



Christian Family Movement

CFM Teens in Action

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*Inside:
Third part
of a series
on Cardinal
Joseph. Cardijn*

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It all started with CFM. That's the way **Elaine Elpers** of St. Philip CFM, **Evansville, Ind.**, sees the beginning of her ministry with teens. "My teenage daughters came to me and said, 'How can we have fellowship with kids on our same faith level like we see you having with CFM?'"

At first she put them off because of her busy life. **Kevin** and Elaine are the parents of six. She was president of the parent-teacher organization at the time, and she works part time as a nurse. Then she heard a minister on TV saying, "When you children come to you asking you to be involved in something, you'd better listen." She felt her children were asking her to structure some sort of activity for them that helped them socialize with their friends that didn't involve drinking or going to R-rated movies.

"Drinking is a big problem in our area. The school had been having a lot of programs about it, but there were no solutions offered. I felt I was too busy, but I knew something had to be done."

The group began with the teenage program, "In Search of Jesus," developed years ago by CFM teens. From that small beginning Elpers has developed what she calls CTM, Christian Teen Movement.

Each "CTM" session begins with prayer time and a Christian song.

The discussion topic is usually related to the song and for about an hour and a half the teens exchange ideas. Elpers then calls the group to prayer and presents what she calls a "faith challenge" to the students. She sees that challenge as a real difference between her group and other teen ministry groups available locally. She has challenged



*Top to bottom, left to right:
Katie Elpers. Christina Johnson,
Natalie Lannert. Rachel Wright, Cassie
McCard, Kristi Miller*

students to "thank a person who has been a role model," and to "write a letter to a teacher who has meant a lot to you," among other

—See *Teens* page 5



Presidents' Perspective

by Peter and Jane Buchbauer

Evidence of Faith

Are we mature Christians? How do we know? How can we pass on the faith and a fire to serve God and others to our children?

Well, there is a lot there, no doubt. But CFM's next Inquiry book, *Evidence of Faith*, will lead you on the road to answering these questions.

Evidence of Faith concentrates on ten characteristics of a mature faith. Through beautiful prayer experiences, insightful reflections, inspiring social inquiries and pointed questions calling you to observe, judge and act, *Evidence of Faith* will give you an opportunity to adopt and nurture these traits in your and your family's lives.

The ten chapters explore trust, grace, prayer, right judgment, service, breaking down walls of prejudice, righteous and unjust authority, hope, faith rituals and practices and evangelization in an easy, do-able and direct manner. We were particularly moved by the approach taken by the authors to these sometimes complex and somewhat deep topics. For example, the inquiry on trusting in God will deal, in part, with the very human tendency to blame God for life's unfairness in a basic and uplifting way; and the inquiry on prayer will call you to a commitment to daily prayer and offer the opportunity to sample different forms of prayer.

Editor **Debby Weidner** draws on her years of study and her life experience as a Catholic, a wife, and a mother to develop a program which will cause you to observe your life, judge its faithfulness and act to deepen and nurture your relationship with God and those around you. In the book's introduc-

tion, Debby quotes **Drs. Merton Strommen and Richard Hardel**: "An integral faith makes itself public in actions of decision, obedience, service and morality." *Evidence of Faith* invites the participant to develop the characteristics of a mature faith in our children and determine the presence of them in our own lives. It provides a means to measure our faith through our actions.

Evidence of Faith presents inquiries entitled:

- Trusting in a God Who Loves Me,
- Living in Grace,
- Habits of Prayer,
- Do the Right Thing,
- Caring for the Body of Christ,
- Loving Your Neighbor,
- Living with Authority,
- Practicing Hope,
- Celebrating Faith and
- Spreading the Good News.

This inquiry book will provide the stepping stone to a greater knowledge of one's faith, a means to explore the presence and depth of these characteristics in our lives, and a reflection of how to instill these characteristics in our children. The approach taken will help you to greater insight in the context of manageable group discussion.

A book which delves into faith issues in a family-friendly way, *Evidence of Faith* is a sound program for the 2002-2003 CFM year. We hope your Action Groups will embrace it and gain from the wisdom it seeks to share.

Peter and Jane Buchbauer, CFM Presidents, live in Winchester, Virginia. Their children are Joseph, 20; Peter, 18; Michael, 13; and Maria, 12.



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CFM news articles and photos welcome. Subscriptions are free to members and \$8.00 for non-members.

Want to touch base with CFMers around the country? Join CFM's e-mail exchange by contacting cfm-exchange@cfm.org

CFM's Mission

- ◆ to promote Christ-centered marriage and family life;
- ◆ to help individuals and their families to live the Christian faith in everyday life; and
- ◆ to improve society through actions of love, service, education and example.

Those eighteen years go by so fast. Yes that's how long you have to train your child to handle life in a mature way. Here are three things we need to instill in our children as they grow up:

- self-confidence
- self-discipline
- a sense of goodness.

How do we develop these qualities? Self-confidence takes courage. It gradually grows as we teach them to complete a job and do it well. As they tackle harder and harder jobs, they start believing in themselves and become self-confident. Try to take the time to give your children jobs they can handle. Show them how to do each step and then expect them to do a good job. Give them loads of praise when they follow through. Too many times we do things ourselves,

knowing we can do them faster; but this won't help your child build self-confidence.

Self-discipline builds when we as parents say "no" to a child's many demands. Very early we need to deny what is not good for a child. Children stop throwing tantrums when they know we mean what we say. Regular bedtimes and curfews need to be enforced. A consequence should be determined for any rule made, and children should know both the rule and the consequence.

A sense of goodness is so important in today's world where

there is so much lack of respect. Teach your children to believe that "people" are more important than "things." When children see their parents helping people, respecting their elders, loving their family, caring for the sick, sharing some of what they have with the poor and putting justice and honesty first, they learn a sense of goodness.

We in CFM are lucky because these are some of the things we talk about at our meetings. There we are reminded how important it is to be the best kind of person and parent we can possibly be.

Parent to Parent

by Mary Lou Gorman

About Training a Child



CFM Welcomes National Chaplain Father Don Conroy

by Lauri Przybysz

CFM welcomes our new National Chaplain, **Father Don Conroy, S.T.L., Ph.D.**, succeeding **Father Bill Young**, who served with wisdom and enthusiasm for nine years. Father Conroy is no stranger to CFM and family ministry. He served as local chaplain to CFM in Greensburg, Pa, from 1965-1975, and later worked as diocesan family life director. He has been involved in family ministry at national and international levels and is currently President of the National Institute for the Family in Washington, DC.

During a Covenant Weekend Marriage Enrichment Experience (www.thecovenantexperience.com) organized by Past Presidents **Chuck and Jan Rogers** at their Virginia parish last February, Father Conroy provided rich

insights about family spirituality, and offered personal encouragement and a cheerful presence to the 15 couples, including CFM Presidents **Peter and Jane Buchbauer** and Secretaries **John and Lauri Przybysz**. All the Board members who participated in the weekend thought he would make an excellent Chaplain for CFM. The National Board concurred.

Father Conroy views his new CFM ministry as an important next step in his long career of service to families: The power of CFM to transform the world is real. This power just needs to be tapped by a new generation of CFM leaders in the 21st century. This new moment in history provides a fresh opportunity to renew the family, the world and CFM itself.

Father Conroy will serve on the



Father Don Conroy

Board as spiritual director, attending 2-3 meetings a year, leading retreats and liturgies, contributing to national board discussion, and writing a regular column in *ACT*. He has promised "to provide vision that will challenge the Board in the spirit of such priests as **Msgr. Hillenbrand**."



The Man Who Planted the Seed of CFM Cardinal Joseph Cardijn

by Jane and Paul Leingang

This is the concluding installment of our series on **Cardinal Joseph Cardijn**. We have learned how Cardijn, who came from a poor family near **Brussels**, identified with the plight of working youth. He was assigned by **Cardinal Mercier** as a young priest to develop a ministry to youth. The result was the **Young Christian Worker** (*Juennesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* or **JOC**) movement. When the YCW gained strength it came into conflict with the wealthy and powerful elite who exerted influence on the cardinal to censure Cardijn for his activities. Cardijn's response to his censure was to seek endorsement for the movement directly from **Pope Pius XI**. Pius XI was enthusiastic in his support for Cardijn and took the movement under his wing. His successors were equally pleased to give the movement their approval.

One of the things that set YCW apart from other movements was the fact that it was led by laypeople. While Cardijn was extremely important to the movement, he did not view himself as its leader. The direction of the movement was in the hands of the laymen and laywomen that participated in the study circles. **Fernand Tonnet**, **Paul Garcet**, and **Jaques Meert** were "the three musketeers" of YCW at its beginning. Cardijn's place in the movement is described in a biography of Tonnet as the "flamme." This French word is translated as "flame," but has more of the meaning of inspiring, heartening, passion-giving force. Cardijn was passionate about his work with youth and never lost his ability to arouse enthusiasm in his followers.

CFM acknowledges Cardijn as the person who formulated the Observe, Judge and Act methodol-

ogy that is at the heart of CFM. In YCW literature this method is often translated as "See, Judge, Act." Whatever the wording, this approach was part of Cardijn's work from the very first study groups he formed. He does not, however, seem to have articulated it that way at the beginning. It was not until 1935 when he delivered an address



to a congress of YCW members that he first stated the formula. At that point he had been working with young people for 20 years.

In his address he said, YCW is "Leaders and members learning to see, to judge and to act:

- to **SEE** the problem of their temporal and eternal destiny;
- to **JUDGE** the present situation, the problems, the contradictions, and the eternal destiny;
- to **ACT** in view of the conquest of that temporal and eternal destiny:

To act individually and together as a team, in the local section, in the regional federation, in a national movement, in meetings, though practical accomplishment, both in individual lives and within the whole milieu, thus forming a single front going forward to conquer on behalf of the workers, their brothers."

To put it in terms that are more modern:

- We **SEE** or observe a problem of daily living in the context of our salvation.
- We **JUDGE** the situation in the light of what Jesus would have us do.

"It is not your business to imitate priests and religious. .

...You have to work, but you also have to learn a spirituality in which one's work becomes one's prayer....

- We **ACT** to make a difference.

Cardijn understood that actions can be individual or group efforts.

Cardijn felt this method was vital and he constantly stressed the missionary quality of his movement. "We have to win over the whole life of young workers, in their families, their work, their sentiments, so that it all becomes a means of collaboration with God."

During WWII Cardijn was arrested for protesting the deportation of workers to German war factories. **Fernand Tonnet** and **Paul Garcet** were arrested for their collaboration with the Allies and

died in a concentration camp. YCW went underground during the war but it persisted.

After the war Cardijn became concerned about the shape of the new world that would be created. "The whole world and especially the world of workers, is threatened by an unprecedented crisis of materialism," he wrote.

"We must enable these young people to realize the dignity of man as a son of God and to help him towards a higher sense of his life as a person and his life as a Christian more deeply lived in a manner worthy of his eternal destiny." Cardijn was concerned with the happiness of his workers, but he felt their true happiness lay in the discovery of their Christian vocation.

In his later years, Cardijn was celebrated. He was awarded several doctorates especially in **North America**, but also by **Louvain** in his native Belgium. He visited the **United States, Canada and Mexico, Central and South America** in 1947. He was hopeful that his ideas would take hold in the United States because he admired the American spirit of initiative and their practicality. By the late fifties YCW was established in 30 to 40 American cities. Cardijn traveled the world forming YCW communities and speaking to gatherings of the faithful. Youth that were formed in YCW became leaders in their communities.

"It is not your business to imitate priests and religious. You are lay people, young workers, engaged couples, tomorrow fathers, wives, mothers. ...You have to work, but you also have to learn a spirituality in which one's work becomes one's prayer....There is no religion on the side of life—no prayer on one side of life. Such prayer, such religion would be false. Prayer and religion must transform life and make life divine, relink the lives of men to the life of God."

After its beginning in Belgium, YCW eventually spread to more than 70 countries all over the world. The method which Cardijn had conceived proved to be quite adaptable to different cultures and even different faiths.

CFM is an application of the method of Cardijn to the married state. It exists in 45 countries, all of them committed to the method Cardijn formulated to Observe, Judge, and Act.

Cardijn was made a Cardinal of the Church by **Pope Paul VI in February, 1965**. He died July 25, 1967 after having participated in the Second Vatican Council. Much of his thinking had been incorporated into the work of the Council especially in the document on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*.

Romeo Maione spent five years as international president of YCW and is an ardent admirer of Cardijn. In 1995 in a speech in **Liverpool, England**, he said, "At a recent church meeting I was told by a bishop that 'the YCW, YCS, and the CFM, all Cardijn movements, had served the church well. In fact, it was their ideas, experiences, and witness that were at the center of the last council. We salute you. You were the instruments that renewed the church.' It was, to be sure, an incredible compliment I could not really accept because I thought that all the time that I was in the YCW, I was renewing the world. In fact, it is only in renewing the world that the church will really be renewed."

Maione goes on to say, "How can one ever hope to sum up such a man of faith? ... Cardijn is a great teacher and the discoverer of a new method of education 'formation through action.'" His vision of a world renewed by active Christian laymen is yet unrealized, but the hope remains. As Cardijn would say, "We are just beginning."

Teens, continued from page 1

things. This past Lent the response to her faith challenge meant an overflow crowd for the weekly Mass held at the local Catholic high school. The chaplain wondered what had happened until the Elpers' son informed him.

Only after the serious business concludes do students kick back and relax with snacks and fun. During this portion of the meeting, the younger Elpers children are allowed be a part of the mix. Elpers sees this as an integral part of the flow of the meeting. "The teens enjoy seeing our family interact. I feel we can be good role models for them."

Each month has a different theme, starting in September with peer pressure and drinking. Dating, abstinence, communication and honesty are other topics covered. Some months include other types of events, such as caroling, a hayride, or Valentine gag gift exchange, but the faith challenge is always part of the meeting. The group recently had its last event of the year, a picnic celebration. The evening included a review of all the topics covered and an affirmation session to recognize graduating seniors.

Elpers plans to start her fourth year of ministry in August after taking June and July off. With Elaine's youngest child just starting kindergarten, it looks as if "CTM" can look forward to a bright future.

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Taking the Time to Make a Difference

by Paul R. Leingang

A season of life

Karl was a grade school friend of mine. He would visit our family home frequently, especially in summer. During the growing season, my parents expected me to help in the garden and in the fields. Our plantings included potatoes, tomatoes, sweet corn and a variety of other vegetables and crops.

In the spring and early summer, a major task for the kids – and our parents, too – was cleaning the weeds out of the rows and rows of cultivated crops. It was painstaking work, especially for kids who would might lapse into day-dreaming. As we chopped and scraped with our hoes, some weeds might occasionally escape us – that was bad. Worse than that, though, was the slip of the hoe – and a tomato plant or a stalk of corn would be cut off in its prime.

I grew up witnessing the values of the farm field. Soil had to be prepared, plants had to be cared for, weeds were to be removed – and if God blessed us with the appropriate amounts of sun and rain, the field would yield good harvest. I saw it all, year after year.

Karl had other ideas. I'm not sure he ever gave in to the temptation, but one day he told me about it. It made my stomach uneasy just to think about it. Here's what he suggested: Parents value the vegetable plants. They want us to hoe the weeds between them. All we have to do is "accidentally" cut off enough of the good plants, and they will make us quit working and

send us away to play. I'd been tempted before – but in my young life, this was a temptation I will never forget. For a young boy, here was the choice: responsibility or freedom from it, serving the common good or seeking time away to play, serving the will of my parents or serving selfish desires. As I reflect today, the choice is even stronger: choose life or take a life, accept life or end it, choose to nourish life or choose a plan of

*Take the time
to remember
the grain of wheat
that gave
all it could,
so that new life
could rise.*

convenience, hope for the future or give in to the moment.

Peter Maurin, a friend and colleague of **Dorothy Day** in founding the Catholic Worker Movement, wrote a few lines that were recently quoted in the Houston Catholic Worker, a publication of the Casa Juan Diego House of

Hospitality in Houston. The article, written a few years ago and published again in the March-April issue of the newspaper, contained these lines of his:

On the Cross of Calvary,
Christ gave his life to redeem the world.
The life of Christ was a life of sacrifice.
We cannot imitate the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary
By trying to get all we can.
We can only imitate the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary
By trying to give all we can.



This Summer, thoughts of new life in the gardens and fields of our world come easily to mind. Flowers bloom, trees bud and blossom, grass is green, the earth rejoices. Take the time to remember the grain of wheat that gave all it could, so that new life could rise.

Take the time to reflect on the choices you can make, choices that will nourish and protect fragile life in all its forms. Now is the time to teach a child the value of life. Now is the time to affirm our own belief in the life that was won for us by the one who gave his life for ours. Choosing life is more than an act of the will. Action has to follow. Now is the time to do the works that bring out the beauty of life among our neighbors – those who need food when they are hungry, clothing to protect them, and love when they are lonely. Those who choose life make a difference.

Paul is director of communications for the Diocese of Evansville, Ind.; 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 executive directors of CFM.

In 2000, the CFM community at St. Jude's parish, **Redmond, Wash.**, hosted the national board of directors during their summer meeting. St. Jude's leader **Debby Weidner** had just completed a Master's degree program at Regis University. **Bev Johnson**, a former CFM national board member from **Omaha, Neb.**, had an opportunity to read her thesis during the meeting. Bev knows a good idea when she sees it. After reading Debby's work, she was convinced a key concept from the thesis would make a good program book. Not only that, but she also convinced Debby to become editor for the book. The whole CFM community will benefit from Bev's intuition this fall.

Evidence of Faith is a ten-meeting inquiry focused on the spiritual aspect of family life. The program explores the characteristics of a mature Christian faith. Each meeting examines a different aspect of mature Christian faith. Challenging study questions and suggestions for action will guide groups through the process of strengthening these characteristics in the lives of both parents and

children. The book features expanded prayer and spiritual reflection sections.

At the end of an editing process that lasted about 18 months, Debby said she "learned how diverse the community of CFM is through reviewing chapters written by groups all over the country." She said, "When a CFM book is published, it truly is the result of a collaborative effort."

Debby hopes that "parents (using the book) would reflect on being "more intentional about passing on the faith." She also said she hopes that "people will be more appreciative of the community of faith that we reside in." She feels an essential source of strength for individuals is a community of faith. Without that source the Christian is unable to reach out in action.

Debby expressed appreciation for the support of the national

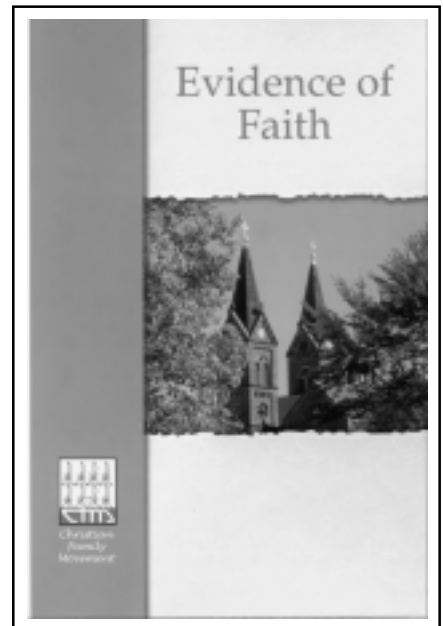
Evidence of Faith New Program Book focuses on Spiritual Aspect of Family Life

office and the editing team. "I was never left alone. I really appreciate that." **Margie Murchan**, program chair, coordinates program development for CFM. **Andy and Martha Maurer, Margie and Larry Murchan, Pat and Pete Stevenson, Jane Leingang and Lauri Przybysz** participated in the final critiquing. The book was typeset by **Jim Johnson**.

Debby is coordinator of sacramental preparation and family ministry at St. Bridget Catholic Church in **Seattle**. She and her husband, **Dave**, are the parents of four children ranging in age from 17 to 9. They have been in CFM since 1985.



Dave and Debbie Weidner frequently shared their musical gifts with the board during their service as representatives from 1995-1999.



Evidence of Faith is the CFM program for the 2002-2003 membership year. It is available free with membership in the movement. Contact the national office for details on how to order this and other materials available for family and faith enrichment.

Stephen and Robin Matthews, formerly of Placentia, are starting a new group at St. Joseph parish in Auburn, Calif.

Tom Jonas reports that St. Richard's CFM in **Bloomington, Minn.**, is into a second year of sponsoring once a month court-whist card parties for adults of the parish. Participants change tables and get to play and visit with everyone.

Eric Bustos borrowed the CFM banner to use at the ground breaking for their new church at Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in **Brentwood, Calif.**

Bob Smith reports that their group At Blessed Sacrament in **Alexandria, Va.** sends "Care Packages" to children away at college. "Over the years, our CFM group has interacted as

families, particularly at family retreats ...it means more to them to receive a package from the entire CFM group just from their parents." Bob encourages others to try this simple project.

Deacon Don Grossnickle, Our Lady of Wayside, Arlington Heights, Ill., wrote to say that the young man their CFM group is helping, **Rob Komosa**, is doing well. Rob became a quadriplegic as the result of a high school football injury. CFM provided the impetus to rally the entire Chicago area in responding to his needs and those of his Polish immigrant family. His story has been the subject of an hour-long PBS program. Largely through the efforts and leadership of CFM he now has a wheelchair accessible home valued at one half million dollars and a new van. He has had ramps constructed, medical bills paid, tutors supplied, on and on.

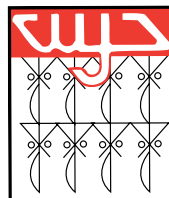
"I am so proud of CFM. The heart of this story is CFM because CFM people got the ball rolling and mobilized thousands in the community."

CFM pioneer **Burnie Bauer of South Bend, Ind.** contacted the national office for help on locating a copy of his book, *Blue Print for Family Catholic Action*. The book was published by Ave Maria Press in the 50's with a forward by **Fr. Louis Putz**. If anyone knows of an existing copy, please contact the national office.

Karla Stauder reports that CFM at St. Maria Goretti in **Westfield, Ind.** sent flyers to neighbors and then pulled wagons around the neighborhood to collect backpacks and school supplies needed by a local food pantry.

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