

# St. Louis College Ministry

*Keeping you Connected to the Fam*



How do you like the picture?! It was taken by Vickie Yozwiak, the Director of Religious Education for 5th grade and below at St. Louis. I had an awesome experience in Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families Conference as well as the weekend of the Papal Visit & Mass! Our office prayed for all of our young people and those of you away at school! The World Meeting of Families inspired the majority of the articles in this newsletter.

Enjoy all things pumpkin this Fall– it keeps the homesickness away. :)

-God Bless! St. Louis College Ministry

## Sunday Night Check Ups

Just a week ago, Maggie Fischer and I were leading a Confirmation large group session. There were about 70 teens there, all in their junior year of high school. You remember junior year, right? There's a lot going on: learning permits, driver's ed, driving tests, SAT prep, SAT tests, the beginning of the search for colleges, varsity sports, homecoming, prom, additional pressure to get good grades because those are the grades the "colleges really look at."

Maggie was acknowledging this and afterwards, she said to the group, "I hate to break it to you, but this is the least busy you will ever be in your life." There was hardly a response, although I imagine every teenager listening was silently dying inside. You mean it gets busier than this?!

It's hard to make a blanket statement that applies to everyone such as "You will never be less busy in your life", but the statement does point to a truth about busyness and how it consumes us. As we become older, more mature, and more organized, we are capable of putting more on our plate. We sign up for more activities, we acquire more responsibility in our jobs, we enter into relationships that require time and effort in order to be successful. We become busier.

I was really busy in high school, and decided that I wanted

### Balance Check List

- \_\_\_\_\_ Enough Sleep
- \_\_\_\_\_ Eating healthily
- \_\_\_\_\_ Exercising 3-4 times a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leisure & Rest
- \_\_\_\_\_ Studying Enough for Classes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Time to Pray & Attend Mass
- \_\_\_\_\_ Time for Fun & Friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ Service to Community

to live differently in college. I still wanted to have great activities on my resume; I still wanted to experience intramurals and service trips and dances; I still wanted to work hard and be successful. But it came down to this. I am a Christian, and I am called to live my life in a way that reflects Christ! My life should be attractive and inspiring to others. While there's something impressive about someone who is very involved and seems to have it all together, there's nothing attractive about someone who is sleep deprived, fatigued, and constantly talking about just how busy they are. "How are you?" "Good, busy." It's the oldest line in the book. Well, probably not. But it's pretty old! God loves you and wants you to enjoy your life, and sometimes, busyness can detract from the enjoyment.

Finding the balance when it comes to being busy is really difficult and I can't say that I have mastered it, or that I know many who have! What I do know is that it takes wisdom and maturity to know when to pull out of an activity and how to set aside time for personal health. I am bringing back the balance check list.

Every once in a while (like now), I need to take a look at this check list and evaluate how I am doing, and I usually do so in the context of prayer. Something like this: "Alright, Lord, how am I doing these days?" Again, remember how much God loves you and how the Holy Spirit is with you to help direct and guide all of your actions. God has given you all the time that you need to do exactly all the things you need to do. It may not feel like it, but it's true!

Consider making it a habit to review this checklist every Sunday night, before the new week starts. I think it will help you balance your life!

## The Family Fully Alive— What is your role in the wellbeing of your family?



The World Meeting of Families was held in Philadelphia from September 22-27 and the St. Louis CYM Office was fortunate enough to attend. Allow me to be honest for a second: I wasn't too excited about the World Meeting of Families at first. In fact, I wasn't too excited about families in general. There's been a lot of talk about families recently, especially in the Church world, when it comes to the different ministries we provide. Currently, most parishes provide very segmented ministries. For example, we have middle school youth ministry, high school youth ministry, young adult ministry, "regular adult ministry", etc. There aren't a ton of activities and ministries that are open to the participation of the entire family. And that's been okay for me because I haven't known, or even thought about, anything different.

**"When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me with you..."**  
(Jeremiah 29:13-14)

I experienced what I consider to be my conversion in high school. I consider this time my conversion because it's when I became "on fire" for God and for my faith. At the time, I didn't think my family had anything to do with my conversion. I believed I experienced my conversion without their help.

### Appreciation for my Family

The week I spent at the World Meeting of Families gave me a lot to think about. There were keynote talks which were attended by all 15, 000 participants as well as break out talks, that you could attend based on your personal interests. Many of the talks I heard addressed the parents—encouraging them in the difficult work of being the spiritual leaders of their families, offering advice for how to juggle all the responsibilities of adult life with their children, and reaffirming how influential they are in spiritual lives of their other family members.

Though I thought my family had "very little" to do with my own conversion and that I had come to a relationship with God more or less without them, this past week, I was filled with appreciation and recognition for all the many ways that I had been disposed me to a relationship with God. My parents sacrificed financially to send me to a Catholic elementary and middle school, we said grace before meals, we prayed for all of our family members every night,

and when I was in high school, my parents allowed me to attend youth ministry events by driving me and paying for different fees. They instilled the fact that God was a priority in life and without that, who knows where I would be today.

### Different Beginnings but the Same Destination

We all come from different places in terms of our faith, and so do our families. In some families, the father is the spiritual leader; in others, it's really mom that makes the family attend Church on Sundays. In some families, the parents are dedicated to the Catholic faith, but the children are still determining what they believe. When I came to know the love of God, I immediately desired my family members to know it as well, but I quickly learned that I can't force that knowledge on anyone. God asks us to pray with trust and hope for the members of our family. He is taking care of them and working for their salvation, far harder than we could ever work. Our job is to be patient and prayerful. I have seen amazing things happen in my family, though none of them in my own time.

Make it a habit to pray everyday for the members of your family, that they may know the love of God and be changed by it! I believe God gave us the families we are born into for a reason and we have a particular responsibility to watch out for them!

### But what if I've fallen away?

On Saturday of the WMOF, we spent the day camped on the grass at the Festival of Families in Philadelphia, awaiting the arrival of Pope Francis. While we were there, we had the opportunity to make a lot of friends with those around us. One of the couples I was speaking with were astounded that I was so young *and* faithful. They immediately began telling me a saga of how their youngest son was being influenced by a "bad girlfriend" and no longer wanted to attend Mass. In fact, he didn't even consider himself Christian anymore. He just keeps telling his mom, "I'm a good person! You have to believe I'm still a good person." The parents were extremely distressed and didn't know what to make of the situation.

I was glad that I got to speak with these parents because I could offer them words of consolation—the same words that I would share with the son of this couple. I told the parents that faith is a journey, and college is a time in life when many people start putting more effort into actively figuring out what they believe. This is an important stage of faith, even if it seems to bring one away for a while. You may feel like the son—searching, influenced, misunderstood, and maybe even confused. I encourage you to continue the journey. Actively searching for the truth can only take you somewhere good!

## From the Streets of Crime to the Streets of Philly

So guess who was the emcee of the “Festival of Families”- an evening program held on Saturday, September 26, in Philadelphia, that was attended by Pope Francis. Yup, Marky-Mark Wahlberg! This may seem like an unusual choice of an emcee, but Mark Wahlberg stood on stage as a man who has turned from his life of drugs and imprisonment to find success in the entertainment industry and joy in the Catholic faith.

By no means am I holding Mark Wahlberg on a pedestal as the “ideal Catholic” (because really, we shouldn’t do that to anyone), but personally, I am so grateful to have the example of a celebrity who unashamedly owns to being a fol-

lower of Jesus and a member of the Catholic Church. His example is such a reminder to me that we need faithful Christians in all realms of life- the entertainment industry, the corporate world, service positions. Look up some of the interviews and articles on Mark’s conversion- they are inspiring!



“Being a good actor or a good producer: that’s not going to help me sleep at night or get me into heaven. The most important thing from where I sit is to be a good father, a good husband, and a good human being – a man who helps his fellow man and raises his kids to be good human beings too. Every single aspect of my family life is joy.”

## Dead Body on Tour in the United States

I am completely aware the Catholics had some pretty... let’s say “odd” (but awesome!)... traditions and practices that take a lot of explaining in order to understand. I was reminded of one of them while I was at the World Meeting of Families when another excited participant informed me, “Maria Goretti is on tour in the US!” If you haven’t heard of Maria Goretti, she is an Italian Saint who was murdered when she was just 11 years old in 1902. So essentially, it was St. Maria’s deceased body on tour in the US.

The question you may be asking is why. The Catholic Church venerates the body parts, and even objects that have touched the body parts, of saints because we believe them to be sacred objects that God can use to bless us. We call these remnants of body parts and objects that have touched them **relics**.

The belief in relics is actually grounded in Scripture. There is the

story of the prophet Elisha, who was buried in a tomb after his death. One day, the Israelites were burying another man, and in their haste, threw the second man into Elisha’s tomb. When the second man’s body touched Elisha’s *bones*, the second man rose and came back to life! (2 Kings 13:20-22) There was the hemorrhaging woman who just needed to touch Jesus’ *cloak* to be healed (Mark 5:27-29). There’s even this shocking passage that I had never noticed before: “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even *handkerchiefs* and *aprons* that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them” (Acts 19:11-12). So our belief that saints bodies and belongings are sacred is supported by the Bible.

St. Maria Goretti’s body is especially remarkable because it is **incorrupt**, meaning that even in death, it has been preserved from decay. There are several saints who have incorrupt bodies and I believe that God

**“I forgive Alessandro Serenelli ... and I want him with me in heaven forever.”**  
-St. Maria Goretti

uses this to get us to pay extra attention to the life of the saint.

St. Maria was the victim of a failed attempt at rape. When her predator, a neighbor named Alessandro Serenelli, tried to take advantage of her, Maria resisted, leading Alessandro to stab her out of rage. St. Maria did not die instantaneously and while she was on her death bed, she forgave Alessandro for what he had done to her. To me, St. Maria is an incredible example of both purity and forgiveness. With a few other members of the St. Louis staff, I was able to see her body (encased in wax) while in Philadelphia. I touched a rosary to the outside of her coffin, making my rosary a “third class” relic. I pray that we may be as pure and forgiving as St. Maria!

**YOUR PARISH IS  
PRAYING FOR YOU!**

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**SAVE THE DATES!**

- **1st Sunday of the Month, 7-8:30pm**– Praise & Work in Rooms 301 & 302 of the Social Hall
- **October 17, 10:30-12:30pm**– 4 volunteers needed to help 2 parish families around their houses and yards! Please email Katie Erskine ASAP if interested!
- **December 20**– College BRUCNHES Service to the Homeless & College Christmas Party
- **January 6**– College Day Retreat
- **May 23-28**– College Habitat for Humanity

**OCTOBER:**

**RESPECT LIFE MONTH**

A couple of my friends from college joined a missionary organization after graduating called The Culture Project ([restoreculture.com](http://restoreculture.com)) which is dedicated to transforming the culture through the experience of virtue. Their missionaries travel the country (and world!) giving pro-life and chastity talks. The Culture Project hosted an event called “Wine and Wisdom” one night during the World Meeting of Families that I was fortunate to be able to attend. At their event they had an impressive panel of well-known Catholic speakers– Jason and Crystalina Evert and Brian Butler- all known for chastity and purity ministries; Matt Fradd– known for education about the harmful effects of pornography and empowering people to break the addiction; and Christina Barba, the founder of The Culture Project.

The audience was able to ask the panel some difficult questions about topics that are considered controversial or misunderstood by our culture: saving sex for marriage, abortion, contraception, same-sex marriage, and pornography (to name a few). While listening to the panelists answer the difficult questions, I was so greatly inspired by the wise, loving, and beautiful manner in which they were able to articulate the truths about life and love which we hold to as Catholics.

I reflected upon my own beliefs. I sincerely and wholeheartedly believed everything that was said by the panelists, but I realized that I have become rusty on articulating (and even understanding at times) *why*. And because I have become so rusty, I’ve also allowed people who hold the opposite view of myself to tell me that my view on life and on love is evil, exclusive, mean, intolerant, unaccepting etc. when the reality is that our Catholic faith holds a wonderful, freeing, inclusive, and life-giving position on the human person! During Respect Life month, join me in discovering or rediscovering the beauty of life and love. With love, Katie

**Important “Attachments”**

1. World Youth Day Pamphlet

Prayerfully consider attending the World Youth Day Pilgrimage with St. Louis and the rest of the Archdiocese of Baltimore! The deadline is now November 1st so there is not a lot of time! St. Louis will be working together to with the hope of raising \$2000 of the cost per person.

2. Catholic Advocacy Network

We need the Catholics of Maryland to take a stand! There are two important issues that will be available for you vote upon in the next election: a) Whether or not more tax money should be allotted to Catholic schools which would allow St. Louis to offer spots at its school for HALF the present cost and 2) whether or not doctors should be able to prescribe lethal medication to patients who have been deemed mentally cognizant, and have received a terminal diagnosis (Physician-assisted Suicide).

**Please consider filling out the Catholic Advocacy Form OR registering online, in order that you may be kept in the loop and alerted when Important issues are on the ballot!**