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Christian Family Movement

A "New" Family Dinner Tradition

Research supports what CFM Families have known all along

At the winter board meeting the Christian Family Movement board of directors endorsed participation by local CFM groups in the celebration of the eighth annual *Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children™* sponsored by The National Center on Addiction and Substance

CASA's research consistently shows that the more often children eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs. *Family Day* helps remind busy families of the invaluable role that parental involvement plays in steering children and teens away from cigarettes, drugs and alcohol.



Family dinnertime makes a difference.

Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University on September 29, 2008.

Launched by CASA in 2001, *Family Day* is a national movement that encourages parents to frequently eat dinner with their kids and be involved in their children's lives.

According to CASA's report, *The Importance of Family Dinners III*, compared to kids who have fewer than three family dinners per week, children and teens who have frequent family dinners are at 70 percent lower risk for substance abuse; half as likely to try cigarettes or marijuana; one third less likely to try alcohol and half as likely to get drunk monthly; and almost 40 percent likelier to say future drug use will never happen. The report also found that teens that have frequent family dinners are likelier to get better grades in school and are likelier to have parents who take responsibility for teen drug use.

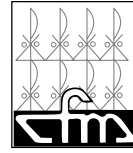
CFM is committed to strengthening families and believes that celebrating *Family Day* is a good opportunity for CFM groups to bring the message about the importance of the family meal to the parish and the community.

See page 3 for action ideas.



Presidents' Perspective

by John and Lauri Przybysz



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

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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.

Like a Deed to a Gold Mine

Babies are a lot of work. They require constant care: feeding, burping, cleaning, dressing, undressing, laundry, entertaining, cuddling, and rocking to sleep.

When I was a young dad, the hardest times came around the birth of a new baby. When Lauri was in the hospital and I cared for the older children, I learned how hard her job was.

I'll never forget the spaghetti dinner I cooked when Tony was born and I was home with the four older children. The pot was too small, I didn't break the pasta in half, and it stood upright in the boiling water like a miserable spaghetti teepee – half uncooked and half boiled to mush. Dinner was late; we were hungry and tired; and they ridiculed my cooking. I didn't even yell at them; just rested my chin in my hand and let the tears roll down my cheeks.

After that I devised my rule of minimum expectations: When a woman is pregnant or has a baby under one year old, nothing much should be expected of her. She should get out of bed in the morning. Survive the day. Make it back to bed at night. That, and keeping the baby alive, is a full day's work. Anything else is bonus points.

We believe that children are treasures, but having a baby is not like being handed a chest full of gold. It is more like getting the deed to a gold mine. You own a lot of gold, but you have a lot of digging to do.

Now we have eleven grandchildren, and these are very much our golden years. Our investments are returning dividends. And the shoe is on the other foot now.

It makes me tired just to watch my children take care of my grandchildren. It takes ten minutes per child to get them diapered and dressed and strapped in their car seats.

When my children complain, I tell them, "Don't worry: your grandchildren will pay them back for you."

I wonder if young parents realize how important their work is. It has eternal consequences. Careers come and go and are forgotten. Our children can live forever with us in heaven.

The thing that sustained me as a young dad was the company of the other young dads who shared the conviction that we were engaged in an important mission. These were my CFM buddies – Joe, Stan, Mike, Bob and more. We were on a mission from God.

*Children are a gift from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb, a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children born in one's youth.
Blessed are they whose quivers are full.
They will never be put to shame."
— Psalm 127: 3-5*

John and Lauri Przybysz live in Severna Park, Md., and have been active CFM members since 1980. They are the parents of six children and eleven grandchildren.

Family Dinner:

What Families Can Do...

- Start the pattern of family dinners when children are young.
- Encourage your children to create menu ideas and participate in meal preparation.
- Turn off the TV and let your answering machine answer calls during dinnertime.
- Talk about what happened in everyone's day: school, work, extracurricular activities or current events.
- Establish a routine to start and end each meal. Light candles, say grace or tell a story.
- After dinner play a board game or serve dessert to encourage the family to continue the conversation.
- Keep conversation positive and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.

What CFM groups can do...

- Talk to parish staff about promoting Family Day.
- Submit information about Family Day for your parish bulletin.
- Ask your pastor to mention Family Day at Mass.

For additional information about *Family Day*, visit www.CASAFamilyDay.org.

Parent to Parent

by Mary Lou Gorman



Plan Ahead, Follow the Plan

Keep one step ahead of your kids! If you plan ahead, you'll be able to let them know your expectations, and let them know the consequences of bad behavior, and this will save you a lot of headaches.

For instance, when you are on your way to a store, talk over exactly what they can get or cannot

*If you plan ahead,
you'll be able
to let them know
your expectations.*

eat. Remind them if they display bad behavior there will be consequences. Share with them what you are going to look at and buy. If it's groceries, let them pick out some of their favorites first. Get them involved with comparison pricing and synchronizing the itinerary with the list. If children are old enough to explore on their own, set a time and place to meet and set a limit of how much money they can spend without your approval.

Before going to church, explain why it's important to be quiet (Certainly, to help people concentrate on prayer!) Help them appreciate the presence of God, and help them learn to offer their concerns to God along with the gifts, expecting new insight and grace through the Eu-

charist. Plan something special after church.

If you are expecting guests, let your children know how you expect them to behave. Plan what they can do while your guests are there.

If you are visiting, explain how you expect them to behave in someone else's house. Promise a small reward for good behavior, and remind them to say "please" and "thank you" and to respect other people's property.

Children need to be told how to act at a show or other entertainment. They need to respect the entertainer by listening and allowing others to listen.

Above all, give yourself enough time to lay out the rules. Your children will be happier if they know what is expected of them.

Don't forget to anticipate quiet moments by taking along things for them to do. It's easy to get into trouble when there seems to be nothing to do.

Plan. Remind. Reward.

Mary Lou and her late husband Phil Gorman, Arlington Heights, joined CFM in 1953. The family includes four daughters and fourteen grandchildren.



From the National Chaplain

by Father Don Conroy

Sacred Silence: Keeping the Noise Down at Home

The typical American home starts the morning with a series of loud noises. After the alarm clock sounds off, the TV morning news and weather come on, one or more computers are turned on, and the car radio along with the ever present cell phone clamor for our attention on the way to work.

If you're like me, you may just long for the "sounds of silence." Whatever they are!

Well, we live in a very noisy world which constantly wants to get our attention – to sell, to inform and to just be there!

What is a normal, peaceful day like? Oh, I wish I could do something about it. But what?

I was thinking about this one summer day, and I came across an interesting little paperback written by a Catholic wife and mom. Her name is **Teresa Tomeo** and her book is simply called *Noise*, but its subtitle is more to the point: *How Our Media-Saturated Culture Dominates Lives and Dismantles Families*. (Ascension Press, 2007)

In the middle of being overwhelmed by the noisy media and culture around us, these sane words from a media-savvy mother give families a glimmer of hope.

Using the CFM method of observing first, I read on. I got from this well-written book a more realis-

tic, objective idea of how much the social means of communication in our 21st century culture penetrates our daily life.

Influenced by the media and their own biases, some people respond, "It's no big deal." However, take a long, hard look at what is happening to our society. Consider the addictions within our culture which are fomented by the run-away, ever present media saturating our lives.

In addition to your own life experience, observe the research coming from three respected sources:

The American Academy of Pediatrics has found it important to issue a warning that television viewing is harmful to toddlers' development.

The Kaiser Family Foundation in 2003 reported that teens who watched over an hour of TV a day were almost four times as likely to commit aggressive acts in their adult years.

The American Medical Association in March 2006 found that media images of college girls partying during spring break might contribute to an increase in reckless and promiscuous behavior. (The recent episode of deliberately pregnant fifteen-year-olds in New England only tends to confirm the influence of the media which

celebrate the pregnancies of unmarried movie stars.)

Common sense tells us we don't need studies to verify for us what we can judge for ourselves from life experience. But in our secular culture it's good to back up our personal observation with hard evidence from these and many other studies.

How is over-saturation of media distorting our underlying values? Both the content itself and the constant bombardment of sound and video weaken our moral conscience and distort our ability to direct our actions toward worthy and spiritual goals.

Many factors contribute to the contemporary pace of the over-stimulating mass media culture. Some of these no doubt are the Hollywood writers' agenda, the market-driven economy where only immediate profit counts, the voracious appetites of the media conglomerates which go 24/7, consumer apathy and media addiction.

The major issue, after we have made these observations and value-judgments, is a big feeling of being overwhelmed and paralyzed. What can we do to transform our culture of "sounding bass and tinkling symbols" and to reclaim the control over our lives especially in our families?

—continued on next page

First of all we can begin with our own lives. We need quite reflective time in which to get hold of our actions and pray, relate and construct a new way of living our day-to-day existence. We simply need to take time to be quiet, to be at peace within and to reflect. All the great teachers and mystics of all times tell us that we can't be our true selves and become authentic persons without reflection and meditation.

However, this turn to silence and reflection must take into account the environment in our home, our workplace and our other venues of life.

After these initial steps at personal reflection, we can look at our daily routine to make time for quiet. Turn off the media and listen to God speaking in our heart.

Then we can choose to get hold of our daily routines which are addicted to the jangle and noise which prevents us from clear thinking and effective action.

We can have a family meeting to examine our home life and go down the list of all the noisy machines that we let into our lives. From iPhones and BlackBerries and laptop computers to radio, television and CD players, we need to reflect on a new way to let such devices have a place our lives without taking over our minds.

If we become media-savvy families, we can recover and find new peace, joy and purpose in our lives as individuals, in our family relationships, and in our society.

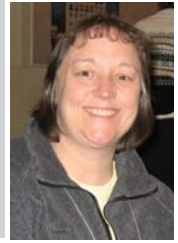
Why wait any longer?

Father Donald Conroy is National Chaplain of CFM. He lives in Indiana County, Pa., within the Diocese of Greensburg, and is active in hospital, family and parish ministries.

Family Activity Corner

by Anna Kieliszewski

Summertime reflections



The sounds of summer are all around us. Many of us are enjoying the break from our "structured" schedule and have the chance to spend more time together as a family. Vacations, summer camps, Vacation Bible School, dinner on the deck, picnic at the park, and outdoor concerts may have become part of your summer ritual.

However, we know that the days are getting shorter. All too soon the school bell will ring and the homework, sports activities, religious education, will start again. But Wait! We still have time! Gather the family together for a meal and afterwards create a list of what you did this summer. Then talk about what you would still like to do.

Maybe you wanted to visit the local museum or take a bike ride around the lake. Expand your opportunities. Too often in my family we say, "I didn't get to do this... I didn't do that." Take the positive! Find that family "fun" opportunity.

Also ask your family, "What have we done to grow in our faith this summer?" Maybe you visited an out-of-town church, learned about some of the Saints on their feast days, or shared "where you found Jesus" this week while traveling in the car.

We parents need to remember to start these conversations. It is in our sharing about Jesus and being an example that our children learn the most about our faith.

An important part of our faith is Jesus' call to community. Through CFM, our local community has become an extension of the larger

church. My children become excited when we are at church or a store and see some of the families from our group. They cannot wait to go up to them afterwards and share all their latest adventures with their friends.

How are we sharing the message of CFM? August is a great time to bring new members on board. At our parish, we have found the benefit of August registration even though our first meeting is in October. This gives families the materials ahead of time and also allows us as leaders to be prepared for the first meeting. Since we have children's programs at the same time the parents meet, we then can prepare our leaders for how many children we will have. We still take last minute registrations, but being prepared has made our opening meeting more relaxing.

The other idea we use is to have pizza before each meeting every other month. This is a great time for fellowship and allows families a break from planning dinner. Having children's programs during the adult meeting is becoming a vibrant new CFM style.

If you would like to explore the possibility of children's programming, feel free to call the national office. They will put you in touch with parishes that use this model of CFM.

Enjoy your family! Enjoy the fun!

Ken and Anna Kieliszewski, parents of two children, have been members of CFM at St. Thomas of Villanova parish, Palatine, Ill., since 2003.



Taking the Time to Make a Difference

by Paul R. Leingang

Having Fun With People Having Fun

We must have stood and watched for 15 minutes. Every few seconds, another group went sliding by, smiling and laughing.

We were at the Holiday World theme park at **Santa Claus, Ind.**, inside the water park. We were standing in an overlook area, built especially for the purpose of being able to do what we were doing – which was to watch the people come sliding down and around in a gigantic bowl of water.

We had just completed our own ride, but before we went away to sample some of the many other rides and features of the park, we climbed up to the observation area to see what we could see.

We listened to the screaming as the sliders came down a long, enclosed tube, building up speed down an incline as they emerged out of the dark into the open basin. They came in groups of two or three or four on a big inflated rubber raft, legs piled up in the center, hands gripping tightly, heads held back, shouting and laughing.

The ones who went fast enough could travel twice around the bowl before making the final plunge into the center and on to the end of the ride. The ones who traveled more slowly slipped into the center after only one circuit. Whether once or twice, though, the laughter did not seem to be diminished.

As a matter of fact, the only person I remember seeing not laughing was one single rider, quiet and lonely on the raft that was designed for four.

I concluded that it is fun to be with other people who are having fun. That is a pretty simple conclusion to draw, but then, I wonder, why is it so hard to apply that simple truth to other areas of life in society today?

What leads me to that question is a report by Catholic News Service about the comments of **Jean Vanier**, the Canadian founder of communi-

*the only person ...
not laughing
was one
single rider,
quiet and lonely
on the raft that was
designed for four.*

ties for people with developmental disabilities. He said the poor and the marginalized are crying out, not just for generosity, but for love and relationships.

Vanier is the founder of the International Federation of L'Arche Communities and author of books on compassion and human fragility. He was a speaker at the 49th International Eucharistic Congress in **Quebec City** June 16.

According to the Catholic News Service report, Vanier said that Christians are called to be like Jesus, with their hearts open to all the poor and disadvantaged.

But opening up to a relationship with the marginalized is

frightening, he said, because doing so will destroy the walls that separate people and fill in the gap that separates the rich and poor.

"In our world there is a lot of generosity," but there must be relationships and love, he said, adding that "to be like Jesus, we have to be able to wash the feet of one another."



What all of this leads me to understand is that it is not only important to be a joyful giver, but it is important to give joy. Money is not enough. Even time with another may not be enough.

What the poor and the vulnerable need is the ability to laugh out loud in the presence of another, not in the tunnels that can close us in, but out in the open for all to see.

I once proposed that there should be an addition to the standard list of works of mercy; adding to such actions as giving food to the hungry and shelter to the homeless, there should be "Provide transportation for those who need to go somewhere."

Maybe bringing a smile to the poor and laughter to the lonely is another work worthy of defining what it means to be a Christian.



Take the time to be generous with what you have – your ideas, your skills, the good things you have gained.

Then give of what you are. That's what will truly 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 and appears on the CFM website. Paul and Jane Leingang are executive directors of CFM.

Your Marriage: The Great Adventure

by Lauri Przybysz



Marriage Enrichment DIY, Part II

Your marriage will thrive if you care for it, nurturing your relationship and making room for God. We usually think of marriage enrichment taking place in workshops or retreats, which are really valuable. However, most couples prefer to seek enrichment and resources for their marriages in the privacy of their own home.

When choosing any resources for marriage, know what you believe. A person should have a good grasp of what their church teaches about marriage and relationships, in order to be able to discriminate among all the offerings for marriage guidance. No matter what book, CD, video or site you visit, measure the contents against the values recognized by your faith.

Last month in *ACT* (June 2008), we explored internet resources. Let's look at print and recorded resources. At your bookstore and in the library you will find shelf upon shelf of self-help books. Where to start?

First, look to Scripture. Having a happy Christian marriage begins with being a faithful disciple of Jesus. An adult disciple is a person who is spiritually and emotionally mature and close to God, always seeking to act as Jesus would. We look to the Scriptures for guidance. Although written generations ago, in cultures very different from today's, the Bible is a reliable source

for how to treat others and how to live a moral life. These lessons are essential for your marriage.

Modern author **Henri Nouwen**, whose own writings are reliable sources of inspiration, expresses for me why reading Scripture, challenging though it may be at times, is essential:

Spiritual reading is food for our souls. As we slowly let the words of the Bible or any spiritual book enter into our minds and descend into our hearts, we become different people. The Word gradually becomes flesh in us and thus transforms our whole beings.

Identify other authors that are well respected and quoted in publications you trust. **Kathy and Mitch Finley**, for example, have consistently produced good resources for marriage and family life in the Catholic tradition. Explore their work, including *Building a Christian Marriage: 11 Essential Skills* at their website, www.mitchandkathyfinley.com. Catholic publishing houses carefully screen the work of the authors they publish.

If you have found a valuable book from Liguori, Paulist, Twenty-third Publications, Ave Maria, or ACTA Publications, to name only a few, you can expect that you are on solid ground.

Subscribe to a magazine geared to encourage Christian marriage. International Marriage Encounter's *Marriage Magazine* is loaded with good and interesting articles supportive of your marriage. Call 1-800-MARRIAGE to subscribe at \$19.95/year, or write to IME at P.O. Box #387, South St. Paul, MN 55075-0387.

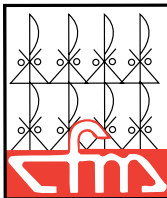
Not a reader? Audio and video resources can also be helpful. Try the great audio CD by family minister Dr. James Healy, *When the Cake is Gone: How to Get Married and Stay Engaged*. When you order it from www.rootedinlove.org or call 815-741-5188, ask for the discussion guide that accompanies it.

Finally, no book, audio talk, no education course or internet resource can substitute for the most important marriage enrichment program of all: Taking the time to enjoy one another's company. Focused attention and mutual appreciation will do more for your marriage than anything else.

Celebrate your marriage. Remember why you fell in love.

Lauri and John Przybysz live in Severna Park, Md., and have six children. Lauri is coordinator of marriage and family enrichment for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

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SPOTLIGHT

The Catholic Press Association awarded its top prize for column writing on spiritual life to **Paul Leingang** at the Catholic Media Convention, May 30 in **Toronto**. The citation read in part,

The writer's style is sparse and clean, a joy to read. Each column is personal and evocative with just the right measure of opinion and humility. Genuine.

The 2008 contest was open to any Catholic publication in the United States or Canada. Paul's column, "Taking the Time to Make a Difference," is distributed through the Christian Family Movement by email and posted weekly on the CFM webpage. Congratulations to Paul on this outstanding honor.

CFM's column has been honored three times by the Catholic Press Association for

excellence in family issues and spirituality writing. Paul recently began offering the column as a podcast.

The Cana Movement and CFM in **Malta** celebrated the 80th birthday of CFM pioneer **Msgr. Charles Vella** this summer. Msgr. Vella founded the Cana Movement in 1956 and later CFM. His first contacts were with **Pat and Patty Cowley**, co-founders of CFM and worldwide ambassadors for the movement from the earliest beginnings of the movement until Pat's death in 1974. Msgr. Vella also drew inspiration for his work from **Msgr. John Egan**, who was chaplain for the Cana Conference in 1955 when they met. Msgr. Egan was an inspirational leader and a well-known proponent of Catholic Action in Chicago during his long priestly ministry.

Msgr. Vella also introduced CFM to **Italy** and he organized several international meetings for

international CFM, most notably the 1974 meeting in **Tanzania**. He served as international chaplain of ICCFM during the synod for the family in **Rome** in 1980 and recently completed two terms as ICCFM chaplain, serving with President Couple **Nop and Elma Muangkroot** from 2001-07. He received the Cardijn Award for service to ICCFM in **Fatima** at the close of their 2007 meeting.

The CFM group at St. James in **Arlington Heights, Ill.**, will have a new look come fall. Leader **Gail Madden** reports, "We'll all meet in the Church basement instead of in homes. After the opening prayer, our moderator, **Father Chris Kulig**, will offer a 15-20 minute "Catholicism Lesson" on church teachings and whatever questions we want answered. Then we will break into small groups and discuss the chapter. followed by some social time as a whole group."