Kids care about discipline. They just don't want you to think they do, for two reasons. One, if you think that your 25-cent penalty affected Penny, you just might try this fine approach more often in the future, and she certainly wouldn't want that. In any given year, she'd need to win the state lottery to pay you off. And two, Penny knows you're upset over her apathy, so at least she salvages something for her quarter.

On occasion, kids genuinely don't care about what you did. Carlisle's thinking, "So what if I can't have the car for a week. I don't need it." But on his third carless day, Carlisle gets a call from Carla, who says, "I have three free tickets to the Strawberry Asphalt concert, including a compli-

mentary meal and autograph session with the band. Can you drive?" It took a few days, but Carlisle did find out that seemingly carefree consequences can lead to complications.

Too, always remember this discipline maxim: Your purpose is not solely to make kids care about your discipline. Your purpose is to place what you (or they) think is a fair consequence for their actions and then stick with it. Your goal is to teach Carlisle something about life, that is, that people are held accountable for their behavior, whether they care or not.

So what can you say or do in the face of apathy? Try meeting apathy with apathy. Don't say or do anything. Your calm will convey quite nicely that it doesn't matter to you that it doesn't matter to Joy. If you bounce all over looking for consequences that do seem to matter to her, you'll search endlessly, because Joy will most likely convey the same reaction regardless of what you try. Kids stick with tactics that work on parents.

If you must say something or you'll just burst, try "I'm glad you're taking this so calmly." That usually takes the fire right out of apathy.

Apathy may be nerve-wracking, but it's simpler to handle than an argument or outright resistance. Kids who don't care do care, especially if we don't care that they don't care. [MJ]



Dr. Ray Guarendi

is the father of ten, a psychologist, a popular Catholic radio personality and guest speaker offering parenting advice in concert with Catholic values. More information about Dr. Ray's books and tapes can be found on the internet at www.DrRay.com

Umbert the Unborn





DEAR FATHER

Ask Father John

By Rev. John Carl Lombardi, M.S.F.

Dear Father,

I have heard that the popular children's song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" has hidden references to the basic teachings of the Catholic faith. Is this a coded song?

Opinion is divided whether this 16th century English song has coded references to the basic teachings to help young people learn the tenets of their faith.

Let us examine the facts. Catholics in England during the period of 1558 to 1829 were prohibited by law from any public or private practice of their faith.

So the idea of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" written as one of the "catechism songs" to help young Catholics to learn their faith isn't as far-fetched as it sounds. That's especially true when to have been caught with anything in writing indicating adherence to the Catholic faith could have gotten one not only imprisoned but also hanged.

The "true love" mentioned in the song is meant to refer to God Himself. And each of the days illustrates some aspect of the Catholic faith that was important for children to learn. The "me" who receives the presents refers to every baptized person.


On the first day of Christmas my true love (God) gave to me ... a partridge in a pear tree. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose birthday we celebrate on Dec. 25, the

first day of Christmas.

The other days could be symbols for the following:

- 2 turtle doves — Old and New Testaments;
- 3 French hens — three theological virtues: faith, hope and love;
- 4 calling birds — four Gospels and/or the four Evangelists;
- 5 golden rings — first five books of the Old Testament, the Torah;
- 6 geese a-laying — six days of creation;
- 7 swans a-swimming — seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and/or the seven sacraments;
- 8 maids a-milking — the eight Beatitudes;
- 9 ladies dancing — the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit;
- 10 lords a-leaping — Ten Commandments;
- 11 pipers piping — 11 faithful Apostles;
- 12 drummers drumming — 12 points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

After examining the meaning of these 12 symbols one discovers that they apply to all Christians, except for the seven Sacraments. So why did Catholics have to be cautious in teaching their children these doctrines? I would have to say that any Roman Catholic catechetical instruction outside of the Anglican tradition was looked upon as heretical and could have resulted in death.

And since there is little hard evidence for or against the fact that “The Twelve Days of Christmas” had a hidden coded message for Catholic children — let us in the spirit of the Christmas season simply enjoy it as a charming Christmas song. 



Father Lombardi, a priest of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, is associate pastor of St. Wenceslaus Parish in South Saint Louis, Missouri.





A PROFILE OF SERVICE

Father John Brieffies, M.S.F.

Interviewed and written by Guy Parasch and Beth Crowell

Father John Brieffies turned 85 on November 25, 2007 and has been a priest for 51 years. Ordained to the priesthood at the age of 33, he has led an exciting life which began in his small hometown of Lutjebroek, Holland (now the Netherlands). Lutjebroek is less than an hour north from Amsterdam and the town name has a humorous meaning in colloquial Dutch which is “insignificant speck on the map.” From this “speck” came a man who has helped the

memories of his parents are many, but in particular recalls how his father never spoke ill of anyone. If his father heard someone talking negative about someone he would say “Look at your own life – who is perfect?” Father Brieffies felt his father was a wonderful teacher on how to live life. His mother, Elizabeth, especially looked out for his spiritual well being. When John as a youth would be heading to town his Dad would ask if he



Missionaries of the Holy Family minister to hundreds of thousands of lives!

John Brieffies was born the fourth child to Francis and Elizabeth Brieffies. He was one of 11 children – 6 girls and 5 boys. John was the oldest of the boys. Life on the family farm was hard work but joyful. As Father Brieffies recalls “There was always a lot of love.” His

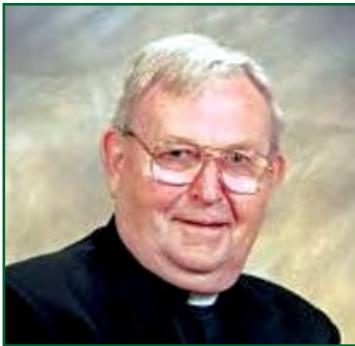
had money and his Mom would be sure he had his handkerchief and Rosary.

[From the 11 Brieffies children would come 2 religious vocations – John and his sister, Gertrude, who became an Ursuline Sister for 50 years serving 35 years in Uganda. His other siblings followed their vocations and went on to be married and have lovely families.]

John went to school through the sixth grade. After that, his strength and sturdiness was needed to help manage the family farm. One weekend when John was 20 years old his hometown parish, St. Lawrence, hosted a missionary priest to preach. Father Giovanni Groen, M.S.F. was from Borneo, Kalimantan, Indonesia. He shared stories about his work and the missions in Indonesia. This was a pivotal visit for John. He recalls that this is when he was drawn to the priesthood. The idea especially took hold when John heard that this missionary priest had not

sensed his call to be a priest until he was in his 20's. John identified with this. For the next year John kept his interest in the priesthood to himself. He said he prayed about it. During that year, his Mom and Dad noticed changes in how he was living. He had stopped dating and often appeared distracted or preoccupied. Eventually he talked with his father about his interest in the priesthood. They had a very long talk and in the end his desire for the priesthood remained and his father told him to follow his heart and if it didn't work out then just come back to the farm.

Note: Fr. Giovanni Groen, M.S.F. was Dutch and he has the distinction of being the first Missionary of the Holy Family to be ordained a Bishop.



Fr. John Brieffies, M.S.F.
51 years of Priesthood
Born: November 25, 1922
Age: 85
Hometown:
 Lutjebroek,
 North Holland, Netherlands
Hometown Parish:
 Saint Lawrence
Patron Saint:
 St. John the Baptist

Confirmation Name:

Lawrence

Ordained:

July 29, 1956

Education:

(1-6) St. Lawrence
 Catholic Parish School

Seminary:

Minor - St. Anthony, Kaatsheubel
 Major - St. John Berchman,
 Oudenbosh

Hobbies:

Yard work, music, reading &
 stamp collecting.

Heroes

Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa,
 Pope John XXII &
 Martin Luther King

Last Book Read:

The Phenomenon of Man
 by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.

Motto:

"Glory to God" &
 "The purpose of life is to be happy"

The priest John had heard speak was from the Missionaries of the Holy Family and so John contacted them. He was welcomed by the Holy Family priests and brothers to pursue his calling and began his studies in the Missionaries of the Holy Family's minor seminary in Holland. He started at the minor seminary, St. Anthony, since his formal

education ended at 6th grade. After six years, in September of 1950, he went on to their major seminary, St. John Berchman, and studied philosophy then theology. There were nearly 150 men studying for the priesthood at the seminary and he remembers the years very fondly with great friendships.

Rev. John Brieffies was ordained a priest of the Missionaries of the Holy Family by +Most Rev. Joseph Wilhelmus Maria Baeten – Bishop of Breda, Netherlands on July 29, 1956. Within a year he was sent by the Missionaries of the Holy Family to South America, which Father John found humorous because he studied several languages while in the Seminary but Spanish was not one of

them! He spent nearly 15 years in Chili working among the poor in the missions. This included six years of service as a hospital chaplain in Santiago. His final two years in Chile were in the far south of the country and that climate began to cause him health issues.

In 1971 he was sent to the United States to coordinate fund raising efforts to support the Holy Family Priests and Brothers who worked at international missions. When he arrived in the United States it was a



special experience. Fr. John said "I could almost smell the freedom in the air. In South America you could feel the control of the government on the lives of the people. Freedom is God's greatest Gift to a way of government."

As Executive Director of the General Mission Office (GMO), Father John has traveled all over the United States spreading his message of the Good News. He tells of the work of the Missionaries of the Holy Family and why their ministries are important. You may recall Sundays at your parish when a missionary comes to speak about the overseas missions. This is the work Fr. John does. His frequent travels have earned him the nickname of "Highway Johnny" from his colleagues.

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In earlier years his busy season had him on the road traveling from parish to parish from Easter time until late September. Often celebrating Mass and giving homilies at 90 or more parishes in

of miles to continue his ministry. He continues to run the General Mission Office in West Point, Virginia. Father John also assists in the local parish of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament when needed. To this day Father John continues to do much of his own yard work and walks his faithful dog Bobby daily.

In October of 2007 all the Provincials for the Missionaries of the Holy Family from around the world gathered in Rome for the General Chapter meeting.




Photo above: Donna Geron (left) and Beth Crosswell (right) Fr. John's essential associates in the General Mission Office.



Photo right: Very Rev. Philip Sosa, Provincial for the North American Provincial presenting Fr. John his certificate.

a season. Fr. John has always been frugal – almost to a fault – because it was not uncommon for him to forfeit the safety of an overnight stay in a hotel room by sleeping in his car.

Following a near fatal car accident in 1991, he asked God for 10 more years. Not only were his prayers answered (with bonus years), but he has been given the gift of good health as well. Now that he is in his 80's, he has finally slowed down - a little, but he still is driving thousands

Every Provincial wanted to thank Fr. John Briefies for his decades of tremendous service. The Holy Family missions throughout the world have been helped by the generosity of those who heard Fr. John preach the Good News. A special certificate was created as a simple token of appreciation for all his years of service. Very Rev. Philip Sosa, Provincial for the North American Province had the honor of presenting Fr. John with this recognition. 



HOLY FAMILY LIFE

Supplemental

Holy Longing

By Heidi Hess Saxton

*"I prefer the monotony of obscure sacrifice to all ecstasies.
To pick up a pin for love can convert a soul."*

– Therese of Lisieux.

Some weeks ago a friend drew my attention to a story about a former priest, who (brace yourself) "left the Catholic clergy in 1971 to marry Jackie, a former nun."

My thoughts went immediately to two men of my own acquaintance ...

The first of them left seminary in the 70s, halfway through, and married a dear friend of mine. This couple have since been actively involved in parish work, leading group after group of "lost lambs"

(myself included) into the fold of the Good Shepherd and His Church. They are eager to see a time when the Church does away with the "celibacy requirement"

for her priests. However, whenever they voice this opinion (it tends to crop up when I'm around), my mind immediately returns to an encounter with the second man — a certain Jesuit priest I know.

I met this man for the first time as he was about to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination. He had spent much of that time as a seminary professor, raising spiritual sons who would follow after

*"No, not at first," he replied softly.
"There was a young woman, you see, who I loved very much..."
His eyes grew soft, remembering.*

him. During the interview, I asked him if he had always wanted to be a priest.

"No, not at first," he replied softly. "There was a young woman, you see, who I loved very much..." His eyes grew soft, remembering.



Fiona was a very good girl. But I was resigned to be a priest, and I never doubted that this was God's will for me. Before Fiona entered the convent, I wanted to marry her. I knew this wasn't what God wanted for me. Still, I bargained with God, "Now let me marry Fiona, we can have ten children who can be nuns and priests." But He didn't take me up on it, and I understood what God wanted me to do. I would be a priest.

God said to me, "Do you love this girl, and always want to be with her? I want you to give her back to me, and I will be your love. I am infinitely more loving, I love you more than she could ever love you, I know you through and through. If you will accept me as your love, I will give myself — all that I am — to you."

What I had for Fiona was a selfish love, a self-indulgent kind of love. I enjoyed being with her because it made me feel good. But it would not be that way for me. There would be no emotional, no physical consolation. "You will serve me — I will teach you to serve me — with a true love, without those sensible pleasures." And so I said yes, and I received such grace. I was accepting in the dark, a life without any particular joy — that was how it was going to be. When God let me know I was going to be a priest, I immediately wrote to Fiona and to my parish priest, telling them — I burned all my bridges, there was no opportunity to back out.

Continues on page 26

Fiona entered the convent the following September. Later, I had an opportunity to talk with her older sister, who told me about this Carmelite nun, Teresa of the Child Jesus, and urged me to read her biography. When I went to the library, I couldn't find Teresa (of Avila) but I did find Therese (of Lisieux). I opened up "A Story of a Soul" and I began to read.

A shower, an indescribable shower of love and tenderness rained down upon me. I was just overwhelmed with feelings of tenderness and love. I had never felt this love of God in my heart before. In the book Therese said she felt a shower of graces coming down, and I knew that this is what I was experiencing.

When Father finished, we both had tears in our eyes.

When Father finished, we both had tears in our eyes. I did not doubt that he had suffered greatly — there is no pain greater, I think, than inflicting pain on someone who loves you. But oh, what a prize he had won!

I think about Father L. often, when I hear of this one or that one who has retraced his or her steps along a pathway of intention. Sometimes it involves a broken promise, other times a broken heart ... a shattered dream, or weak resolve. We human beings are frail creatures, and there are times when the moment comes and (God help us) like Peter we falter.

And then the cock crows.

In His mercy, God often redeems even the poorest of our choices in unexpected ways. He blesses us far beyond anything we have reason to expect. That's just His way.

And part of that mercy includes never knowing the many blessings that might have been ours, that could have been others', had we simply stayed the course.

Jesus once said to a would-be disciple, "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62). Just as a plow horse wears blinders (only God, the Great Sower, sees infinitely ahead), we must orient ourselves always toward the present. What is God asking of you *now*?

In this moment, there is grace enough for the next step. But if you break your focus, if you set your sights either backward or too

“In this moment, there is grace enough for the next step.”

far forward, disordered longings can grip you and keep you from embracing all God wants you to have and do, right now.

Have you ever experienced this? I have. I remember a time about three years ago, when it looked as though our foster children (who had been with us over two years) were going to be returned to their birth family. I spent three days in bed, unable to cope with the prospect of losing them. I let myself get too far ahead ... and it paralyzed me. For those three days I stopped plowing, straining vainly to see (and yet fearful of what I might find).

We do it all the time, don't we?

“If only I could be with _____,
then I would be truly happy.”

“If only I could have _____,
(a child, a spouse, a better job, a healing), I'll never ask God for anything else.”

“If only I didn't have (or had) _____,
I could serve God freely.”

Enough. We must place these longings into the hands of our Heavenly Father, that we might be free for the work at hand. One day, one step, one furrow at a time, trusting that when the time is right, each of these longings will be fulfilled in infinitely better ways than ever we could have imagined.

Jesus, I trust in You. 



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Heidi is the editor of Canticle
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and the mother of two young children.
She has a blog for moms
mommymonsters.blogspot.com
and Catholic converts and seekers
streamsofmercy.blogspot.com.

A Friend of the Missionaries of the Holy Family gives prayerful support.



The Missionaries of the Holy Family seek to work with lay people who are also committed to the pastoral care of families especially through the promotion of a prayer life.

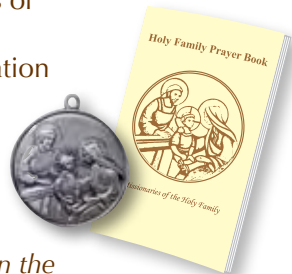
General Regulations for membership in the

The Friends of the Missionaries of the Holy Family

1. Fill out the enrollment form and mail in.* **There is no fee.**
2. As a practicing Catholic, recite three daily prayers:
 - A. The Prayer to the Holy Family
 - B. The Prayer for Missionaries
 - C. The Prayer for Vocations.
3. Consecration to the Holy Family to be prayed every 1st Friday
4. Members are asked to support the apostolate of the Missionaries of the Holy Family by:
 - A. Praying for the Missionaries and for their Apostolates
 - B. Making known the spirituality and work of the Missionaries of the Holy Family and of the Friends of the Missionaries of the Holy Family
 - C. Doing corporal works of mercy as they are able, i.e., visiting the sick, volunteering in a soup kitchen or food pantry, fundraising for the missions, etc.
5. At the end of two years, a member can submit a letter requesting permanent membership. Members, however, do not have to become permanent members; they may continue to renew provisional membership or they may end their commitment.

Benefits of Membership for the Friends of the Missionaries of the Holy Family

1. Sharing in the work and spiritual benefits of the Missionaries of the Holy Family
2. Enrollment in the Perpetual Mass Association
3. Holy Family Prayer Book
4. Blessed Holy Family Medal
5. A deeper spiritual life



**For an application to join the
Friends of the Missionaries of the Holy Family
see your pastor or call 314-577-6300*

Friend of the Missionaries of the Holy Family Application Form

Candidates apply in writing to the Provincial using this form. The applicant must be a Catholic in good standing and the application form must be signed by a priest, brother or deacon. The applicant must also sign that he or she promises to abide by the guidelines of the Association.

*Please
Print*

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

I request to be enrolled as a member of "**The Friends of the Missionaries of the Holy Family.**" I further promise to abide by the Philosophy and Purpose of the Association. This commitment is made for a period of two years, at which time I may renew my commitment.

Candidate Signature

Witnessed by Priest, Brother, or Deacon

Date

Detach this application page and mail to:
Friends of the Missionaries of the Holy Family
3014 Oregon Avenue
Saint Louis, Missouri 63118

“Mountains and hills shall break out in song before you, and all the trees of the countryside shall clap their hands.”

Isaiah 55:12 (NAB)



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