

Summer 2015

Tender Tidings

A Magazine for INTENTIONAL CATHOLIC PARENTS



NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING In Real Life

KNOW:
the real root of
misbehavior

CREATE:
build a family
sacrament book

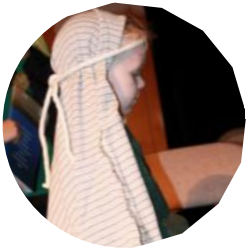
JOURNEY:
reclaim family
road trips

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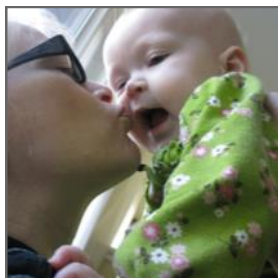
COMING early September





SUMMER GREETINGS from *Kim*

HAPPY SUMMER!



Here in the Cameron-Smith home, we've wrapped up our school year and the kids have already spent several days in a row splashing in our pool. I am wondering what surprises this summer will bring. Our summers tend to involve unexpected animals and camping trips (not necessarily simultaneously, but often enough). A few years ago, one of our hens perished unexpectedly, so the kids spent the summer raising a few new chicks. They also catch California blue-belly lizards and keep them as pets all summer until we insist they be released to a future outdoors with other lizards.

For the most part, long summer days provide opportunities for family relaxation and building fond memories, but our children can find themselves with too much time on their hands and not enough structure or outlets for exploring. **MY "GENTLE DISCIPLINE"** article touches on this issue: kids frequently misbehave when one of their needs is unmet, including their need for structure and certainty. When their school-year routine is disrupted, kids may not know what to do with themselves. I think by allowing my children to take on responsibility for pets — even those temporary summer pets — they become absorbed in something meaningful and fun.

Many of you are planning family vacations and perhaps you're wondering how you can keep your sanity even while traveling with children. You'll appreciate **MICHAELYN HEINS'S** article on how she navigates long road trips with her young kids. She offers great, practical tips. If you're not going away on an extended vacation, you can enjoy a mini-retreat with your family by having a picnic at a nearby park or lake. **CHRISTINA KOLB** has created some delicious picnic recipes for you that will lure your family close to the picnic basket!

No matter how you spend your summer, we pray you will grow in faith and love as a family! Remember to pray for us as we will for you, and visit us at intentionalcatholicparenting.com and catholicap.com!

Kim Cameron-Smith



July 2012: two Cameron-Smith pets meet each other for the first time

CONTRIBUTORS



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Kim lives in Northern California where she homeschools her 4 children. Kim believes that Catholic theology perfects what is already just and beautiful in secular insights about how children thrive. She is a regular contributor on the topic of “intentional Catholic parenting” on Greg & Lisa Popcak’s radio program *More2Life*. Kim is a licensed attorney and a member of the California State Bar. She holds a B.A. in English from Wellesley College, an M.Phil. in Medieval Literature from Oxford University, a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard University, and a J.D. from U.C. Berkeley.



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Melanie Jean Juneau is a wife, writer and mother of nine children who blogs at *Joy of Nine9* (melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com). The very existence of a joyful mother of nine children seems to confound people. Her writing is humorous and heart warming; thoughtful and thought provoking with a strong current of spirituality running through it. Part of her call and her witness is to write the truth about children, family, marriage and the sacredness of life, especially a life lived in God.



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OUR PARENTING MODEL

7 BUILDING BLOCKS TO A JOYFUL CATHOLIC HOME™



1. LOVE

- ♥ Children need unconditional love in order to thrive, but we can send them conflicting signals about how we feel about them. Our words, actions, and countenance can send them the message that they need to do the right thing or achieve the highest awards in order to earn our deepest held love.
- ♥ Loving our children intentionally and unconditionally requires 1) emotional openness, 2) a recognition and affirmation of their unique, unrepeatable value, and 3) our willingness to be changed by our children.

2. EMPATHY

- ♥ Get to know each child as a unique human being.
- ♥ Understand what's behind your child's eyes and in her heart at each developmental stage.
- ♥ Recognize any of your old wounds so that you can parent your child appropriately and with awareness, and not from a place of fear or anger unrelated to your child or her behavior.

3. PLAY

- ♥ All human beings need play in order to thrive — parents and kids alike. Children need plenty of uninterrupted time for free play both alone and with other children.
- ♥ Play is one of the most important ways children connect to us, work through their fears and frustrations, and build their self-confidence.
- ♥ Enter a child's play world on their terms. Be willing to be silly and goofy on occasion!

4. RADIANT FAITH

- ♥ Every family can enjoy a shared faith life that's alive and downright fun! Such faith is a tremendous witness to other families, Catholic and non-Catholic alike.
- ♥ Allow your home to reflect the abundant joy and hope of our Catholic Faith. Explore and celebrate feast days and saints days with crafts, special parties, and sharing books together. Develop a family prayer plan and pray together regularly.
- ♥ Children, especially young ones, will absorb our attitudes about attending Mass and growing in the Faith. If we're excited and enthusiastic, it'll be contagious! The heart of our Faith is love and hope, and the opportunity for transformation and renewal — not a list of obligations we need to fulfill to be “good”.

5. GENTLE DISCIPLINE

- ♥ The *heart* of gentle discipline is the connection between parent and child. Without a secure connection, discipline will be a frustrating power struggle.

- ♥ The *goal* of gentle discipline is for the child to build a conscience and self-control, not to break the child's will or to coerce obedience through threats. In an empathic, nurturing home a child is never humiliated and parents don't use their superior size and authority to intimidate children into compliance.
- ♥ Growing up can be confusing and frustrating. Try to see situations from your child's perspective, even if it seems irrational to you. We can't expect a three-year-old to have the self-control of a six-year-old. Each developmental age comes with its struggles and joys. If we educate ourselves about child development we can understand our child's feelings and needs better, so the balance tips towards joy!

6. BALANCE

- ♥ Balance work, play, and prayer in your home. Do all these things as a family. Each family member contributes to the upkeep of the home as is appropriate for their developmental age. Even very young children enjoy being included in the routine with small jobs, like helping unload the dishwasher, mopping, or dusting.
- ♥ Every parent needs a little time alone to refuel. How much time you can spend alone and how frequently depends on various factors in your home, including the availability of your spouse or a babysitter and how young your children are, but remember that you will be parenting for many years. Don't run out of gas early on!
- ♥ Take time to exercise and eat well. This can involve the kids! Children love to ride their bikes with parents who might be running or biking. Make a hiking plan and explore different hiking trails in your region. Children love to help with food preparations, like making salads and kneading bread dough.

7. A STRONG MARRIAGE

- ♥ If you treat your child with respect and affection, but fail to model such respect and affection with your spouse, your child may still enter adulthood with a relationship handicap. Your marriage models for your children how to treat others in close, intimate relationships.
- ♥ Speak about and to your spouse with deep regard and love; perform little acts of kindness to make his or her life easier. Be willing to *serve* even in small ways.
- ♥ You and your spouse are called to help one another on your paths to heaven. See your spouse the way Christ does, as a precious and priceless soul on a journey to a Divine Destination.

BUILDING BLOCKS *in Focus*



*Kim Cameron-Smith on the
“7 BUILDING BLOCKS TO A
JOYFUL CATHOLIC HOME”*

BUILDING BLOCK 5 Gentle Discipline

- ♥ The *heart* of gentle discipline is the connection between parent and child. Without a secure connection, discipline will be a frustrating power struggle.
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The **Real Root** of **Naughtiness**



When kids behave badly, it's easy to focus on just the behavior we don't like. The wisest parents try to understand why their child did what they did; they consider their child's actions from his point of view, especially his physical and mental state. When we only look at a child's behavior from our own adult perspective, we can make the situation worse.

This nearly happened to me a few weeks ago with Lydia, my preschooler. Lydia and two of my other children were in a play through our homeschool group. All the kids involved had been rehearsing diligently for four months. When the big night arrived, they were excited to show their family and friends the fruit of all their hard work. Not long after the play started, Lydia began pestering other kids around her on the stage, pulling on one girl's scarf, talking to herself, then lying on the floor of the stage so the actors had to step over her. She was clearly affecting the entire play and the experience of the actors and audience. I was very embarrassed!

After perhaps five minutes of these antics, I removed Lydia from the stage. She wanted to return to the performance, so I explained to her that she needed to keep her hands to herself, and that everyone wanted to hear the beautiful songs she had been practicing. Within a few minutes of joining the performance, she began lying on the floor again, mumbling to herself. So, I removed her again and sat her on my lap for the rest of the show. I was disappointed and emotionally ruffled. A little irritated even. Lydia just turned five and I thought to myself that I should not have enrolled her in our homeschool program until the fall, that she wasn't mature enough to handle a group activity that required sustained cooperation.

Experiences like these are frustrating. They leave us scrambling for solutions. But, most misbehavior is an expression of our child's attempt to meet a need, however clumsy or misguided her approach. If we do a little detective work we can figure out the need that is driving the behavior. Then we'll be far more effective in coming up with solutions that not only help our child, but protect our bond with her.

Here are some questions we can ask ourselves during tense moments with our kids:

1. DOES MY CHILD HAVE AN UNMET PHYSICAL NEED?

First, figure out whether an unmet *physical* need may be at the root of your child's actions. If children are too hungry or tired, or if they are feeling unwell, they will have a tough time managing their emotions and actions. Parents probably know this intuitively and from much experience! Most of us can read our kids well enough to know when they need nap or a snack, and we can tell when they're becoming droopy with illness.

Sometimes we miss it though. Like me that night of the play. It turns out my Lydia was getting very sick during the performance. Not more than an hour after we returned home, I found myself on the phone with a 9-1-1 operator and opened the door for the paramedics a few minutes later. During the performance, Lydia was in the early stages of an allergic reaction to something. By the time we arrived home, I could see the hives developing; within thirty minutes they had spread to her face, trunk, arms, and legs.

Lydia had been "misbehaving" because she was uncomfortable and feeling badly. I'm glad I held her on my lap and cuddled her during the remainder of the play rather than punishing her. Lydia didn't need punishment; she needed my help.

2. DOES MY CHILD HAVE AN UNMET PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED?

However, sometimes Lydia or one of my other kids begins behaving poorly and I'm certain it has nothing to do with hunger, tiredness, or illness. In these moments, I like to remember the acronym "SRC," which stands for stimulation, recognition, and certainty. These are the three human *psychological* hungers, which all need to be satisfied and in balance for optimal mental and physical human health. Our child's misbehavior can be a signal



Lydia before show time

THE 3 HUMAN

PSYCHOLOGICAL HUNGERS

- * Stimulation
- * Recognition
- * Certainty

to us that one of these needs is not being met or that these needs are out of balance. Sometimes our child can be getting too much of one thing (stimulation) and lacking another (certainty).

Stimulation: All human beings need to feel energized and vital. We even need some spontaneity and novelty in our lives on occasion. Our child's brain actually registers under-stimulation as stress and he will naturally do things to increase his state of arousal. So, perhaps he starts jumping on the couch or poking his sister in the car to get a reaction. Have our children been doing the same activity for too long? Are they bored and don't know how to relieve it? Boredom can be good for kids, because it forces them to use their wits and creativity, but sometimes our rules and discomfort with mess can prevent our children from curing their own boredom.

The opposite can also be true: children can act up because of sensory overload. Children need a balance between lots of physical activity and quiet time, between play dates with other kids and time alone to explore and think. Bad news or disruptions to their routine can make children anxious or agitated. They may need some support or reassurance from us during such times.

Recognition: All human beings need to feel valued and acknowledged. Have we been too busy with our own affairs to engage meaningfully with our kids? When our children are talking to us about something that matters to them, do we tune them out or dismiss their concerns? Do our children feel nurtured and loved for who they are? If he is suffering from a recognition hunger, our child will do anything to get our attention, even if it results in a harsh scolding or punishment.

Certainty: All human beings need to know what the rules are and who is in charge. Have we provided appropriate structure for our child's day? Do we have clear rules and expectations and do we enforce them? Do our children know they can count on us to take care of their needs? Particularly during the summer months, when the familiarity of their school routine is eliminated or relaxed, children can misbehave because they lack direction or a sense of confidence about what is expected of them.

My purpose isn't to *excuse* our child's poor choices, especially if he harmed somebody or broke a household rule. We may need to explain to him firmly why his behavior was unacceptable, but we can include in this discussion an exploration of the need he was trying to meet. By acknowledging the positive intentions beneath our child's behavior we are demonstrating empathy for his experience. This helps him feel acknowledged and respected. We can then suggest to him strategies for handling similar feelings or situations in the future.

Kids' behavior can be challenging. By thinking about the possible needs underlying their actions, we'll have an easier time staying in control of our own emotions and actions. Then, hopefully we can respond in love rather than react in anger or frustration.





Live Joyfully

“A family vacation is one where you arrive with four kids, five bags, and seven I-thought-you-packed-its.”

Ivern Ball



RECLAIMING the ROAD TRIP

TIPS FOR ENJOYING LONG TRIPS IN THE CAR WITH KIDS

BY MICHAELYN HEIN

Photos by Michaelyn Hein. All rights reserved.

My husband and I used to love road trips. We'd spend days in the car listening to audiobooks and entertaining ourselves with easy conversation. Yes, we gladly passed up the chance to fly to our summer destination.

Then, we had kids, and it seemed that our glory days on the road were gone. But, the stress and added expense of flying with children was beyond us. So, our first summer with our son, we did what we'd always done. We packed ourselves into our van and hit the road for a two-day drive to the Midwest — biting our nails all the while.

Halfway through the journey, though, I discovered something: our trip was going well. Really well. We've chosen road trips over flying ever since because, as we learned, if you take the time to plan ahead, there's still joy to be found on the road. Here are some ideas to help your family get back on the road again:

1. START (AND END) WITH PRAYER.

We teach our children to begin and end each day with prayer, and a trip is no different. Start the day's journey by leading your family through a rosary or by inviting the children to say a special prayer of petition (as in, "Please, Lord, help us to be patient today with whatever comes our way." I've prayed this often on the road!). When you reach the day's destination, be sure to end with a prayer of thanksgiving, too!

2. HIT THE LIBRARY.

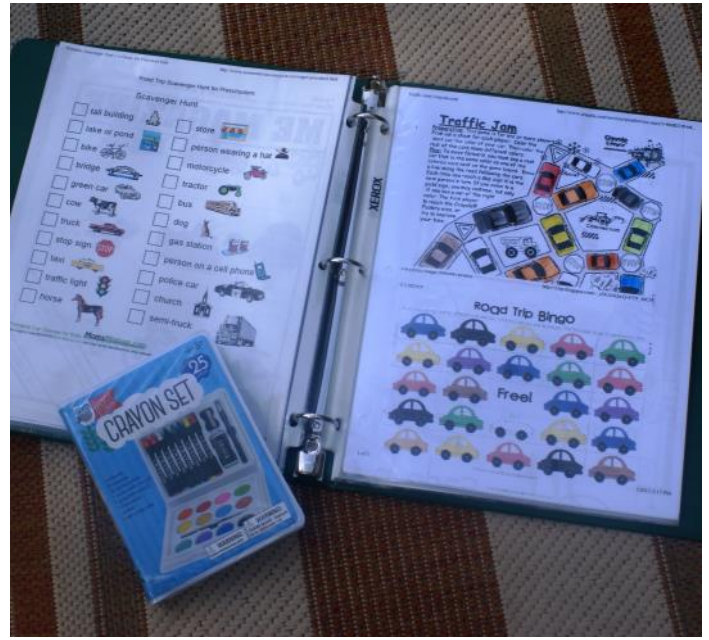
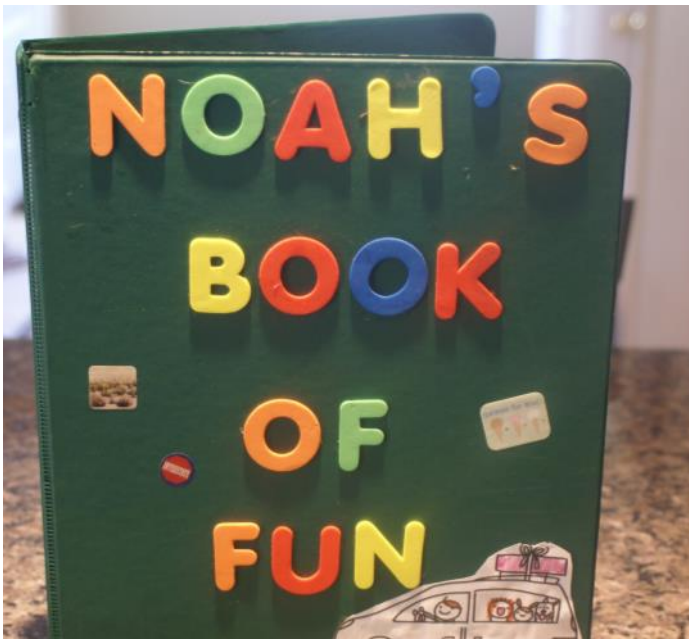
Before you discover the world, rediscover your local library. Take out books the old-fashioned way, or opt for a Playaway (a handheld listening or viewing device that offers the chance to sit back and listen to a great story or watch a favorite film). Most libraries have gone virtual, too. If you own a tablet, take advantage of the free music, movies, and books available with databases like Flipster (for magazines), Freegal (for music and movies), and Hoopla (for just about everything). Oh, and if you're going traditional? Don't worry about late fees! Most libraries now let you renew online.

3. TAKE A BREAK!

With websites like KidsLoveTravel.com, there's no excuse not to take the kids on the road . . . or take a break from it. The travel guides offered there help you plan your route by suggesting loads of kid-friendly stops along the way. You can order the appropriate guidebook and take it along (or download the e-book version), and when the kids are ready for a stop, check out what there is to do! Or, anticipate when your kids might need breaks and make an itinerary ahead of time. Of course, be prepared to deviate from your itinerary when necessary. The point is to take time to enjoy the journey.

4. CREATE A TRAVEL BINDER FOR THE KIDS.

Make a travel binder for your child and surprise him with it once your trip has begun. For younger ones, simply purchase an inexpensive three-ring binder and take to the web. With websites like Minitime.com and Momsminivan.com you can print an array of freebies, from mazes and coloring pages to license plate scavenger hunts and road trip bingo games. Supply older children with a journal or sketchbook to create memories of their journey through their writing or drawing. Don't forget the pencils and crayons!



5. EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY!

It's no secret that hungry kids are cranky kids. Keep everyone happy by packing a cooler of healthy snacks and drinks, and don't forget to keep it in an easy-to-reach spot. It'll mean less stopping (and spending) for you and less road food for them.

6. MAKE ROOM FOR MOMMY (OR DADDY).

When we tackled that first road trip with our son, we learned quickly that we hadn't packed well. We stuffed the van with suitcases, bags, and coolers, buckled each of us into our seats and went on our way. Before long, though, my son needed me in the back . . . and I had no way to get to him without doing some serious acrobatics. We reconfigured things for our second day of driving, ensuring there was a safe place for me when needed.

7. WE ARE FAMILY!

In many ways, technology has made road trips much easier for families. But blessings can also be curses. Don't let ear buds and screens cut into this family bonding time. Prepare yourself with fun family games and conversation starters for when you need a break from those tablets. We like to travel with cards from "Trivial Pursuit" games and quiz each other with questions. Melissa & Doug's "Box of Questions" offers an array of topics to talk about and comes in a variety of themes, including "The Family Road Trip" and "Faith" editions. Scholastic offers a free app called KidQ that presents your family with questions about everything you ever wanted to know. The bonus? It offers answers, too!

Part of why we love road trips is the closeness and bonding it offers our family. Sure, flying will get you to your destination in a matter of hours, but taking to the road can take your family on a journey you'll never forget. All that's needed is a little planning to steer everyone in the right direction.





GREAT WEBSITES for *Intentional Catholic Parents*

Intentional Catholic Parenting

www.intentionalcatholicparenting.com

The home of *Tender Tidings* magazine, ICP explores intentional Catholic parenting through the 7 Building Blocks to a Joyful Catholic Home: love, empathy, play, radiant faith, gentle discipline, balance, and a strong marriage.

Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner

www.catholicap.com

Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner (CAPC) offers resources and support for Catholic parents interested in gentle, intentional, or attachment-based parenting. CAPC hosts a Facebook page and yahoo support group.

Couple to Couple League

www.ccli.org

The Couple to Couple League (CCL) is an international, Catholic, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and teaching fertility awareness (natural family planning) to married and engaged couples.

Positive Discipline

www.positivediscipline.com

Positive Discipline is a program designed to teach young people to become responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities. Recent research tells us that children are “hardwired” from birth to connect with others, and that children who feel a sense of connection to their community, family, and school are less likely to misbehave. Taking this into account, Positive Discipline has as its core tools mutual respect, identifying the belief behind the behavior, effective communication, discipline that teaches, and encouragement.

Parenting Science

www.parentingscience.com

Founded by a biological anthropologist, Parenting Science “is dedicated to families who want information based on the scientific evidence.” Not Catholic, but important and fascinating as we seek to parent prudently and intentionally.



WRING OUT MY CLOTHES

St. Francis Assisi

Such love does
the sky now pour,
that whenever I stand in a field,
I have to wring out the light
when I get
home.

Image courtesy of dan (freedigitalphotos.com)

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING



An honest look at the blessings and challenges of practicing natural family planning.

NFP

IN REAL LIFE

by Charisse Tierney

“It’s been really hard.” The sweet, Southern accent softened the young bride’s statement, but I could hear the pain in her voice. She and her husband had just returned from their honeymoon, but they still hadn’t consummated their marriage. They were struggling with charting her signs of fertility, and their desire for control was wrestling with their longing to fully trust God.

A couple just beginning their journey down the winding path of Natural Family Planning is a reminder of the complexities that the practice of NFP entails. The honeymoon of housing a converted heart quickly gives way to reality as confusing charts, difficulties with abstinence, and uncertainties about God’s plan create confusion and conflict. At times NFP can make couples feel as if they’re living an oxymoron. It’s wonderfully challenging. It’s blissfully torturous. It’s divinely human. But, like the wood of the Cross upon which our Savior hung, it carries with it the promise of glory, of heavenly rewards, and a depth of love we could never have achieved on our own.

My husband and I have taught the Sympto-Thermal Method of Natural Family Planning for the Couple to Couple League for twelve years. We’ve seen resistant couples and receptive couples, jaded couples and joyful couples. But whether they come to an NFP class with open hearts, or just because their priest “made” them attend, three main factors always generate conversation and questions:

1. THE CHARTING FACTOR

The alarm went off, and my dutiful husband handed me . . . the alarm clock? He was supposed to hand me my thermometer so I could take my waking temperature, but instead he handed me the first thing his sleepy hand grabbed.

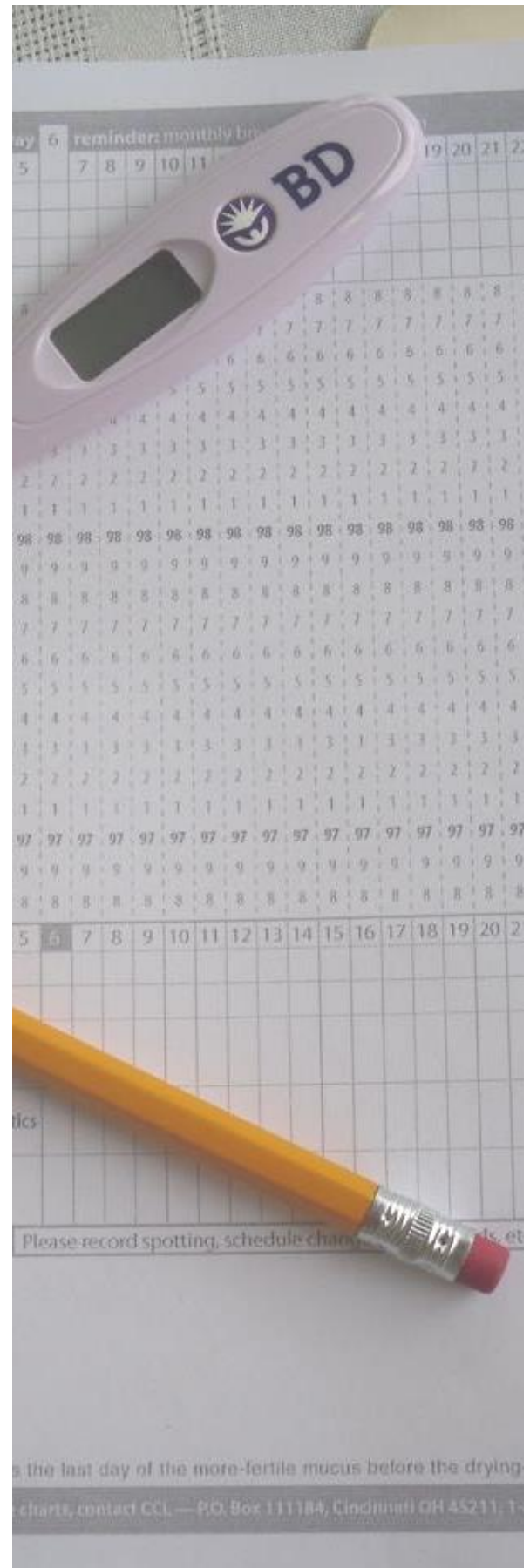
Every method of NFP requires knowledge, training, time, and effort. And even then, charting accurately can be a challenge. Sometimes maintaining a chart is just a pain. Beeping thermometers wake up co-sleeping children (I've started taking my temperature behind the closed door of a bathroom as soon as I get out of bed in the morning), penciling in temperatures and mucus signs becomes secondary to nursing babies and the exhaustion of parenting (instead of temperatures and mucus symbols, many of my charts are filled with writing notes and grocery lists), and sometimes the chart gets misplaced completely in the flurry of family life (that's okay, the information is all safe in my head, right?).

But while charting might not seem like the most convenient answer for managing fertility, it is a tool that provides invaluable information and optimal health. It has no side effects, it can reveal underlying health issues that have gone unnoticed for years while masked by chemical or hormonal birth control, it requires frequent communication between spouses, and it can help the couple desperately hoping for a child to finally conceive. Oh . . . and did I mention it's *free*?

Yes, there are months that my chart is a mess. Missed temperatures, unclear mucus signs, and the feeling that I'm the only one in our marriage who's even making the effort to keep track of my fertility. But then I catch my husband sneaking a peek at my chart, and we start to talk. And I realize he's been with me all along — not just waiting for the “green light,” but praying, discerning, and appreciating every aspect of my femininity . . . even as he hands me the alarm clock.

2. THE ABSTINENCE FACTOR

There's no way around it. Abstinence stinks. In its worst moments, it appears to breed resentment, bitterness, pain, and disunity. At its best, abstinence seems to foster clearer com-



“At its best, abstinence seems to foster clearer communication, an airing out of emotions, and a deepening connection. All too often we forget that it is not the abstinence itself that produces these results, but how we respond to it.”

munication, an airing out of emotions, and a deepening connection. All too often we forget that it is not the abstinence itself that produces these results, but how we respond to it. Abstinence is a mirror with striking clarity. It reveals the face of our souls and shows us where our hearts still need mending. We come face to face with our selfishness, desires, past wounds, and the stain of sin. We become wrapped up in ourselves and neglect the one we are supposed to aid in getting to heaven.

It is through abstinence that our masculinity and femininity come to light. Women are more likely to be “in the mood” during their fertile time, while men, well...aren’t they usually “in the mood”? My husband and I have found this phenomenon to be very frustrating when postponing pregnancy. We teach in our NFP classes that a period of abstinence can create a “honeymoon effect.” At times, yes, abstinence does make the heart grow fonder and the body long to follow. But other times, the infertile time and its hormone fluctuations only brings me fatigue, irritability, and low libido — not very honeymoon-like at all.

And then there are the times that the first day of the fertile period is the one night that all of the kids miraculously go to sleep before 9pm — or it coincides with a weekend get away, a long awaited date night, or even the much anticipated honeymoon. My husband and I have experienced many of these situations ourselves. At times, our longing for one another tells us God is calling us to try for another baby. At other times, it means God is calling us to try for an increase in virtue.

Even when it’s hard, even when it’s painful, even when I go to bed with tears in my eyes and an ache in my heart, I rejoice in God’s beautiful plan for man and wife. Because when we persevere, when the tension of the previous evening dissolves in an *I’m sorry* and a heart-on-your-sleeve, emotionally raw conversation, we’ve taken a step closer to what marriage really means. Sacrifice. Self-donation. Understanding. Patience. Acceptance. Real love. These are the things that bind us. These are the things we cling to when we cannot cling to our spouse. And when our hearts are woven together in this way, the unity of our bodies is easier to wait for.

3. THE OPENNESS TO LIFE FACTOR

I want a list. I’m a planner, and I want my planning tool. Just a simple equation would suffice: *If you make X yearly salary, and your expenditures are Y, divide that difference by the number of children you already have to determine whether or not you should try to conceive this month.*

But the Church doesn't give a list or an equation. She gives us guidelines. She's told us that "If, then, there are serious motives to space out births, which derive from the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife, or from external conditions, the Church teaches that it is then licit to take into account the natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions, for the use of marriage in the [infertile] periods only, and in this way to regulate births without offending the moral principles which have been recalled earlier." *Humanae Vitae* 16.

That's it. Any way you word it, *serious motives, just reasons, or grave reasons*, it's up to each couple to prayerfully determine what this means for *them*. There are no lists of these "reasons" (believe me, I've looked!). Each married couple is responsible for forming their consciences and prayer life well, then making use of their knowledge of NFP if they hear God calling them to postpone pregnancy.

We are called to be open to life — not always to the life of a new baby, but always to the life of the Spirit. And we convey this openness through the language of our bodies--by working with their natural, God-given cycles to follow God's plan for that time in our lives. But we are never called to shut the door on the hope that our financial situation will change, that a cure will be found for our medical condition, that our spouse will have a conversion of heart, or that we will be given the strength to have "just one more". And even if none of these things come to fruition, at least we've allowed God the room to work in our hearts, to bring us more closely into relationship with Him, and to help us love and appreciate our spouse more deeply.



“Openness to Life”— a big, beautiful, terrifying phrase. It suggests a release of control and an embracing of the unknown — a plunging of ourselves into this great mystery we call life and a deep trust that the One who created us will carry us through the unexpected. Infertility, a child with special needs, three children in the span of as many years, miscarriage. Openness to life is an openness to vulnerability, to joy, and, yes, to heart-ache. But behind this open door of our hearts is the potential for great growth and room for the Holy Spirit to work. It is the same door that Mary had permanently propped open, and so welcomed the Savior of an infinite number of souls.

This is why there isn't a “list”. Because, when it comes to creating new life, God isn't a God of lists. He is a God of inspirations, whisperings, and thoughts tugging at the back of our minds. He is a God who waits patiently for us to pay attention to *His* plan — a plan that can only be found, not in exterior lists, but in the innermost chambers of an open heart. We are not on our own. God is always there. We just have to keep straining our ears in the hopes of hearing Him.

Natural Family Planning. It's messy, scary, and challenging. But it is also joyful, beautiful, and miraculous, and I would go to the ends of the earth to promote it. Why? Because every bone in my body believes it is God's will, that His plan is always greater than ours, and that He knows what we need to purify our earthly marriages in preparation for entering His heavenly home as His eternal spouse.



BREASTFEEDING AND NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

Myth vs. Fact

MYTH: I can't use NFP during the postpartum time. My cycles are too unpredictable.

FACT: Modern NFP methods account for changes and abnormalities within your cycle — even during the confusing postpartum time. Seek out a postpartum-specific NFP class and additional personal counseling from a trained NFP teacher during this time, and you will be able to maintain a high level of effectiveness.

MYTH: Breastfeeding automatically spaces children about two years apart.

FACT: The return of fertility is primarily dependent on the frequency of baby's suckling. Your physiology, how often a bottle or pacifier is used, and how close baby regularly stays to you are all variables that affect the timing of the return of fertility. Two years between children is common in NFP-practicing families where baby is exclusively breastfed (no bottles or pacifiers) — not only because all of the variables are right for this kind of timing, but also because of an open-to-life mindset.

MYTH: I have to completely wean my baby to get my fertility back and conceive again.

FACT: Sometimes just cutting out one or two nursings a day will bring back regular cycles. It *is* possible to conceive while breastfeeding! A postpartum NFP class is very helpful for determining when and how you can get back to “normal” looking charts. But, be sure to follow your baby's cues. If he is very resistant to cutting back on nursing, then maybe it isn't quite time to conceive again.

MYTH: It isn't safe to breastfeed while pregnant.

FACT: It is generally safe to continue your breastfeeding relationship while pregnant. Work with a doctor or midwife well-versed in breastfeeding and NFP. Of course, if your past pregnancies follow a pattern of complications that seem to be connected to continued breastfeeding, you have to choose what is best for everyone, including the new life within you. If you do continue breastfeeding while pregnant, your milk will start to dry up, and nursing may become uncomfortable. Sometimes even the most voracious of nursers will accept cutting back a bit at this point. Continued nursing works wonders for a toddler whose world is rocked by a new sibling, and an experienced nurser is wonderful for getting your milk to come in and to relieve engorgement!

NFP Resources

Sympto-Thermal Method (uses temperature, mucus, and cervix signs)

The Couple to Couple League (www.ccli.org)

Billings Method (primarily based on mucus signs)

BOMA-USA (www.boma-usa.org)

Billings Life (www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org)

Creighton Method (primarily based on mucus signs)

Creighton Model Fertility Care System (www.creightonmodel.com)

Fertility Care Centers of America (www.fertilitycare.org)

NaProTechnology (www.naprotechnology.com)

Marquette Method (nfp.marquette.edu)

Family of the Americas (www.familyplanning.net)

Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction (www.popepaulvi.com)

natural fertility regulation and reproductive medicine

Breastfeeding Resources

La Leche League International (<http://www.llli.org>)



“Take away from love
the fullness of self surrender,
the completeness of personal commitment,
and what remains will be
a total denial and negation of it.”

— Pope Saint John Paul II

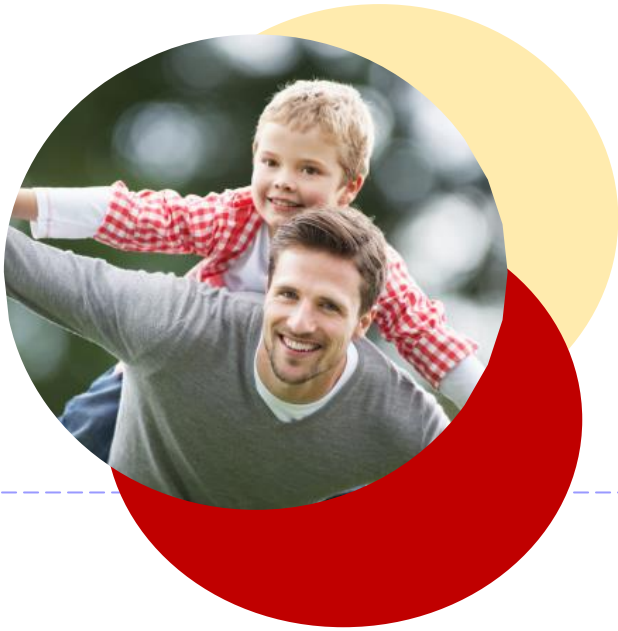




FAMILY OF FAITH

“The Church is not a cultural organization,
but the family of Jesus.”

— Pope Francis



A FATHER'S EXAMINATION of CONSCIENCE

BY MICHAELYN HEIN

1. You shall not have strange gods before me.

Do I love my children, wife or myself more than God? Do I believe that I can care for/love my family better than God? Have I succumbed to pride by venerating myself rather than God? Have I loved God with my whole heart? Have I placed money, my career or success above God in my life? Do I fully accept Church teaching? Do I lead my wife and children toward a closer relationship with God?

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.

Have I cursed or used the Lord's name in swearing? Have I allowed my children to do so or refrained from correcting them if they have? Do I teach and require my children to behave in Church?

3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

Have I gone to Mass each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation? Have I placed other things, like work or sports, above going to Mass or have I allowed my family to do so? Have I gone to Mass begrudgingly rather than with a heart desiring Jesus? Do I pray with my children daily?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

Do I respect my children's mother in the way that I speak to/treat her? Have I ever allowed my children to disrespect their mother? Do I respect the authority figures in my life? Do I require my children to respect their elders/authority figures or do I make excuses for them when they don't?

5. You shall not kill.

Have I verbally, emotionally or physically hurt my wife or children? Have I misused my power and authority? Do I willingly protect my family as my vocation requires me to? Do I respond lovingly to my wife's and chil-

dren's needs? Have I shown forgiveness to others and truly forgiven them in my heart? Have I wished evil upon others? Have I intentionally or unintentionally put others in danger with my actions? Have I caused or encouraged my children to commit a mortal sin (i.e. by not taking them to Mass on a day of obligation or to Confession)?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

Have I looked lustfully at or flirted too much with another woman? Have I encouraged the use of artificial birth control in my marriage? Have I watched/listened to sinful things or allowed my children to do so? Have I engaged in pornography or masturbation? Have I caused my wife to feel "used" in our marital relations? Do I approach intimacy with my wife with love and adoration?

7. You shall not steal.

Have I neglected to take on my proper leadership role as a husband and father? Do I try to provide for my family? If my children have stolen, have I required them to make reparations for their action? Have I taught my children to be charitable, especially through my actions? Do I tithe? Do I waste time? Have I cheated in any way?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I always been truthful with my spouse? Have I kept anything hidden from her that she should rightfully know? Do I discourage gossip in my home when I hear it - even if it's from my wife? Do I require my children to always be honest and truthful? Have I ridiculed others or hurt them with sarcasm?

9. You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse.

Have I ever desired not to be married to my wife? Have I been ungrateful for the wife and children that God has given me? Have I made my wife or children feel they are not enough (or are too much) for me? Have I made my wife or children feel second to other things, like my job, sports, etc.?

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's property.

Have I lamented about my family's financial circumstances or envied/resented that of others (i.e. home, car, vacations, etc.)? Have I taught/allowed my children to do so? Have I nurtured materialism in my children? Have I neglected my vocation of fatherhood in favor of other jobs and activities?



Gladsome Light

Growing your family faith
with **MARCIA MATTERN**



BUILDING A SACRAMENTAL

MEMORY BOOK

our life of faith

The whirlwind of May is fading away. Those weekends packed with First Communions, graduations, Confirmations, and weddings are behind us. We are gearing up for summer and it's coming fast.

Let's not let the momentum of a living faith, of the grace-infused moments, fade away. Like the fire that has been lit in the soul of a child, in the soul of an adult, let us continue to fan the flame of faith.

How can we continue the spiritual momentum of May? How can we find a way to pause and reflect on the blessings of the sacraments received this year? Perhaps there are moments of faith from years past that need to be remembered, to be treasured as well?

*The seven sacraments touch all stages and
all the important moments of Christian life:
they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith.
There is thus a certain resemblance between the steps of natural life and*

the stages of the spiritual life.

— Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1210

Many years ago, at the suggestion of a friend, we began a Life of Faith Book. It is a sacramental memory book for our immediate family. It's a simple cloth-covered photo album in which photos and small notes can be attached to each page. I chose an album that holds only one photo per page. It's small enough that the toddlers in our family can view it easily. My plan was to document the time line of faith in our family.

The book is a witness to the moments of spiritual growth in our lives. The first page is a photo of my husband and me just after we had shared our vows before a priest, when we celebrated the sacrament that began our family: Holy Matrimony. It highlights the importance of that moment in which we invited God into our life as a couple, as a family.

*Celebrated worthily in faith,
the sacraments confer the grace that they signify.*

— Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1127

As Catholics, we believe Christ himself instituted the sacraments. These actions of the Holy Spirit — through the hands of a priest — give life. Through the sacraments, we are strengthened and renewed to grow in our faith and to share it with others. This sharing begins in the home.



A page from the Mattern family Life of Faith book

The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial.

*For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus;
for the Church, on the other hand it is an increase in charity and in her mission of witness.*

— Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1134

The next pages in the book share photos of my husband's and my Baptisms, First Communion and First Reconciliations. I included dates and names of the priests and churches where these sacraments were conferred. As the book continues, in chronological order, it shows our six children and their Baptisms, First Communion, and Confirmations. We marvel at the smallness of each child at their Baptism. We rejoice with them as we see both the physical and spiritual growth through the photos in this book.

Each year we celebrate these moments with a special meal. We happily celebrate our marriage anniversary each year. We also like to celebrate the date of the Baptism of each child, the anniversary of the beginning of the life of faith in their life. By using our Life of Faith memory book, we can remember the dates that these important events took place and have a visual memory as well. The book is placed in a prominent place in our house all year long. On sacramental anniversaries, we move it to the kitchen table. As the younger children anticipate receiving a sacrament, they enjoy hearing the stories of when their older siblings were conferred the same sacrament. We look forward to adding more moments each year as we continue this journey of faith together.

May God continue to bless your family as you increase in charity and grace.





Making God's presence tangible
to our children



Our Home

a flexible tabernacle

by Melanie Jean Juneau

My husband and I discovered how to build relationships with our children and encourage their relationship with God through a combination of the grace of God, parental intuition, and perhaps a dash of sheer luck.

In order to nurture authentic Catholic family life, we learned that we had to first nurture our own intimacy with God, because preaching about God was not effective. Initially, I focused on teaching my children with theory and ideas. One day while trying to teach my eldest about the different types of prayer, he suddenly sighed, "Mum. I do all that but without all these words." My son's insight forced me to realize I was imposing an adult spirituality on a little child. My methods were not in sync with what God was doing within in my son's heart.

Children are more intuitive than cerebral. They are open to the Presence of the Holy Spirit. So, I turned my attention to drawing closer to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit myself. As I lived, moved and even breathed in the Presence of the Trinity, the first community, my children were also drawn into a spiritual relationship with God as well -- but on their own terms.

Jesus rebuked His disciples for not allowing children to come into contact with Him directly:

And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them;

but the disciples rebuked them.

But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them,

"Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them;

for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

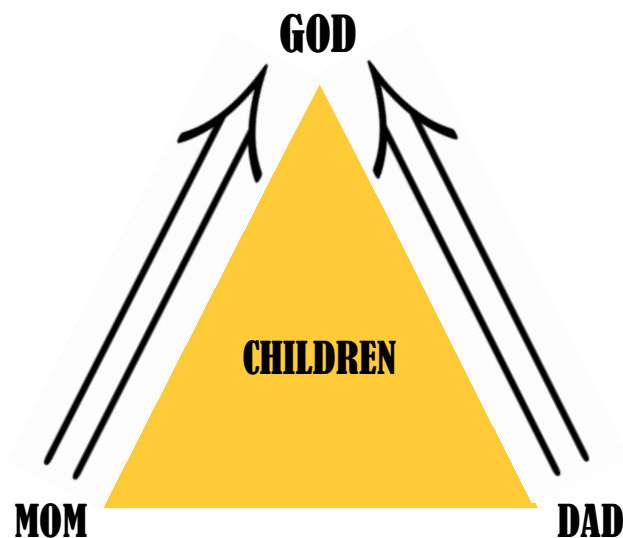
Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God

like a child will not enter it at all.

Mark 10 :13-15

A blessed home, dedicated to God, could actually be called a tabernacle because it is filled with a tangible Presence of God. When we give God permission to be Lord of our own lives and our children's lives, then the Holy Spirit is in the very air we breathe. Children soak in not only our human love but Divine Love as well.

God gave me an image of a Christian family who live in the Presence of the Trinity. I saw a triangle of light with strong bars of light flowing from the heart of the mother and father at the base, and up to God at the top of the pinnacle, with the children protected in the middle of the triangle. The light of God's love fills the triangle, protecting and nurturing the children. This is a vision of family as a community submersed in the



community of the Trinity.

This atmosphere is not something a parent can manufacture in their own strength. If we try, we end up creating a phony religious atmosphere which will stifle little ones rather than nurture them in Love. No, we surrender to God and allow Him to be the Lord of our homes by consecrating our house to Him. It is wonderful when a priest can bless our homes with holy water, dedicating our house to God with a physical, tangible ceremony, a visible symbol of what we have already asked for in our hearts.

The Presence of God is actually a tangible presence when we welcome Christ as Head of our homes. We can play and laugh and simply be with our children when we give God control over our family. No need to force the issue of religion, because Jesus is present with all of us in communion -- living in community with us. As a result, teaching moments flow naturally in our daily lives. Those teaching moments require words and explanations, but our words will be in sync with what God is doing in our kids' hearts. Our children will sense our words vibrate not only with our concern to form them, but with the very presence of the Trinity.





LIVE *like a* Saint!

ST. MARIA GORETTI

Patron of chastity, rape victims, youth, poverty, and forgiveness

d. 1890

Feast Day: July 6

1. Mary

Maria Goretti was born to a poor Italian family in 1890. Their possessions were few, but the one they prized most was a small image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Communicate the value of your family's religious items by finding places of honor for them.

2. Rosary

Maria's father died from a serious illness when Maria was only nine years old. This tragedy increased her devotion to God, and she kept a Rosary wrapped around her wrist so she could pray it frequently for her father. Keep your family's Rosaries in a convenient place, and pray it often.

3. Spool and Thimble

When Maria's father died, she took over all of the cleaning, cooking, sewing, and childcare so her mother could work their farmland. Her work was hard, but Maria always maintained a cheerful countenance. Strive for cheerfulness as you go about your daily tasks.

4. White Dress

Those who knew Maria agreed that her beauty radiated from within and she needed no adornment. She embodied the meaning of modesty. Look through your family's clothing and ask yourself if every piece reveals your inner beauty while concealing that which is sacred.

5. Lilies

When Maria was eleven years old, a hired hand threatened her with sexual assault. When she refused his advances, he stabbed her fourteen times. Her determination to preserve her chastity was only surpassed by her capacity for forgiveness. She forgave her attacker before dying and expressed sincere concern for his soul. She later appeared to him in a dream in a white dress and handed him lilies, which granted him a full conversion of heart. He begged forgiveness from her mother, and was present for her canonization in 1950. Maria Goretti is one of the youngest saints ever to be canonized. Place a bouquet of lilies in your home to remind you of the beauty of purity and the sweetness of mercy.





NOURISH

**PICNIC
CROWD-PLEASERS**

by Christina Kolb

Photos by Christina Kolb. All rights reserved.

A DIVERSION FROM THE USUAL ROUTINE and easy on the budget, picnics are a great way to add some excitement to a family meal. Pick your favorite beach, park, or even just a spot in your backyard, cook up some of these picnic-friendly recipes, and let the fun begin!

Strawberry Lemonade

Start off the fun with a special beverage to keep you cool on hot summer days. Even the littlest “helpers” can assist by mashing the strawberries or stirring in the sugar.



Ingredients

1 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 cup sugar

5 cups water

Approximately 1 cup fresh strawberries, sliced

In a small bowl, mash the sliced strawberries with a fork, until most of the pieces are small. Set aside.

In a large pitcher, mix the lemon juice, sugar and water until the sugar is completely dissolved. Add the strawberries and give another stir. Let chill in the refrigerator for an hour or two. Serve over ice.

Garlic and Herb Potato Salad

Sure, it's easy to buy a tub of potato salad at the store, but it won't be half as delicious, or nearly as much fun to serve at your picnic. Let your kids pick which herbs they'd like to add!



Ingredients

2 lbs small Yukon Gold Potatoes, cut into eighths

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup mayo

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

2-3 garlic cloves, minced

3 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs, such as dill, parsley, cilantro, scallion, chives, etc.

Salt and pepper to taste

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook potatoes about 20 minutes or until tender (this amount of time will vary based on the size of your potatoes).

While the potatoes are cooking, prepare the dressing. In a small bowl, combine the mayo, vinegar, and mustard. On a cutting board, sprinkle the little pile of minced garlic with a big pinch of salt, and then use the back of your knife to mash the garlic against the cutting board to make a paste. The goal here is to not have any huge chunks of garlic left. Add the mashed garlic and the herbs to the dressing mixture and stir to combine.

When potatoes are fully cooked, drain in a colander, and then place in a large bowl.

While they are still hot, pour the dressing over the potatoes and stir to coat all of the potatoes. Cover the potato salad and place in the refrigerator until cooled. If you like, sprinkle with more chopped herbs before serving.

Picnic Chicken

Fried chicken is a picnic classic, but let's be honest--it can be hard to get that perfect crunchy skin and tender meat when you're toting it to your favorite picnic spot. It often ends up greasy, bland, and disappointing. This picnic chicken is baked, not fried, so not only is it healthier, but it's also incredibly flavorful, without ever getting soggy. As a bonus, it's great served hot, cold, or room temperature- so you're sure to enjoy it wherever you may be eating!



Ingredients

- ½ cup good quality soy sauce
- ¼ cup fresh squeezed orange juice
- 2 lemons, juiced
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon mild smoked paprika
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup olive oil
- 4 pounds chicken legs

Place all ingredients except the olive oil and chicken into the bowl of a blender or food processor. Puree for 30 seconds on high.

With the motor running, slowly add the oil. Then, pour the marinade over chicken (either in a dish or a gallon-sized plastic bag). Marinate for 24 hours in the refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 400°F. Remove the chicken from the marinade and arrange on a baking sheet or baking dish. Roast for 45 minutes, or until the skin is nicely browned and the chicken is cooked through. Serve hot, cold, or anywhere in between.

Apple Pie Biscuits

Apple pie makes a wonderful end to a summer meal, and it tends to be a crowd-pleaser. These biscuits capture the flavor of apple pie, but in less fussy, more picnic-friendly package. (As in, you can eat this dessert with your hands!)



Ingredients

For the Apples:

1 Fuji apple, peeled, cored and sliced very thin
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons packed brown sugar

For the Topping:

1 large egg, beaten
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
pinch of salt

For the Biscuits:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
3/4 cup cold buttermilk

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.

To make the apples, place butter in a skillet over medium heat to melt. Add the apples, cinnamon, and brown sugar. Stir with a wooden spoon until all of the apples are coated and the sugar is melted over the apples, about 2 to 4 minutes. The mixture will be warm and glossy, but the apples won't be cooked through. Remove from the heat and set aside.

To make the biscuit dough, place flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl and add cold butter cubes. Using your fingers, rub the butter down into the flour. Some of the butter bits will be the size of oats, some the size of small peas. Stir in the granulated sugar.

Create a well in the center of the butter and flour mixture and add the buttermilk. Stir the mixture together until it is well moistened and holds together well. Biscuit dough should be soft and moist.

Generously dust a clear work surface with flour. Spoon dough onto the floured surface and use your hands to gather it into a ball and gently pat it into a small rectangle.

Use a rolling pin to gently roll the dough into a rectangle 1/2-inch thick, about 7 inches x 10 inches. Arrange cooled apples in a single layer over half of the rolled out biscuit dough. Fold the bare side of the dough over the apples and gently press the edges to seal in the apples. Use the palms of your hand to pat the dough into a 6 x 8-inch rectangle if the edges are looking a bit rounded.

Use a sharp knife to slice the dough into 12 squares. Using a spatula, place each biscuit onto the prepared baking sheet, about 2 inches apart.

In a small bowl, whisk together sugar for topping, cinnamon, and salt.

Brush each biscuit top with beaten egg and sprinkle generously with the cinnamon sugar mixture.

Bake for 12 to 14 minutes until the biscuits are risen and golden brown. Remove from the oven and serve warm, or cool completely before storing in an airtight container.

ICP

Intentional Catholic Parenting

7 Building Blocks to a Joyful Catholic Home

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