

The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Priests Forever



“Consecrate them in the truth.”
(John 17:17)

SUMMER 2012

The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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Missionaries of the Holy Family (MSF)

3014 Oregon Avenue
Saint Louis, MO 63118-1412
Phone: 888.484.9945
www.MSF-America.org

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

Editor: Maurice Prater

Designer: Bill Herberholt,
Graphic Masters

Printer: Universal Printing Company

Front Cover: Father Jack Kilburg, M.S.F. giving his blessing to a new Holy Family priest, Father Robert DeLong, M.S.F., at the Ordination Mass of December 30, 2011.

Back Cover: iStockphoto.com

Provincial Perspective

Dear Family,

Where has the time gone? The year is already half over and many things are happening in our world. We look at our society and wonder where God is. Because we are not perfect does not mean God is not with us. His Spirit in us makes Him present by our words and actions.

Many times the negative aspects of daily living slow us down, but life goes on. We need to concentrate on Life: this precious, unique, and unrepeatable life that is such a gracious gift from God. Thus, we need to live as fully, as lovingly, and as joyfully as we can. Life is too short!

Summertime gives us the opportunity to relax; to refresh ourselves; to take vacation time. However, it does not mean vacation from God, or Sunday Mass, or our prayer time. God never goes on vacation. Our faith in Him is seeing His will for us unfolding in mysterious ways.

Please refer to page 14 of this magazine and pre-order a copy of our *Holy Family Prayer Book: Prayers for Every Family*, available this September, and published by Liguori Publications. Besides new prayers, the English version has a foreword written by Cardinal Dolan of New York and the Spanish version has a foreword written by Archbishop Gustavo of San Antonio. **These books make great Christmas gifts!**

May God bless you and your family with a joyful and relaxing summer.

Yours in Jesus, Mary & Joseph,



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



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

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VOCATIONS

Never Say Never

by Father Robert DeLong, M.S.F.

About 10 years ago, I was asked to write an article for the vocation issue of *Today's Catholic*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. I wrote an article called *Just a Brother*. In that article, I wrote that none of us are "just" but rather "are." We are not "just" a Brother, Sister, Priest, or whatever our state in religious life happens to be.

We "are" a Brother, Sister, Priest, etc. The idea was to emphasize that we too often sell ourselves short when it comes to our calling as religious or laypeople. When we say "I am just a..." we do a great injustice to God's plan for us, so we should not say that.

Now I find that there is another expression that we should not use. It involves the word "never." We have all been told since we were little ones to "Never say never!" I, however, didn't pay attention when I was young, so this expression has come to define my present state in life.

I have been ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ, the result, thank God, of an unfulfilled "never." I had been, until November 2010,



On the evening of his ordination, December 30, 2011, the Feast of the Holy Family, Father Robert DeLong, M.S.F. (left) shares a moment with Father Philip Sosa, M.S.F., Provincial Superior of the Missionaries of the Holy Family.

a religious brother, a state that I was sure would never – that word again! – change. I was very sure that I would remain a brother and that I would never be a priest. That is one thing I never intended to be, nor was it ever intended that I should be... or so I thought.

Not everybody thinks the same way as I do, though. I remember on several occasions Archbishop Patrick Flores (now Archbishop Emeritus of San Antonio) telling me that he would pray to Our Lady of Guadalupe for me to become a priest.

I told him not to do me any favors because I had enough problems with her! (She has led me through my religious life with the greatest of care, and I knew that a word from her and I would be on my way to the priesthood.) What I didn't know about was Archbishop Flores' spe-

After five long years, I completed my seminary studies. I will not say that I did not struggle at times, nor will I say that it was all a breeze. Thanks to the unfaltering support of both my religious family and my own family (my mom is *soooo* proud), I was able to persevere



Father Robert DeLong, M.S.F. (center) celebrates his first Mass as an ordained priest, a Mass of Thanksgiving, on Saturday, December 31, 2011 at Holy Family Parish in New Braunfels, Texas, the church where he was ordained the previous evening.

cial, spiritual connections with Our Blessed Mother!

I surprised even myself when, in response to the question "What do you want to do now?" at the end of my term as vocation director, I asked to study for the priesthood! The rest, as they say, is history. To return to school after almost 35 years is difficult, to say the least. Add to that the need to take almost 30 hours of philosophy before even starting on the theological studies.

And so the studies began.

while learning from some of the world's best professors, literally! There are many who taught and mentored me on this long journey, and I am thankful to God for all of them.

No one undertakes a task of this magnitude at an "advanced age," or as the Generalate Newsletter of the Missionaries of the Holy Family put it, as "a really late vocation," without a lot of help. Those who will always be very important to me, who gave spiritually and financially, are my family, friends, reli-



After celebrating his first Mass, Father Robert DeLong, M.S.F. (center, beneath St. Joseph in the Holy Family statue) joins with some members of his religious community, the Missionaries of the Holy Family, outside the church doors.

gious community, and, especially, the benefactors of our Holy Family priests and brothers.

I cannot express strongly enough my eternal gratitude for what you have done for me, for it is all of you who made my priesthood a reality. I could not have done it without you! You, my dear friends, really poured it on with your prayers for the intercession of Our Blessed Mother and the Holy Spirit to see me through my belated vocation.

On December 30, 2011, the Feast of the Holy Family, I was ordained to the Holy Order of Presbyterate (Priest). I was ordained by another good friend of mine and of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, Bishop Gustavo Rodriguez-Vega,

Bishop of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

Of interest here is the fact that Bishop Gustavo is also a victim of an unfulfilled “never.” He emphatically said that he would never become a bishop, so it was a “never going to be a bishop” ordaining a “never going to be a priest!” I remind everyone once again, especially the young adults, “Never say never!”


In addition to family, friends, priests, and religious in attendance, there were two other bishops present. (Yup! A three-bishop ordination!) Most Reverend John Yanta, Bishop Emeritus of Amarillo, was my ordaining bishop for the diaconate (when I became a transitional deacon). The third bishop was Most Reverend Thomas Fla-

nagan, Retired Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio, a great friend of the Missionaries of the Holy Family and a personal friend and guide.

Many of the ones who inspired me the most to continue with my studies to the priesthood were the “kids” whom I worked with over the years, especially the parish altar servers. They can really push and inspire you! I had the honor of joining them in the Graduation Mass of

the Class of 2012 because I technically completed all of my required courses this year, too.

Many young men are still serving in their parishes, and some may become priests. Pray for them all as you have for me. Remember that nothing is impossible, and, “Never say never!”

May God richly bless all of you and keep you in the care of His Holy Family. 

Do You Want More Priests?

Join the Holy Family Circle and help foster vocations to the priesthood and brotherhood. Member benefits include:

- Daily Remembrance in Prayer by Holy Family Priests and Brothers.
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A PROFILE OF SERVICE



Requiescat in Pace (Rest in Peace)

**Father Leonard Henry Kelly, M.S.F.
27 February 1925 - 18 May 2012**

Fortified with the Sacraments of Holy Mother Church, Father Leonard Henry Kelly, M.S.F. died Friday, May 18, 2012 at Padua House Nursing Home in San Antonio, Texas. He was born on February 27, 1925 in Gambo, Newfoundland in Canada, the son of Michael Patrick Kelly and Iva Label Burges. He is survived by a brother, Michael, and a sister, Marie.

He joined the Missionaries of the Holy Family in 1949 and attended Holy Family Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He entered the Novitiate on August 15, 1951, made his First Profession of Vows on August

15, 1952, and made his Perpetual Profession of Vows on August 15, 1955. He was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on June 1, 1957.

In his priestly ministry, he served in the Dioceses of Brownsville and Corpus Christi and in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. He was much involved in the Charismatic Movement. He loved building and construction, and he built church facilities in Skidmore and Charlotte, Texas.

Father Kelly was a tailor, and he loved making vestments and stoles. The baking of bread was another one of his hobbies. Even when he

had to retire, he kept himself busy until health problems put an end to most of his activities. He was well taken care of to the very end by the Missionary Servants of St. Anthony and the staff of Padua House, a residence for retired priests and brothers in San Antonio.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon

him. May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. [M]

To make a Tribute Gift in memory of Father Kelly, please use the envelope found in the center of this magazine.

Men of God: Priests Forever

In this Year of Our Lord 2012, four priests of the Missionaries of the Holy Family are celebrating anniversaries of their ordination to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ:



Fr. Daniel Hawkins, M.S.F.
35 years



Fr. Ignatius "Feddy" Himawan, M.S.F.
20 years



Fr. Eka Yudianto, M.S.F.
10 years



Fr. José Mario Galindo, M.S.F.
5 years

We thank God for our priests, and we beseech Him to send us many more. If you would like to send a Tribute Gift in honor of one or more of these Men of God, please use the envelope found in the middle of this magazine. Thank you and God bless your family.



PARENTS TIME OUT

Begin a Family Tradition

Contributed by Dr. Ray Guarendi

A tradition isn't necessarily centuries, or even decades, old. A tradition can be something done enough to become a valued part of someone or "someones." Traditions are the unique signatures of a family, marks of one being connected to a bigger "us."


Traditions can be annual: the first-week-of-June beach trip; finding a Christmas tree the Sunday after Thanksgiving; or a husband buying a wife a brand new, dual bag, vacuum cleaner for Christmas. (*On second thought, skip that last one. I tried it ... once.*)

Traditions can be monthly: a first-Sunday-of-the-month family breakfast at a restaurant (you can even let the kids pick the restaurant); or a Saturday morning visit to the library to store up books for the month.

Traditions can be weekly: a Friday-night-at-home movie and popcorn.

Traditions can be daily: the piggy-back ride to bed, complete with prayers, story, and tucking in. My daughter Liz thinks our family traditions are nonnegotiable, judging by how she incessantly nags for the next one.

Anything done regularly can rapidly become a tradition. The family knows it's predictable, anticipates it, and spends time talking about its details and how it should be structured.

A tradition is people glue. It forms memories; it helps solidify a family's identity: this activity we share together is a reliable sign of who we are. 

Raising Good Kids: Back to Family Basics, p. 24-25. Copyright © 2011, Dr. Ray Guarendi. Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.



Dr. Ray Guarendi

The father of 10, Dr. Ray is a psychologist and a popular TV and radio personality and guest speaker offering parenting advice in concert with Catholic values. More information about Dr. Ray's books and DVDs can be found on the internet at www.DrRay.com.



A FAMILY VACATION

The Shrine of St. Joseph with a Vatican-Approved Miracle is in...

by Maury Prater, Advancement Director

- A.) St. Louis, Missouri
- B.) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- C.) Santa Fe, New Mexico

The answer is... A!

St. Louis, where the mighty Missouri and Mississippi Rivers merge, is known as the Gateway to the West. It is also the home of the St. Louis Cardinals, winners of more World Series, 11, than any other National League baseball team.

Even loftier, in a divine sense, St. Louis is called the “Rome of the West” because of the numerous grand churches in this sprawling archdiocese. One of those churches is the Shrine of St. Joseph, often called the “Church of Miracles.”

The following excerpts are taken from literature at the Shrine’s visitor center and its website, www.shrineofstjoseph.org:

The Shrine of St. Joseph dates back to 1844, and it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is a historic and religiously significant landmark in downtown St. Louis. The Shrine is the site of the only Vatican-authenticated miracle anywhere in the midwestern states



An outside view of the Shrine of St. Joseph on March 19, 2012, the Feast Day of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

of our nation.

In 1864, when St. Joseph’s served a huge German immigrant population, Mr. Ignatius Strecker, a man near death, was blessed in the church with the relic of Blessed Peter Claver, a Jesuit missionary priest known for his work and



The blessed bread and fruit, placed on the sanctuary steps on St. Joseph's feast day, are given to all after the celebration of the noon Mass.

ministry among African people forced into slavery. Mr. Strecker immediately began to heal, and he was miraculously cured.

This miracle was formally declared authentic in Rome, and it was chosen as one of the two miracles required for the canonization of St. Peter Claver, which eventually took place in 1888.

In 1866, there was a major cholera epidemic, and the priest at St. Joseph's, Father Joseph Weber, asked his parishioners to make a vow to St. Joseph that if they would be spared from further deaths, a suitable monument to the saint would be built.

The families of all who signed the



This statue of St. Peter Claver is popular at the Shrine, where one of two miracles needed for St. Peter's canonization took place in 1864.

vow were indeed spared, and the elaborate Italian Renaissance main altar, called the “Altar of Answered Prayers,” was built in fulfillment of the vow.

A professionally produced video of the miraculous story of the Shrine of St. Joseph has been featured on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), and the video is available for purchase from the Shrine.

To plan a pilgrimage to the Shrine with your family, please visit www.shrineofstjoseph.org, or call (314) 231-9407.


Other “hot spots” in St. Louis:

- The Gateway Arch, our nation’s tallest monument, is 1.3 miles south of the Shrine of St. Joseph, www.gatewayarch.com and (877) 982-1410.

- Consider a visit to the beautiful St. Wenceslaus Church, home of the provincial offices of the North American Province of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, which is only 3.5 miles south of the Shrine, www.stwenceslaus.catholicweb.com and (314) 865-1020.

- After visiting St. Wenceslaus Church, walk down Gravois Avenue to tour the St. Francis de Sales Oratory, only 0.5 miles north of our provincial offices, www.institute-christ-king.org/stlouis and (314) 771-3100.

- Are you thirsty yet? Then hurry over to the Anheuser-Busch Brewery for a tour and some suds (Only those at least 21 years of age can enjoy the suds!). The famous brewery is 3.4 miles south of the Shrine, www.anheuser-busch.com and (800) 342-5283.

God bless your family! 



Pieta Votive Candles

This beautiful Pieta statue is in St. Wenceslaus Church in Saint Louis, MO, and in the rectory are the offices of the North American Province of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. If you would like for us to light a seven-day votive candle and pray for your family and your intentions, please use the return envelope stapled in the middle of this magazine. The suggested donation is \$7.00. May God bless you.



An Immigrant's Story

by Emanuel Vincent Ressler

Although I live in Ottawa now, I was born and raised in Bavaria, Germany (close to the city of Munich), where I received my First Communion and really began to learn about Jesus Christ and His disciples. I come from a very Catholic and loving family, however, growing up in Germany wasn't always easy. I had my fair share of conflicts and problems at school.

In November 2003, my parents felt we were ready for a change, so we immigrated to Canada, hoping to start a better and more complete life. I was around nine years old at the time and couldn't speak a word of English. My family, though, stuck together, and we were convinced that we would make it with the help of God.

I have never felt so welcomed and accepted than at my first elementary school in Canada, which was located in Burnaby, Vancouver. After two years, we moved to Toronto because my dad was offered a good job. However, we only spent one year in Toronto because he got a more promising job offer in Ottawa. We eventually settled in Canada's capital, where I made new friends and really felt at home like never before.

Since I am from Germany, soccer



Emanuel Vincent Ressler, parishioner at St. Leonard's in Manotick, Ottawa.


has always been my main sport, and I have played on various teams in Ontario, meeting many friendly and kind people. I am passionate about swimming, and it is one of my main hobbies. I also hold a second degree black belt in the sport of Taekwondo, and I participate in this sport at least once a week.

Sports can play a very important role in one's life because they teach you to never give up, to always be positive, and to work hard. Without these virtues, you will never reach the top or realize your maximum potential in sports, and this is comparable to many

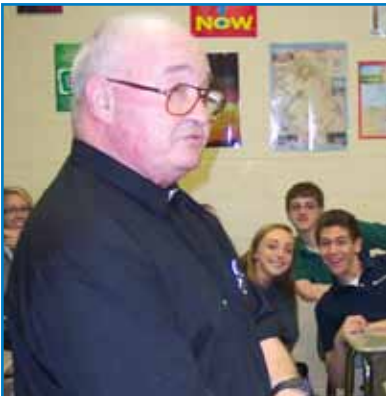
of our real life situations, too. Nothing will happen if you don't try and stay persistent.

Because it is necessary to thank God for all He does for us and to listen to Him, going to Mass at my parish, St. Leonard's, every Sunday has always been a top priority for me. Eventually, I felt like I wanted to do more, so I became involved at St. Leonard's by being an altar server and helping Father Dan Hawkins. Whenever I am on the altar, I feel closer to God, and I know he appreciates the fact that I am serving Him.

A couple years ago, when I was only 15, I was encouraged by Father Dan to become a Eucharistic Minister. It is an honor to distribute the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ to His faithful followers, so I gladly accepted this new ministry.

I no longer look back. I know that God will always be with me and protect me and everyone else on their earthly pilgrimage. My goal for the future is to help others, just like my parents and God are always helping me. God bless everyone, especially my family of faith at St. Leonard's! 

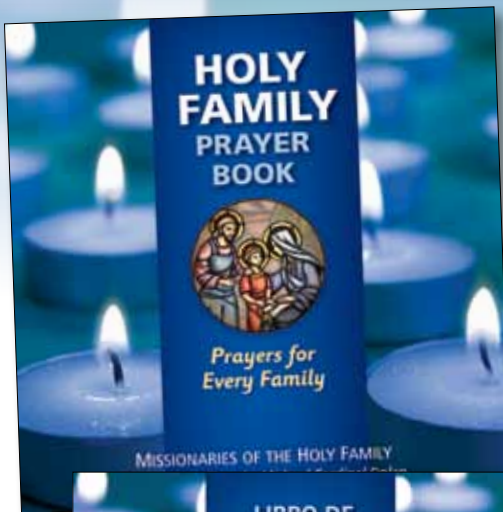
Around The Province...



▲ In March 2012, the Archdiocese of Saint Louis sponsored a Rally for Religious Freedom at the State Capitol in Jefferson City, MO to protest our government's "Contraception Mandate." Students and staff members of Rosati-Kain Catholic High School in Saint Louis attended the rally.

◀ In April 2012, Father Jim Wasser, M.S.F., Formation Director for the Missionaries of the Holy Family, gave a vocation presentation at John F. Kennedy Catholic High School in Manchester, Missouri.

New Prayer Books, Devotions



Holy Family Prayer Book Prayers for Every Family *Missionaries of the Holy Family*

Foreword by
Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan

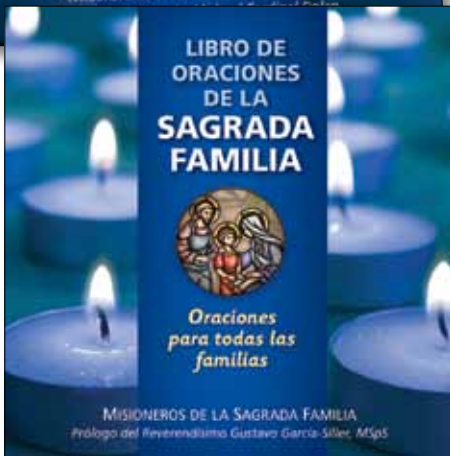
This simple prayer book, devoted to the Holy Family, offers traditional and original prayers dedicated to helping families today. Included in *The Holy Family Prayer Book* are a variety of prayers that will help families stay spiritually grounded and ever-present in faith.

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Misioneros De La Sagrada Familia

Prólogo del Reverendísimo Gustavo García-Siller, MSPs



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oted to the Holy Family

“...Holy Family, we pray that we can love as you love, and to embrace the sacrifice required to love and to forgive when needed. Holy Family, help us to recognize that loving is a choice, an act of the will, and not something we find. Help us to love faithfully and unconditionally, even when love is not returned. As parents, help us to always love the children in our family with our hearts, words, and actions. As children, help us to love and respect our parents. Help us to see and love You, Jesus, in our brothers and sisters, especially in the suffering, poor, elderly, and rejected.”

-From the *Novena to the Holy Family*



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HOLY FAMILY LIFE

Marriage or Matrimony?

by Mr. J.P. Richardson

God made man. Then God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him." (Genesis 2:18)

God made woman from man, both in His own image. Then God made marriage. Why? To unite man and woman: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body." (Genesis 2:24)

God made man and woman for marriage, and God made marriage for man and woman. He willed man and woman to be a fruitful pair in Eden, His Garden of Delight.

Then the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, chose to commit the first sin. They disobeyed their Creator, who in love had offered them the fruits of all His trees but one. If ever they ate from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," they would lose His supreme gift of love, a life of everlasting happiness. Yet so ardently they desired to know what only God knows that they acted against His word.

Thus Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, knowing that now they

must die. Because Adam and Eve were our original parents, we inherit – at conception – their Original Sin.

Although God makes each of us in His own image, we stubbornly desire to do things our own way, which is not always God's way.



God's way for marriage is matrimony.

In the Bible, we read about the Marriage at Cana, which Jesus made into the holy Sacrament of Matrimony when He turned water into wine. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, a man and a woman give themselves in love to each other and to God, while God gives them His grace to share in His holiness, and His love to share in His self-sacrifice.

Many people say that the Catholic Church is wrong about marriage. Marriage, they say, is not a sacrament, but a right, and that a right is more sacred than a sacrament. Everyone has the right to be married, and marriage belongs to the government, not to God. Some even say that God, who loves everyone, would never deny marriage to anyone.

Many people are calling for the legalization of homosexual or "same-sex"

marriage. This is news! From the beginning, marriage has been heterosexual, for the “opposite sexes” only. Matrimony comes from “mater” or mother. In matrimony, the woman wills to be the mother, and the man wills to be the father of each child, if any, God desires to create through their love.

A woman cannot be a father, and

a man cannot be a mother. Mother and father are not interchangeable parents to a child. Nevertheless, many people insist that homosexual “marriage” is a right, no different from heterosexual marriage. To keep marriage heterosexual, they say, is to deprive homosexual persons of their rights. But what do they say about the rights of children? Are these critics right, and the Catholic Church wrong?

This is not the first time that people have chosen their idea of marriage rather than God’s idea. Since the Garden of Eden, some have remade marriage as they like it, rather than as God made it. To feel good about preferring themselves to God, some have even tried to “remake God in their own image,” forgetting that God made them in *His* image.

God made marriage pure and holy. But we human beings, flawed in mind and will by Original Sin, have found it difficult to keep marriage pure and holy. God said, “I hate divorce” (Malachi 2:16), but some men and women have not cared if they displeased God by divorcing their spouses and re-making marriage into re-marriage.



When God made marriage, He told Adam and Eve: “Be fertile and multiply.” (Genesis 1:28) But people have found ways not to be fertile or fruitful through contraception and sterilization, and many married people now commit these sins. Some refuse to multiply, but instead divide and subtract by committing the sin of abortion, which is

to slay their own children.

Over many years, people have added other impure things to marriage. Some have practiced bigamy or polygamy, re-fashioning marriage for more than two spouses. Some have committed adultery, offending one’s spouse and God by breaking promises made on their wedding day.

When we marry God’s way, we say “We do!” to God. When we marry our way, we say, “We do not!” to God.

Anyone can be tempted to say “No!” to God. A king of England once even told a pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth, that the king, not the pope, knew God’s will for his marriage.


By the sin of pride, fallen people, though created by God in His image, often act in the image of Lucifer, the fallen Angel of Pride, who said to God: “I will not serve!” (see Jeremiah 2:20)

Matrimony is Christ’s wedding gift to His bride, the Church. Matrimony is “marriage made in Heaven” and blessed by God. But not everyone cherishes Jesus Christ’s gift. Some desire mere marriage, without seeking God’s blessing.

What is marriage? A right granted by the government which, after all, is only

people who have power over other people? Or, a sacred vocation or calling from the Creator of all people?

Jesus taught: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.” (Matthew 5:8) God’s idea of marriage is clean or pure. If we love God enough to please Him, then our hearts must be pure, and our idea of marriage must be God’s.

Matrimony, God’s idea of marriage, is one man and one woman uniting themselves with God in His sacramental blessing for their time together in this life (“till death do us part”) ... a sign that they desire, most of all, to “see God” in life eternal. 

Mr. J.P. Richardson is a freelance writer from St. Paul, Minnesota and a member of the Knights of Columbus.



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Missionaries of the Holy Family



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*If you are remembering the Missionaries of the Holy Family in your estate plans, please remember us as: **Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family – North American Province.***



FOR YOUR HEALTH

Free from Vasectomy

by Dr. Mark S. Hickman, Apostolate Board Member

Every year in the United States, it's estimated that 550,000 to 700,000 men undergo vasectomies for elective sterilization. However, each year about 5% of these men have second thoughts and consider vasectomy reversal surgery. The reasons for seeking vasectomy reversal may vary from patient to patient, but one major obstacle confronts them all: cost.

The cost of vasectomy reversal in the United States varies widely. Many physicians charge \$8,000 - \$9,000, yet some institutions charge as much as \$22,500. To make matters worse, most insurance companies will not provide coverage for vasectomy reversal procedures. This financial barrier is even acknowledged by the Catholic Church.

Having a vasectomy is considered a sin, and the Church advises men who have undergone a vasectomy to undergo a reversal, unless the cost would be too excessive and constitute an undue financial burden. The cost often presents an insurmountable barrier to having the procedure performed. It is this very disconnect -- the



Dr. Mark S. Hickman, MD, FACS

A Catholic husband and father, Dr. Hickman is a General & Thoracic (Chest) Surgeon and a Clinical Adjunct Professor of Surgery at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. For information about his unique ministry of performing affordable Microsurgical Vasectomy Reversals, visit www.micro-vas-reversals.com or call (830) 660-0600.

desire to restore one's God-given natural fertility, coupled with the excessive fees charged by many secular surgical practices -- which led a very special man to provide a Christian solution.

Dr. Cary Leverett, a urologist, practiced medicine for a number of years before undergoing a vasectomy reversal himself. He was able to afford the high costs of traveling to a "nationally recognized expert" for the expensive procedure. However, it was not successful, and, as a result of this, he and his wife adopted two children. The experience, meanwhile, caused



Catholic Television of San Antonio, in May 2012, featured Dr. Mark Hickman in a program about his ministry. From left to right: Steve Van Sciver (who had a vasectomy reversal); Mary Van Sciver; Father Phil Sosa, M.S.F.; Dr. Hickman; and Angela Sealana, the show's host.

him to start a very special ministry: providing affordable vasectomy reversal procedures in a Christian environment.

He began slowly, but, with the help of Christian organizations such as One More Soul (www.onemore-soul.com), his practice and ministry grew. His reputation spread, but awareness of his ministry exploded with the advent of the Internet. As a result of the worldwide web, patients were easily able to find his special ministry. The number of procedures Dr. Leverett performed grew tremendously. When he retired a couple years ago, he had performed vasectomy reversals on over 5,000 - 6,000 patients (and he wasn't big on counting!).

Prior to his retirement, he

approached me and another surgeon to help keep the ministry alive. I must admit that when I first considered getting involved with vasectomy reversal surgery nearly four years ago, I wasn't all that excited. I had a very busy (actually, too busy) General & Thoracic (Chest) Surgery practice. I didn't perform vasectomies in my practice because I didn't like them... but I didn't know why. In retrospect, I firmly believe the Lord had plans for me, but it would take being a surgeon for over 25 years before He would reveal (at least partially) His plan for my surgical skills.

I started observing cases with Dr. Leverett to learn more about the procedure and the ministry.

The surgical and technical aspects were easy enough to learn. I had performed a number of very demanding and delicate microsurgical procedures when I was a General Surgery resident, so the microsurgery component of a vasectomy reversal wasn't all that difficult.

The biggest surprise was the patients! It amazed me how couples from every corner of the world would travel great distances to seek out Dr. Leverett. The Christian nature of his practice was boldly apparent where all could feel and experience it. That clearly brought great inspiration to the couples, as well as to me! Dr. Leverett prayed over each patient and his patient's wife before every surgery. The prayer he composed was so beautiful and thoughtful that I adopted it into my ministry with only a few modifications.

Personally, at the time, I was beginning to feel a bit "burned out" professionally. The rapid changes in our healthcare system, the rigors of practice, years of surgical "on call duties," and several other factors were to blame. However, like a fresh spring breeze, I felt individually and professionally reinvigorated. The "doctor-patient" relationship was born anew in the vasectomy reversal ministry! **No insurance companies, no bureaucratic hassles, no night calls; just the doctor, his patient... and the Lord!**

I completed my training with Dr. Leverett and began performing surgeries on my own about two years ago. Dr. Leverett retired shortly thereafter. Since then, I have performed vasectomy reversals on over 600 patients (I'm not good at counting either!). Demand continues to be strong as we are performing 6 - 8 reversals per week. It is crowding out the other parts of my practice, but, quite frankly, I don't worry about it.

With all the changes occurring in healthcare, it would be easy to become anxious and afraid of the future, but my wife Elsa prays with me for the Lord's guidance on how to direct my career, and it has been such a blessing.

We have been performing reversals long enough now that we get notifications of pregnancies and births on a regular basis. Each time I hear of such blessings, it reminds me of how, in our small way, our team is lashing back against the current Culture of Death that trivializes the sanctity of human life. Perhaps, if some mothers contemplating abortion could visit with some of my couples who are trying, by God's grace, so hard to conceive new life, maybe they wouldn't be so cavalier about abortion.

As for having a vasectomy itself, it is not always a benign procedure. Many men complain of increased sensitivity or even chronic pain in

their testicles. There is conflicting medical evidence linking vasectomy to a mild increase in the risk of prostate cancer. Many report a decrease in sexual desire. As mentioned previously, the Catholic Church denounces vasectomy as sinful. Several of my patients, regardless of religious denomination, have told me that immediately after their vasectomies they left the doctor's office and cried as they knew in their hearts they had sinned.

A vasectomy circumvents God's design for our sexuality and fertility. Natural family planning techniques approved by the Church allow for the responsible, meaningful, and thoughtful expression of love within a marriage. Vasectomy, on the other hand, often has selfish


motivations behind the decision to have it performed. It is an affront to God's dominion over our lives.

Meanwhile, it was no coincidence in my mind that around the time

"...the Catholic Church denounces vasectomy as sinful. Several of my patients, regardless of religious denomination..."

this all began, I was invited to serve on the Apostolate Board of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. Their concentration on ministering to the

family and emphasizing the family's critical role in our culture has proven to be such a perfect fit with our vasectomy reversal practice. I deeply appreciate their ongoing efforts in promoting our ministry.

Further information about the vasectomy reversal process can be obtained from our website at www.micro-vas-reversals.com or by calling (830) 660-0600. God bless your family. 

www.MSF-America.org





DEAR FATHER

Ask Father John

by Father John Carl Lombardi, M.S.F.

Q: *Dear Father,* As a Catholic couple, after informing our consciences by prayer and consultation with our pastor, we made a conscientious choice to use artificial contraception. Now we hear the Church, especially New York's Cardinal Dolan, coming out very strongly against artificial contraception. We are both daily communicants, and now we are guilt ridden about our decision. What should we do?

A: The first thing you should do is stop practicing artificial contraception, and then stop going to Holy Communion until both of you have gone to Confession to a priest.

Next, you said that you had informed your consciences. An informed conscience means having your conscience informed according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, which, in this case, you have not done. This teaching, this instruction, goes back biblically to the Church Fathers.

In 1968, Pope Paul VI issued his landmark encyclical letter, *Humanae Vitae*, which states that it is always intrinsically wrong to use contraception to prevent new human beings from coming into existence. Unfortunately, this encyclical was ignored by many priests and bishops who failed to teach strongly against artificial contraception.


In fact, artificial contraception has been condemned in the past century by Pope Pius XI, Venerable Pope Pius XII, Blessed Pope John XXIII, The Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI, Blessed Pope John Paul II, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* -- which makes me wonder where your pastor was coming from on the Church's teaching on artificial contraception.

Pope Paul VI believed that ignoring his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* would have far reaching effects on our families and society. In fact, it has! It has led to marital infidelity, the general lowering of morality, loss of respect for women, and government imposition of repressive contraceptive programs upon their peoples -- which we are tragically seeing today with the attempts made under "Obamacare."

One of the answers, as a moral alternative to artificial contraception, is Natural Family Planning

(NFP). There is a book co-authored by John Kippley and his wife Sheila, founders of the Couple to Couple League in 1971 to help other married couples, called *The Art of Natural Family Planning*.

But, NFP is not meant to be abused as a form of “Catholic birth control.” If a husband and wife have a serious need to postpone pregnancy, then they can legitimately use NFP. Remember, children are not just another commodity: “We have two cars, two TV’s, two children...” I hope I have been of help to you. To be on the right road, by lead-

ing moral lives as a married couple, please keep your consciences informed and enlightened with the official teachings of the Catholic Church. God bless your family. 



Father John Lombardi, M.S.F., a retired priest of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, lives at Padua Place in San Antonio.

Around The Province...



◀ At the Annual St. Joseph Day Procession in Donna, Texas in March 2012, Father Simon Brzozowski, M.S.F., Priest in Residence, led the Youth Ministry of St. Joseph Parish.

In March 2012, the ▶ 2nd graders of St. Frances Cabrini Academy, on the Campus of St. Wenceslaus Church in Saint Louis, Missouri, hosted a Career Week to learn about life in a variety of occupations. Father Jim Wuerth, M.S.F. is in the back row, next to the police motorcycle.





PARISH SPOTLIGHT

Our Church Family: St. Leonard's in Canada

St. Leonard's is a Canadian parish in Manotick, Ontario, and the pastor is a priest of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, Father Dan Hawkins, M.S.F., who is celebrating his 35th year as an ordained Priest of Jesus Christ.



Father Dan celebrates First Reconciliation with 160 children.



Making Rosaries keeps the children happy!



St. Leonard's Christmas Parade.

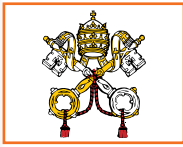


Volunteer Appreciation Night at St. Leonard's.



Father Dan gives a special blessing to the engaged couples of St. Leonard's.

God bless you, Father Dan, and your parish family at St. Leonard's!



FROM THE HOLY SEE

Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer Intentions

July 2012

General Intention: That everyone may have work in safe and secure conditions.

Missionary Intention: That Christian volunteers in mission territories may witness to the love of Christ.

August 2012

General Intention: That prisoners may be treated with justice and respect for their human dignity.

Missionary Intention: That young people, called to follow Christ, may be willing to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

September 2012

General Intention: That politicians may always act with honesty, integrity, and love for the Truth!

Missionary Intention: That Christian communities may have a growing willingness to send missionaries, priests, and lay people, along with concrete resources, to the poorest Churches.

October 2012

General Intention: That the New Evangelization may progress in the oldest Christian countries.

Missionary Intention: That the celebration of World Mission Day may result in a renewed commitment to evangelization.

November 2012

General Intention: That bishops, priests, and all ministers of the Gospel may bear the courageous witness of fidelity to the crucified and risen Lord.

Missionary Intention: That the pilgrim Church on earth may shine as a light to the nations.

December 2012

General Intention: That migrants throughout the world may be welcomed with generosity and authentic love, especially by Christian communities.

Missionary Intention: That Christ may reveal Himself to all humanity with the light that shines forth from Bethlehem and is reflected in the face of His Church.

Remembering Blessed Pope John Paul II:

"The common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights – for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture -- is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition of all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination."

**-- Blessed Pope John Paul II,
Christifideles Laici, 1988**



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THE POETRY CORNER

Faith

© Father James Wasser, M.S.F., Formation Director

Lord of the sea, land, and air,
I reach out to you with broken wings
Weighed down by sin and human despair.
Lord of the mountains, fields, and plains,
Listen to the cries of life's own burdens.
Send down to us from heaven on high,
The Son who taught us how to love and die.
Lord of the earth and all created being,
Bring to man that sense of knowledge,
Which unfolds for him the true meaning
Of life within God's Plan.
Give to him that all-hallowed wisdom
Which comes with time and allows him, Lord,
To circumvent life's problems with
Your Father's gentleness and vision.
Create in me, O Lord of the air, wind, and sea,
The person of love God planned for all eternity!
Allow me to exist, to grow, to be.
Give me new strength in all things, I plea.
Show me how to live, to love, to die.
I place in Your Hands my present, my future, my eternity.
Well, Lord, there it is; my life is fleeing.
You have seen my struggles, my joys, my defeats.
As Life's last breath now ebbs from my being,
Allow me to mend the wings of broken hearts and promises.
Give me, in my final moment,
That last glimmer of hope from above,
Which is founded on Your Love,
And called by man, "**Faith.**"

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- ◆ Sympathy
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Perpetual Mass Enrollments are available immediately on our website, www.MSF-America.org - click on "Prayer and the Holy Family" - look for Perpetual Mass. You can also call our office at 1-888-484-9945.



*God, author of all
life, bless, we pray,
this unborn child;
give constant
protection and grant
a healthy birth
that is the sign of
our rebirth one day
into the eternal
rejoicing of heaven...*

*~ excerpt from the
Prayer of Blessing
of a Child in the Womb*



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