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Pages for the young adult Catholic

hope
confidence
expectation

Ask Mason & Teo



My young adult son won't go to church

Hi Mason & Teo, I look forward to reading your columns in the Hawaii Catholic Herald and I have learned a lot about the Catholic Church because of them. I am not a young adult but I am a parent of a young adult. I have sent my son through Catholic schools all of his life and I go to Mass regularly. I have tried to get my son to go to church but he says that he doesn't need to go to church. He believes in God and he says he is spiritual. He doesn't see the need to go to church because he can worship God anywhere because God is everywhere and he thinks religion is pointless. Can you help me explain why going to Mass is important? (Frustrated Parent)

Dear Frustrated Parent, Today, many young Catholics view going to Sunday Mass as an option. However, the church teaches that faithful Catholics are obligated to attend Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation. The Third Commandment tells us to "keep holy the Sabbath Day." Early Christians observed Sunday as a day of worship and rest in order to honor the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We have a responsibility to worship God. In participating in Mass we are honoring and worshipping Jesus, the Son of God. Breaking this Commandment is seriously sinful.

Yes, we can worship God anywhere. But at Mass, we hear God's Word in the Scriptures and are nourished by the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. "I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink

Going to Mass connects us to a Christian Community. We cannot live as Christians just by ourselves. We need to enter into relationships with others.

his blood, you do not have life within you" (John 6:53).

When dealing with life's challenges — health problems; temptations to abuse sex, alcohol and drugs; difficulties at work or school, troubles in our families and marriages — we need God's help to live as Jesus and his church call us to live. The Mass fills our spiritual hunger and gives us the grace to become better persons.

Going to Mass connects us to a Christian Community. We cannot live as Christians just by ourselves. We need to enter into relationships with others. The word "religion" comes from the Latin word "religio" which means "relationships." According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Mass is the "summit and source of

Christian life." We concentrate on our vertical relationship to God without losing sight of our horizontal relationship with the worshipping community. Like the cross, we need both God and each other.

Going to Mass regularly instills a spiritual discipline that helps a person through the rest of the week. Having Sunday Mass available is a privilege we often take for granted. Some places do not have Sunday Mass because of a shortage of priests. Be grateful for the opportunity to go to Mass and participate in the Eucharistic celebration.

Some say that they don't go to Mass because "they don't get anything out of it. Instead of trying to get something out of it, you should try putting more into it, such as singing, active listening, praying, and responding. Everyone must take their part in the celebration. It is a communal effort.

Going to Mass is not a punishment. It's not a chore to get out of the way so you can go to the movies or go out to eat breakfast. The Mass is celebrated at Christ's instruction, "Do this in memory of me." Understanding why the Mass is so important is the first step to loving the Mass. And when you come to love the Mass, going to church on Sunday no longer feels like an "I have to," but instead becomes an "I need to; I want to."

Mass is central to all faithful followers of Jesus Christ. It is the summit of all we do and the source from which all blessings flow. Faithfulness to the Sunday Mass is the bare minimum of being a good Catholic. Much more is needed if we are to allow our faith to be an intimate part of our lives. Begin by filling your spiritual hunger with Mass every Sunday.

Mason and Teo Matsuda are parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Ewa Beach and have served in youth and young adult ministries for years. Write to them at yaadvice@yahoo.com.

Heather Ogata with her husband, Damon, and her four children, Promise, 8, Joseph, 6, Abraham, 3, and Ethan, 1.



Photo courtesy Edwina Fujimoto

'God gave me the gifts to help'

Wife, mother, medical assistant and home care nurse still finds time to volunteer at her parish

By Anna Weaver
Hawaii Catholic Herald

Heather Ogata wanted to be in the medical field since she was a child, not because her younger self was particularly fascinated with the scientific aspect of medicine but because she "always wanted to help people."

Ogata became a Catholic at 15. "As I grew more in my faith, I just wanted to help more because it felt like that's what God was telling me to do," said the 25-year-old Big Island resident.

She considered becoming a doctor, but once she started a family with her husband Damon, Ogata decided she was probably called elsewhere. Instead this mother of four children — ages 8, 6, 3 and 1 — became a certified nurse's assistant, working first in nursing homes, and then as a home care nurse. In the last year she's also added a part-time job as a medical assistant and receptionist for a private doctor's practice.

"I feel I was drawn to [this work] and God gave me the gifts to help," said Ogata, who attends St. John Baptist Mission in Kealahou. "I think that has to do with being Catholic and being more involved."

In her medical assistant job, she checks in patients, assists in procedures, helps with prescriptions and gives vaccines. As a home care nurse, Ogata spends two days a week with her client, a paraplegic, helping him and his mother through his daily routine.

Ogata said she prefers home care over nursing homes because, "It's more one on one. You spend more time with people and get to know their families."

A typical day starts at 8 a.m. getting her client ready for the day by helping him shave, brush teeth, dress and get to the chiropractor. Afterward, "we take him for a cruise up Alii Drive, because he likes the ocean," or sometimes they'll even take him out in the water to float around.

Then, while his mother leaves the house for awhile in the afternoon, Ogata does tilt table exercises with her client or gives him a massage as she silently prays for him. Sometimes she'll also pray with her client's

mother if she's having a rough day.

"I always try to be joyful," said Ogata. "If she needs me to pray with her, I'll pray with her."

She uses prayer to help with her own job frustrations such as when her client, who can't speak, gets upset, and she doesn't know what he wants, or in dealing with new tasks in her medical assistant/receptionist work.

Ogata's faith life is rooted at St. John's where she cantors, leads children's liturgy, and helps with the annual Young Adult Connection event and with youth activities. When she had more time, she was a member of the Diocesan Youth and Young Adult Board. Now her husband is on it.

It's not easy taking care of a young family and managing two part-time jobs, but Ogata and her husband have the support of fellow parishioners.

"It's nice to have a Catholic community at our church that's really there for us when we need help," she said.

Ogata thinks that once her children are older she'll go back to school, maybe for a nursing degree. "I've been praying on it. I go with the flow," she said.

In the next issue: A young adult finds faith and work intersect in his job as a high school counselor.

Movie reviews

I Love You, Beth Cooper (Fox Atomic): A nerdy high school valedictorian (Paul Rust) uses his speech to declare his love for the head cheerleader (Hayden Panettiere) after which the unlikely pair have a series of graduation night adventures in the company of his sexually conflicted best friend (Jack T. Carpenter) and her two closest pom-pom pals (Lauren London and Lauren Storm). In director Chris Columbus' comic misfire, adapted by Larry Doyle from his novel, a potentially charming central relationship gets lost in the shuffle of well-worn social stereotypes, harshly violent confrontations with the heroine's boyfriend (Shawn Roberts) and free-wheeling sexual attitudes and behavior. Brief nongraphic, nonmarital sexual activity, an off-screen three-way encounter, benign view of group sex and homosexuality, underage drinking, drug references, much sexual and occasional irreverent humor, at least one use of the F-word, much crude language and a half-dozen uses of profanity. O (R)

The Stoning of Soraya M. (Roadside/Mpower): Compelling and often moving, if necessarily violent, fact-based drama set in Iran, in which a philandering husband (Navid Negahban) falsely accuses his wife (Mozhan Marno) of adultery with her employer (Parviz Sayyad), eventually convincing her neighbors (David Diaan and Ali Pourtash, among others) to condemn her, despite the vigorous protests of her courageous aunt (Shohreh Aghdashloo). Director and co-writer Cyrus Nowrasteh's adaptation of the best-selling book,



which also features Jim Caviezel as author-journalist Freidoune Sahebjam, takes an admirable stand against injustice, but depicts the climactic execution extremely graphically. A sequence of intense violence, torture, sexual references, one rough and a few crude and crass terms. In Farsi. Subtitles. L (R)

Whatever Works (Sony Pictures Classics): A pessimistic New York grouch (Larry David) finds his life transformed when he reluctantly

shelters a homeless but irrepressibly cheerful young Southerner (Evan Rachel Wood), and they fall for each other. Though undeniably clever at times, writer-director Woody Allen's comedy of manners mocks evangelical Christians through the waif's parents (Patricia Clarkson and Ed Begley Jr.) and heavily-handedly rams home the message that, in a meaningless universe, any path to temporary fulfillment, particularly that of unbridled sexuality, ought to be pursued. Adultery, implied group sex

and homosexual activity, images of full nudity, a suicide theme, some sexual humor, at least one crude and one crass word, and about a dozen uses of profanity. O (PG-13)

Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg (International Film Circuit): Warmhearted documentary celebrating the life and career of Gertrude Berg, the creator, principal writer and star of "The Goldbergs," a popular radio series about a middle-class Jewish family that became one of TV's first sitcoms in 1949. Filmmaker

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (Warner Bros.): At the behest of his mentor (Michael Gambon), the now-teenage wizard (Daniel Radcliffe) ingratiates himself with a returning Hogwarts instructor (Jim Broadbent) who once taught his archenemy Lord Voldemort and whose memories may hold the key to defeating the villain, while adolescent romantic tensions complicate the lad's relationship with his two closest friends (Rupert Grint and Emma Watson). As directed by David Yates, this sixth adaptation of J.K. Rowling's hugely popular fantasy novel series is a richly textured, though at times overcrowded, adventure narrative in which good and evil are clearly delineated, but characters present a range of moral shading. Also shown in Imax. Moderate action violence, occasional peril, a couple of crass expressions, and a few vaguely sexual references. A-II (PG)

Aviva Kempner's accomplished profile of this media pioneer, whose scripts promoted familial relationships over possessions, offers insights into the early history of broadcasting, the widespread anti-Semitism against which Berg courageously struggled, and the anti-communism crusade of the 1950s which temporarily drove the show off the air. Mature themes, including suicide, and incidental but negative treatment of Catholic historical figures. A-II (NR)

Commentary



Anna Weaver

A homecoming story

“Who says you can't go home?” That's Bon Jovi's refrain and it might as well be the motto of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans' Operation Helping Hands, which has been rebuilding the homes of disabled, elderly and uninsured people since Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in August 2005.

If you think four years after Katrina that most of the reconstruction would be done, you'd be wrong. Refurbishing or completely rebuilding the estimated 200,000 homes that received major hurricane damage continues to be a huge task. Home owners who qualified for rebuilding grants often didn't receive enough to cover all repair costs, some were cheated by contractors, and others needed to use the grant money for basic living costs.

To help those who otherwise wouldn't be able to fix their homes, New Orleans' Catholic Charities formed Operation Helping Hands in November 2005, first gutting homes and now rebuilding them.

There are many people still waiting to come home and others who have relocated and won't be back. Four years later, New Orleans' population has returned to only three-fourths of its pre-Katrina size.

Operation Helping Hands is trying to make a homecoming possible for as many as they can. They've worked on more than 2,500 homes in the last four years and have had 2,000-plus volunteers. Among those volunteers have been seven groups of undergraduates from Northwest

ern University's Sheil Catholic Center, the college's Catholic campus ministry, who first came the December after Katrina, and Sheil Young Alumni, who started service visits last year.

In the latter group's second trip, seven Sheil alumni including myself spent July 15-19 in New Orleans volunteering with Operation Helping Hands. We worked in the east end of the city on an elderly woman's almost-complete home, caulking, painting, cutting quarter round flooring trim and other "punch out" tasks.

The homeowner has been living with her daughter in Oklahoma ever since Katrina, and in a few months she'll finally be able to return to her house. But just down the block, there's a gutted grocery store and houses with gaping walls ready to collapse. Public housing apartments, including several buildings finished right before the hurricane, remain unrepaired.

Our site coordinator, Eric, also gave us a tour of the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward, the area most devastated by Katrina flooding. There are new brightly painted blocks of Habitat for Humanity houses and several designer-styled homes funded by Brad Pitt. Other streets have many homes that have been rebuilt or refurbished. Yet there are still empty lots with nothing but a stoop, and many damaged homes. There's more that needs to be done.

For the seven of us who were active at Sheil during college, this year's trip felt like our own sort of homecoming. The Catholic Center



The Sheil group in front of the house they worked on. From left: Helping Hands volunteer Murphy, Sheil alumni Chris, Anna, Tatiana, Matt, Christine, site coordinator Eric, alumni Mike, and Anne.

was not only the place to go to Mass on Sunday but our oasis amidst school stress. We learned the value of service there through weekly volunteering and school break trips. I did Habitat for Humanity in Jonestown, Miss., one of several places to which Sheil has taken groups.

Since we all graduated within

the last four years (three of us only two months before Katrina), we've gotten jobs, gone to graduate school and gotten wrapped up in post-college life. I've carried the Catholic values and commitment I learned at Sheil with me back to Hawaii, but I've never found a place quite like Sheil.

It isn't easy now to get away

from work, school and other everyday obligations. One alumna in dental school had even worked Wednesday morning and then flew to New Orleans still in her scrubs. But I think we all knew we needed to make this trip.

We needed to do the "punch out" house work in the humid NOLA weather, getting sore and dirty and paint-covered, to help even in our short work time those that were still waiting to come home get there that much quicker. We needed to hear the stories from homeowners whom Catholic Charities is helping, to remember that New Orleans is still recovering and still needs assistance.

We needed to see the good work that Operation Helping Hand is doing and hear from the long term volunteers that work with the program, the majority of whom are young adults like ourselves and demonstrate the energy and dedication to service people our age can possess. We needed our prayer time and intimate Mass for eight, led by a priest who's worked with Sheil since its groups first started coming to New Orleans.

And we needed the fellowship with each other, whether that was joking over our "haunted" sleeping quarters at a former children's residential program, heading to Preservation Hall to hear some great jazz, eating our weight in N'Awlins cuisine, or reminiscing about college days. We needed that to know that even though we're out of college, it's never too late to have the spirit of Sheil back.

Find out more about Operation Helping Hands at: http://www.ccano.org/operation_helping_hands.htm