

Is God on Your Calendar?

“Where does God show up on your calendar?” That’s the question Laura Kelly Fanucci asked herself as a new school year approached. Writing for *Catholic News Service*, she admitted that while her calendar was full of birthdays, anniversaries, and her kids’ activities, there wasn’t much mention of God.

After writing “Mass” on every Sunday, Fanucci wondered how else she could make her family’s spiritual lives more visible in their schedules. She reflected, “Maybe we’re called to more Sabbath together, to guard our Sundays for worship and rest. Maybe we’re called to more service, to take time to offer ourselves to our community. Could we celebrate an extra feast day each month at home, to enliven our faith as a family? Are we called to a retreat, a class or a group at our parish—something new to help us grow in faith?”

“Whatever changes the fall may bring, I know the prayer I need to carry with me now, a psalm in my pocket: Teach us to number our days with You in the center. Give us the wisdom to give our time to You.”

Teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart. (Psalm 90:12)

*Guide me in making more time for You,
Savior.*

Peace and Compassion...Holy Threads

Teaching a special education class many years ago taught Sister Ave Clark, O.P., to “be kinder, more compassionate, more accepting, and vulnerable,” she said during a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her book *Peace and Compassion...Holy Threads*. Sister Ave carries those qualities into all aspects of Heart to Heart Ministry, which she founded to counsel those experiencing stress or trauma.

She explained, “Peace, to me, is [experiencing] God’s love no matter what you’re going through. Peace is an extension of God saying, ‘Love one another into life.’ Does that mean we’re going to disagree [sometimes]? We can, but I think we need to disagree in a much better way without this harshness, cruelty.”

“You can’t have [peace and compassion] without the other, because when you’re compassionate, you either give or receive peace. If you’re getting compassion back, you feel peaceful inside. That doesn’t mean that all your problems or worries are gone. Maybe we learn to carry them better...and be that little beam of light in the world that we can be.”

**My covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.
(Isaiah 54:10)**

*Teach me to be a person of peace and
compassion, Jesus.*

Crusader for People with Special Needs

In August 2022, Mary Karry was posthumously honored for her work and dedication to helping those with special needs on Long Island, New York. She set an example for “treating all with the dignity they deserve.”

Karry’s son, Danny, had special needs, and four decades ago was being inhumanely treated in a psychiatric hospital. Karry pulled Danny out and realized she had to fight for him and others, transforming special needs care on Long Island.

She created the Riverhead nonprofit for the developmentally disabled, Rise Life Services—and Danny was the first resident to move into their facilities. Now, the property includes 32 small residences, and it is here where Karry and her son were posthumously honored.

Nonprofits like Rise Life Services are changing lives every day, and the nursing staff continues to live out Karry’s example to treat each person with dignity and care. Nurse Robert Walker told *CBS News* that helping his patients is the greatest reward.

The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up. (James 5:15)

Merciful Jesus, help me to always treat others with dignity and care.

Mississippi Teen's Heroic Dive Saves Lives

It was 2:30 a.m. when 16-year-old Corion Evans witnessed a car veer “off the I-10 boat launch” in Mississippi’s Pascagoula River, as reported by the Moss Point Police Department on *Fox News*. The driver told the police that “she was following her GPS and didn’t realize she was heading towards the water.”

The three teenage passengers had just managed to climb onto the roof of the car when Evans jumped into the water to help. Police Officer Garry Mercer was quick to follow, but Evans’ presence and aid in the water was lifesaving.

“We commend Mr. Evans’ bravery and selflessness that he displayed by risking his own life to help people in danger,” Chief of Police Brandon Ashley declared when presenting Evans, along with Mercer, with a Certificate of Commendation. “If Mr. Evans had not assisted, the situation could have turned out differently, instead of all occupants being rescued safely.”

“We are proud of the young man for having the courage to forget about himself,” Mayor Billy Knight was quoted as saying in the *Associated Press*. “It’s not often enough that you see people put others above themselves.”

He drew me out of mighty waters. (Psalm 18:16)

Abba, may we strive to put others before ourselves.

You Don't Have to Carry It All, Part 1

As a mother of three, former *ABC News* anchor Paula Faris has experienced countless misperceptions about motherhood, such as when she returned from maternity leave once only to have a co-worker ask her, “How was your vacation?”

That’s why Paula has become a voice for mothers who work outside the home through her company Carry Media and her book *You Don't Have to Carry It All*. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, she pointed out, “Many of the issues we face as a society are a direct result of how mothers are treated in the workplace, as well as how families are devalued in society.”

Paula continued, “The mother is the default caretaker, nurturer. Seventy percent of mothers will also be the primary breadwinner for their family...[But] once you become a mother, you are treated as this flight risk and liability [in the workplace]...We are passed over for promotions... We are paid less. We are deemed less viable leaders...If we’re a country about families, we’ve got to take care of our families so much better. It’s the true health of a nation.”

**Let her works praise her in the city gates.
(Proverbs 31:31)**

Teach us to value the work of mothers, Holy Spirit.

You Don't Have to Carry It All, Part 2

While conducting research for her book, *You Don't Have to Carry It All*, Paula Faris learned the surprising fact that for much of human history, men and women were co-producers and co-laborers in family economies.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, Paula explained that prior to the Industrial Revolution, husbands and wives worked the farms and fields together and shared in the child-rearing duties. This changed somewhat once industry jobs arose, but the biggest shift occurred when soldiers returned home from overseas after World War II.

Paula said, “Men were told, ‘You bring home the bacon. And the women, you fry it and nurture everyone.’ That’s where...we start to carry it all as mothers.”

Studying history led Paula to realize that the 1950s ideal fell short. Around 25 percent of people lived below the poverty line, while women and African Americans were often forced out of the workplace. She declared, “I say we find that better way forward. That’s what I’m trying to do with this book.”

**Give her a share in the fruit of her hands.
(Proverbs 31:31)**

May men and women appreciate each other's gifts, Lord.

You Don't Have to Carry It All, Part 3

In order to find a better way forward for mothers in the U.S. who work outside the home, Paula Faris looked to other countries. She shared the story of her friend Liz Bohannon, founder of Sseko Designs, which offers education, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities to women in East Africa.

Liz told Paula that “mom guilt” is an American thing because in many other countries, women have no choice but to work. These women take pride in being able to provide for their families.

“What’s even more important,” added Paula, “is there’s an attitudinal shift in other countries that ‘These are our children,’ even if they’re not your children...I am my brother’s keeper. There’s community, there’s social policies.

“They’re all working to raise this next generation, because they believe that kids are the greatest natural resource in the future of their country...They have interdependence, they have family members that live with them. Here, it’s like if we ask for help, we’re weaker. We need help. We need to say, ‘I cannot do this on my own, and I cannot carry it all.’”

Two are better than one. (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

Teach us to grow in interdependence, Holy Trinity.

You Don't Have to Carry It All, Part 4

Part of the conflict Paula Faris has felt as a working mother stems from being raised with the Christian belief that “a good, godly woman stays home with her children,” she said during a *Christopher Closeup* interview. Therefore, she explored what the Bible actually teaches about women working outside the home.

In interviewing the Director of Theology for Proverbs 31 Ministries, she gained a new perspective. Paula said, “I had heard in church growing up, ‘You’re in the kitchen, you raise your kids, that’s the Proverbs 31 woman.’...[But there’s] much more than just the Proverbs 31 woman in the domesticated sense. She was the source of stability for her family and for her community...but she worked outside of the home.

“There’s a verse in Proverbs 31 where it talks about her buying a vineyard...with the money that she earned in the marketplace. She was a skillful negotiator, a skilled businesswoman...So, for me, it was freeing in terms of what God really says about our roles as women and as mothers. It was something...that a lot of other women need to hear.”

She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. (Proverbs 31:18)

Guide women to achieve a good work-life balance, Jesus.

You Don't Have to Carry It All, Part 5

You Don't Have to Carry It All author Paula Faris hopes that corporate America will make the workplace more family-friendly. Simple steps include flexible schedules and hybrid home/office hours; ending discrimination against the “mommy gap” on resumés from women who left the workforce for several years to raise their children; and ending the “motherhood penalty,” which passes over mothers for promotions and raises.

Paula said, “Children are our greatest natural resource...If we make it more difficult to have families, we'll have fewer children. Fewer children equals labor shortage. Labor shortage equals crisis. So, it's the right thing to do for companies, and it's good for their bottom line. You take care of families, and culture will change.

“Mothers and fathers are very productive. There [are] all these core capabilities that increase once you become a parent...The companies that take care of families on their roster are going to be the ones that will advance deep into the 21st century. The ones that don't, they're going to have a retention and hiring crisis.”

Build up each other. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Help society build stronger families, Messiah.

Arthouse 2B

Who would have guessed that a chance meeting at a retreat in 2018 would lead to a lasting friendship, along with the creation of a haven for Catholic artists? Yet that is exactly what happened when former New York City ballerina Claire Kretzschmar and artist Erin T. McAtee met six years ago. United by their Catholic faith, these two eventual roommates found they had another value in common: a talent and appreciation for art.

In the wake of the COVID pandemic, Kretzschmar and McAtee—along with many New York-based actors, singers, and dancers—found themselves missing the daily closeness of their community and cut off from opportunities to display their artwork. Thus, Arthouse 2B was born. Named after their shared apartment number, this organization hosts “a dozen events a year” under the direction of its founders.

Kretzschmar told *The Tablet*, “This idea of creating not only the space for the artists to feel elevated and supported, and for others to experience that artwork, but giving people that atmosphere of hospitality was important. And we wanted to always keep [God] at the center.”

The builder of all things is God. (Hebrews 3:4)

God, may faith be at the heart of all our endeavors.

Allow God to Dwell in You

Each of us is called to be God's hands and heart in this world. This was a calling that St. Clare of Assisi understood particularly well. Consider these insights from Ilia Delio, OSF's book *Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love*, as quoted on *FranciscanMedia.org*:

“Clare’s emphasis on the person of Jesus Christ is an emphasis on the human person as well, what we are and what we are called to be. Christ crucified is the mirror in which we are to see our reflection, our strengths and weaknesses, our failures and our capacity to love. She wants us to reflect Christ in our lives, to help build up the Body of Christ through transformation in love.”

“She is a mystic who calls us to go forward into God by letting Christ take on our flesh so that we may reflect the face of Christ to the world. She tells us not to be dissuaded in the path to God, to be resolute in our convictions and trust the guidance of the Spirit in our lives. Her thought is centered on the essence of human identity: Be yourself and allow God to dwell within you. Christ will then be alive, and the world will be created anew.”

**See, I am making all things new.
(Revelation 21:5)**

Holy Spirit, guide me in doing Your will and reflecting the light of Christ to the world.

‘We Gotta Save this Kid’

MTA engineer William Kennedy was the first to notice a young boy on the “live rail track... heading toward the electrified third rail” on New York’s Metro-North train line. He placed a call to the train across the way, telling them to stop.

“I got four kids, so as soon as I saw it was a child, instantly ‘Daddy’ kicked in,” Kennedy told *WABC’s Eyewitness News*, “and [I thought], ‘We gotta save this kid.’”

“[The boy] had climbed over the third rail,” northbound train conductor Marcus Higgins added. “So, God forbid, you know, this could have gone in a totally different direction. Thank God it didn’t...I scooped him up...just walked him back to the train, got on the train. And we reversed back to Tarrytown.”

It was in Tarrytown where the young boy’s mother, Aridia Bruno De Sosa, was waiting with her daughter, out of her mind with worry, especially since she told the police her missing son had autism. Video footage showed the family’s tearful reunion. In thanks for their collaborative “daring rescue,” Higgins, along with the five other MTA workers involved, all received commendations for their heroic actions.

**Save others by snatching them out of...fire.
(Jude 1:23)**

Father, bless the unsung heroes of our world.

Mater Filius

Mater Filius is a “Catholic based home for women with crisis pregnancies who want to choose life but lack support.” Founded more than 20 years ago by Miriam and Jose Manuel Tejada in Mexico City, Mater Filius opened its first United States home in Omaha, Nebraska, back in 2012.

It has since established homes in three other states, with a fourth home also in the works. Jim and Julie Mainelli, co-directors of the Omaha location, affirm the motto of their organization is “defending life with love.”

In addition to shelter, these young mothers—or “mathis,” a term derived from the name Matthew, meaning “gift of God”—are provided with free secular and religious education for both them and their children, as well as assistance in finding jobs.

These young women typically remain in this “structured and loving environment” for up to 12 months, but its impact lasts a lifetime. “I’m starting to believe in God again,” mother of two and recovering drug addict Hailey declared to *The Catholic Voice*. “I’m finally finding peace...I have new support here, a new way to be.”

Choose life. (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Father, may mothers always receive the help they need to raise their children.

Getting Real with Jesus and Mary, Part 1

Leticia Ochoa Adams's life has not been easy. She endured repeated sexual abuse when she was a child and, as an adult, she lost her son Anthony to suicide. It took years for Leticia to acknowledge the traumas she had endured and the poor choices she made as a result.

But after becoming Catholic and slowly forging a healthy relationship with God, she was able to move towards healing. Leticia shares her story in her memoir, *Our Lady of Hot Messes: Getting Real with God in Dive Bars and Confessionals*.

Though "Our Lady of Hot Messes" may seem an unusual title for Mary, it is grounded in Leticia's lifelong reverence for the mother of Jesus. Growing up, Leticia's tias (aunts) all had giant pictures of Our Lady of Guadalupe in their homes.

In addition, continued Leticia, "When I was in my teenage years and I began running away and acting out, my mom found...a statue of Mary, and it had all these little candle holders on the feet of Mary. [My mother] would pray for me and light these candles." More tomorrow...

Pray for one another, so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

Guide suffering souls to Your Son's healing, Mary.

Getting Real with Jesus and Mary, Part 2

Following her son Anthony's suicide in 2017, Leticia Ochoa Adams was filled with anger at God. Yet, she continued attending Mass and always found herself sitting next to a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The painting reminded her of Mary's significant role in her spiritual life.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her memoir *Our Lady of Hot Messes*, Leticia recalled, "I realized there was a shift in my idea of Mary, that I didn't have to be perfect to come to her—and I never was. She's always seen me exactly for who I was...Even in those moments where I'm the messiest, she's there and patiently, lovingly, kindly praying for me.

"That's where the title [of my book] came from. [I'm] trying to convey that just because Mary was sinless doesn't mean she expects us to be perfect. She knows we're not. So, when we come to her in this idealistic version of ourselves that we [think we] need to present to her, we're lying, and we're not trusting that she loves us as we are...She can't help you if you're not giving her reality."

More tomorrow...

Keep your promise and be honest. (Sirach 29:3)

*Grant me the courage to be honest with You,
Blessed Mother.*

Getting Real with Jesus and Mary, Part 3

To be fully honest in her prayer life, Leticia Ochoa Adams had to first learn to be honest with herself. The sexual abuse she suffered as a child left her traumatized, angry, feeling low self-esteem, and unable to build healthy relationships.

Leticia credits therapy with helping her move forward in her life, though she also believes God tricked her into pursuing it. She explained, “I started therapy to get my therapist to convince my husband [Stacey] that everything that was wrong [with our marriage] was his fault. God gave me that idea.”

The therapist, however, suggested that she and Stacey each do separate sessions for six months, after which the therapist told Leticia that she herself was the problem, not Stacey.

Leticia got that same message from other people, and she was humble enough to take it seriously and work to improve herself. Her marriage got better, and she found herself growing spiritually as well. Then, the biggest tragedy she had ever faced derailed her for some time.

More tomorrow...

**In an abundance of counselors there is safety.
(Proverbs 11:14)**

Father, may those struggling with the trauma of abuse find the loving guidance they need.

Getting Real with Jesus and Mary, Part 4

Filled with anger at God for months after her son Anthony's suicide, Leticia Ochoa Adams went to Confession to Father Jonathan, the parish priest who had been a supportive friend to her family throughout their ordeal. Aware that the priest in that moment is standing in the person of Christ, she unloaded her fury and pain at him. At the end, Father Jonathan simply responded, "It broke my heart, too."

Leticia observed, "I already knew Father Jonathan's heart was broken, losing Anthony. So, the only reason he would say those words to me is because it was Christ talking to me, and it broke His heart, too. And I believed it. I believe it still to this day...[God] stood there crying and grieving for the loss of my son, too."

"That changed everything for me...I went on a mission to grow my relationship with [God], and not with this idea of Him that has to do with politics or this lifestyle or that lifestyle or this Mass or that Mass. It had everything to do with the God who made the heavens and earth."

More tomorrow...

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

*Meet me in my grief, and lead me toward
Your light, Jesus.*

Getting Real with Jesus and Mary, Part 5

Leticia Ochoa Adams's walk through suffering, therapy, and spiritual growth has changed her—and will continue to change her. In addition, she has gained a new, more expansive view of God because she and her husband sold their house and relocated to the great outdoors.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her memoir *Our Lady of Hot Messes*, she concluded, “We moved to raw land...which means there's no electricity, no water. We've had to build from scratch, and my current understanding of God is so much bigger than a fairy in the sky who makes your wishes come true.

“There's no light pollution out here, so when I look up at the sky and see the stars, I'm in awe. The sunset, the sunrise, the weather patterns. It's so much different than living in a city...I can see the allness of God and how much everything He creates is beautiful and how much He delights in that beauty. That includes us. So, the person I can't stand, God finds delightful and beautiful. That's really changed how I see Him now.”

Give thanks to the God of heaven, for His steadfast love endures forever. (Psalm 136:26)

Fill me with awe at Your creation and love, Father.

One Mother's Determination

When Claudia Blanco's seven-year-old daughter Claudita was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the prospects appeared to be grim. Even though it was 1994, their local hospital in Culiacan, Mexico, didn't have the resources to treat children with cancer.

Claudita went on to receive lifesaving treatment at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in the USA. In gratitude to God, Claudia started volunteering at their local children's hospital back in Culiacan. One day, she heard a little girl screaming. Claudia learned that because the hospital didn't have an anesthesia machine, they performed bone marrow aspirations without any painkillers. This was too much for Claudia to bear, and she grew determined to raise money for the hospital.

She still resisted, however, because asking for money embarrassed Claudia. As recalled in *St. Jude Inspire* magazine, a priest told Claudia that not to ask "was a lack of humility." This comment emboldened Claudia, who went on to raise funds that have made a major difference in improving the hospital.

Ask, and it will be given you. (Matthew 7:7)

Creator, ease the suffering of children enduring cancer, and help us to make a positive difference for them.

The World's Oldest Practicing Doctor

Dr. Howard Tucker, the world's oldest practicing physician at age 100, admits that genes and good luck might have something to do with his longevity. But he believes that certain choices he's made in his life have helped him, too.

The neurologist from Cleveland, Ohio, began practicing medicine in 1947. In an essay for *CNBC.com*, he wrote, "If you're blessed to have a career you enjoy and are still able to work, consider delaying retirement. Many people who retire and become inactive in their day-to-day routine are at an increased risk of cognitive decline."

Dr. Tucker stayed active into his late 80s by "swimming, jogging, hiking, and skiing." Nowadays, he walks three miles a day on his treadmill, with *Turner Classic Movies* playing in the background to prevent boredom.

Dr. Tucker also follows a path of moderation in his diet. He enjoys the occasional martini and strip steak, but makes sure to eat healthy in general. Finally, he not only enjoys teaching medical students, but learning from them as well.

Moses was 120 years old when he died...his vigor had not abated. (Deuteronomy 34:7)

Help me age well both physically and spiritually, Lord.

Lifting Weights and Spirits

Powerlifting champion Javeno McLean does more than lift heavy weights; he bolsters the spirits of those who are disabled and elderly.

As reported by *Upworthy.com*, the 36-year-old father of two achieved his dream of success in the fitness world, so he wanted to do something to help others. He explained, “I’m from poverty... My family taught me when I was young, when I’m in a position to give without taking, that’s what I’m gonna do.”

The powerlifter then opened up “J7 Health Center, in Manchester, United Kingdom, to specifically train individuals with disabilities... Currently, he is training 15 disabled children and around 30 elderly adults.”

One of McLean’s trainees is 11-year-old Marley Felton, who has cerebral palsy and gets around in a wheelchair. Teaching Marley how to stand up from his wheelchair and hold a ball over his head has improved the youngster’s physical and emotional well-being. Marley’s mom calls McLean “an incredible guy with a huge heart.”

He...strengthens the powerless. (Isaiah 40:29)

Raise up champions for the disabled, Creator.

Police Officer Forgives Drunk Driver

Suffolk County, New York Police Officer Timothy Thrane suffered serious injuries and spent weeks in a coma after being hit by a drunk driver in November 2021.

Despite this life-threatening incident, Thrane found it in his heart to forgive the driver, helping to reduce the man's sentence and give him a second chance. "I realize how precious life is, so I am going to make the best out of mine," Thrane said during the trial of 38-year-old William Petersohn. "I sincerely hope you do the same."

As reported by *CBS News*, due to Thrane's forgiveness, Petersohn's sentence was greatly reduced from several years in jail to six months imprisonment and five years' probation. The judge commended Thrane's ability to forgive.

Now, Thrane, a husband and father of three, remains on the road to recovery, but he hopes to do the job he loves and be a cop again.

Have you sinned my child? Do so no more, but ask forgiveness for your past sins. (Sirach 21:1)

Merciful Lord, as You forgive me for my sins, may I have the strength to forgive those who do me wrong.

Will We Learn?

In addition to his longtime job as a stage manager for *ABC's Good Morning America*, Eddie Luisi is also a church musician and songwriter.

Years ago, he wrote a song called "Will We Learn?" which he finally recorded in Nashville in 2022 as part of The Grove Jesus Music project.

The song offers some thought-provoking spiritual observations and questions, so here is an excerpt:

"We are sisters and brothers./We are children of the world./We are united in God's family./We can learn to live in peace..."

"We can visit the prison./We can take care of the ill./We can feed those who hunger./We can learn to live in peace."

"Will we learn to love one another?/Will we learn to live in harmony?/Will we learn to walk with each other?/Will we learn to live in peace?"

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. (John 13:34)

Light of the World, teach us to live in peace with one another and to love selflessly.

Remember Us with Smiles, Part 1

For co-authors Gary and Grace Jansen, their Christopher Award-winning children's book *Remember Us with Smiles* was inspired by their extraordinary ordinary experiences of family life with their two sons.

This was especially important to Gary, who revealed to The Christophers that while his parents were wonderful people and hard workers, there was also a lot of “brokenness” in his family when he was growing up. Creating fun and memorable experiences with his kids became one of his goals as a dad.

Sometimes, those experiences were simply eating French fries together on a park bench. Other times, it was unique, such as being chased by a skunk while playing miniature golf.

“For me, memory has a spiritual importance to it,” Gary explained. “The work that I do, [as] a writer and as an editor, it’s always trying to find practical ways of expanding our spirituality...We all have plenty of bad memories we can focus on, but accentuating the positive and looking back—for me and for our family, too—is a deeply spiritual experience.”

**The memory of me is sweeter than honey.
(Sirach 24:20)**

Guide me in creating good memories with my family and friends, God.

Remember Us with Smiles, Part 2

The spirituality in the Christopher Award-winning children's book *Remember Us with Smiles* is more implicit than overt, but it is there. Co-author Gary Jansen discussed his own journey of faith with The Christophers, noting, "Years ago, a friend invited me to go on an Ignatian retreat, and I didn't know anything about St. Ignatius. I grew up Catholic and went to Catholic school but... faith wasn't a big part of my life."

"[On that retreat]," Gary continued, "that's when I got my first introduction to St. Ignatius and this idea of finding God in all things. So, we try to be good Catholics. We pray before meals and go to church and all of that...And there's a prayer called The Examen where you can examine your life or your day, and you focus on events that happened and where God was."

Gary, therefore, sees God's inherent presence in the book and hopes that readers, both parents and children, are drawn in by its heartwarming appeal: "If we can get people to cry, but in a good way, that was our objective...We want the book to open up people's hearts and for them to have an emotional experience and connect with the people that they love."

**[Children] are a heritage from the Lord.
(Psalm 127:3)**

I welcome You into my family's life, Creator.

How Little Children Teach Us to Pray

Theresa Civantos Barber was a new assistant at The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium in Scottsdale, Arizona. The program offers a Montessori approach to teaching children about God. But Barber realized that adults can also learn a lot from how little children pray.

As Hurricane Ian raged through Florida, one child knelt down, folded her hands in prayer, and told Barber, “I need to pray for the people in Florida. There’s a really bad hurricane.” This stunned Barber. Even though she was following the news closely and had family and friends in Florida, she had not thought to pray.

Writing at *Aleteia.org*, Barber explained, “I can’t express what a feeling of wonder comes with witnessing a little child deep in prayer. They seem to have a simple, innate sense of connection to God that many adults have lost. I could feel God’s presence there with us.”

It truly was a moment of reflection for the teacher to learn from her students, witnessing “these beautiful moments of encounter and connection between their souls and God.”

A little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:6)

Jesus, help me to learn from the innocence of youth.

Addiction and Recovery for MLB Veteran

During the early 1970s, Major League Baseball pitcher Michael Jackson showed promise in his work with the Phillies, Cardinals, Royals, and Indians. But because of his addiction issues, his career was destroyed, and he ended up unemployed and homeless.

Jackson found healing and recovery at a substance abuse treatment facility called Straight and Narrow, which is run by the Catholic Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey. In time, he became a counselor there, helping others through their own addictions.

In 2023, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Jackson received the Key to the City in recognition of his work. Steve Howe, the Deputy Director of the Department of Public Works, said, “We all owe him gratitude because he still continues every day to help people.”

Jackson told *WABC-TV*, “Receiving this Key to the City was totally a surprise to me. In all sincerity, walk with God, the maker and giver of all good and perfect gifts, because what I went through, He was preparing His purpose for me.”

Let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love. (1 Thessalonians 5:8)

Help addicts choose healing and recovery, Savior.

Centenarian's Tips for a Long, Healthy Life

Vincent Dransfield, age 109, feels more vital than people half his age. He still resides independently in his house of more than 70 years in Little Falls, New Jersey, and is a proud father, grandfather, and now great-grandfather of seven. Having lived a full life, Dransfield has tips to offer the youngsters of today:

- **Spend time doing what you love.** Vincent volunteered for more than 80 years at his local fire department. According to *Today.com*, after the loss of his wife of 54 years, it was these firehouse friendships that truly “kept him going.”
- **Milk does a body good.** Starting at age 15, Dransfield worked at a dairy farm to help his family during the Great Depression—and he hasn’t stopped drinking milk since!
- **Stay active.** While Vincent never frequented a gym, he was always on the move responding to all those “fire alarms.”
- **It’s never too late to fix a bad habit.** Vincent smoked for 20 years before he quit and has never lit up since.
- **Stay positive.**

**Even to your old age I...will carry you.
(Isaiah 46:4)**

Messiah, may we strive to live every day to the fullest.

Meeting God in the Darkness, Part 1

A nervous breakdown was not something Juanita Campbell Rasmus saw coming, but it knocked her out just the same. The copastor of St. John's United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, found herself sleeping 18 to 20 hours a day for weeks.

After seeing a psychiatrist, Rasmus learned she was suffering a “major depressive episode.” The doctor prescribed medication and told her she would start noticing a change for the better in six weeks.

As Rasmus recalled at *ChristianityToday.com*, she had always found strength in prayer and studying the Bible, but now she found it difficult to focus. Finally, after six weeks of meds and therapy, she heard God say to her, “I’ll give you the treasures out of the darkness.”

Rasmus was not immediately healed. She still struggled day-to-day. But those words gave her hope. And after one year, she was ready to return to her love of Scripture. But this time, she would delve into an ancient practice that would bring it alive for her in a new way. More tomorrow...

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:5)

Reveal Your light to me in times of darkness, Christ.

Meeting God in the Darkness, Part 2

One year after enduring the darkness of a nervous breakdown, medication and therapy finally got Methodist pastor Juanita Campbell Rasmus back to a place where she could focus on Scripture again. For the first time in her life, she tried “lectio divina, an ancient practice of reading and contemplating Scripture,” she recalled at *ChristianityToday.com*.

Rasmus writes, “I revisited the truth that embracing even small portions of Scripture can help us see what God sees; it can cultivate within us courage, patience, wisdom, and love to respond to life’s difficulties, tragedies, and even celebrations in ways that promote the kingdom of God.

“During that season, the Word was marinating in me...But let me be clear: It took time. The long periods of silence and solitude I experienced, though painful, created space for God to speak to me and for me to hear God speak.

“Thankfully that period in my life has come and gone, but the one thing I can tell you for certain is that God’s Word...remains a constant source of joy, hope, wisdom, comfort, and outright love for me.”

**The word of God is living and active.
(Hebrews 4:12)**

May Your Word heal and guide me, Creator.

From Egypt to New York

Maria Keddis may have been born in Cairo, Egypt, but it was at St. John's University in Queens, New York, where she truly felt at home. Because Maria's parents are Coptic Christians, a minority faith in Egypt, they faced discrimination in their native country. Maria told *St. John's Magazine*, "It was hard for my mom [a pediatrician], who was denied jobs because she was Coptic or because she was a woman."

The Keddis family moved to Vancouver in 2015, so Maria became a Canadian citizen. In 2019, when the time came to attend college, Maria chose St. John's because she felt drawn to New York City and all it offered, including the diversity of an international student population.

In 2023, Maria earned her degree in Communications and plans to remain in New York to both further her education and seek employment. She said, "St. John's has given me such an opportunity. I was just thinking of myself in my first year versus the person I am now. There is such a difference. I have grown closer to God, and I have learned so much."

**As in one body we have many members...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ.
(Romans 12:4-5)**

*May we learn from our diversity of cultures,
Creator.*