

## 2020 Prayer Letter Address Change Comments

Thank you so much  
for your prayers  
and support! I  
am grateful for  
your ministry!  
Sr. Annette  
his year.

Thank you for your  
continued prayers!  
Fr. Wick

Fr. Mark Murphy

THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR  
PRAYERS &  
SUPPORT FOR  
9 YEARS!

QA Prayer Letter via EMAIL rather than NCPS

DEAR St. E.A.S. MEN OF ACTION —

Every month I'm grateful for <sup>the</sup> thoughtful note of prayer. And, every month, I offer a little prayer for your group. For months, I'VE BEEN THINKING "I SHOULD DROP THEM A NOTE," AND FOR MONTHS IT STAYED ON THE BACKBURNER OF MANY IDEAS I HAVE FOR NICE-THINGS-TO-DO. WELL, HOW CAN I RESIST A PROVIDED PIECE OF PAPER & SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE!?

YOUR COMMUNITY & YOUR PRAYER ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO ME. MANY OF YOU KNEW ME AS AN ENGINEER AT COLLINS, KNOCKING AROUND THE IDEA OF PRIESTHOOD. IT WAS AT A CELEB (THAT MANY OF YOU WERE A PART OF) THAT I STARTED THE NUTTY JOURNEY I FIND MYSELF ON. (PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE PUT ~~THE~~ "PILGRIMAGE" BUT WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN I HAVE WRITTEN.)

---

I'M EXCITED FOR YOU THAT FR. GARY MAYER IS COMING AS PASTOR OF ST. E'S. HE WAS STARTING OUT AT SEMINARY AS I WAS COMPLETING IT. HE'S A GREAT GUY & WILL LEAD WELL, I'M SURE OF IT!

Continued blessings & prayers.

Fr. Greg Ball

Moving is NO FUN! I am  
glad to tell you I will be  
on a sabbatical from Aug. 16  
through Dec. 11 this year. I'm  
in San Antonio & really looking  
forward to it.

MOA Prayer Letter via **EMAIL**, rather than USPS.

My mail will be forwarded  
during that time -

Dr. Neal

Thanks for all  
your support &  
prayers MOA!

July 3, 2020

Dear Men of Action,

It has been on my heart to write to you for a few months. Then your very considerate and gentlemanly request for my change of address made it ever so convenient that I could not put off the Holy Spirit any longer.

I am so grateful and inspired by your courageous witness of true masculinity and fatherhood in this confusing and increasingly dark hour of our century's history. Your manly love for your Church, your parish, your families, and most of all for your God is doing more than you will know in this lifetime. By your constant dedication to your duties as fathers, husbands, brothers, sons & Christians, you remain for all a bright & beid image of God the Father in your steadfast providence, God the Son in your utterly selfless sacrifice, and God the Spirit in the fire of your courageous love for those whom God has given you.

And for the prayers and encouragement that your letters bring, I cannot thank you enough. I rely entirely on prayers and yours are deeply appreciated. Please know of my prayers for you through the Blessed Mother to the Heart of her Son.

In Jesus & Mary,

St. Louis Marie, OP

P. S. I am including an article that, when I read it, I knew I had to send it to you. God bless you all!

## Crisis Magazine -- "No Church for Young Men" by Eric Sammons

**"Children are the future** of the Church." How often are such truisms used to explain the extensive focus on a single demographic group within a parish? From youth ministry to religious education to Catholic schools, most Catholic parishes direct a large amount of their limited resources toward young people. After all, if our children fall away, the future of the Church will be dire indeed.

Of course, the future of the Church *is* dire, demographically speaking. In spite of all this focus on young people, we see them flocking for the door once they reach adulthood. The problem isn't bad or incompetent youth ministers; I've known many good and sincere Catholics involved in youth outreach, who work long hours and are committed to bringing kids to Christ. Yet, to repeat, it's not working. Once free from their parents' direct influence, kids are leaving the Church.

So, if the problem isn't a lack of focus or competent and sincere leaders, then what is it? I would argue that our model for reaching young people is fatally flawed.

I know that even suggesting that our current model of youth ministry is flawed will raise the hackles of the Catholic professional class, in spite of the current model's evident failure. For some reason, youth ministry is a sacred cow. However, we can't avoid the grim reality of millions of Catholics growing up and then moving out, even after having been involved in "good" youth ministry. Surely many youth programs are orthodox and very well-intentioned. This is my point. So why are young people still leaving? And how can we change this?

Finding the answer starts with looking at which factors influence a person's decision to remain Catholic after the teenage years. The biggest influence on them is the parents. As a recent study by the Pew Research Center noted, "Among those who were raised in a single religious background...the family's religious commitment is closely linked with retaining one's religion into adulthood. Those adults who say religion was very important to their family while growing up and whose parents frequently discussed religion are more likely than others to continue to identify with their parents' religion as adults."

For Catholics, if religion was "very important" in the family, then 73 percent of the time the kids remained Catholic after leaving the house. If it was "not too/not at all important," only 38 percent remained Catholic. This shouldn't be surprising to most people involved with youth outreach; they know it from experience. This is why many look for ways to involve parents in their youth activities. However, the model remains directed toward the kids, separate from their parents.

Research also points to the vital role specifically of the *father's* faith. A 2000 report in *Population Studies* magazine concluded that "it is the religious practice of the father of the family that, above all, determines the future attendance at or absence from church of the children." More specifically, it states:

In short, if a father does not go to church—no matter how faithful his wife's devotions—only one child in 50 will become a regular worshipper. If a father does go regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will become churchgoers (regular and irregular).

Only 2 percent of kids whose fathers don't practice the faith will end up practicing that faith! It's clear, then, that fathers more than anyone dramatically impact their children's future religious practice, and if parishes want children to retain their faith in adulthood (which is the purpose of youth ministry), they should focus not on the children but on the fathers.

Even with data supporting this conclusion, it still seems counterintuitive that to reach kids we shouldn't focus on them but on their fathers instead. Yet this is the biblical method of salvation.

In the Bible, whenever God works with a group of people, He does not direct His energies toward the entire group, but toward a mediator. Think of Abraham, Moses, or David: each of these men represented a much larger group of people. God first influenced and converted the one man, then He allowed that individual to influence the group he led and represented. This is also the fundamental way in which the Catholic Church operates: we have bishops and priests who receive specific graces and powers that are then used to help the laity draw closer to Christ.

The father is the "mediator"—the "priest"—of the family, the domestic church. Therefore it makes sense, both sociologically and theologically, to focus on fathers in order to save the children.

**How can we do this?** What practical steps can a parish take to influence fathers? Many people might suggest the typical answers, such as a men's Bible study group or a strong Knights of Columbus council. However, these things, while they can be beneficial, aren't enough. They may support men already strong in their faith, but they don't impart the faith or make it attractive to men. If we are going to attract and hold the attention of fathers of young children, parishes will need to make more radical changes. These will be highly controversial, but we need to ask ourselves: do we want to succeed in passing on the faith to future generations, or are we more concerned with maintaining the status quo?

The primary thing that needs to be done is to destroy the current ambiance found in most parishes, which is only attractive to gay men of the 1970s. Merely entering a typical suburban Catholic parish is emasculating, from the architecture to the music to the felt banners to the limp homily to the army of elderly female Eucharistic ministers. What red-blooded male would be interested in that if he did not already have a faith strong enough to see beyond it to the underlying reality? Parishes are sending a strong message without even realizing it: young virile men are not welcome.

What can be done to change this? Here are seven suggestions (with thanks to John Zmirak, who suggested a couple of them to me):

- 1) *Institute ad orientem-worship.* Men would prefer following a leader into battle to sitting around a table for a chat. When a priest leads his people in worship, not only in spirit, but in his body's orientation, he challenges men to follow him, and men love that challenge.
- 2) *Ensure there are only men and boys at the altar.* In many parishes, there is only one man at the altar during Mass: the priest. The altar servers are all girls, and the Eucharistic ministers are female as well. Men are not naturally inclined to follow women, though women will follow men. The visual of hordes of women at the altar sends an unwelcoming and effeminate message to most men.
- 3) *Maintain silence before and after Mass in the church.* Walking into a Catholic church full of the sound of people chattering away before Mass sends a signal that people there don't take the Mass seriously. Men want a faith that is serious above all else. They are not looking for a social club; they are looking for something to give their life to. Well-dressed male ushers should politely remind those who do talk before or after Mass to stop.
- 4) *Sing traditional hymns, not the 1970s folk drivels so popular today.* Men want to hear songs that are beautiful and inspire them to greater heights, not a thousand and one variations of kum-ba-yah.
- 5) *Institute men's groups (i.e. the Holy Name Society) that focus on concrete, practical activities.* Most men don't want to sit around in a group and share their feelings about a Bible passage. They want to *do things*. So have a men's group that does service projects, such as working at a soup kitchen, praying in front of Planned Parenthood, or building a grotto on the parish grounds. Such a group should be chaplained by the pastor, who connects their actions with their spirituality as Catholic men.
- 6) *Call for sacrifice.* Men don't want to hear "just be nice" week in and week out. They want to be challenged to go deeper in the faith, with practical and concrete challenges. So call them to make real sacrifices, such as fasting on Fridays or taking cold showers in reparation for sin or for the salvation of souls.
- 7) *Tell it like it is.* Stop mincing words. Confront the anti-Catholic secularism that's overtaking our culture, and directly address the crisis in the Church. Pretending there isn't rampant corruption at the highest levels of the Church only makes one look like a cowardly sycophant, not a courageous disciple of Christ that men will be willing to follow.

If we want the faith to survive tomorrow, it's imperative that we reach out to fathers today. This won't be easy. Parishes must change their entire mindset when it comes to helping young people, redirecting their focus from youth outreach to bringing fathers back to the faith. Only then will the next generation have a chance. If we save the father, we will save the youth, and save the future of the Church.