

The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY



Judge DeStefano: Faith and Justice

WINTER 2023 - 2024

The MESSENGER

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The MESSENGER

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Back Cover: First Communion in Madagascar.

Provincial Perspective

Dear Family,

Our Blessed Mother and Family Love

Mother of Perpetual Help, bless our families with your tender, motherly love.

May the sacrament of marriage bring husbands and wives ever closer together, that they may always be faithful and love each other as Christ loves us.

Help all mothers and fathers love and cherish the children God has entrusted to them. May they always be models of a truly Christian life.

Help all children, that they may love and respect their parents.

Inspire all people to value Christian marriage and family life.

Give us a sense of responsibility that we may do our part in making our homes havens of love and peace.

Mary, our model, help every family grow daily in genuine love for God and neighbor so that justice and peace may flourish everywhere in the human family.

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Sincerely in the Holy Family, I am



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



Very Rev. Philip Sosa, M.S.F.

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FAITH AND JUSTICE

by **Honorable Vito M. DeStefano**
New York State Supreme Court Justice

Note from Father Phil, Provincial: Being a faithful Catholic is not about going to church on Sunday and then breaking the Ten Commandments throughout the week. It is about sincerely trying to incorporate Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition into every aspect of life. Judge Vito is the real deal: uncompromisingly ethical and Catholic, which further graces the good Judge with integrity and purity of heart.

Several years ago, I was fortunate to pick up an old book at a used bookstore entitled *The Road to Damascus*. Long out of print, the book, from 1955, contains autobiographical descriptions of the faith journeys of a number of Catholic converts prominent in the 1950s. One of the things I noted when reading the book was an underlying similarity in everyone's story: the ability to recall the moment when they felt God's presence in their lives.

When I was asked to write a short piece about my faith journey, and about the importance of faith in my life and work, I immediately thought of that book. Not that I am a person of comparable significance or prominence as were the book's contributors. But as a judicial veteran of 20 years in the state of New York, I can say, without any pride, that I have some

prominence in the community, and, more importantly, that my Catholic faith and my relationship with God are at the center of my thoughts and life.

Another point relating to *The Road to Damascus* – all of the prominent people featured therein are dead and most have been long forgotten. So, with that humbling reality, and with the candid acknowledgment that I am a deeply flawed sinner, I am happy to discuss the role of faith in my life and work.

Growing Up

I grew up in a lower middle-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, the second of five children. We lived in a small apartment in a walk-up building above a bakery, and we lived with a lot of cockroaches and mice too!

My father held many jobs to make ends meet, but we were

perpetually broke. We had to eat and live very frugally, and, in fact, we had less than virtually all the families we knew. We were not poor – just broke all the time, but, of course, there is a huge difference between those two states in life (broke versus poor), as anyone who has been in either knows.

We received the sacraments, but did not attend Mass regularly.

My father, who did grow up poor, lost his faith when his mother died at a relatively young age.

I think that for a long time he was unable to love God, or return His love, in view of the suffering his mother had endured after

having 11 children and then living long enough to see several of them die very tragically.

My own mother would occasionally take us to Mass, but she also had issues which caused lukewarm participation in the Church. In short, my parents believed, but not enough to practice the faith. The result was that my siblings and I were not "religious" in any sense of the word.

Only my sister, who was several

years younger, had faith, and she prayed for our conversion constantly. She never missed Mass and tried mightily to get us to go, but we stayed away. During these teenage years, I believed in God and accepted the Church's teachings, but God and the faith were inconvenient and the four last things (death, judgment, heaven, and hell) were simply too intangible and distant. Besides, deep down, I felt that one day I would go back to the Church and the faith.



Left to right: Carmine, Anthony, Vito, and Elisa in cradle.

When I was 22, I got engaged to my girlfriend. Like my family and me, she was Catholic but did not practice the faith.

Notwithstanding, it was the occasion of our engagement that began my conversion. I specifically recall feeling at that time what I can only describe as Joy: joy in the excitement, joy in being congratulated by everyone, and joy in feeling loved.

The Joy of Faith

Most importantly, I became conscious of the feeling of joy for the first time in my life. The nearest description I would give

it is happiness at another level. So different was this feeling that I remember being grateful to God for letting me experience it. For whatever reason, I knew that the experience was attributable, in some way, to God, and I was thankful for it. As I experienced joy for the first time, I also felt God's presence for the first time.

Almost simultaneously, I remember asking myself what I did to deserve the happiness that I felt. When I answered the question, which was nothing, I suddenly felt extreme sorrow for neglecting God and the sacraments and for living a hedonistic, selfish life. Shortly thereafter, I went to Confession and attended weekly Mass, and thus began the long faith journey that I continue to this day.

Now, at the age of 56, I begin every day with prayers, Eucharistic Adoration at 5:30 a.m., the Rosary, and then 6:30 a.m. Mass. My days are extremely busy, but I try to say some short prayers when I can. I read spiritual books regularly and incorporate my faith into my public life at every opportunity, including when I teach law.

I end each day with prayer,

preferably with the Rosary. I try to live and prioritize in accordance with the Ten Commandments, and I go to Confession every week, typically twice a week. Not because I want to, but because I *need* this sacrament!

Rendering Judgment



Judge DeStefano at the Red Mass.

I am sure that my faith is intimately tied to my vocation as a judge. The whole path of my career has been truly miraculous – even when other parts of my life have not been, and even with all the sacrifices

that are attendant to a life of public service. Yet I have seen and felt God's hand in it from the beginning, and my Catholic faith has served to enhance and fortify me in my commitment to service and to justice and truth.

I'm always aware of the fact that in rendering judgment, I am engaging in a God-like function, and I often pray to God for the wisdom to do the correct thing and to reach the correct result. I invoke the intercession of the saints daily for this purpose as well, and especially Saint Thomas More who is the patron saint of lawyers.

Always on my mind is something

I witnessed many years ago when, peeking into my courtroom before going onto the bench, I saw a woman in the back praying. At that moment, it occurred to me that she was praying to God to intercede with me, as I served as the judge in this criminal case. Likely praying for the benefit of herself or, more likely, for her son, who, as it turned out, was a defendant in the trial. This vision overwhelmed me, and it has stayed with me my whole career.

This memory is a personal reminder from God that every conflict I preside over has real significance to someone made in

His image, and that I am to act and judge accordingly. The bottom line is that God wanted me to become a judge and to dedicate all my talent, intellect, and heart to it, aware, as a Catholic should be, that one day "He will judge my judging." I pray to God that I have judged well.

Gifts from God

One of the many gifts God has given to me is to occasionally see with extreme clarity the causal connection between prayer and its effects. To be sure, all people of faith

believe in the efficacy of prayer, but to be able to actually point to a significant effect following the prayer – like the Roman Centurion whose faith healed his servant – is an especially remarkable gift.

I have been blessed to experience this multiple times in my life. No, the evidence is not of a type that would stand up in a court of law, but it is nevertheless of a type that

people gifted with faith, as C.S. Lewis once described, know and recognize with metaphysical certitude.

For example, without a single



Left to right: son Matthew, daughter Diana, sibling Fr. Sal, wife Kim, and Judge Vito.

thought of becoming a lawyer during the entirety of my life, I decided to go to law school immediately after reading about and meditating on the life of Saint Thomas More, and that I entered law school without even the slightest difficulty, being accepted into every law school to which I applied.

I know that my legal career took a remarkable path upwards once I started praying the Rosary, in that just seven years after graduating

from law school, I became a judge, and I have risen in status and in the judiciary for 20 years. And, considering that me and my previously faithless family members, including my parents, ALL RETURNED to the Church and a life of faith, with one brother becoming a priest and another becoming a noted author of religious books, ***I know that my little sister's prayers were heard and answered!***

I have seen people become reconciled with God, have tremendous financial problems resolved, and be healed of serious physical illnesses from the very Masses I requested from the Missionaries of the Holy Family. I believe so strongly in the power of the Mass that I request them for everyone and anyone: strangers, relatives, ancestors, Souls in Purgatory, people estranged from me, litigants, colleagues, students, and all.

When it comes to Masses, you might say that I am an "impulse buyer," and I have even apologized for requesting so many Masses,

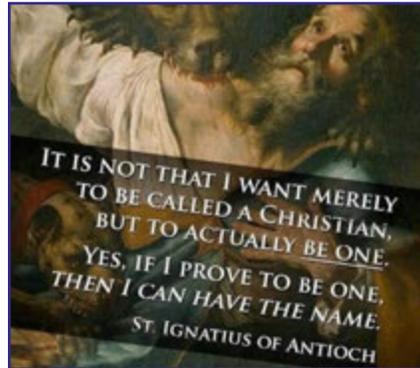
but I have always been assured that this is never a problem. Deo Gratias (thanks be to God)!

Note from the Editor. Judge Vito and his lovely wife Kim have four beautiful children. Regarding Judge Vito and family life, this quote from the late Father Theodore Hesburgh comes to the forefront: *"The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother."*

+JM+

Credit for Ten Commandments: © Rev. Mr. Ramón Rolón, Permanent Deacon, Saint Margaret of Scotland Parish, Reading, Pennsylvania.

Credit for Saint Ignatius of Antioch: © Anastpaul.com.



O Christian, Earn Your Name!



Four men from Madagascar (front row) took their first vows as Brothers of the Missionaries of the Holy Family.

The Ten Commandments

I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.

Have I treated people, events, or things as more important than God?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Have my words, actively or passively, put down God, the Church, or people?

Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

Do I go to Mass every Sunday (or Saturday Vigil) and on Holy Days of Obligation (Jan. 1; the Ascension; Aug. 15; Nov. 1; Dec. 8; Dec. 25)? Do I avoid, when possible, work that impedes worship to God, joy for the Lord's Day, and proper relation of mind and body? Do I look for ways to spend time with family or in service on Sunday?

Honor your father and your mother.

Do I show my parents due respect? Do I seek to maintain good communication with my parents where possible? Do I criticize them for lacking skills I think they should have?

You shall not kill.

Have I harmed another through physical, verbal, or emotional means, including gossip or manipulation of any kind?

You shall not commit adultery.

Have I respected the physical and sexual dignity of others and of myself?

You shall not steal.

Have I taken or wasted time or resources that belonged to another?

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I gossiped, told lies, or embellished stories at the expense of another?

You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse.

Have I honored my spouse with my full affection and exclusive love?

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Am I content with my own means and needs, or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily?



MADE IN MADAGASCAR

“I can do all things through Christ.”

by Father André Bemora, M.S.F.

Editor’s Note: Father André is from our Madagascar Province, and he arrived in the United States in November 2022. He is currently assisting the provincial superior, Very Reverend Philip Sosa, M.S.F., at Saint Wenceslaus Parish in Saint Louis, Missouri. Following are his answers to some questions about his fascinating life.

Where were you born?

My name is André Bemora, and I was born on May 1, 1970. My father’s name is Joseph Jaoravoana, and my mother’s name is Louise Marivony. They were farmers. I have two brothers and three sisters, and I grew up in a small village called Antsakolany. I am originally from Nosy-Be Hell-Ville in the Diocese of Ambanja and the province of Diego-Suarez. In short, my city is Diego-Suarez and the country is Madagascar.

Why did you become a missionary priest?

In 1988, I entered the minor seminary of the Diocese of Ambanja. I always wanted to be a religious priest, so I spoke to the spiritual director, and he showed me a book about religious orders.

I found in the Missionaries of the Holy Family the charism and spirituality that suited me. I made a request to the Father Provincial, and in August 1992, I joined the Missionaries of the Holy Family as a postulant. I completed all the training to become a priest.

I took my first vows on August 26, 1995, and my perpetual vows on July 20, 2002. I was ordained a Priest of Jesus Christ in August 2003.

“If anyone wants to follow me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)



Fr. André’s siblings.

Why is the English language hard to learn?

English is fundamentally neither easier nor more difficult to learn than any other foreign language. It contains points which may pose problems, and which must be approached with patience and rigor. English is a complex language because it has 44 word sounds or phonemes, containing 19 vowel-types and 25 consonant-types, and the pronunciation can be very complicated. For example, there are silent letters like **kn**ow and **wr**ench.

How is the United States different from Madagascar?

The main difference between the United States and Madagascar is material progress.

The United States has progressed much more in terms of the economy, politics, culture, infrastructure, living standards, and governmental administration. Considering the climate, the USA can be very cold at times, but in Madagascar the weather is usually warmer. The United States is a large country, but Madagascar is small in comparison.

Do Catholics in Madagascar practice their Faith?

Unlike the United States, the majority of Catholics in Madagascar still practice their faith. Why? Faith is a person’s response to God who reveals Himself and gives a unique light to see the true meaning of one’s life. God never stops drawing people to Himself, and only in God can people find truth and happiness. We have no wealth or power to rely on; we rely on God.



Fr. André’s family members including his mom to his left.

What are your favorite memories as a priest?

My favorite memory as a priest is my ordination.

On August 24, 2003, the original desire for God’s call

to sacrifice that had begun in

me in 1983 was finally realized. Secondly, I actively participate in the work of salvation commanded by Jesus Christ to His disciples. Also, I know that I am sent by God to be a worker in His vineyard. *“The harvest is great, but the laborers are few...”*

(Matthew 9:37-38)



Dancing with the priests.

What type of books do you like to read?

Besides the Bible, I like to read philosophical books because it helps me to understand, deepen, live, and share theology according to the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas *"Philosophy is at the service of theology."*

Secondly, philosophy makes it easier for me to open my perspective to see and study situations, the reality of these situations, and understand their meaning and importance. It helps me to live the charism of the Missionaries of the Holy Family: Family, Vocations, and Missions.

What are the two dimensions of Jesus Christ?

Good question! In Madagascar, I taught philosophy in the seminary for 10 years. The profound wisdom of God is manifested in the fact that the Incarnation of the Word, the form chosen to save man, is the most adapted to our human nature.

The Incarnation is: the mystery of

the union of loving divinity and humanity in the One Person of the Word (*Catechism #483*). Jesus Christ is true God and true man (*Catechism #464*). The Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. confirmed that the two natures of the person in the Incarnate Word are neither confused nor separated. These are the two dimensions of Jesus Christ.

Why should laypeople be interested in philosophy?

The essence of philosophy is the search for truth and not its possession. Philosophy is what brings us back to the center where man becomes himself by inserting himself into reality. Philosophy can reach any person, and even a child, in the form of a few simple and effective reflections. The philosopher is designated as someone who loves knowledge, as opposed to someone who, possessing knowledge, calls himself a scholar. In short, man



Left to right: Fr. Joss, Fr. Ben, and Fr. André.

cannot do without philosophy. For reference, read Karl Jaspers' *Introduction to Philosophy*.

If God granted you one wish, what would it be?

Perfection. In this sense, according to the words of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Saint Matthew: *"Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is*

perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

Which ultimately means, in Philippians 4:13 -- *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* Please pray for me, and I will pray for you. +JM+



LES 18 ETHNIES DE MADAGASCAR

The 18 Tribes of Madagascar

1/	ANTAKARANA
2/	TSIMIHETY
3/	SIHANAKA
4/	BETSIMISARAKA
5/	MERINA
6/	BEZANOZANO
7/	SAKALAVA
8/	BETSILEO
9/	TANALA
10/	ANTEMORO
11/	BARA
12/	ANTEFASY
13/	VEZO
14/	ANTAMBAHOAKA
15/	MAHAFALY
16/	ANTASAKA
17/	ANTANDROY
18/	ANTANDOSY

MADAGASCAR INSPIRE

Man of God: Religious Forever

In this Year of Our Lord 2024, Rev. Benoit "Father Ben" Fidele Ramanandraibe, M.S.F. celebrates his 20th anniversary of ordination as a Priest of Jesus Christ. We thank God for Father Ben and all of our priests and brothers, and we beseech Him to send us many more.

If you would like to send a Tribute Gift in honor of Father Ben, please send it to 3014 Oregon Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63118-1412.

Thank you and God bless your family!



Fr. Ben Ramanandraibe, M.S.F.
20 years



Do You Want More Holy Priests?

Please join the *Holy Family Circle* and help foster vocations to the priesthood! Find your level of joyful giving below, complete the form, and mail it or a copy to 3014 Oregon Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118.

Giving Level	Associate..... up to \$49 per month	Patriarch/Matriarch
Examples:	Samaritan.....\$50 per month	\$10,000 annual gift
	Companion.....\$100 per month	
	Disciple.....\$300 per month	
	Apostle.....\$600 per month	

My Contact Information:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

My Level of Joyful Giving per month: _____



THE POETRY CORNER



She Catches the Sun by Emil Poprawski

As I sit here by the window, and look toward the West,
I realize every evening, My Love catches the sun.
As it begins to fade in the West, she holds it closer to her heart,
Cuddling it next to her breast, cuddling the warm ball of light.

She holds it all evening, and all throughout the long night,
But as she sleeps and dreams, she begins to loosen her hold on the sun.
As I am rousing from my night of sleep, I see by the bedroom window, the faint glimmer of daybreak, and the sun is there.

Yes, she loosened her hold on the sun, and the daybreak came to be,
I catch the sunlight from her hands, holding it for us during the day.
We pass our love to each other, passing the sun from day to day.
Our love continues to shine, no matter the time of night or day.

Priscilla "Pris" Poprawski

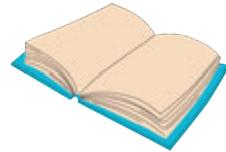
April 6, 1948 – December 5, 2021

Thank You & God Bless You to everyone who made a financial gift in 2023. We, the priests and brothers of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, extend our deep gratitude to all our benefactors. You are remembered in our prayers.

Around the Province



Enjoying a good book at bedtime.



Seven deacons ordained in Madagascar.



Relic of St. Wenceslaus.

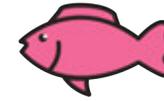


Fr. Joss (left) and Fr. Andre at a Grizzlies Baseball game.



Around the Province

Little fisher girl.



Katie with three of her many nieces.



"Wine to make us happy, olive oil to soothe our skin, and bread to give us strength."

Psalm 104:15



Some of our Madagascar priests on the feast day of Our Lady of La Salette.





JOYS OF FAMILY LIFE

The Deceased Are Still Family!

by Brother Knight Baldy Bluett

My youngest brother Rob recently died. He would have been 64 on December 8, 2023, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



The Bluett Brothers.

Everything seemed to be in order with finances and preparations for his death. He knew it was coming; details don't matter. Another one of my younger brothers was there for at least three weeks to help put things in order. He even helped get rid of the animal traps, ha! Rob was a trapper, and he was also one heck of a character.

Death in a family. It's sad, but it's also glorious. Unfortunately, I have seen families break up over a few coins. I don't know

what the coins were worth, but it certainly was not worth breaking up a family.

When my mother-in-law died, her oldest son was the executor.

There were no arguments or disputes, and he did a great job. When my Mom died, one of my brothers was the executor. There were no arguments or disputes, and he did a great job.



Left to right: Wife Tammy, +Rob Bluett, and Mom Bluett.

One penny or a million bucks, it's not worth breaking up a family! I urge you to not let a death in the family break up your family. Rather, celebrate the life of the person who died.

Times change. My Dad died in 1979. I remember there were over 100 cars in the procession from the Funeral Mass to the grave site, and it was at least a 30-minute drive. Today, most people don't go to the cemetery after the funeral. Those people in 100+ cars went to celebrate my Dad's life.



+Rob & Wife Tammy in 1995.

Eventually, there will be a party to celebrate Rob's life, and there will be lots of stories and lots of laughs. Celebrate life and celebrate eternal life too. Just celebrate your family, and may God bless all of our families, the living and the deceased. +JMJ+



+Rob & Wife Tammy at their son, Robbie's, wedding.

You will always be loved and never forgotten. I will carry you with me forever and wait patiently until we meet again.



Pieta Votive Candles



This beautiful Pieta statue is in Saint Wenceslaus Church in Saint Louis, Missouri, and in the rectory are the offices of the North American Province of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. If you would like a 6-day votive candle lit for your family and your intentions, contact us at mprater@msf-america.org or 1-888-484-9945. Candles burn in a rack to the right of the statue. (The suggested donation is \$7.00.) Thank you and may God bless you.



STEPS TO A STRONGER MARRIAGE

5 Keys to a Holy Marriage

by Dr. Ray Guarendi, PhD, EWTN Radio

© Reprinted with permission, churchpop.com, Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). September 5, 2023. All rights reserved. (Dr. Ray is a father to 10 adopted children and husband to his wife Randi Guarendi for 39 years and counting.)

Divorce rates increase, families break apart, and the next generation suffers the effect of being raised in single-parent homes. Is this the new normal?

Dr. Ray Guarendi, psychologist and host of EWTN Radio's *The Doctor is In*, recently appeared on *The World Over with Raymond Arroyo* to discuss his new book, **Simple Steps to a Stronger Marriage**. Here are five helpful tips he suggests for Catholic couples:

1. Our Culture is Not Your Friend.

Make no mistake -- we currently live in the culture of death, and we were warned by Pope Saint John Paul II. This culture promotes pleasure, selfishness, and transactional relationships as a means to an end.

The culture of our time tells us that self-worship is empowerment; we

must elevate our happiness above all else and throw away anything that does not serve us. Jesus says the exact opposite. He tells us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. **(Luke 9:23)**

During times of marital discourse, do not turn to this self-obsessed culture as a guide or comfort. When asked about the high divorce rate, Dr. Guarendi states, *"About 80 percent of marriages end because 'I don't like you anymore, I don't want to be around you, I don't want to live with you anymore.'"*

"The bulk of marriages don't have severe pathology... For the most part, it's two people who have stopped getting along... We



Marriage of Mary and Joseph.

live in a culture that says you can have sexual relationships with anybody, anytime, anywhere. Just don't have more than 1.86 children. Then, we will belittle you." [Souls lose sanctifying grace from mortal sins: Catechism #1861.]

2. Learn to Be Silent - Listen to Your Partner.

Not to be confused with the silent treatment, we can benefit from the power of silence. There is much to be said for learning to pause and hold our tongue. Unfortunately, speaking to our spouse out of anger is very common, in what Dr. Guarendi calls peak emotional surge.

"When you most feel like saying it, delay it," he continues. *"Hold for 20 seconds and the physiological urge will taper enough for you to control it."*

Good communication calls for acknowledging both -- when to speak and when to listen, even though it may not be easy. *"Spouses have to understand what's going on in the other person's head. You may not agree with it... but you have to at least understand it. Most people want to be understood even more than they want to be agreed with,"* Dr. Guarendi says.

3. Remember Your Manners.

Manners. Remember those? *"Many spouses don't have the manners of a five-year-old,"* Dr. Guarendi shares.

As the years pass, spouses may take one another for granted, forgetting a quintessential life skill called manners. The way we speak to our spouse matters, and saying "please" and "thank you" should always be part of our daily vocabulary. Respecting the dignity of the spouse God entrusted you with must remain a priority.

"We expect manners from five-year-olds, but in a marriage, we get very sloppy with our spouses," Dr. Guarendi says.



Marriage commitment.

4. Shared Faith is Essential.

When it comes to the role of faith in relationships, Dr. Guarendi states, *"If one spouse is faith-filled, the marriage has a much longer chance of success. If both spouses are faith-filled, the divorce rate is much lower."*

Pursuing someone with the hopes of converting them later is not smart courtship and may only waste time. Sharing the Catholic faith, and all the values that come with it, is essential.

5. "Opposites Attract" Won't Get You Very Far.

We've all heard "opposites attract," but how opposite is too opposite? Should we seek a spouse who is vastly different from ourselves?

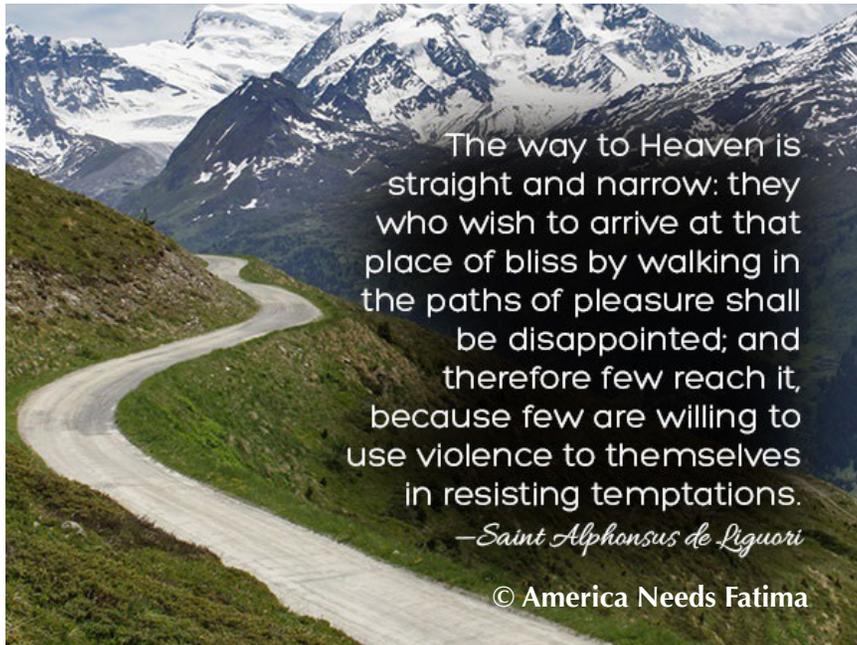
"I have seen many marriages fail because they didn't have enough commonality. The first commonality is faith," Dr. Guarendi says. *"Secondly, take the time you need to really get to know this person."*

Third, make sure this person views life as you do (children, finances, family, parenting, etc.). *"Most importantly, find a potential spouse who celebrates the faith like you do,"* Dr. Guarendi explains.

While dating someone so opposite to yourself may seem exciting at first, it may quickly become tiresome. Having shared morals and beliefs is important, as the relationship will often rely on this foundation.

Catholics should not take the sacrament of Holy Matrimony lightly, as it is a physical representation of Christ's sacrifice in the living Eucharist. We are called to love and be loved, and in the marital vocation, to give the complete gift of self unconditionally.

Commitment is not always easy, but as Catholics, we are provided with the most perfect example: a loving Lord who will show up for us time and time again. +JMj+



An Invitation

The Family Forever Society

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

What is the Family Forever Society? It's very simple! Members of this special society are people who have remembered the Missionaries of the Holy Family in their wills or estate plans. Their bequests are called Legacy Gifts.

While most Legacy Gifts are made with the intention of the Missionaries of the Holy Family receiving benefits in the future, some Legacy Gifts are realized in the present. Gifts of securities or stock, real estate, and other tangible property are usually transferred before December 31 of any year so the benefactor can realize tax breaks for charitable donations.

Most Legacy Gifts are used as principal for our Retirement Trust Fund. While we do have a modest trust fund to help cover the rising cost of healthcare needed by the elderly and disabled members of our religious community, it is always a struggle.

Please consider joining our Family Forever Society. To receive a free booklet on preparing your will, please send your request to me at 3014 Oregon Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63118, or call me at 1-888-484-9945. If you are remembering us in your will, please remember us as: *Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family - North American Province.*

Our Holy Family priests and brothers will always hold you and your loved ones in prayer. Isn't that what a Family is supposed to do? Thank you and God bless you... forever.



Forever Yours in the Holy Family,

Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F.

Very Reverend Philip Sosa, M.S.F.
Provincial Superior, North American Province



FEED MY SHEEP

John 21:15-17

by Celia Barragán

On Saturday, May 20, 2023, Deacon Jordan Thomas Milligan was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ for the Archdiocese of San Antonio by Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller at Saint Mark the Evangelist Church. Archbishop Gustavo remarked that Father Jordan is to be a shepherd in the image of the Good Shepherd.

Archbishop Gustavo emphasized that Father Jordan is to preach zealously words of freedom and peace to those who live in fear, and to tenderly heal the broken hearted. Archbishop Gustavo expressed that Father Jordan

should place the Eucharist at the heart of his service as he baptizes, forgives sins, anoints the sick, witnesses the marriage of couples, and commends God's people in the funeral rites. Father Jordan must be a man of transparent goodness, joy, integrity, honesty, and warmth. Archbishop Gustavo prayed that Our Lady of Guadalupe will watch over Father Jordan and continue to form him as she formed Jesus Christ to do God's holy will.

Father Jordan's parents, Thomas and Rita Milligan, have always been very involved in church activities, whether it was singing in the Holy Family Church choir in New Braunfels, Texas, going on retreats, or attending conferences. Jordan received his sacraments of Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation at Holy Family Church. He became involved as

an altar server, in youth ministry, and as a catechist early on through college.

Jordan and his parents once traveled to attend the Steubenville Catholic Youth Conference. He recalls contemplating whether God was calling him, but he kept those thoughts to himself. The church ladies would often say, "Mijo (Darling), you would make a great priest."

The late Father Jim Wasser, a Missionary of the Holy Family priest, served many years at Holy Family Parish, and he was a very influential role model. Father Jordan recalls that Father Wasser would come over to their house on special occasions, such as Thanksgiving and birthdays. The Milligan Family even vacationed with Father Wasser one summer in Saint Louis, Missouri. Jordan had a full picture of a priest's life, not just in religious settings. Father Wasser planted a seed which Father Jordan discovered as he matured. From an early age, Jordan viewed his church as a second home.

Jordan aspired to be a pharmacist. While attending The University of

Incarnate Word (UIW), he made a personal commitment to attend Daily Mass. He came across a chaplain who was starting up a campus ministry. Father James, a Trinitarian priest, asked Jordan if he was interested in the vocation group. Jordan attended the first meeting only to find out he would be the first member! He recalls that he was "roped in" to a calling he would soon discern. Jordan felt a great love for God. His mother Rita recalls how Jordan did his own research to discern and decide his path in life.

As an only child, Jordan decided to be a diocesan priest so he can be close to home and incorporate different

spiritualities into his priesthood. He attended a discernment retreat called Life Awareness in January 2016. By May 2016, he was accepted at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, and Jordan served on various pastoral assignments as a seminarian.

Two memorable assignments for Jordan were his internship and his diaconate year. In 2021 - 2022, Jordan served at Saint Joseph's and Our Lady of Guadalupe in Del



Fr. Jordan with his parents.



Fr. Jordan celebrating Mass.



Fr. Jordan incensing the altar.

her judgment, Jesus will ask her what she did with her earthly life. The mother will give Jesus the maniturgium, and Jesus will accept the cloth knowing that the son's priesthood is a gift from the mother.

Jordan's Dad was given the priestly stole that Father Jordan wore when hearing his first Confession as a priest. Similarly, Jordan's father will present the priestly stole to Jesus when he enters into his eternal reward.

The parishioners were very moved by this beautiful tradition which not only remind us of the love and support Jordan received from his parents, but also of his love and support for them.

Rio to complete his internship. In 2022 - 2023, Deacon Jordan served at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Selma with Father Jeff Pehl, his former seminary rector.

Father Jordan Thomas Milligan celebrated his First Solemn Mass on Sunday, May 21, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at Holy Family Church in New Braunfels. Surrounded by family, parishioners, brother priests, and deacons, they welcomed the newly ordained priest they so proudly claim as their own.

During the Mass, Father Jordan presented his mother with his maniturgium, the cloth used to wipe the chrism from the hands of the newly ordained during the Ordination Mass. He told the congregation that it is a tradition to present the maniturgium to the priest's mother. When she dies, she is buried with the cloth. At

A reception followed at the Holy Family parish hall, and hundreds were in attendance. Father Jordan expressed his gratitude to all who have supported him throughout his journey. He thanked Assumption Seminary, the Oblate School of Theology, and the Mexican American College for preparing him to serve the living Body of Christ. To each parish community, friendship, and place of ministry that helped him reach this moment, he expressed his appreciation.

Father Jordan asked for continued prayers and for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life. He and his parents spent much of June traveling to the places Jordan

served in the past to offer Masses of Thanksgiving. They traveled to Del Rio to Saint Joseph's and Our Lady of Guadalupe Churches. The communities were happy to see his return and received him as a priest. He also enjoyed time with family and friends.

On Saturday, July 1, 2023 Father Jordan began his first assignment at Saint Francis of Assisi Parish in

San Antonio. *"A shepherd after the heart of God has a heart sufficiently free to set aside his own concerns. He does not live by calculating his gains or how long he has worked: he is not an accountant of the Spirit, but a Good Samaritan who seeks out those in need."* – Pope Francis

+jMJ+

Artist Spotlight

Lillian Ryan is an aspiring artist in Saint Louis, Missouri. At a young age, she learned to paint and draw, using inspiration from her family. She is currently a fourth-year student at Fontbonne University in Saint Louis, studying for a BFA in Studio Art with a minor in Psychology. She then plans to receive an MFA in Art Therapy.



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FELLOWSHIP FOR THE BEREAVED

Holy Family Bereavement Ministry

by Celia Barragan

*"Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted."
(Matthew 5:4)*

One of the most difficult and painful experiences we go through is losing a family member or a dear friend. This is a moment when we need the support of other family members and friends to help us as we face a devastating time.

In 2007, the late Rev. James Wasser, M.S.F., Sister Jean Hope, and Sister Maria Gomez formed the Holy Family Catholic Church Bereavement Ministry in New Braunfels, Texas. This was a ministry that was very much needed for the parishioners. In years past, the parishioners of Holy Family depended on other family members and friends to help with arrangements for a gathering or reception following a funeral or burial. Most receptions very likely took place in their own homes where space to gather was limited.



Bereavement Ministry today.

The Bereavement Ministry provided its first reception in September 2007 in the Holy Family Church Hall. Parishioners volunteered their time and donated food to provide a meal for at least 100 people. Father Wasser suggested that a donation

box be provided at the reception for those who would contribute monetarily. Donations were used to buy items needed for the following bereavement reception. The generosity of those who have donated has allowed the bereavement ministry to continue for 15 years and counting. As the group of volunteers grew, new ideas and suggestions allowed the ministry to be better prepared. The Holy Family Bereavement Ministry is a church group made up of men and women who work together

to prepare a meal, which is served following the funeral services for the bereaved. Volunteers cover tables, arrange place settings and utensils, greet the attendees, help cook, serve refreshments, and clean up after the reception.

This ministry allows for the bereaved to have fellowship with those who are there to accompany them. It is a time to share memories and feel the support from those who have attended the services. The bereavement ministry is there to cook, serve, and clean so family members can have the needed time to partake of a meal with family and friends. Having others prepare a reception for the family takes away some of the stress during a time when many feel overwhelmed.

Jimmy Castillo, the Holy Family Bereavement Ministry organizer, has spearheaded this ministry. As the need arises, Jimmy starts a calling chain of the members. Over the years, the Holy Family Church has been blessed with two coordinators, Dora Lagunas and Maria Veliz, who begin by making phone calls from a list of volunteers. Some volunteers are delegated to cook, while others will assist in the setup, and still others will bring a prepared dish or dessert for the reception.

The members plan the meal, estimate how many will be in attendance, and begin to prepare for the reception. Family members or friends of the deceased often times bring additional food items that are added to a second serving line. The bereavement members prepare the serving and

dining tables. They help set up a remembrance table and anything else that the family wishes to display at the reception.

Most of the volunteers are retired. This in itself is admirable! Volunteers give of their time, talents, and true compassion for others. They make themselves available from the time the phone call is received to the planning, preparing, and serving of the meal. True dedication from the parishioners who serve in this ministry has been ongoing for years.

Donations are often given to the ministry for future use, but ministry members also often donate whatever is needed to make sure that all necessary items, including food, are available. It doesn't matter if a reception consists of a just a few family members and friends or a large crowd. God always provides what is needed.

Holy Family Catholic Church is blessed to have parishioners who give so much of themselves through this ministry to provide what is most needed: love and compassion. Thank you to the parishioners who have given of their time, to those who continue to bring prepared dishes or desserts, and to those who donate monetarily. It is through your continued support that the Bereavement Ministry is able to be there for families and friends. Thank you, good and faithful servants. God bless you! **+JM+**





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God bless your family! +JM+



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