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Christian Family Movement

Chicago Region Plans February Event *Area leaders describe variety of CFM styles*

by Tom Toussaint, Arlington Heights, IL

Thirty leaders from six of the eight active groups in the Chicago area, representing over 300 CFM members, gathered November 16 at Our Lady of the Wayside Parish in **Arlington Heights, Ill.**, to meet one another and learn about how each group “does CFM” at their parishes.

The meeting was hosted by **Glen and Teresa Stewart**, 2008-09 leaders of Our Lady of the Wayside’s chapter (currently the largest in the country with more than 100 member families), and chaired by board members **Tom and Laura Toussaint**.

In addition to Wayside, other groups attending included Holy Family, Inverness; St. Clement, **Chicago**; St. Edna and St. James, **Arlington Heights**; and St. Thomas of Villanova, **Palatine**.

Three completely different models of CFM were described. At Wayside and St. Edna’s, couples are assigned to a new action group each year and meet in members’ homes. St. Clement assigns new members to a forming group that they stay with for years. Holy Family, St. Thomas of Villanova and now St. James, meet at the parish as a large group first and then break down into smaller discussion groups, different each time and based on the number of people in attendance.

The groups that meet at the parish tend to include children in some way, ranging from simple babysitting to full age-specific programming. Groups that meet in homes tend to include children only at social and outreach events.

The meeting began as informational, but extended to brainstorming about how groups could better share resources like leadership development, outreach activities and even social events.

In addition to getting to know one another, the groups also spent some time planning the winter meeting of CFM’s board of directors meeting, held each year in February. The board tries each year to meet with local leaders during their gatherings and this year will be no exception.

The board meeting will be held Friday-Sunday, February 20-22, at Wayside, and the chapter there will host a regional event for all local CFMers at 7 p.m., Saturday, February 21, in the church.

Couples will be invited to renew their wedding vows while single people will be invited to receive a special blessing, too. Mass will be followed by a reception much like a wedding, including wedding cake, dancing and even free photos of each couple.



Presidents' Perspective

by John and Lauri Przybysz

Child Protection: Everyone's Responsibility

Parents, guardians, and all adults who care for children face constant challenges when trying to help keep children safer in today's world. The Christian Family Movement urges all its members to educate themselves about the threat of child abuse and the efforts being made in society and in the Church for child safety.

The sexual abuse crisis in the church uncovered the fact that sexual abuse in the United States is far more common than we imagined. We have the opportunity to be agents of change in our society. We all have a responsibility to be vigilant, to educate ourselves and our children, and to support the ministries of healing in the Church. Victims and their families have been deeply hurt and still need our support. The process of healing will go on for many years, and we all have a part to play.

The Christian Family Movement has been proactive in implementing a child protection policy <http://www.cfm.org/protect.pdf>. Local CFM groups are encouraged not to permit persons who are non-compliant with local diocesan policies to be in leadership or have substantial contact with children at activities or events sponsored or promoted by CFM.

From what we have observed, we believe that the Church wholeheartedly seeks to help victims.

Shamed and humbled by the crimes committed by trusted clergy in the past, the U.S. Bishops have developed better prevention and education policies.

Their 2002 Charter to Protect Children and Young People, *Promise to Protect and Heal*, directs action to protect children and youth and to help victims heal in the following ways:

- Creation of safe environment for children and young people
- Training programs for adults, children and youth
- Background checks for all employees and volunteers who have regular contact with minors
- Healing and reconciliation for victims and survivors
- Prompt and effective response to allegations of abuse
- Cooperation with civil authorities
- Disciplining of offenders.

Read more about the Charter at <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/faqs.shtml>.

Anger about these failures of the past jeopardizes the good work that has begun. Repeated civil lawsuits against the Church threaten to bankrupt some dioceses and are crushing their ability to minister to families. As a result, many family life, faith formation and pastoral care office of the U.S. Church have

closed, compromising the ability of the Church to carry out its mission.

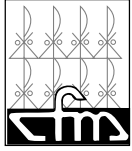
Those seeking to punish the Church for the crimes of abusers continue to seek to remove statutes of limitations on accusations of child abuse by priests and other employees of the Church. In many cases, the accused or possible exculpatory witnesses are already dead, or "recovered memories" are cited as evidence.

It is especially unfair that the current legal structure protects employees of public institutions, such as schools and governments, while permitting repeated litigation against the Church.

In the states that have changed the statute of limitations, significant harm has been done to the Church through punitive suits. These changes to the law were enacted with little public opposition. If other states consider similar revisions, CFM groups will have to decide if they will stand by idly, or take action to protect their interests.

Next month: Information and resources for parents to better protect children and youth from exploitation and abuse.

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



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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.

Parent to Parent

by Mary Lou Gorman



What's Important

When someone asked me what is the most important skill for parents to teach their children, it didn't take me long to answer: There's a skill that should last a lifetime, and into eternity:

Teach your children to do for others.

Our children today have been very spoiled. Our economy has been good, so we have tended to buy them whatever they seem to want. It's now time to teach them how to sacrifice and to think about how they can help others. Of course our example is important. Thinking about others and not just concentrating on their wants will help them grow up to be better adults.

As parents, we need to put ideas into their heads and also to work beside them. Gathering together clothes and toys we don't use any more is a good start. Always remind them to be good to their sisters, brothers, and friends when occasions arise. A family might give up a meal or snack as a reminder of the poor, not just during Lent but perhaps each week. Giving the money to a good cause, and letting the children see the benefit of their sacrifice can be a rich experience.

Healthy regard for the value of resources can take many forms. Re-

mind them to recycle, to save water when they can, and to walk rather than expect a ride for short trips. We leave more for generations to come when we are good stewards.

Hospitals and shelters always need volunteers. Many of our neighbors can use help with shopping or yard work and some simply need company. Visiting someone sick or handicapped is something kids can do. Think of the joy they bring to older people when they visit assisted living homes.

There are so many opportunities out there where you and your children can bring joy and hope to others. Bringing this message of Jesus home to our children takes some thought and time.

Just remember that they will be better citizens and adults if you start helping them do things for others when they are young. A busy child doing for others is a happier child, and it's easier to teach a child about the love of Jesus when he himself shares love with others.

Pray that Jesus will guide you always with your children.

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

Domestic Violence Advocacy: A personal journey of observation, judgment, and action

by Nicole Schmirler

The term, “domestic violence,” means different things to different people. It may signify a political objective to a politician seeking stiffer penalties for abusers. Perhaps domestic violence represents hatred for an adult male by whom one was victimized as a child. It may even mean a biased belief from an upper-middle-class woman, that domestic violence transpires in indigent societies only. For me, it represents a predominantly ignored sociological problem facing every nation, socio-economic status, religion, race, sexual orientation, and both men and women.

Despite the number of court cases clogging our criminal justice system, domestic violence seems to be written-off as a rarity or attributed to victim provocation. Just recently, an in-law’s comment, “She must have done something to deserve it”, to my description of a victim suffering minor brain damage because of multiple and prolonged strangulations by her abuser stupefied me. My shock to this insensitive comment bewildered my in-law.

I work as an advocate at a local domestic violence shelter. Though my two-and-a-half-years doesn’t qualify me as an expert or a veteran, I’ve witnessed a full gamut of emotions. It’s certainly no picnic taking a crisis call from a distraught mother whose daughter was murdered by an ex-boyfriend. Equally disturbing is working with a client whose face and body bears witness to a frenzied attack by multiple lacerations and cigarette burns. Though not easy, advo-

cacy is immeasurably rewarding, especially when you’ve received a thank you note from a previous client, explaining she’s been free of domestic violence and drugs, and has recently garnered her G.E.D so that she may pursue an associate’s degree. It’s necessary to understand that domestic violence is only one of many issues facing the majority of shelter clients. Alcohol/drug addition, lack of education, past/childhood victimization, poor financial management, unemployment—to name a few—plague most shelter clients.

When I first began, I believed it would be easy to detach myself from these situations. After all, I was well-educated and professionally trained. Detachment came easy at first, and I prided myself on it. With each successive case, though, I softened. Soon enough, my emotional compass turned from detached professional to “man-hater.” After all, isn’t it because of men that most domestic violence situations occur? I truly felt compassion for the victims, and I would often berate myself for not doing more, not advocating enough. It was during this time that a group of us founded a transitional living house for women and children exiting crisis shelters. After all, most victims return to their abusers because they can’t locate affordable housing. Our joint endeavor would definitely address this need...right?

As months transpired, I continually witnessed women and children returning to their abusers, despite the transitional living program and a host of other social service agencies geared towards

this segment of the population. It seemed few clients utilized these agencies, and those that did rarely completed the programs to assist them in becoming independent. It is frustrating to watch a mother work very hard, successfully secure employment for the first time in years, and locate safe and affordable housing, and then to have to be the person to evict her from shelter because illicit drugs have been found in her room. Most shelter clients have a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse. I learned the statistics; I saw the faces behind the statistics; I did what I was trained to do; but I was certain that I was missing something important. Why was my advocacy for victims’ rights and independence failing?

As I was in the process of wrapping-up my responsibilities getting the shelter started, I experienced a profound epiphany: If I am to succeed as an advocate, the survivors I support have to work even harder than I do. I can present options. They have to choose a path to independence. My success is in presenting options. The outcomes are out of my control. Advocacy means accepting, unconditionally and without judging, the opinions and choices survivors make.

My own emotions ricocheted from anger with men for the violence—to irritation with my clients for repeating their mistakes—to anger with myself for naïveté. After all, abusers are successful because their victims enable their behavior. Part of the tragedy in the cycle of domestic violence is that a victim subjects him/herself to repeated and elevated levels of violence. The more sinister component is that truly innocent victims, the children, are repeatedly exposed to danger. Not only are children victims of an abuser’s actions, they’re also victims of poor choices made on their behalf.

My heart finally softened after months of journaling, much emotional release, and focus on Jesus' call to both justice and mercy. I reflected on Matthew 25:40: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Although I'm no longer angry with myself or irritated with victims, I can't deny that I was naïve. The quintessential truth about domestic violence is that it will always exist; there is neither a shortage of willing aggressors nor of compliant participants. At this stage in my work I've heard and witnessed every argument about why many victims return to endure further abuse. It can be very difficult to leave a familiar situation, even if it is abusive. The fact remains, however, that most victims have made very poor choices.

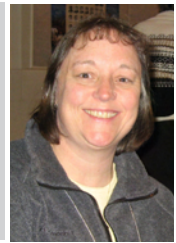
I have heard the stories and seen the faces of domestic violence, and I recognize in myself a calling to advocate for those who suffer it. Yes, I know that victims have made bad decisions; I also recognize that Jesus calls us to serve others, whether or not our efforts change their lives. The Lord is calling us to see that every human is worthy of dignity and respect, even if much of our effort seems to be wasted. My work in domestic violence has taught me that being a Christian is rarely easy. On the contrary, it can be extremely emotional, frustrating, agonizing ... When Jesus invites us to take up our cross and follow in his steps, he didn't promise that the road to justice would be easy or smooth, but only that he would be with us and none of us is called to travel it alone.

Nicole and her husband Ron have been members of St. Anthony on the Lake CFM in Pewaukee, Wisc., since 2002. They have two children.

Family Activity Corner

by Anna Kieliszewski

Little arms of prayer



February offers many opportunities for families. Valentine's Day is an opportunity to let the members of our families (especially our spouses) know how much they are loved and appreciated. I for one, hope this time doesn't pass me by. Seeing the good in my family reminds me of how much God looks past my faults and still loves me I ask God to give me the grace to do this for my family!

The other opportunity is Lent. Lent begins February 25th. A fellow CFM member told me of a family activity her Mom used to do on Fat Tuesday, the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. Every year, the family made pretzels and puncki (a polish pastry.) My friend's favorite memories were the prayer they said before eating the pretzels, and that the day set the tone for the days of Lent ahead.

Pretzels were "invented" by monks in the Middle Ages, when "fasting" meant no milk, no butter, no cheese, no cream, and no eggs as well as no meat. The shape of the pretzel was a reminder to pray, since their gesture of prayer was to cross their hands over their chest. The Latin "little arms, "bracallae" became, in German "brezel" and, in English, "pretzel".

Your family might enjoy making pretzels and serving them with prayer each evening during Lent.

Blessings on your journey!

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

Pretzels

1 package active dry yeast
1 ½ cups hot tap water
1/3 cup brown sugar
2 cups and 3 cups flour
salt (if desired)

In a large bowl, mix yeast, brown sugar and 2 cups of flour.

Measure hot tap water (120 – 130 F) and quickly mix with flour mixture.

Add remaining 3 cups of flour gradually. Mix until dough is workable and not sticky (note: you may not use all the flour.)

Knead dough for 5 minutes.

Twist dough into pretzel design.

Preheat oven to 450 F.

In a stainless steel saucepan, measure ¼ cup baking soda and 2 cups water. Bring to a boil.

Dip twisted pretzel in boiling water for a few seconds. The dough may turn yellow.

Remove and drain on a paper towel. Continue until all pretzels are made.

Place pretzels on a greased, salted cookie sheet. Top with salt if desired.

Bake 8-10 minutes until golden (makes 16 pretzels.)

Pretzel Blessing

Lord, Bless these breads which remind us of the early Christians who crossed their arms in prayer. May we always be reminded by the sight of these pretzels to pray to you with grateful hearts. Amen.



Taking the Time to Make a Difference

by Paul R. Leingang

About Truth in Action

It's been an odd few weeks.

I bought a new pair of eye-glasses from a place that advertises glasses "in about an hour." I finally got them 12 days later.

I took my car to a local shop for some minor repairs, early one recent morning. A woman at the office made sure she had my correct phone number so I could be called when the car was ready. The call finally came just before the end of the workday, but it wasn't at all what I expected to hear. The man in charge said he had forgotten about my car completely, until someone asked him about it as they were closing up shop for the day. He promised to get to it first thing the next day.

A classified ad for a used chainsaw caught my eye recently: "Won't start. \$100."



A simple question in John's Gospel (chapter 18) has always puzzled me. "What is truth?" said Pilate to Jesus.

Was that a real question? The kind that seeks an answer? Or was that a cynical exclamation?

Reflecting on my eyeglasses, my car, and the ad for the chainsaw that won't start, I began to realize that truth is not always easy to find, or easy to tell.

To be honest — since that is the subject matter of this reflection — I never really expected my glasses to be ready "in about an hour." That's just an advertisement, I know, and you and I are probably willing to accept a little exaggeration.

I would not have been too upset if the "hour" turned into "an hour and a-half" or even "sometime later today." Twelve days, though, is too much of a stretch.

And to be honest again, my first reaction to the call from the repair shop was anger. But in reflection, I have to say I appreciated the man's honesty. He could have told me the line I've heard many times before:

*When do you tell the truth?
When are you tempted to find a plausible excuse?
Or exaggerate ... ?*

"We ran into some unexpected problems," or something like that. Instead, he admitted that he had forgotten all about the appointment we had agreed on. That takes a deal of courage not to try to hide behind a plausible excuse.

The hopeful seller of that chainsaw, the one that won't start, could have described it in "as is" condition. I laughed when I read it the first time, but my appreciation is growing for such straightforward truth in advertising. That ad might challenge someone who knows and loves chainsaws into thinking, perhaps foolishly, "Well, I bet I could start it!"



A troublesome conclusion for a Christian, it seems to me, is that truth is never just a fact or a description of a done deed. Truth carries with it some responsibility to another.

It's not a stretch to consider the Gospel teaching of Jesus in Matthew 21, about the man with two sons. The father told the sons to "go and work in the vineyard today." One son said, "I will not," but he repented and went. The other said, "I go, sir," but did not go.

Neither son told the truth with his words, but the first one followed through with his actions.



What level of "truth" do you expect? Are you willing to accept a "lesser standard" from some sources?

If you have children, what is their experience of truth? From advertisements? From their friends? From their parents?

When do you tell the truth? When are you tempted to find a plausible excuse? Or exaggerate your abilities or your promises?

Take the time today to examine not only the truth in your own home and experience, but the truth that is told to the "least ones" in our society. "We welcome everyone — but not your kind." "You have freedom of speech here — just make sure you speak our language." "You are innocent until proven guilty — but I know you did it." "You have a right to life — after you're born, but not if you're guilty."

What is truth?

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



Appreciate Your Mate

The Library of Congress recently added rock 'n' roll pioneer **Roy Orbison's** song, "Oh, Pretty Woman" to the National Recording Registry. **Bruce Springsteen** has called it the best girl-watching rock 'n' roll song ever. Orbison wrote the song for his first wife, **Claudette Frady**. One day, she left for the store—by "walking down the street"—and by the time she returned, Orbison had written what would become his most enduring hit. Claudette died in a motorcycle accident in 1966, two years after the song hit No. 1 on the charts.

Would that we all would take such a positive view of our spouses as Orbison did that day. Appreciating your spouse and letting him or her know it can make a big hit in your marriage.

Give your mate the gift of focused attention. Take time to talk, not just about family business or the kids, but really share thoughts. Expose your feelings instead of keeping them to yourself. It's important to turn off the television or put down that magazine and look into each other's eyes while you converse. Really listen and understand. If your spouse is distracted, then ask him or her for 10-15 minutes when possible just to catch up.

If you do this regularly, you will start to see your spouse more fully. You'll begin to appreciate his or her ambitions and desires. You

may think you couldn't possibly learn anything new about your spouse, but husbands and wives are humans who change and grow. What are the ways your spouse has grown lately? What new things has he or she learned? Why not find out? It will be the best 10-15 minutes of your day.

Use words of affirmation regularly. A critical attitude can make or break a marriage. Instead of pointing out all of the ways your spouse regularly disappoints you, start to look for the positive attributes. Take the opportunity to express your heartfelt appreciation. By giving a little praise, more of your mate's good qualities will stand out, and in addition, you will find your spouse's heart growing larger toward you as he or she feels more appreciated and loved.

When we view our marriage with the eyes of faith, we can see God's hopes and dreams for us. By appreciating and believing in our spouse, we can build in him or her a self-image that is positive and strong. With our spouse as our chief fan and promoter, we can be inspired to rise to the occasion. Love calls us to see our lover as God sees -- and loves -- him or her, yet love also calls us to recognize what is admirable in ourselves.

Mutual appreciation must be practiced to be effective.

OBSERVE

- What qualities do you see in yourself that are admirable?
- What qualities do you admire in your spouse?

JUDGE

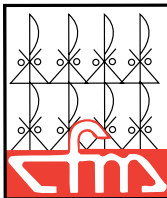
- How can I grow in admirable qualities?
- How well do I show my spouse appreciation?

ACT

1. Make a list of qualities you love about your spouse, then share lists.
2. Read to each other the beautiful love poetry of the Bible's *Song of Songs*, a passionate study in mutual appreciation and admiration of two lovers.
*More delightful
is your love
than wine!
Your name spoken
is a spreading perfume...
how rightly you are loved!*
(1:3-4)
3. Sing "Pretty Woman" to your wife.

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

Baltimore-area CFM groups at St. Jane Frances and Our Lady of the Fields packed 23 Christmas shoeboxes of useful items and goodies for merchant sailors served by the Apostleship of the Sea, the ministry of the Catholic Church to seafarers in the major ports worldwide. Learn how you can help at <http://www.aos-usa.org/whatcan.php>.

Sean and Lisa Ryan and Kermit and Laura Gaither share leadership of Sacred Heart CFM in **Winchester, Va.** The group is active in many service projects. Two examples: They recently built a wheelchair ramp for a member of parish and provided a children's fun night at the parish so that parents could do some Christmas shopping.

Christopher and Rosemary Piraino have recently started a group at St. Paul, **Damascus, Md.** The group is using the book *Families: Whole and Holy* as a follow-up to *Taking the Time to Make a Difference*. They recently prepared dinner for women's shelter while their small children did a craft project. Two of the mothers delivered the dinner accompanied by their kids.

Susan and Jason Battani report that CFM has taken over responsibility for the monthly food pantry collections at the St. Mary of Nazareth parish in **Des Moines, Ia.** This has led to an increase in donations.

St. Maurice CFM in **Pittsburgh, Penn.**, participated in the Mr. Rogers Sweater drive. Last year they filled three vans with sweaters. They collected at Masses for two weekends and advertised in the parish school. **Rob and Kathy Powers** are leaders.

E.J. and Alida Wells are new leaders at St. Lawrence Martyr parish in **Redondo Beach, Cal.** Among other the activities, this group sponsors the Operation Christmas Children project, makes sandwiches monthly for the homeless, and provides several social activities during the year, including a Thanksgiving feast for the entire group of over 80 families.

Renewal of Marriage Vows

Saturday, February 21,
at Our Lady of the Wayside,
Arlington Heights, Ill.

Details at
www.cfm.org