

in a

Word

Should a woman raise a
child by herself?
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**CHILDREN STILL NEED
A MOTHER AND FATHER**

Photo by Father Pawlicki, SVD



Reflections on Life! Who will replace us?

Rev. Jerome LeDoux, S.V.D., syndicated columnist

The stately mountains outside Denver were a welcome contrast to the mid-summer heat and humidity of Houston, and Michael Fritzen was enjoying every minute of it. Rocky Mountain National Park's hiking trails beckoned to him.

Such vigorous exercise is great, especially for a hardworking Pastor in need of a break from building a new church and from all the stresses of a large urban parish.

However, hypertension, the silent killer, and high cholesterol creating blocked arteries had become life-threatening.

The exertion of hiking, coupled with the pulmonary strain of mile-high thin air, put too much stress on a circulatory system stressed out by hypertension and leaping cholesterol.

"A catastrophic coronary event," the doctor called it, which killed Michael very quickly despite CPR from passing hikers, stunning the parishioners and friends of the vibrant, ever-intense, motivated, pile-driving, efficient pastor.

Eternally curious about people and their activities, Michael never heard a conversation he was not attracted to and never met anyone whose pedigree and life he did not explore.

Numerous reflections flood our minds when a relatively young person full of the joy *do vivere* leaves us so suddenly. Somehow, such a person does not appear to be a candidate for critical illness, let alone death. Yes, 57 is still young.

Even as I write, the Gospel reading from today's Mass hangs in my memory from this morning's worship, dredging up the troubling problem of rapid decline in available priests:

"The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. So ask the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest" (Matthew 9:36—30).

Other religious denominations, for the most part, seem to have far less of a problem finding people to answer the Master's call to ministry, and that would appear to be usually connected with their freedom to marry and rear a family.

Which causes many Catholics to long for a return to the olden days when Paul was writing to Timothy, advising him that a bishop "must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled" (1 Timothy 3:2).

A pipe dream, to be sure. In today's landscape of the Church, even though many men, younger and older, state without blinking that they would gladly become priests if given the option to marry and have their own family.

Apart from this pipe dream, where do we turn? To prayer, obviously, as we just quoted Jesus: "Ask the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

But we know God expects much more of us than prayer, although we must always keep our hotline with God. Could it be that there are tiny sparks all around us which must be seized and combined to ignite a fire and then a conflagration?

There is the spark of 6-year-old Jacquan who mimics everything I say and do during Sunday Mass, then repeats it all every night before he turns in. Unprompted, he sings, prays, preaches, "says Mass" and declares he will be a priest.

Curiously, there are the small boys who regularly play in our parking lot, sometimes vandalizing windows and cars. They were galvanized when we joined hands and prayed together.

No doubt, we adults need to seek our children out often, hold hands and pray for ourselves and for each other.

The Myth of Single Mothers

THE FAMILY. It is still the most important unit for our American society. It must be strengthened and seen as valuable.

These ideas have been uttered to countless generations since the inception of the world. Ancient Greeks and Romans expressed these notions. Our own country has spoken strongly about the need to strengthen family values, not only in this last year of the century, but since our foundation in 1776.

Yet, through it all, some of the most fundamental supports of the family are seldom addressed. A new notion that aims at the core of the family is the idea that a woman can raise a child by herself. Sure it's possible and many do. Yet, how unfortunate it is for the child and the woman as well.

A recent Oprah show discussed the problems a few mothers were having with their teen age daughters. An interesting show but one filled with a lot of assumptions and glaring issues not addressed. As one person who watched the show said ..."where is mention of the father in raising these young girls?" The word "father" was never uttered by any of the mothers or Oprah herself. **How important it is for a child to have both mother and father living in a Christian marriage!**

Unfortunately, the family structure itself has been tragically devalued by society and its acceptance of pre-marital sex and a constant increase in unwed mothers. We have been de-sensitized on a day to day basis by this phenomenon and we fail to raise our daughters and sons to know that **"your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own"**. (1 Corinthians 6:19)



How can we expect a woman to be both mother and father? Yet it seems America is fast moving to the idea that it can be done and that this is the norm. On the contrary, **our children need both parents! There is something a father can bring a child that a woman cannot. Like it or not we need both male and female guides to assist us.**

"Making a baby" is no small responsibility. A child needs guidance in so many ways and if they are not presented with the proper models what will happen to them? A child's lack of self worth, his unfulfilled need to male bond, and feelings of abandonment are only a few problems the child will face.

Is selfishness too prevalent in our American society? Is personal gratification the ideal? Yet this seems to be the reason for so many having children. Responsibility for the raising of the child has to be both parents. If it takes two to create a child then two should be important in

the raising of that child.

We train our children to be computer savvy, to be engineers, drive a car, etc. But are we training them to accept responsibility for what they create? Do we provide them with the role models they need? Does our philosophy of life seem to say life is cheap? Do we teach them the morality of their actions?

If our families are to be strong, should we not face the hard questions? **Ought we not address these ideas of selfishness and personal gratification as the core of our problems?**

in a word or two

Congratulations to Franciscan Fr. James E. Goode, OFM, who was re-elected president of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus this summer in Philadelphia. Also elected is Divine Word Fr. Chester Smith, SVD as vice-president. Board members include Charlotte diocese Deacon Curtis Todd, vice chancellor; Redemptorist pastor Fr. Glenn Parker, CSSR; Chicago pastor Fr. David Jones; and Benedictine historian Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB.

The Josephite African American History and Heritage calendar, Millennium 2000, can now be ordered through the Josephite Pastoral Center. The calendar boasts vibrant African artwork for each month and is a great gift for parishioners and family. For ordering, contact:

Josephite Pastoral Center
1200 Varnum St., NE
Washington, DC 20017
(202) 526.9270

Join the Millennium Pilgrimage to Africa tour hosted by Fr. Clarence Williams, CPPS, PhD. Pilgrims will depart on June 25, 2000 from New York City and fly to Dakar, Senegal where they will visit open-air markets, the Ifam Museum and the original slave island of Goree among other sites. On to the Ivory Coast, pilgrims will experience a land rich in culture, its beautiful people and exotic foods. Tour costs \$2995. For more information, contact:

Fr. Clarence Williams, CPPS, PhD
11430 Morang Dr.
Detroit, MI 48224
Tel. (313) 521.7777
Fax (313) 521.7766

"Hush, Hush! Somebody's Calling My Name - A Call to Scripture", is the theme of the African American Ministry Annual Day of Reflection at the St. Alphonse Center in Wilson, NC.

The event will be held on November 13, 1999 and will include storytelling from the bible, workshops and worship services. Hosted by the Diocese of Raleigh, the event's speaker is Mr. Michael Howard, founder of Eat the Scroll Ministry based in Washington, DC. For more information, contact:

African American Ministry and Evangelization
810 Reid St. E
Wilson, NC 27893-5431
(252) 243.7592

It's no surprise that our country is changing and multiculturalism is the direction of that change. Between 1950 and 1998 the number of Hispanics increased from 4 million to 30.5 million. This growth of 26.5 million represents an increase of more than 650%. From 1950 to 1998, Hispanics have accounted for approximately 23% of the country's population growth.

Fr. Thomas DiFolco, pastor of St. Martin de Porres and St. Agnes parishes in Cincinnati, OH will be leading The Jubilee Pilgrimage to the Holy Land Of Our Lord January 24 through February 2, 2000. Pilgrims will fly from Cincinnati to Tel Aviv, spend 8 nights in first class hotels, breakfast and dinner daily, travel by land in deluxe motorcoach and visit the important sites of our Lord's birth and death. Tour costs \$2,160 per person for double occupancy. For more information and for a detailed brochure, contact Fr. DiFolco at 513.554.4010 or Tekton Ministries (toll free) at 888.850.6279.

Did you know that Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable, a Roman Catholic Black man from St. Marc, Haiti, founded the city of Chicago?

The first Bishop Joseph Francis Scholarship Fund Dinner will be held on November 6, 1999 at Xavier University of Louisiana. This annual event is sponsored by the Divine Word Missionaries to raise money for the scholarship fund which will support the development of lay leadership in the parishes and ministries of the Southern Province. For contributions or reservations, contact:

Father Bob Kelly, SVD
199 Seminary Dr.
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
(228) 467.6414

The Ohio Commission of African American Catholics is having its Bi-Annual Convocation September 24-25, 1999. Titled Keys to open wide the door the Conference will feature noted speakers, symbolic ritual actions.

For more information contact 1-614-475-6787. Or got to [web site at http://members.aol.com/clmbsconv/page/index1.htm](http://members.aol.com/clmbsconv/page/index1.htm)

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 5,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among blacks in the southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center.

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