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Christian Family Movement

TV-Turnoff Week

This April 23-29, 2001, millions of Americans will turn off their televisions in conjunction with the 7th annual National TV-Turnoff Week.

The average American spends four hours a day watching television. This adds up to two months a year. At this rate, a 65-year old would spend nine years of life watching tv.

Participating in this project might be a good way to re-evaluate the role television plays in our lives. Professor Barbara Brock of Eastern Washington University is studying TV-free families in America. Initial results show families who watch little or no TV have more time to talk than most Americans, are overwhelmingly satisfied with their lives, and are active in their communities. The full report is due to be released this year.

Observe

- Who watches TV in your household? When? What? Why?
- Is tv-watching a solitary activity or a family event?
- Do you choose shows deliberately or is TV "just something to do"?
- Do your children imitate the behavior or speech patterns of television characters? How do you feel about that?

Judge

- How positive is the effect of television on your family life?
- What effect do news broadcasts, cartoons, dramas, sitcoms have on the way you and your children view the world?
- How close are TV's values to those of Jesus Christ?

Act

- Experiment with TV-Turnoff the week of April 23-29 and see what happens.
- Share your thoughts and experiences with CFM: Contact the National Office or cfm-exchange@cfm.org



From the President

by Jan Rogers

A CFM-School Connection

Over the years, CFM program books have looked at the family from many perspectives. We studied family spirituality and the family in society, and looked inwardly at the family through relationships in and around the family. Next year's book, entitled *Love Still Happens in Families*, edited by **Margie Murchan** of San Jose, California, will deal with a topic never addressed in a CFM program book: Fatherhood.

As CFMers, we are always called to observe, judge and act. In my world lately my actions have been centered in my parish, in my community, and at my daughter Abbie's school, where I have been the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) coordinator for the last five years. RIF is a federally-funded program to support and promote literacy in schools and communities through book ownership. Free books are distributed to students three or four times a year. Being the "Book Lady" at Virginia Avenue School is fun.

Three years ago, I started a special one-day program in February called "Dads Love to Read Day." With so many households headed by moms and so many female teachers in elementary schools, I felt that men in classrooms would send a positive message that dads think reading and learning are important. The first year, only twelve men participated. Many willingly volunteered to read in more than one classroom so that each of the 25 classrooms could participate. Last year, fifty "Dads" participated. They included fathers, grandfathers, big brothers, uncles and special friends. The kids

were the biggest promoters. Having dad at school was a good thing.

This February, 56 men volunteered to read. Most arrived carrying their reading selections and some had hats or props to enhance their stories. In addition to all our dads, we hosted the national RIFNet video crew filming and interviewing many of the dads. They had heard about the program and were producing a special RIFNet program for their educational network entitled "Fathers Voices/ Male Roles." The final show will emphasize how shared activities between

fathers and children are associated with a child's academic success. The show will highlight four schools with programs that invite men into the learning process and finally list resources that will help encourage further programs across the country. Our Virginia Avenue school family is pleased to be one of these special schools .

Next fall CFMers will know and enjoy all that *Love Still Happens in Families* has to explore. Fatherhood will be only one of many thought provoking topics that groups will discuss. In closing, I suggest all of us look at the "world" we live in. Is your world like mine? Are you a parent? A spouse? A daughter? A son? A sibling? A neighbor? A parishioner? A volunteer? Observe, Judge and Act to try made your "world" a better place.

A Few Words for Lent

by Paul Leingang

. A recent publication from the organization, "Alternatives for Simple Living," struck my fancy. It included some brief sayings from a variety of sources — bumper stickers, lectionary readings, Biblical and more recent prophets.

The suggestion is that a Christian, or a Christian family, might reflect and meditate on the collected sayings, one a day, one at a time, as a way to observe Lent.

Here are some samples from the collection:

◆ Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.

— *Shaker aphorism*

◆ There are two ways to get enough. One is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less.

— *G.K. Chesterton*

◆ In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.

— *from the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederation*

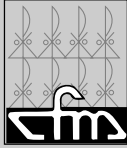
◆ My other car is a bicycle.

— *Bumper Sticker*

◆ Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?

— *Ezekiel 34:18*

What pithy sayings would you suggest that CFM families consider during Lent? Contact the National office or e-mail cfm-exchange@cfm.org with your favorites. We'll share them in the next issue of ACT.



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 by reaching out."

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 Join CFM's e-mail exchange
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Parent to Parent by Mary Lou Gorman *Should You Home-School?*



Perhaps you are a parent who is considering home-schooling. States all around the country do allow this as long as you follow your state's requirements. The state of Illinois only has two: One is that you teach in English, and the other is that you use an age-appropriate curriculum. The parents I know who home-school love learning with their children, use a faith-based curriculum, and love the freedom they have to be with their children. It does take a lot of structuring and patience, so if you are not willing to work hard on these particular virtues, home-schooling might not be best for you.

There are a lot of decisions you need to make. Finding the best curriculum for your children is one of them. Understanding what your children's learning styles are, so you can help them learn in a way that best fits them is another. Whether to send them on to high school or not is another. My oldest granddaughter was home-schooled through high school and is now a senior in college completing her premedical courses. She has done very well. Her brother, however,

was sent to high school to graduate. You need to treat each child as an individual.

Home -schooling is a challenge. Lesson plans need to be made and a curriculum respected. Satellite schools will give you grade-level books in a box or you can do "unschooling," which is an interest-level curriculum which fits the needs of individual children.

There are cultural arts programs that teach music, art, and foreign languages that you can enroll your children in. Internet access can provide you with a wealth of information. Home-school.com can start you off. Catholic home-school sites are abundant, as are many faith-based education sites. Having access to a computer for your children's learning experiences is certainly an asset.

Home-schooling is not for everyone, but if you feel up to the challenge, are willing to work hard with your children, and can sacrifice the time from your other activities, try it! You may find it fits your needs and the needs of your family.

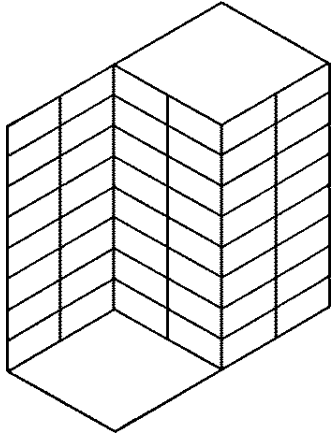
Remember, Dads, you can teach some of the subjects too!

Invitation to Brazil

An ICCFM World Assembly will be held July 25-29 in Maceio, Alagoas, Brazil.

The theme of the conference is "Ethics of Life in a Globalized and Excluding World." Earlier in the year U.S. CFM groups were asked to provide input on this theme. A

delegation from the U.S. will be among the CFM representatives from around the world expected to take part in the five day gathering. To learn more about attending the World Assembly, contact the National CFM Office. Any CFM member is eligible to participate.



Random, with Open Spaces

In **Winchester VA**, we have assigned groups each year by random drawing since 1985. Everyone joining knows that from the outset. The groups are established when the bulk of the registrations arrive in September with about 6-9 couples per group, and all members are invited to bring guests for the purpose of keeping membership open throughout the program year. New members are put in with experienced members and age groups are also mixed. If enough people express an interest in joining CFM midyear, all new and without connections to members within a group, a new group is formed using "Taking the Time" — We formed one of those groups last year.

"Special interest" groups — empty nesters, singles, etc... — have not worked well here. Most people want to be involved in the CFM experience together and singling out "types" seems to alienate them. Since we rotate every year, a group that doesn't gel right away can usually hold on, knowing that they won't be together forever, but often becoming good friends when all is said and done. Naturally, a lot of that has to do with the group's experiences throughout the year but we've seldom had any major dissention to this plan

—Jane Buchbauer

Idea Exchange

What factors should be considered when assigning CFM small groups?

What is a good size for a group?

Should new members have their own group or be assigned to established groups? Should groups be diverse or similar in age of members, etc.? How long should groups stay together? If you have had experience with "empty-nester," "new parent" or other "special" groups, please let us know what has worked and what hasn't.

Flexible, Every Meeting

CFM at Holy Family, **Inverness, IL**, is made up of families with small children. Because of this, attendance is sporadic. Someone always has a sick child and can't make it, or school events get in the way of the schedule. We have gone to flexible grouping. We all meet together at the church to share the Gospel reading for the week, and then we break into small groups by counting off. We have pre-assigned facilitator couples for each month, so we just give each facilitator a group of people to work with. The children are in the nursery while we meet and the older kids may use the gym for basketball with adult supervision. Following the meeting, the children join us and we share treats with whole families. We really feel that the flexible grouping has helped build community within our group. Of course, this only works if you are meeting at a central place. Having our groups at church also helps make it possible for families with young children to participate. For those groups meeting in homes, you may want to consider adding this as an option for that population.

—Mary Whiteside

Old, New, and a Hat

At St. Lawrence Martyr in **Torrance, CA**, we assign groups by chance. At our September "kickoff," we assign first-time CFM'ers to "first-year" groups (usually two of 15-20 families each). Everyone else is assigned to "veteran" groups (usually 5 or more) of 15-20 families each. We just pick names out of a hat (literally)! It mixes things up every year and keeps the groups fresh.

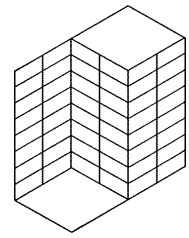
—Noreen Thomas

Leader-Rich Groups

At Our Lady of the Wayside, **Arlington Heights, IL**, there are ten groups of 13-14 couples each. Leader couples each serve one two year term, and afterwards may serve as backup couples or in "front page" leadership positions (liturgy, treasurer, leader training, homeless ministry liaison, etc.). Thus, many members have leadership experience. Experienced CFM'ers are assigned at random to groups, then new members are assigned at random, so there's a mix of ages and stages, parish school and public school families.

—Kathleen Miller.

Forming Strong Small Groups



One of several groups in St. James CFM, Arlington Heights, IL

Some Lessons of History

Some solutions create their own problems. That has been the experience of groups in the Chicago Federation.

Sometimes, a group “gels” so well that it wants to be a permanent “family.” Sometimes, such a group becomes a support group or a prayer group, and leaves CFM. Sometimes, successful CFM groups become so comfortable they forget to attract new members. Time passes; the group dwindles, stagnates, ages, and eventually disbands.

One stubborn group threatened to drop out of CFM unless the leaders allowed them to stay

together. As a compromise, the members continued in CFM, joining new groups; and the “old” group continued to meet separately. After about four years, two couples were transferred out of state and the group disbanded, but “it was wonderful while it lasted.”

One parish CFM had an “associates” group for veteran members. After about five years, the leadership decided that their wisdom was a precious resource, and asked the associates to join regular groups again.

Another had an “empty-nesters” group. Members enjoyed the experience, but no one wanted the responsibility of leadership, and the group disbanded.

Next month's question:

*What are the qualities of effective group leaders?
What has been your experience with leadership formation?
How do leaders prepare for meetings?*

CFM has aged rather ungracefully in some parishes, failing to attract new members. We can blame lack of marketing savvy, shifting clerical priorities, cliquishness, elitism, and partisanship in some instances; but probably in others, the Holy Spirit has simply chosen different means of parish, personal, and neighborhood renewal than the Christian Family Movement for that particular place and time.

—Editor

Madeleine Furth is a CFM dynamo: In the 1940's, she was one of the founders of CFM in Canada, in the 50's she worked with Catholic Action at several levels in Puerto Rico; in the 60's she served as CFM's lobbyist on Capitol Hill, buttonholing legislators on the Civil Rights Bill, the Voting Rights Bill, and lots of poverty legislation, for example a bill to prevent pesticide spraying while farm workers and their families were in the fields.

Madeleine is now 77. She follows current affairs, especially poverty initiatives, with profound attention. She suggests that CFM groups meet periodically on a city-wide basis so that poor and rich can meet together and seek solutions together.

She also has a special heart for widows, singles, and families without children who might not feel that CFM includes them. In light of the discussion on these pages, what do you judge your group could do to respond to Madeleine's concerns?



Taking the Time to Make a Difference

by Paul R. Leingang

A lesson from the frying pan

You might call it an insight. Or maybe it was just a marker along the path of growing up. It happened one day in the kitchen of a log cabin along the Current River in Missouri. I was lucky enough during my high school years to be part of a small group of students who took canoe trips and cave-exploring trips in the Missouri and Arkansas Ozarks. A priest who taught at my high school organized the trips, and another priest usually went with the group, too. We all shared cooking and cleaning chores on these trips - and that meant that some meals were better than others. Some people were more concerned about neatness and cleanliness, too. One morning I remember, it was my turn to help prepare breakfast. I dumped a package of bacon into a frying pan and turned up the heat underneath it. I stirred it up so that it didn't burn, and in a very short time, all of the slices were finished in a twisted and tangled jumble. Father Frank was obviously unhappy with what I had done. He said he liked to have his bacon slices flat and crispy. It seemed to me that frying bacon flat and crispy took too much space in the pan and too much time to complete. I was in favor of quantity and quickness, not flat and perfect. So when Father Frank told me how he liked to have his breakfast, I told him that the bacon was good the way I had

prepared it. I was prepared to argue, but he was not. It may be good the way I had prepared it, but it was not the way he liked it, he said. To say he didn't like it my way was not to say that it wasn't good — but it wasn't what he wanted. I think that was the first time I saw that differences in opinion were not judgments about right and wrong, good and bad, black and white - or in this case, flat or tangled.

Telling right from wrong may be difficult. Telling right from right is much harder.

Life is simpler when the differences are clear between right and wrong. It takes more reason and reflection to make a choice from many "right" options. I don't know if that was what St. Paul intended by his comments, but this is what I think about when I read the advice that a grown-up has to put away the things of a child. We're still young when we reach "the age of reason." Telling right

from wrong may be difficult. Telling right from right is much harder. Choosing a career is an obvious example of picking from among many "right" options. But years before a career choice has to be made, there are many other occasions for picking the best path from the many good ones. How many sports or extra-curricular activities can one person do? How do I pick the best of friends? Questions pop up throughout life. What are the most important things I do at work or at home? If I reach a stage when "I can't do everything," what are the good things that need to be left out?



Take the time today to reflect on choices you have made from among several good options. If you have children, talk with them about their choices, and tell them stories about yours. Examine the level of tolerance or acceptance in your church or community for different "good" options. Culture, ethnic origin, education, personal tastes and preferences - all of these can lead to disagreements, unless a common understanding can be achieved that "my way is good, and so is yours." Take the time to learn more about someone who does things differently than you. Help a child to appreciate such differences. Work in your home and in your community to eliminate prejudice.

Paul is director of communications for the diocese of Evansville, Indiana; and editor of The Message, the diocesan newspaper. His weekly column Taking the Time to Make a Difference is syndicated in a number of diocesan newspapers. Paul and Jane Leingang are past presidents of CFM.

CFM International at the United Nations

Humility

*is a virtue
which induces a person
to evaluate himself or
herself
at his or her true worth,
to recognize his or her
dependence on God,
and to give glory
to God
for the good he or she
has and can do.*

We are writing to request your help. For a long time we have been calling and speaking with CFM'ers to see if someone would be willing to represent the International organization (ICCFM) at the United Nations office in New York. The "job" does not require a whole lot of time, only a commitment to attend a committee meeting occasionally (possibly once or twice a year), but mostly to act as a conduit for information between the UN and ICCFM. We already have representation at the UN office in Vienna.

The ideal person/couple would live within driving distance to New York, or travel enough to be able to

spare frequent flyer miles, because as a volunteer organization we do not have any money for travel expenses. We would furnish you with all of the required contacts and other information needed to act on behalf of ICCFM.

We know the information presented here is sketchy at best...If you have a desire to learn more, please contact us anytime....

Pete and Carolyn Broeren
North American
Continental Couple
ICCFM
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Pittsburgh, PA 15235
(412) 856-7899

**It's the second largest
state in America.
And every resident is
struggling to get out.**

In these times of prosperity, it's easy to forget those among us fighting to survive with the least. But as Catholics, we have a special obligation to the poor, to help them realize their God-given human dignity. So let us work together, through community effort, to create a more human and just social order — and bring hope to the 32 million people in America still struggling to leave poverty behind.

POVERTY.
America's forgotten state.

Catholic Campaign
for Human Development
1-800-946-4243
www.povertyusa.org



Harry Opila, former national board member and **Chicago** Federation member was honored with an 80th birthday celebration on Dec. 23. His wife **Bernice**, their 11 children and many CFMers helped him celebrate.

Jo-Anne Plavchan led and coordinated the annual New Year's Family Games event for current and former members of CFM in Queen of Apostles, **Alexandria VA** and St. Bernadette's Parish in **Springfield VA**.

Joan Thiry, DRE at St. Lambert's in **Skokie IL** is introducing CFM to her parish.

Libby Downs is starting CFM groups at St. Agnes Catholic Church in **Uniontown KY**.

Joe Bettinardi has organized a CFM group at St. Alexander Parish in **Palos Hts. IL**.

New CFM coordinators at St. Lucy Parish in **St. Clair Shores MI** are **Chuck and Theresa Kay**.

Maureen and Tim Conrad are the contacts for CFM at St. John Vianney in **Bettendorf IA**. They welcome newcomers with breakfast at their parish every three or four months. In December they held a Christmas caroling potluck and visited elderly parishioners. They also organized a party for Troubled Teens at Arrowhead Ranch. In February they held a Family Bowl Day.

Elizabeth Winjum reports that the group at St. Thomas Aquinas in **Indianola IA** held an information night February 18.

John Zalko is starting a group in **Elmore, OH**.

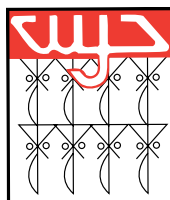
Former CFMer **Joe Saunders** of **Ormaon Beach FL** died Dec. 31. He and Leona were leaders in the **Detroit** Federation in the early 1970's.

Moving?

Please send or e-mail your new address to the National Office so that you will not miss a single issue of ACT and CFM won't have to pay postage for returned issues of ACT. Thanks a lot!

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