

# The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

The Joy of Family Life  
Celebrating 50 Years of *Humanae Vitae*



SUMMER 2018

# The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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## The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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### **Missionaries of the Holy Family (MSF)**

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Danville, Illinois.

# Provincial Perspective

Dear Family,

As we move through the summer months, I hope all is going well for you in spite of all that is happening in our society and in our world. And we wonder where God is. Remember: He promised to be with us always, and His Spirit in us makes Him present by our words and actions. Jesus told us to love God with all our being and our neighbor as ourselves. **It sounds so easy, doesn't it?**

We live in a country celebrating our freedoms. One of those freedoms is freedom of religion. It is a principle that supports our freedom as an individual or community to manifest our belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. Our actions and words are to be filled with Christ-like love, goodness, and a sense of justice if we call ourselves followers of Christ. Let us open ourselves to His Spirit in our daily lives.

Summertime gives us the opportunity to relax, refresh ourselves, take vacation time, and keep up with our daily tasks. Please make time for God because He is always there for us.

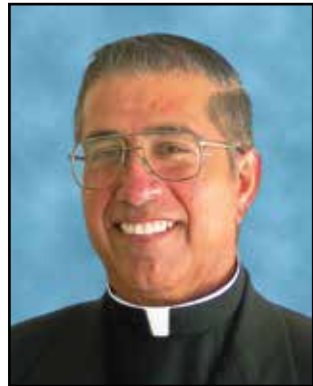
**Remember, God never goes on vacation; He never leaves us.**

May you and your family have a joyful and relaxing summer, and thank you for everything!

Sincerely in the Holy Family, I am

*Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F.*

Very Reverend Philip Sosa, M.S.F.  
Provincial Superior



*Very Rev. Philip Sosa, M.S.F.*

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## An Invitation

# The Family Forever Society

by Very Reverend Philip Sosa, M.S.F.

What is the Family Forever Society? It's very simple! Members of this special society are people who have remembered the Missionaries of the Holy Family in their wills or estate plans. Their bequests are called Legacy Gifts.

While most Legacy Gifts are made with the intention of the Missionaries of the Holy Family receiving benefits in the future, some Legacy Gifts are realized in the present. Gifts of securities or stock, real estate, and other tangible property are usually transferred before December 31 of any year so the benefactor can realize tax breaks for charitable donations.

Most Legacy Gifts are used as principal for our Retirement Trust Fund. While we do have a modest trust fund to help cover the rising cost of healthcare needed by the elderly and disabled members of our religious community, it is currently under funded.

**Please consider joining our Family Forever Society.** To receive a free booklet on preparing your will, please send your request to me at 3014 Oregon Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63118, or call me at 1-888-484-9945. If you are remembering us in your will, please remember us as: *Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family - North American Province.*

Our Holy Family priests and brothers will always hold you and your loved ones in prayer. Isn't that what a Family is supposed to do? Thank you and God bless you... *forever.*



Forever Yours in the Holy Family,

*Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F.*

Very Reverend Philip Sosa, M.S.F.  
Provincial Superior, North American Province



## A PROPHECY FULFILLED

# A Voice Crying in the Wilderness: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*

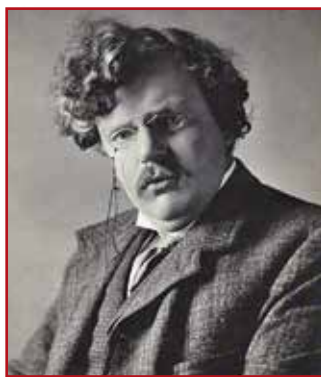
by Father Seán Connolly

**Editor's Note:** The following excerpts are taken from a longer article published in the online news magazine, ©*The Catholic World Report*, on 23 May 2018, about the prophetic encyclical written by Blessed Pope Paul VI, dated 25 July 1968. *Humanae Vitae* is Latin for “On Human Life.” Please visit the magazine’s website at [www.catholicworldreport.com](http://www.catholicworldreport.com).

Pope Paul VI stood firm in the midst of the moral permissiveness which came under the guise of “freedom” in the 1960s, and boldly proclaimed the truth of married love. Later this year, Blessed Paul VI will be raised to the altars as a saint. The canonization is expected to take place in late October at the close of a meeting of the Synod of Bishops. It is fitting that his canonization is taking place this year, which marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what Pope Paul is perhaps best known for — his controversial encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

This significant document reaffirms the Church’s condemnation of artificial “birth control”— a misnamed concept, because as G.K. Chesterton cleverly puts it, “*what is quaintly called Birth Control... is in fact, of course, a scheme for preventing birth in order to escape control.*” (The Well and the Shallows, in vol. 3 of The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton, Ignatius Press)

Not only is this encyclical clarifying, it has proven to be prophetic. The world did not listen to Pope Paul in 1968, and the stark warnings he gave about what the widespread acceptance of contraception would mean for society have all come to pass. And now, a half-century later, the world no longer remembers what he even said in the



G. K. Chesterton

first place. We would do well to honor the memory of this soon-to-be-sainted

pontiff by using this anniversary year to recall and boldly proclaim his oft-neglected message on the nature, purpose, and dignity of married love.

### **Prophecies of *Humanae Vitae***

In *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI asserts that the widespread use of contraception would “lead to conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality.” No one can deny that 50 years later there has been a sweeping decline in morality throughout the world. The vast increases in divorce and children born out of wedlock, the tragedy of abortion being procured on a horrifying scale, and the perversion that pervades contemporary popular culture all testify to this fact.

The encyclical also foretold how the use of contraception would be detrimental to conjugal love. Pope Paul argued that contraception would ultimately lead to a loss of respect for the woman, where “her physical and psychological equilibrium” would no longer be cared for as she would be considered “a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment and no longer as (her husband’s) respected and beloved companion.”

All persons have an innate dignity



as beings created in the image and likeness of God. The Church’s teaching that the use of artificial contraception is an intrinsic evil that can never be accepted is designed, in part, to protect this understanding of the dignity of the human person. That dignity is violated when spouses use each other’s bodies as mere objects for their own gratification by obstructing the natural end of their sexual union. By this act, they display a lack of commitment and authentic love for one another and frustrate the ultimate purposes of their marital union, which are their mutual good and bringing children into the world.

Pope Paul also warned that the widespread acceptance and even celebration of contraception would place a “dangerous weapon... in the hands of those public authorities who take no heed of moral exigencies.” This has certainly come to pass as the prevailing wisdom identifies overpopulation as the primary cause of poverty. As a result, it is the policy of many governments to control population growth through “family-planning programs.”

What this means, of course, is the widespread distribution of contra-

ceptives, opportunities for sterilization procedures, and abortion (even forced abortions, in the case of China). Countries implementing birth control practices are given preferential access to resources from first-world governments and charitable agencies, forcing the Catholic poor into the indignity of exchanging their consciences for money. Contrary to the prevailing wisdom, the plain truth is that there is an actual problem of under-population in the West. Most Western nations have a birthrate that is under 2.1, which is not enough to sustain a given society.

The final warning of this prophetic document was that contraception would lead man to think he has unlimited dominion over his own body. God's will has been replaced with the selfish desire of the individual. Many go so far as to alter their own physical make-up by undergoing sterilization procedures. The emergence of the practice of in vitro fertilization and the transgender movement are not at all unrelated to this. In each of those cases, God's dominion over the natural order is obstructed to suit one's own desire.

### **Message of *Humanae Vitae***

Today, the most transient and material things of this world — clothes,

cars, expensive vacations — are more desired than the joy of children. Our secular world has forgotten God and the greatest blessing he gives to any family — new life.



Pope Paul VI stood firm in the midst of the moral permissiveness which came under the guise of “freedom” in the 1960s and boldly proclaimed the truth of married love. But his message was a like a voice crying out in the wilderness. It is the cause of great controversy, and is despised and rejected. But what, ultimately, is the message of *Humanae Vitae*?

Put very briefly: that the long and uncomplicated tradition of a man and a woman falling in love, getting married, and having children is a good thing.



That the family is the most important unit of society. And that the natural order of all this should be respected. That this should be the subject of controversy shows how society has lost its way. May the message of the soon-to-be Pope Saint Paul VI, in *Humanae Vitae*, help us to find it again.

[Father Seán Connolly, author of this article, is a priest of the Archdiocese of New York. He currently serves as parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Our Lady Parish in Tuckahoe, New York.] [+JM+](#)



## CONFRONTING EVIL

### Negative Consequences of Contraception

by Father Jim Beegan, M.S.F.

The Catholic Church has never taught that wives are to have as many children as possible. There are natural, non-contraceptive ways through which Catholic couples are permitted to moderate their number of offspring.



In 1968, Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, Latin for “On Human Life.” This encyclical explains the opposition of the Catholic Church to the use of artificial contraception. Incidentally, many birth control pills present a serious problem because they work as abortifacients, which usually causes the uterus to reject a fertilized egg.

According to Church teaching, a fertilized egg is an embryo and, therefore, a human person.

The Church also condemns artificial contraception because it undermines the meaning and purpose of the sexual act. Every sexual act is intended

by God to be directed toward two ends. The first end is the love and intimate union between a husband and wife. The second end is the conception of another human being.

The sexual act is moral and acceptable in the eyes of God even if the wife does not conceive. But, there must be no man-made obstacles, such as contra-

ceptives, which prevent conception. A married woman who is past the age of childbearing still has the right to engage in a normal sexual relationship with her husband.

**Children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3).** However, they are not a “natural right,” which means married couples cannot use technologies that try to unnaturally create life, either.



Whenever marital love and life (procreation) are separated, then sex becomes an end in itself rather than a means to an end. In such a case, both husband and wife are more likely to pursue their own self-interests and ignore the needs of their spouse.

Contraception also has some serious, negative social consequences. Up until 1930, everyone in the United States knew that the population of young people would outnumber older people in society. There would be a constant stream of young workers entering the labor force. These new, young workers would replace the older workers who were opting for retirement, and they would support the rising cost of social security,

Medicare, and various social programs.

This is not happening in recent times. The number of elderly in our society has grown significantly because of advances in medical care. At the same time, however, due to the increased acceptance of birth control, the number of young people has declined. The result is that the smaller, younger population has fewer resources and the elderly have more needs.

According to the United Nations, the birth rate among First World, industrialized nations has decreased so rapidly that the birth rate is not sufficient to replace the current generation, especially in Europe. **+JM+**

## *Around The Province...*



Some members of the Missionaries of the Holy Family gathered after daily Mass at the Chapter Meeting in April 2018 in San Antonio, Texas.



# I am the Prodigal Son

by Ryan Jones

Growing up Catholic for me was a very big part of my life, and it had a huge impact on my desire to discern the priesthood. The earliest time I can remember thinking about the priesthood was second grade. So, growing up, I would say that I always felt a call to the priesthood. As a kid, I would often invite my family to our basement and my mismatched chapel for Mass, playing the part of the priest. This was one of my favorite past times, which I can say led me to love the Sacred Liturgy. I don't know what it was exactly, but I was always drawn to the ritual and the reverence of the liturgy.

Even before entering school, I remember going with my grandma to daily Mass, which continued into my grade school years. Both my mother and my grandma were very supportive and encouraging of my early discernment. They would chauffeur me around to the various church activities I was joining, including altar serving, youth choir, and Junior Legion of Mary. They

would also take me to adult faith studies with them (some I ended up leading!). They even encouraged me to study piano, which eventually led

me to becoming a church organist. I am so happy to be playing the organ at Saint Wenceslaus Church in Saint Louis, Missouri where the Missionaries of the Holy Family have their provincial office. Father Jim Wasser, M.S.F. is the parish pastor.



Ryan in youth ministry.

But before I get too far into my discernment process, I feel I should mention my family. I like to describe my family life as that of a starfish, because when you ask me how many siblings I have, I don't know how many fingers to hold up. I am my mother's only biological child, but I have over 10 siblings across Missouri, the United States, and the world; some of them are half, step, adopted, foster, and foreign exchange brothers and sisters. I was raised from early childhood by my mother after my father passed away.

The overall best way to describe my childhood faith into my early teen years was that I loved God and I loved my

faith. I always wanted to learn more and more about that unending wealth of knowledge, the treasures of wisdom found in the Catholic Church. A major experience that gave me the ability to grow in my faith and love for God was my time at the Apostolate for Family Consecration (AFC). When I was in seventh grade, I was first introduced to the AFC's Catholic Family Land. For me, it was my home away from home every summer. I would see my friends each year from all over the country, who were just as on fire for the faith as I was. My involvement with the AFC led to my family getting involved with the Missouri Holy Family Fest, a smaller version of the AFC's Catholic Family Land.

Around this same time, unfortunately, my faith began to waver. As I was coming to the end of high school, I started listening to the influences of the world saying that I could not be loved by God the way that I always thought I was. These influences began to impact my faith life, causing me to doubt God's love for me and His plan for my life. As my faith diminished, so did my identity as a Catholic and a Child of God, and I lived out my col-

lege years searching for God's love in worldly things.

After seven years of uncertainty of who I was and how God fit into my life, He eventually led me back to Himself. During those seven years, I pursued and earned both a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts in Technical Theatre, which took me from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, across the country to Washington, Nebraska, Southern Illinois, Chicago, and eventually to Detroit. While in Detroit,

I began to feel God calling me back to Himself. It took my entire world that I had built to crumble to the ground before I realized He had never left me. Rather, it was I who made the mistake and left Him.

This was the first time in a while that I started to take my faith seriously again. As I went and received the sacraments, I knew God would lead me back to the discernment I left all those years ago. Part of me didn't want to pursue this path, feeling I had messed it up too much in the past, but I eventually fell down in prayer one day and said, *"Lord, if this is where you have called me, show me the way. I am tired of*



Ryan and his first car.



Ryan at the March for Life in Washington, DC.

trying to figure it out on my own.” Thankfully, where I am now, He seems to have answered that prayer.

Later that same summer,

I was attending the Missouri Holy Family Fest and that is when I met the Missionaries of the Holy Family (MSF) for the first time. I spent an entire evening speaking with Father Jim Wasser, M.S.F, who was helping with the sacraments for the weekend, hearing about his work and his journey as a priest. The more he spoke about the MSF, the more they peaked my curiosity. Well, sometimes God is mysterious in His workings. The same priest that I met that weekend, also happened to be the MSF Vocation Director! I took this as a sign to continue the conversation with them. After a few more visits, many more conversations, and a lot more prayer, I knew God wanted me to pursue the priesthood in discernment with the Missionaries of the Holy Family.



Ryan today. Back row, third from right.

Before being able to enter, I have one last journey to take, my work with the Labouré Society. I was led to Labouré due to my out-

standing student loan debt from my previous degrees. Like so many other young men and women in the United States discerning a call to the religious life, I have to be totally debt free before entering formation with the MSF. I thank God daily for leading me to religious life, but also for providing a way to overcome my last obstacle by fundraising through the Labouré Society to pay off my student loan debt.

If you know someone discerning the call, but is blocked like I was due to school debt, please direct them to The Labouré Society, (651) 212-4977 and [www.labouresociety.org](http://www.labouresociety.org). It is a pity that one should lose his or her vocation due to debt because the fulfillment of a vocation to the priesthood or religious life is priceless. God bless your family!

+jMj+

*Thank You & God Bless You, to everyone who made a financial gift to date in 2018. We, the priests and brothers of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, extend our deep gratitude to all our benefactors. You are remembered in our prayers.*

# Men of God: Religious Forever

In this Year of Our Lord 2018, four priests and one brother of the Missionaries of the Holy Family are celebrating anniversaries of their ordination (priests) and perpetual vows (brother).

We thank God for our priests and brothers, and we beseech Him to send us many more. If you would like to send a Tribute Gift in honor of one or more of these Men of God, please send it to 3014 Oregon Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118. Thank you and God bless your family!



Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F.  
50 years



Br. Rolland Kapsner, M.S.F.  
45 years



Fr. Andrea Spatafora, M.S.F.  
35 years



Fr. Camillo Botello, M.S.F.  
15 years



Fr. Peter Prasetyo, M.S.F.  
10 years

## Do You Want More Holy Priests?

Please join the *Holy Family Circle* and help foster vocations to the priesthood! Find your level of joyful giving below, complete the form, and mail it or a copy to 3014 Oregon Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118.

<b>Giving Level</b>	Associate ..... up to \$49 per month	Patriarch/Matriarch
<b>Examples:</b>	Samaritan ..... \$50 per month	\$10,000 annual gift
	Companion ..... \$100 per month	
	Disciple ..... \$300 per month	
	Apostle ..... \$600 per month	

### My Contact Information:

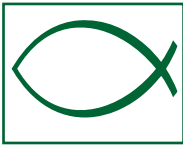
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

My Level of Joyful Giving per month: \_\_\_\_\_



## A PROFILE OF SERVICE

# Churchgoers Devote Time for Love & Giving

by Cristina M. Garcia at *The Monitor*

Renata Coronado scoured the dozens of toys arranged on a table, meticulously looking for the perfect one. Meanwhile, three boys played with their new lightsabers in the back of Sandra Posadas' home as she gathered merry

ioners. Among them was Ron Daigle, a Winter Texan from Winnipeg, Canada who attends Saint Joseph's Catholic Church. *"I'm just amazed at the Rio Grande Valley. The people are so friendly and so generous,"* Daigle said.



Renata Coronado picks out a Play-Doh set on Saturday, December 23, 2017 in the La Frontera colonia.

children in her yard Saturday morning.

In the spirit of Christmas, parishioners at Saint Joseph's Catholic Church and Father Eka Yuantoro, a Missionaries of the Holy Family priest at the parish, delivered toys to children in the La Frontera colonia.

Posadas, who has been entrusted to lead and organize community members in La Frontera, said a prayer expressing gratitude for the gifts donated by parish-

Donations, including Christmas gifts, have been pouring into Saint Joseph's Catholic Church on Salinas Boulevard in Donna, Texas. *"There are children who were not able or cannot receive a gift during this season, but I feel happy because they were able to receive a little bit during this time,"* Sanda Posadas said in Spanish.

Some of those receiving gifts and clothing Saturday attend Catholic churches,

but the volunteers and Father Yuantoro do not ask for religious affiliation. *"That doesn't matter because the church isn't just for the Catholics, but the church is for all,"* Father Yuantoro said.

The kindness Daigle spoke of encompassed more than just the Christmas giving. Groups of volunteers along with Father Yuantoro make weekly trips to colonias, handing out food, clothing, and necessities. They've gone as far as fixing a hole in the floor of a home to keep rats from entering.


*"How can they pray if we ask them to pray and they're hungry,"* Father Yuantoro said when asked about his motivation for mobilizing parishioners to give back. Father Yuantoro, who gathered some inspiration from Pablo Freire's pedagogy, said he believes in developing communities. Friere was a Brazilian philosopher and educator who may have been best known for his work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

In working to achieve that, Father Yuan-

toro consistently makes personal visits to colonias to identify the needs of families. *"It's not just the institution, but the church for me, the concept of the church is the social movement with the people,"* Father Yuantoro said.

Daigle lauded Father Yuantoro for his constant willingness to contribute selflessly to others. *"The prayers are nice, but it's the actions, and he's an action-oriented priest,"* Daigle said describing Father Yuantoro.

Once the toys were handed out, Father Yuantoro, Ron Daigle, and the other volunteers left the La Frontera colonia and headed to specific homes in other communities to deliver bags full of rice, beans, and other food. Meanwhile, Posadas's grandchild played with a stuffed bear he was given. *"God is present in every moment,"* Posadas said in Spanish.

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## Around The Province...

God is good! A Winter Texan donated a small mobile home to Father Eka Yuantoro, M.S.F. It will be used as an office for the many charitable projects that will take place north of Donna, Texas. Some of the Knights of Columbus helped with the installation.



# Party for Father Phil





# Party for Father Phil

*On Friday, 1 June 2018,  
Very Rev. Philip Sosa, M.S.F.,  
provincial superior of the  
Missionaries of the Holy Family,  
celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of ordination to the  
Priesthood of Jesus Christ at  
Saint Joseph Church  
in Donna, Texas.  
Congratulations, Father Phil!*



# Family Baptism



*In May 2018, the Fabick Family celebrated a baptism at Saint Wenceslaus Church in Saint Louis, Missouri. Very Rev. Philip Sosa, M.S.F., provincial superior, administered the sacrament.*



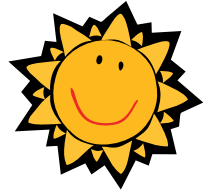
# Family Baptism



*May this  
Child of  
God be  
blessed and  
protected  
forever!*

Thursday,  
August 9 -  
Sunday,  
August 12, 2018

# The Apostolate for Family Consecration & The Missionaries of the Holy Family



## Invite Your Family for a Family Fest Missouri Weekend

### Theme: 50th Anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*



Eagle Hurst Ranch ♦ 240 Eagle Hurst Road ♦ Steelville, MO 65565  
[www.eaglehurstranch.com](http://www.eaglehurstranch.com)

Daily Mass, Rosary & Divine Mercy Chaplet - (*chapel on site*)

~ *Camp Pastor* ~

Father James Wasser, M.S.F.

~ *Youth Coordinator* ~

1 or 2

Dynamic Seminarians!



~ *Family-Friendly Rates* ~

- 1.) \$20 per adult (ages 16 & up) and \$5 per child (ages 3-15):  
\$100 maximum family fee.
- 2.) **Meals:** Feel free to bring your own food and snacks. There is plenty of refrigeration space, however, cooking facilities are minimal. A large BBQ area is available. You may purchase buffet-style meals for \$8.50 per adult per meal and \$5 per child per meal.
- 3.) **Lodging:** Camping/RVs, etc. – no charge (no hookups available). Cabin rental is \$80 per night, and there are 30 air-conditioned cabins with refrigerator (1 or 2 bedroom cabins).



~ *Family Activities* ~

Playgrounds ♦ Tennis ♦ Ping Pong ♦ Sports Equipment  
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Large Swimming Pool & Patio (*modest suits, please!*)

Tubes for the River ♦ and much more

(*Horseback riding not included; \$25 for an hour trail ride.*)

**For more information, call (636) 420-7917.**

**To register, call (314) 638-3382 or (800) 257-2624.**

(No registration fees; donations accepted. Please register by July 31!)



## *Around The Province...*



Parishioners at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Seguin, Texas helped to provide a family with a new home through Habitat for Humanity.

## *Around The Province...*



On Sunday, 27 May 2018, the Daughters of Saint Paul had a book sale at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Seguin, Texas.

## *Around The Province...*



Filled with the Holy Spirit! Meet the Confirmation Class of 2018 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Seguin, Texas.

## *Around The Province...*



Father Robert DeLong, M.S.F. gives a pep talk to the high school athletes in Donna, Texas.

## **Pieta Votive Candles**



This beautiful Pieta statue is in Saint Wenceslaus Church in Saint Louis, Missouri, and in the rectory are the offices of the North American Province of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. If you would like a 6-day votive candle lit for your family and your intentions, contact us at 1-888-484-9945 or [mprater@msf-america.org](mailto:mprater@msf-america.org). Candles burn in a rack to the right of the statue. (The suggested donation is \$7.00.) Thank you and may God bless you.



## REJOICE AND BE GLAD

# How to be a Saint, the Simple Way

by Father F.A. Eka Yuantoro, M.S.F.

Dated on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph on 19 March 2018, an apostolic exhortation was penned by Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad): On The Call To Holiness In Today's*



Father Eka and Auxiliary Bishop Avilés celebrating Mass at a local mission.

*World*. Pope Francis invites us to be saints in a simple way in our modern era. Based on the *Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians*, we are challenged to be saints because God has chosen each one of us to be holy and blameless before Him in love. **(Ephesians 1:4)**

Although we are sinners, God invites us to be holy as He is holy, so we should cry out with joy and gladness because of His love and mercy. God is always calling us to be holy. When we were far from the love of God, He sent his only Son to purchase us from the slavery of sin to new life.

When we received the sacrament of baptism, we were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and we were elevated and adopted as sons and

daughters of God. Monsignor Peter Vaghi wrote that baptism is the gate for us to encounter the mystery of God's love. We become members of the Body of Christ, the Church, and we encounter Jesus in the water of baptism. We are called holy because the Holy One is present among us.

When God created man in His own image, Adam, the first man, abused his freedom by disobeying and rejecting God's care. God closed the gates to paradise: "... you are dust and to dust you shall return." **(Genesis 3:19)**





Feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty.

When Adam sinned, he became separated from God and subjected to death. Even if we are far from God's love, God wants us to be united with Him in one family. Jesus was sent by the Father to redeem us, and when we are baptized into Christ Jesus, we wear a new garment of salvation in order to live a new life in the Kingdom of God. After baptism, however, we must still work to be saints. As disciples of Jesus, we are told: "... *take up your cross and follow after me.*" (**Matthew 10:38**)

The word "cross" means the way of salvation. We are called to be holy here on earth by carrying our cross faithfully and following Jesus: raising our children in the faith, working hard to support our families, remaining cheerful in times of sickness or old age, etc. Holiness is whatever we do with love to show the mercy and love of God to others, right now in our present age. Pope Francis

referred to Pope Saint John Paul II in noting that the witness to Christ, even to the point of the shedding of blood, has become a common inheritance for Catholics. (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, November 10, 1994, no. 29)

### **The Mission of Jesus**

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, explained that the core content of the Gospel is the Kingdom of God. This phrase is used 122 times in the New Testament. God reigns in our world in a dynamic and personal way. Jesus must be encountered in the mysteries of His life, death, and resurrection. Jesus said that "... *when you see me, you see the Father.*" (**John 14:7-14**)

God dwells with us, and we are one with God as Jesus is one with His Father. The other element that is important in this unique relationship between Jesus and His Father is the

Holy Spirit. Pope Francis explains that the work of the Holy Spirit is central to our struggle to be saints. We must open our hearts and minds to work together with the power of the Holy Spirit. (GE, 21)

How can we recognize God's word and His will? Without getting caught up in details, we must contemplate the love of God as seen in Jesus Christ. Listen for the word of God in prayer and try to recognize the signs that He gives us. The Holy Spirit will help us to follow Jesus, which is the best way to do God's will. Then we must become agents of mercy and love to others in our world today. (GE, 22-24)

### **Can We Live without the Grace of God?**

Pope Francis explains that two subtle enemies of holiness are contemporary Gnosticism and Pelagianism. Both are based on the erroneous contemporary philosophy that the intellect is separate from the flesh, man can do anything without God's grace, and man can save himself (GE, 37). Pope Francis warns us that the manifestation of Gnosticism and Pelagianism runs deep in the mentality of our culture today and even faithful Catholics can fall prey to it.

For example, in 2013, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in the *Vatican Insider*: "The other face of the

same vice is the Pelagianism of the pious. They do not want forgiveness and, in general, they do not want any real gift from God either. They



Prayer at the border.

just want to be in order. They don't want hope, they just want security. Their aim is to gain the right to salvation through a strict practice of religious exercises, through prayers and action. What they lack is humility which is essential in order to love; the humility to receive gifts not just because we deserve it or because of how we act..."

In the modern era, many people do not believe that God created the universe. They believe in a theory of evolution without God made popular by Stephen Hawking, Leonard Mlodinow, and Ravi Zacharias. The universe was created by the process of a big bang theory, so there is no need for God. Also, because some extremists are killing "in the name of God," many turn away

from all religious faith. Or, professional sports have become the idols or false gods of today. Is the church empty because our favorite team is playing at the same time Mass is being celebrated?

### **A Little Candle in the World Today**

We are called to be blessed or happy as Jesus taught us in the beatitudes. We find a portrait of the Master in the beatitudes which we are called to reflect on in our daily lives. Pope Francis emphasizes that the words “happy” or “blessed” come

People complain about suffering and the cross that they have to carry, but Pope Francis reminds us that when we carry the cross, and die with Jesus, we shall receive the reward of salvation to come. Saint Paul said that if we died with Christ, we shall live with him in the resurrection. **(Romans 6:8-14)**

We are called holy when we face our reality, even in poverty, free of all that tarnishes love, sowing peace, and remaining faithful until the end with joy. Living in poverty is a chal-



Building community in the Kingdom of God.

to mean “holy.” The beatitudes are a path to becoming disciples of Jesus. Discipleship is based on the quality of how we follow the example of the Master who carried the cross, died, and rose from the dead. This is a paradox that can help us understand salvation. According to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, the beatitudes are an anticipation of the promise of salvation. **(see Matthew 5:1-12)**

lenge, but we are blessed when we take to heart the Word of God: “... *we are born naked and naked shall we go back... blessed be the name of the Lord!*” **(Job 1:21)**

We remain in hope to receive the grace of God. When darkness is coming, do not give up; it is better for us to light a candle and become a sign of love. As the *Book of Job* points out, God will reward us in a greater way than what we expect to

receive when we are faithful during times of trial and tribulation. This is also seen in the *Gospel of Matthew* when the faithful are rewarded for fidelity to God's will to the end in caring for the poor. God cannot be outdone in generosity. **(Matthew 25:31-46)**

Pope Francis tell us of five great expressions of love for God and neighbor: (1) perseverance, (2) patience and meekness, (3) joy and sense of humor, (4) boldness and passion, and (5) active in community and in constant prayer. These expressions of faith make us more human, more holy, and turn our burdens into joy.

Living in holiness at the border between Mexico and the United States is a way of life that emanates from the liturgy of the Church. Daisy L. Machado wrote a recent article about the borderland and the systemic problems of poverty, crime, violence, and racism. What is an effective way to share the Good News with our neighbors? How can we know if something comes from the Holy Spirit, or if it stems from the spirit of the world, or the spirit of the devil?

In these type of situations, Pope Francis reminds us that the gift of discernment becomes all the more necessary. We must take it to prayer,

constant prayer, and then walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ as inspired by the Holy Spirit. We cannot fall into the temptation of doing nothing. Rather, we must engage in respectful dialogue and meet people where they are.

The borderland is not just about one ethnic group of people, it is multi-religious and multi-cultural. Everyone longs for peace, love, and justice. Can we achieve this without communication? It is not as difficult as it seems. It is rather easy to visit with them and offer spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In our own neighborhoods, we feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, give alms to the poor, and bury the dead. Why not do the same in the slums, the colonias?

### **Conclusion**

Pope Francis dated his apostolic exhortation on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary and foster father of Jesus Christ. Joseph is not mentioned in detail in the New Testament, but he gives us a simple example on how to love and care for one's family. Similarly, Pope Francis wants us to be saints today in a simple way.

We have to follow the example of our Master, Jesus Christ, to be a good disciple. We must try to bring the

Good News to people who are living in the shadow of death, because the culture of death tries to drive out the love of God. We stand as a sign of contradiction, as a sign of God's love. Jesus wants us to build His kingdom here on earth with genuine acts of love and mercy, especially

with those in poverty who are living on the peripheries of society. As Saint Paul reminds us, we must love everyone, even our enemies, whether they are real enemies or perceived to be. **(Romans 12:14-21)**  
**+jMJ+**

### *Around The Province...*



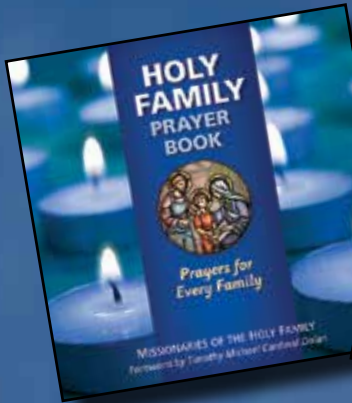
Father Eka Yuantoro, M.S.F. gives a birthday blessing to Father Simon Brzozowski, M.S.F., 94 years young, during Mass at Saint Joseph Church in Donna, Texas in December 2017.

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New officers of the Guadalupanas Society were installed at a recent Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Seguin, Texas.

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