



The Online Newsletter of the Christian Family Movement

February-March 2010 Volume 63, No. 2

Join us for a National CFM Action: Each One, Reach One!

Inspired by the celebration of 60 years of supporting families as they live their faith, CFM is inviting all its member families to share the gift of CFM with friends and acquaintances.



We celebrate how important CFM has been in our lives and would love to share it with others. Executive Director, Missy Parkison recently talked with BJ and Kristin Walraven of CFM, St. Thomas parish, Ann Arbor, Mich., about how they became members of CFM and how they have invited other families into their group.

BJ and Kristin first read about CFM in the St. Thomas bulletin and then attended a planning meeting. Missy asked the Walravens what made this invitation attractive to them:

“It was presented as a group for families. We were interested in meeting other families in the parish, finding people who had similar interests and values, and making friends, both for us and our kids. There was an organizational meeting, hosted by another CFM group at a home. It was great! We planned our next meeting that night.”

When asked about their experience with CFM, this is what the Walravens had to say:

“CFM has brought us closer together as a couple and a family. We have met some great families that we talk to and see outside of church and CFM meetings. Fitting CFM into our life has only been a challenge when there are other important commitments that interfere, such as family birthdays or prior engagements. We make it a priority though, and our group tries to schedule when most families are free. The time we started with was a bit late for our family, so we suggested moving it 30 minutes earlier and that has worked out well. We have shared the babysitting duties since many of the families have young children. We meet in the parish center, so we can have two separate rooms, one for adults and one for kids. Soon we are going to try hiring sitters, maybe older kids and teens from another CFM group family, for our meetings.”

So, what led the Walravens to take the extra step of inviting others to join CFM and how did they go about it?

“We feel that we have benefitted a lot from CFM and wanted to share that with others. We had briefly met or spoken to a few couples and families at church and thought they would enjoy the meetings as much as we had. We told them a bit about the meeting after church one [Sunday](#), told them when the next meeting was, and invited them to come. Both families were excited, as we had been, to meet others and get together with adults from the church. Both families came and have joined the group.”

Finally, Missy asked what advice BJ and Kristin would give others interested in sharing the gift of CFM with other families:

“Make sure you have had a few interactions with the couple or family before bringing up CFM. Use a low-pressure approach, focusing on the positives and what you have learned and liked about the group. For us, CFM has improved our marriage, deepened our faith, and brought us closer to families in the church. Our children love going to CFM meetings and have made some great friends as well. We had always wanted to be a part of something like this and are thankful to have found CFM!”

Presidents' Perspective by *Bob and Anne Tomonto*

Each One, Reach One!

CFM has been a gift to you and your family. Give this gift to others by spreading the good news. How can you do that?

Extend an individual invitation.

Reflect on how CFM has impacted you and your family. Invite someone to your next meeting.

Start a new CFM group in your parish. Are there families in your parish looking for support in living the married life? Contact the national office for a Starter Kit.

Spread the gift of CFM beyond your borders. Visit another parish and give testimony of what CFM has meant to you and your family.

I am employed by a large electric utility in the southeast and recently I was scheduled to work the night shift for seven weeks. This schedule started at 5:00 p.m. and finished at 5:30 a.m. The nights were long and meal time was on an altered schedule. Sleep was during daylight and work was for the nights. Relationships with family and friends were altered, and activities following work were non-existent.

This schedule changed the way I approached many decisions and commitments. I discovered that my limited free time was very precious and commitments needed to be completed on schedule, for there was no recovery time.

As I reflected on this work schedule, I often thought of the many homes where a similar work schedule is the standard for one or both parents. Our service men and women, police and fire rescue, and individuals who are employed in hospitals are among those who often work the night shift or are away from home for extended time intervals. There are many factories, restaurants, and retail outlets that operate around the clock. Parents working such

a schedule often need to seek the support of family and friends to watch over their kids, transfer kids to

afternoon events, care for their parents and, at times, hold the family together. One friend shared with me her relationship with her Dad, who was a New York City police officer. She stated that dad often slept during the day and the kids were taught from a young age to respect this quiet time.

My temporary nightshift schedule gave me the opportunity to reflect on how fortunate I am, and at the same time appreciate my family and friends. I got a sense of how precious every free moment is. My dad passed away in May of this past year, and I have often wished we could have had more time together. He would have complained about my working the night shift, but at the same time he would have had pride in what I was doing.

As we approach Lent, take a few minutes to reflect on your many gifts – your family and friends, children, fellow workers, parish community and perhaps that one special friend – spouse, parent or childhood friend.

Throughout this membership year, CFM is encouraging each member to reach out to share the gift of CFM with another family – “Each One, Reach One.” The goal of this action is to promote the growth of CFM, one family at a time. Who reached out to you and invited you to just come and see what CFM was all about? We invite each of our member families to just reach out and invite one couple to join CFM. Take the opportunity now and witness the growth in your CFM family’s circle of friendship. Love, Bob.

Bob and Anne Tomonto are members of St. Louis Parish CFM, Miami, Fla.

A Prayer for the Growth of CFM

Lord God, thank you for the Christian Family Movement.

Bless and guide us as we share the gift of CFM with other families, always helping us to know when to speak through words and when through deeds, keeping us always faithful to our mission to promote Christian marriage and family life through loving service and faithful example.

Bless families in every way and surround them with a sense of your mercy and love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Inviting New Parents into CFM through Baptism Preparation: Another “Each One, Reach One” Plan

The birth and baptism of a child is often a point in married couples’ lives when they are seeking a reconnection with or a greater participation in the Church. On CFM’s website you will find a meeting designed to support the Baptism preparation curriculum as

well as expose parents to the Observe, Judge, Act method and the CFM experience.

This meeting can be presented at the end of the formal baptism preparation course. The presenting couple can provide a brief witness talk describing how CFM has been a way that they have become more involved in the parish community and strengthened their family. The chapter can then be discussed. CFM

can provide a closing reception for the group. The meeting plan, including prayers, Scripture reflection, Social Inquiry, and action ideas, is available at <http://www.cfm.org/special5.pdf>.

Family Activity Corner by Anna Kieliszewski

Amazing Grace



"I once was lost, but now am found..." is part of the popular song, *Amazing Grace*. This song reminds me that no matter how far I **may** stray from God, God will always welcome me back.

This is especially true when we begin our season of Lent. During our Ash **Wednesday** service, we hear the words, "repent and believe the Good News." When and how do you repent in your life? How about in your family life? Do you ever tell your spouse, your children, "I'm sorry?"

The church provides a time for us to stop and look at ways we can grow closer to God and prepare our hearts to celebrate Christ's resurrection on Easter **Sunday**.

Are you called to give something up? Maybe you go to the local coffee shop every day and buy that \$5.00 beverage. Could you give it up and donate the money to a local food pantry? Maybe your day is not complete until you watch 1 hour of TV. Could you give it up and read the Bible instead? What is God asking you to do this Lent?

Maybe you are one who needs to add something. Is it saying an extra prayer each day for your family members? Is it pausing and praying at the beginning and end of each meal? Is it reading a theology book?

What are you being called to do this Lent? How about as a family? Maybe you can have a "Night of Forgiveness." This is where the family gathers together and each person has a chance to ask forgiveness for the times they have not been the best person God calls them to be.

Or your family could have a "Night of Gratitude." For this, each person goes around and states what they are thankful for, perhaps ways they are thankful for the members of the family.

While these ideas might be met with a groan from our pre-teen and teen members, these family nights can have some powerful benefits. This was true one night at our house. It had been an extremely stressful day, when our ten year old son decided we needed a family prayer service. He picked out an opening and closing song and in the middle had us go around and say why we were glad we were in this family. Needless to say, our 12 year old wasn't thrilled. However, my husband and I were touched and humbled. We were once again reminded how special each one of us are and how much God really loves us.

Try it with your family! Maybe try it with your CFM group. See all the ways that you are being called to grow closer to our God. Blessings to all as you celebrate being a child of God!

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

Lent At Home

Here are some suggestions for putting Lent into practice at home:

Spending Money: Make a survey of your family's life during Lent, comparing it with the way you live at other times of the year. For instance, does your family spend less on potato chips, candy, or treats during Lent by eating more simply? Maybe the money saved should go to the poor.

Spending Time: Unlike money, we cannot see time, but we can waste it. During Lent, we can look at our own use of time. In a Lenten week, spend less time watching TV and more time helping others or praying together. A family Bible time or Rosary deepen our Lenten experience.

Fasting: To fast means to eat no food. Fasting is one kind of penance. In the Catholic tradition, those between the ages of 21 and 59 are required to keep a limited fast (one full meal and two lighter meals in a day) on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Many people "fast" from certain foods all during Lent. Children can make changes in their own eating during Lent and sacrifice for the intention of those who have less.

A CFM Family Night – for Families of All Ages and Stages by Lauri Przybysz

Note: This Lenten CFM Family Night could be enjoyed by families at home or by families gathered as a CFM group. Groups with a mix of family stages could offer all three activities below simultaneously.



Opening Prayer

Lord, as we gather for Family Night, help us to be filled with hope. We have often forgotten to appreciate the good in one another. Empower us to be positive and help us seek and see the goodness in one another. Bless us, dear Jesus, through this whole week. We place our faith in you.

Think about This

From the Bible, read 1 Corinthians 13:13. Hope is one of the three powerful virtues. Christians hope in Christ. Hope means "to want and expect." It is a feeling that what is wanted will happen. Lent is our greatest season of hope because it awaits the great mystery of Jesus' resurrection on Easter morning.

Activity Ideas

Young Families

Prayer Treasure Chest – Materials: shoe box or other box with a lid, old magazines, scissors, glue, stickers, colorful paper. Cut out pictures that remind you of hope and love, and glue them on the box. Have each member write (or help little ones write) three prayers on separate slips of paper. Place the prayers in the Treasure Chest and draw out a prayer to read before dinner or at bedtime. Add new prayers and prayer intentions often.

Middle Years Families

Rice Bowl of Hope – Materials: bowl, paper, and pen. Or use Operation Rice Bowl box and activity ideas from Catholic Relief Services <http://orb.crs.org>. One way of sharing hope with others is by giving alms. Plan to conserve one meal a week and use the money for the Rice Bowl. At the end of Lent, give the money to your local poor or to Catholic Relief Services.

Adult Families

Read John 17:20-26 and Philippians 3:7-17. Share your thoughts, especially about the connections between faith and hope. Decide on a concrete action that will bring hope to someone in your family or community.

Snack Time

Make some popcorn and discuss how the kernels change and become transformed. Share ideas on how we can be compared to popcorn in our own lives.

Entertainment

“Who Am I – Bible version”: Each person takes a turn choosing a person from the Bible. In ten questions or less, the family tries to guess the Bible personality. Only yes and no answers permitted.

Sharing

- Each share a story about a hope he or she had and how things worked out.
- Someone share a funny story about him or herself.
- Share a time you felt especially cared for by another family member.

Closing Prayer

Each person writes a prayer of hope for a family member or for the community or world. Read your prayers to close the evening.

Spiritual Director’s Discourse by Father Tom Rzepiela

With you on the journey of faith

As we move into the season of Lent, I encourage each of you to pause at some point during your preparation for Holy Week to ask the following questions: How is your Lenten Journey going? Is it going? Is it going in the right direction? Is it going, period? Or, has Lent become for you just another word, another meaningless season?

I believe that for all of us, Lent can at times become exactly that – a word, just another time of year, without any real meaning or purpose. We can get so caught up in our own needs, issues and concerns that we let things slip by spiritually. Our routines can lead us to be people of only one dimension. That dimension often centers on the question, “What’s in it for me?”

Yet, Lent can be a very powerful time of change and growth for each one of us if we are willing to live out the spiritual challenges that Lent offers. This season is our spiritual time to look at and review our life. The problem for most of us is that we are afraid to honestly look at ourselves and see our flaws, our faults, our



sinfulness. Yet, isn’t that what Lent is all about? It can and should be one long “examination of conscience.” (That does sound scary and frightful, doesn’t it?) This period of examination helps us prepare for the celebration of Holy Week and the mystery of the Resurrection on Easter Morning. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, walked this earth, suffered, died and rose from the dead so that we can have everlasting life. The traditional venues of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are ways to travel along that Lenten Journey. Through these spiritual practices, we should be able to draw ourselves closer in our walk with the Lord to the cross at Golgotha.

How well have you and your family been living out these Lenten values? Have you spent more time in prayer with your spouse and your children? Have you led your family in sacrificing your own needs for the sake of others?

Have you been more generous with your children and others by the giving of your own time, talent and treasure? Have you brought others along with you on your Lenten journey so that they too can find the Risen Christ?

Your Lenten Journey, like any other journey, begins with small steps taken in the right direction – knowing where you are headed. The journey continues with a constancy of purpose and action toward that final goal.

How is your Lenten Journey going? Is it going?

Happy Journeying and may you walk steadfastly to a Blessed Easter!

Father Tom Rzepiela is Pastor of St. Thomas of Villanova Parish, in Palatine, Ill.

Parent to Parent by Mary Lou Gorman

When Children Want a Pet

Many parents are begged by their children to get them a pet. Parents are misled by the thought that taking care of a pet teaches responsibility. This can be true to a certain extent for some children. What parents don’t realize is that when a pet comes into the household, it is ultimately the parents that are responsible for that pet. When you are teaching a child responsibility, you must model how that pet needs to be cared for. Parents are the ones that are responsible for the food, shots, any health problems and the general well-being of the pet.

Children can play a role in all the care, but ultimately it is you, the parents, that are the caretakers – and the ones who finally bury the pet. A dependent child does not have the finances to take care of a pet, so parents, be careful when you say “yes” to a pet. Of course, children will make all kinds of promises, but be sure you are willing to do your part in raising and caring for the pet. It may be a good idea at first, but when you want to leave town for awhile, that pet will need a caretaker. Also, remember, they do need to be groomed and trained. Be sure you have the time and money for the adventure.

Pets can become like family members and they are loving and faithful, but just like children, they are your responsibility for their lifetime.

If, after thinking about this, you still want the pet, go for it! They don't argue with you or resist your rules. (Or do they?)

Mary Lou and her late husband, Phil Gorman, of Arlington Heights, Ill., joined CFM in 1953.

Your Marriage the Great Adventure by Lauri Przybysz

Spring Clean-up



During the holy season of Lent, we are invited to take a close and unvarnished look at ourselves. When we examine our consciences honestly, we know there is room for improvement! The nice thing about Lent is that everyone else is more inclined to do the same kind of soul-searching. The alternative – refusing to see my faults or refusing to make any meaningful attempt to change – can be destructive to your marriage.

Think about the couples you know right now that are headed for divorce. You may have observed that cases of abuse are the exception, not the rule. Instead, couples tire of working at their relationship and dealing with ongoing conflicts in day-to-day interactions. Marriage wasn't what they expected it to be, and one or both partners leaves.

Research shows that the couples that make it and the couples that fail disagree the same amount, and they also disagree about all the same issues – sex, money, housework, children and in-laws/friends – says marriage education expert Diane Sollee, www.smartmarriages.com. “It turns out it's not whether you disagree that makes a difference (that's normal and very much to be expected); it's how you handle your disagreements that matters.” Sollee explains, “Yelling, complaining, crying, and even revisiting the same issue “over and over and over” might be annoying, but it's behaviors like avoidance, disengagement, contempt, blame, criticism, and ‘the silent treatment’ that lead to divorce.”

That is where Lent is helpful. The first step in conflict resolution is to manage your own behavior – since the only person you can really change is yourself. As Matthew 7:3 says, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

FamilyLife Christian website's (www.familylife.com) Tracey Lanter expressed this need for repentance more bluntly: “I have had many women assume that my husband is perfect because it appears to them that our marriage is so good. I laugh and tell them that our marriage is good, but not because my husband is perfect. He is an overbearing jerk. And I am a pouty little snot. But we know this about each other and we work at marriage. In our home we recognize sin for just what it is: sin. And often, a moment's frustration is all it takes for us to slip into our sin nature. Hubby's moments of frustration slip him

into "overbearing jerk" – and he knows it. My moments of frustration slip me into "pouty little snot" – and I know it."

Lanter explains that she and her husband do not point these faults out be hurtful, but to deal honestly with problems. "We know that because we are most comfortable at home; it is there that our sin nature rears its ugly head the most. I recognize I need someone to help me tame the beast within. Is it always easy to hear about it when I'm being a pouty little snot? No. But hey, my hubby loves me and he needs to help me to be a better person."

So for Lent, let us recognize our "sin-side" and give up stubbornness, pouting, getting even. Let us put on mercy, joy, peace and patience. Let us resolve to recognize our faults and humbly make efforts to be the best spouses we can be, with the help of God and our friends in Christ.

John and Lauri Przybysz live in Severna Park, Md., and have six children and 13 grandchildren. Lauri is coordinator of marriage and family enrichment for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Taking the Time to Make a Difference by Paul R. Leingang

Thoughts about home, and who is welcome there

He was a good friend, but he was far from perfect. He enjoyed coming to my house for reasons I came to understand only years later. We were true childhood friends, but friendship was not the only reason for the many hours we spent together.

Any grown-up with eyes to see would recognize the reality of the situation, that my grade school classmate came to my home so often because he did not have a real home of his own.

We built tree houses. We built forts. In a nearby wooded area we found a rock outcropping that looked a little like the entrance to a cave; it was nothing of the sort, but nonetheless it became one more place we could go to seek security and shelter.

Now the part about my friend being far from perfect.

While he was always free – and even encouraged to be away from the house where his family lived, I often had work to do at my home or in the farm field my family maintained a few miles away.

My mother and father worked all of the time, except on Sundays, and I certainly could not legitimately complain about the few tasks expected of me.

One time, I remember, I went with my parents to the field where the sweet corn had just grown up to a height of a foot or so. My father used a wheeled contraption to cultivate the ground between the rows; my task was to help hoe off the weeds among the plants within a row.

My friend, who wanted to work on the fort we were building, came with us to the field instead. After a few minutes of working side by side with me, he said he knew a way that we could get out of doing what we were supposed to do.

Before I could question him about his plan, he raised his hoe and "accidentally" hacked off a green and healthy corn stalk. I was surprised, shocked, unwilling to believe a friend would cause intentional

harm to our family's plantings. A few more steps along the row, he was about to repeat the accident – but my parents intervened and put a quick end to the evil scheme.

That was the end of my classmate's work in the field, but not mine, and sad disappointment slowly sucked the sunlight out of the rest of the day.

It was a troublesome time for our friendship, but it survived and my home remained open and understanding.

* * *

I thought about this incident as I read a story from the Zenit news service about a recent discussion on the campus of the Catholic University of America. Cardinal Francis George of Chicago was one of the participants, delving into the question: Can belief be made "more believable" for both seekers and the faithful alike?

Cardinal George was quoted: "When I talk to people in their 20s and 40s, they want the Church to be a stable point of reference in the world, even if they do not want to be a part of the Church themselves."

That was just my experience, looking back on those childhood days. My friend, who was always seeking a kind of home, valued the stability I had – but not enough to want to take everything that came with it.

* * *

The story, and the memory it elicited, made me wonder what others think about those of us who profess a Christian belief. When others are questioning and seeking, uncertain but hopeful, what will they see in our practice of the faith we claim? Joyful participation in a community? Or a grudging compliance with rules?

Do we continue to welcome those, who just like us, are far from perfect? Is it possible that we are called to welcome the uncertain? Even those who have done wrong?

Would that make a difference?

Paul Leingang is director of communications for the Diocese of Evansville in Indiana, and editor of the Message, the diocesan newspaper. His award-winning weekly column, Taking the Time to Make a Difference, is syndicated in a number of diocesan newspapers. Paul and his wife, Jane, are members of CFM in Evansville.
