

## Ask Mason & Teo



### I want to pray like them — out loud

Dear Mason & Teo,  
I am part of a Bible study group where the leader picks someone to pray. I don't know how to pray aloud and I am afraid the leader may pick me to pray. I am not sure if God even answers my prayers. How do you know what God sounds like? How do these people know what to say in prayer? I wish I could pray like them. Any advice? (Silent Prayer Warrior)

Dear Silent Prayer Warrior,  
It is great to hear that you are involved in a small group community that helps you to grow closer to Jesus Christ and one another.

Have you ever walked into a conversation between two people and just listened to what they were saying? How about a conversation between your parents when they're talking about you? Well, praying aloud is sort of like that. It is that person's conversational relationship with God and your presence in the conversation includes you in it.

Silence is the universal prayer. The same letters in the word "silent" rearranged is the word "listen." Listening to God is prayer.

We Catholics pray in many different ways: contemplation, the rosary, novenas, meditating on the Scriptures, reciting favorite prayers and, of course, the Mass, which is the greatest and highest form of prayer. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2562), tells us that prayer involves the whole person. It is the "whole man who prays." Scripture speaks of the soul or the heart of a person as the source of prayer. It is "the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain."

"The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live ... The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter because as the image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant" (CCC 2563).

Thus, "Christian prayer is ... the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man" (CCC 2564).

Prayer is a gift from God

and to pray one must freely consent to it. If you feel uncomfortable praying aloud, tell the leader of your group. Mother Angelica of the Eternal Word Network once said, "The best way to pray is the way you pray best."

It sounds like you want to grow into praying aloud. Writing down your prayer helps. Practice often and eventually you'll be able to pray without using notes.

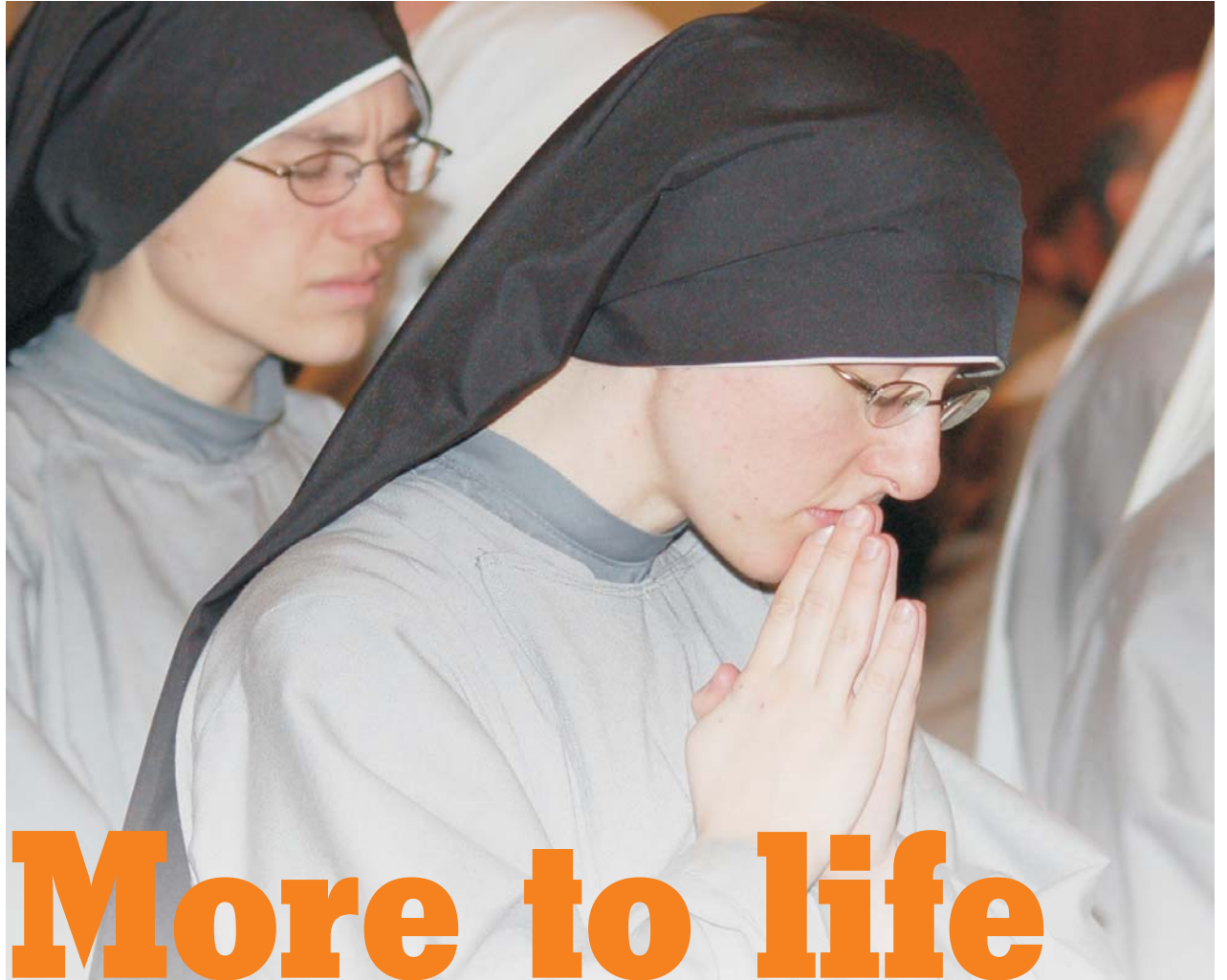
We can become discouraged in prayer because God doesn't seem to hear us. God hears and answers every prayer. We just cannot see, or always understand, how God is answering our prayer. Sometimes his response is "no." God knows what is best for us. Although we may want something that seems good to us now, God may deny our request because of what it may mean to us later.

Since prayer comes from the depths of a humble and contrite heart, it'll often sound like your own voice or the voice of conscience. To determine whether that voice is truly from God, we must measure its fruit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Prayer can be a battle against ourselves when we feel too tired, busy or bored to pray. It can also be a battle against the devil who does not want us to pray. The evil one will do anything to keep us away from God. If a person is not trying to live the Gospel, he or she will not be able to pray. Therefore, to pray well then is to live well, to live the faith, to practice virtue and to fight temptation. "We pray as we live, because we live as we pray" (CCC 2725).

Say a prayer today!

*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.*



## More to life

### Olympic prodigy trades skates for sandals of Franciscan sister

By Simon Caldwell  
Catholic News Service

#### LONDON

In the silence of St Joseph's Convent in Leeds each morning, Sister Catherine dresses herself in a gray habit. She fixes a black veil on her head and fastens to her waist a cord tied into three knots — representing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience — and she slips her feet into the sandals of a Franciscan nun.

Twelve years ago, when she was Kirstin Holum, she was reaching for her skates instead. In 1998 she competed for the United States at the Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. After placing sixth in the 3,000-meter and seventh in the 5,000-meter speedskating races, the 17-year-old was recognized as a prodigy racing against older women in their prime.

Instead of continuing her speedskating career, she joined the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal, an order founded in New York in 1988. In September she arrived in England to work with the poor, with youth and to evangelize. She is a member of a community of four nuns — three American and one English — based in a house that, until last year, was owned and occupied by the Sisters of Mercy.

"I could have gone on" with speedskating, Sister Catherine told Catholic News Service in a Feb. 22 telephone interview. "I was thinking this (Vancouver, British Columbia) could have been my fourth Olympics, but I am so grateful the Lord led me to where I am now."

When speaking to youth groups Sister Catherine makes no secret of her past as an Olympic speedskater because it opens up the possibility of

a religious vocation to young people who would never have thought about it.

"Usually you get a shocked look," she told CNS. "It is hard for children sometimes to picture you as anything else than a nun. It is definitely a starting point for evangelization, for bringing them closer to Christ, because they can see there is a real person standing in front of them and not just a nun."

Kirstin Holum grew up in a suburb of Milwaukee. Her mother, Dianne Holum, was a speedskater who won an Olympic gold medal in 1972 and became a successful coach. She also was a fervent Catholic who conveyed to her daughter the importance of her faith; in 1996 she paid for her daughter to make a pilgrimage to the Marian shrine in Fatima, Portugal.

There, Holum, at the age of 16, felt a powerful sense of vocation and, she said, the "powerful experience of realizing Jesus' presence in the Blessed Sacrament."

She said she prayed to Mary for guidance about her future as a speedskater and, after she had competed in Japan, decided to give it up.

"I was not feeling in my heart that I would be skating the rest of my life; I knew there was more to life than sports," she said. "I never regretted that decision. I think it was just a grace from God to bring me to something else."

"I saw people making sports into the most important thing, and I didn't desire that," she said.

After retiring in 1998 Holum enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago, specializing in photography. When she graduated she joined her mother in Denver and later spent three months on the Crossroads pro-life

walk across the U.S., in which she developed the habits of daily Mass, praying the rosary, eucharistic adoration and "offering up sacrifices for the pro-life cause."

On returning home she recovered a sense of vocation and began to pray for direction. The answer came in 2002 when she walked from Denver to Toronto — approximately 1,500 miles by road — and, at World Youth Day, encountered the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal for the first time. A year later she joined them at their headquarters in New York, taking her religious name after St. Catherine of Siena, whose writings she found inspirational.

"I have never regretted a single day," said Sister Catherine. "I am preparing to make my final profession of vows in June. I am seeing the Lord bring me to where he created me to be. I am preparing to say 'yes' to him for the rest of my life. ... I will belong to him forever."

"There is a lot of joy that comes from doing God's will and a lot of peace, and belonging totally to him as his spouse is the most fulfilling thing I know," she said. "I have been very, very happy since I entered the community."

Sister Catherine has spent most of the last six-and-half years in New York, working with young people and helping in such community projects as soup kitchens. She is now helping the sisters settle in Leeds, in northern England, where they are still in the process of discerning their mission.

Committed to simplicity of life, the nuns have denied themselves a television and a video. This means that Sister Catherine cannot follow the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, though, she confesses, "I love reading about it."

"It brings back a lot of good memories and it is nice to share with the sisters, too, all the memories I have," she said.



"Invictus" -- One of the USCCB's picks for Top Movies of 2009.

CNS photo/Warner Bros

# Oscar, schmoscar: Here are the real BEST MOVIES of 2009

By John Mulderig  
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK

This year, for the first time since 1943, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences — as the folks behind the Oscars are formally

known — allowed for 10 nominees, rather than five, in the category of best picture. At the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office for Film & Broadcasting, the tradition of selecting a roster of 10 top films each year — based on a combination of spiritual and moral as well as artistic criteria — dates

back to 1965.

Though there's no red carpet or golden statuette involved, following, in alphabetical order, are the selections for 2009, together with their USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications and Motion Picture Association of America ratings:

- Based on real events, "The Blind Side" recounts how a wealthy white couple — portrayed by Sandra Bullock and Tim McGraw — offered shelter to a homeless black student. Writer-director John Lee Hancock's unapologetically Christian tale of human solidarity is funny, shrewd and uplifting (A-III, PG-13).

- The thoughtful French-language docudrama "The Class" re-creates the experiences of an idealistic literature teacher over the course of an academic year. Director and co-writer Laurent Cantet creates an engrossing meditation on social and class divisions and on the possibilities of an educator's vocation (A-III, PG-13).

- "Fantastic Mr. Fox" — a droll stop-motion animated adventure — tells how the titular creature (voiced by George Clooney) tries to recapture his wild past as a

chicken thief. Director and co-writer Wes Anderson's clever, lovingly crafted film offers abundant fun for youngsters and a few insights for adults as well (A-I, PG).

- A diverting fact-based comedy, "The Informant!" follows the exploits of an up-and-coming agribusiness executive (Matt Damon) who suddenly turns whistle-blower. Director Steven Soderbergh's offbeat tale benefits from Damon's intense performance as a curiously sympathetic egomaniac (A-III, R).

- In "The International," an intense thriller, a dogged Interpol agent (Clive Owen) and a New York prosecutor (Naomi Watts) investigate the elusive leaders of a global bank implicated in murder. Director Tom Tykwer's sleek conspiracy yarn focuses on the frustrations of operating within the law and the perils of acting outside it (A-III, R).

- The uplifting fact-based drama "Invictus" — starring Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon — charts South African President Nelson Mandela's campaign to unite his country behind the national rugby team. Director Clint Eastwood's account effectively chronicles how Mandela used sporting enthusiasm to break down lingering racial prejudice (A-III, PG-13).

- "Julie & Julia" is the charming dramatization of passages in the lives of master chef Julia Child (Meryl Streep) and Internet blogger Julie Powell (Amy Adams). Writer-director Nora Ephron whips up a delicious melange of the two women's memoirs and details the ingredients requisite for a successful marriage (A-III, PG-13).

- "Star Trek" — an exhilarating prequel — sees the youthful James Tiberius Kirk (Chris Pine) forgoing his delinquent ways to join the crew of the Starship Enterprise. Director J.J. Abrams skillfully balances well-executed action sequences with an absorbing human story (A-III, PG-13).

- The animated instant classic "Up" tells the story of a grumpy widower (voiced by Ed Asner), who decides to relocate his home to South America with the help of thousands of balloons. This touching fable from director and co-writer Pete Docter offers lessons on love, loss, marriage and perseverance (A-I, PG).

- In the intriguing fantasy "Where the Wild Things Are," a

young runaway (Max Records) sails to the island abode of a community of giants. Director and co-writer Spike Jonze's subtle adaptation of Maurice Sendak's classic book is a wistful meditation on the interior struggles of childhood (A-II, PG)

Mulderig is on the staff of the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. More reviews are available online at [www.usccb.org/movies](http://www.usccb.org/movies).

## Ratings

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I — general patronage; A-II — adults and adolescents; A-III — adults; L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O — morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G — general audiences, all ages admitted; PG — parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R — restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 — no one 17 or under admitted; NR — no rating.

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel .....A-I (PG)  
Avatar .....L (R)  
The Blind Side .....A-III (PG-13)  
The Book of Eli .....L (R)  
Cop Out .....O (R)  
The Crazies .....O (R)  
Dear John .....A-III (PG-13)  
Edge of Darkness .....L (R)  
From Paris With Love .....O (R)  
Shutter Island .....O (R)  
The Spy Next Door .....A-II (PG)  
Tooth Fairy .....A-II (PG)  
Up in the Air .....L (R)  
Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief .....A-II (PG)  
When in Rome .....A-III (PG-13)  
The Wolfman .....A-III (R)

## Single & ready to mingle?

St. Augustine Parish in Waikiki is starting a singles group. And if you're over 25 and single, divorced or widowed they're looking for you. The plan is for the group to meet quarterly for faith discussions, volunteer opportunities, and socializing. The first meeting is planned for April. If you're interested e-mail [staugustinebythesea@gmail.com](mailto:staugustinebythesea@gmail.com).

## Twenty Something



### Christina Capecchi | Eventual motherhood: waiting on God's perfect timing

This month brings a milestone for my social circle: for the first time, a childhood friend will become a mother.

As Sara's belly swells, the rest of us are helping prepare for the baby who will catapult us into our next stage. It will provide the surest sign we have reached adulthood, which, up to this point, has felt far less established than it once appeared.

At 15, 25 looked like an elixir to every adolescent woe, the perfect mix of freedom and purpose, objectives that now feel farther apart.

We have enjoyed a certain latitude, slipping in and out of majors and dates and jobs. This baby will be the most real and non-refundable commitment we have seen, heartwarming when he sleeps, head-splitting when he shrieks at 1 a.m. and again at 4 a.m.

We decided to help Sara paint the nursery. A trip to Lowe's forced one of those imperative pre-labor decisions, which our heroine made with ease. That Saturday we cracked open a gallon of sky blue paint named after the first time a baby sleeps through the night: Cloud Nine.

As we turned our blank canvas from beige to blue, we reminisced about the dramas of high school, how impossible it seemed to man-

age a formal dance: whom to ask, what to wear, where to eat, whom to eat with.

Then talk jumped to good grade schools, and Libby pointed out, "Ten years ago we never would've been having this discussion."

Indeed, we are largely transformed from our high-school selves, and now, eventual mothers — one, much sooner than the others.

That is the jarring part: Though our friendships are deeper today, growing up does involve some growing apart, and the milestones that once arrived in sync splinter into different tempos.

It is a wonder that adulthoods charted in the same sandbox can

diverge so widely. Children's names determined in the same tree house are privately amended, and the one you gave half of your heart-shaped "best friends" pendant is now shipping a wedding gift from China.

Ten-year-old girlfriends imagine double weddings, betrothed children and joint summer vacations — a neat correspondence of life events. Yet soon the kids who shared a baseball diamond face a million choices that lead to vastly different fields.

It's hard to not feel behind when you are standing behind an old friend, a bride at the altar. It's hard not to do your own baby math when next year she calls with her good news. It's hard to shake the timeline you once set even when it no longer fits. There is that creeping sense of urgency and absolutes: a timeline, a bottom line, a deadline, a finish line.

But there is no such thing as behind or ahead; we are each on

track with our separate paths. God's timing is perfect because it is custom-designed.

The Scripture writers had an abiding respect for the proper season and time. The prophet Habakkuk describes God's plan with patience and perspective, two hallmarks of the Lenten journey. "For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late."

The blessings that come later are not late; they are right on time and they are sweeter.

Meanwhile, God gives us special synchronicities: husbands who become good friends, college roommates who become godparents, moments when it all circles back, and we see his infinite wisdom a little more clearly.

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