



Family Life Newsletter



Marriage & Family • Pro-Life • Pastoral Care • Counseling Services

December 2017

Marriage & Family Enrichment

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It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year . . .

Full of great content written by the Family Ministries team, the Family Life Newsletter is a source for information, resources and faith-based discussions about all manner of issues affecting families today.

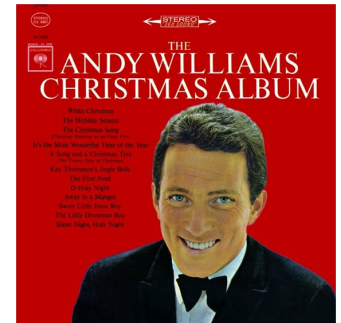
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Have you heard yet this year that song which always seems to be everywhere during the Christmas season?

Andy Williams' recording of ["It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"](#) was released in October 1963 (just before John F. Kennedy's assassination) and has been trying to bring hope and happiness to a world in need of such virtues ever since.



Maybe it's just the sheer happiness of the song . . . maybe it's Andy Williams' great performances he gave many times over the years, [both on his variety show](#) and otherwise . . . or maybe it's just nostalgia for a simpler time, but this song has always reminded me that this time of the year is very different from all others.

"Peace on Earth" is indeed something that comes through clearly upon hearing this song, and it seems that for this brief time every year we are all spiritually restored to the state in which God created our first parents in the Garden – where love reigns and peace, harmony and tranquility flow with abundance. The time of Christ's coming here on Earth is indeed a cause for celebration . . . and no one seems to capture that happy "feeling we should all feel" quite so well as Andy Williams did those many years ago.

Music indeed is the best garnish for this season of peace. Whether it be "Silent Night" so solemnly sung after dark by our wonderful parish choirs on Christmas Eve, or that powerful "Go Tell It On The Mountain" that booms forth on Christmas morning like the transforming grace of an energized faith . . . music is very much the proper expression of this special season.

Music propels our spirits into a future which may be unknown but which nevertheless - by its divine power to inspire and motivate - can for certain be more hopeful, more bright and quite simply just more happy.



The Word has been made flesh and dwelt among us . . . so of course this has to be "the most wonderful time of the year"! So from all of us here at the Family Ministries Office, we wish for you to experience fully that "wonder" both during this special season . . . as well as every day of your lives.



"The season of Advent restores a hope which does not disappoint for it is founded on God's Word."

Pope Francis

Counseling Services

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Holiday Stress



The holidays offer plenty of reasons to be stressed out and anxious -- the gifts you haven't wrapped, the pile of cookie exchange invites, the office parties. But for many, the biggest source of holiday stress is family -- the family dinner, the obligations, and the burden of family tradition. And if you're fighting clinical depression, or have had depression in the past, the holiday stress can be a trigger for more serious problems.

"There's this idea that holiday gatherings with family are supposed to be joyful and stress-free," says Ken Duckworth, MD, medical director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. "That's not the case. Family relationships are complicated. But that's doesn't mean that the solution is to skip the holidays entirely."

With holiday family reunions looming in your calendar, what are some ways that you can prepare yourself and cope better this season? We turned to the experts for some tips on beating holiday stress and anxiety.

What Causes Holiday Stress?

First, ask yourself this: What about the holidays gets you down? Once you cut through the vague sense of dread about family gatherings and identify specific problems, you can deal with them directly. For many people, holiday stress is triggered by:

- **Unhappy memories.** Going home for the holidays naturally makes people remember old times, but for you the memories may be more bitter than sweet.
- **Toxic relatives.** Holidays can put you in the same room with relatives you avoid the rest of the year. People struggling with depression may face stigma, too. "Some relatives don't really believe you're depressed," says Gloria Pope, director of advocacy and public policy at the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. "They think you're just lazy, or that it's all in your head. It can be really hurtful."
- **What's changed?** The holidays can highlight everything that's changed in your lives -- a divorce, a death in the family, a son who's making his first trip back home after starting college. Any of these can really unsettle a gathering and add holiday stress.
- **What's stayed the same?** For others, it's the monotonous sameness of family holiday gatherings that depresses them -- the same faces, the same jokes, and the same food on the same china plates.

Controlling Holiday Stress

Experts say that the holidays can make people feel out of control. We feel at the mercy of our relatives or steam-rolled by the sheer force of family tradition. But you have a say. The key is to take some control over the holidays, instead of letting them control you.

Changing Your Outlook

The next step is to challenge some of your assumptions. If you enjoyed the holidays differently this year, what would happen? What if you *didn't* go to your aunt's for dinner? What if you *didn't* bring the poinsettias to your grandfather's grave? The key is to be conscious about what you're doing. This holiday season; don't unthinkingly do things the same way just because that's how you always do them. If the old holiday traditions aren't working, if they're not making you happy and causing holiday stress, it's time to do something different.

Tips for Beating Holiday Stress

Once you've taken a clear look at the holidays -- about what works and what doesn't -- it's time to make some changes. Focus on the holiday stresses that you can control. That includes making different plans and changing your responses to situations. Here are four key *don'ts* for the holidays.

- **Don't do the same old thing.**
- **Don't expect miracles.**
- **Don't overdo it**
- **Don't worry about how things should be.**

St. John Paul II and His Christmas Poem

The Advent season is finally begun. Joy and anticipation are in the air as we try to patiently prepare ourselves for the Christ child. Advent season is also a time of Marian devotion with back to back feast days of the Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

St. John Paul II certainly had a special devotion to Mother Mary as well. In fact, he entrusted his priesthood to Mother Mary and consecrated himself and the entire world to her motherly protection. His papal motto was *Totus Tuus*, which means “totally thine.” This motto signified his complete devotion to Our Lady. When he was shot by Mehmet Ali Agca on May 13, 1981 (the anniversary of the first apparition at Fatima), in an attempted assassination, St. John Paul II attributed his survival to the Blessed Mother. He later recounted, “One hand fired the shot,” he would say, “but another guided the bullet.”

As we know, St. John Paul II, is regarded as a prolific writer, who published more than 50 major works and profound encyclicals including, [Evangelium Vitae](#) (*The Gospel of Life*) and [Veritatis Splendor](#): (*The Splendor of Truth*) and widely read books such as [Love and Responsibility](#) and [Crossing the Threshold of Hope](#). He also wrote extensively about the Blessed Mother. In his book, [Gift and Mystery](#), he gives credit to his father who regularly took him on pilgrimages to local Marian shrines.

While many are aware that St. John Paul that was a gifted writer, few are aware that he was a talented athlete, actor, and world class philosopher. Even less well-known, is that he was also a talented poet as well. He wrote about many topics close to his heart, especially his love for and devotion to the Blessed Mother. It wasn't until he became Pope for a number of years, that his poetry became known throughout the world. Recently, I came across one of his poems venerating Mother Mary and the wonder of Christmas entitled:

Her Amazement at Her Only Child

Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II)

Light piercing gradually, everyday events;
a woman' eyes, hands
used to them since childhood.
Then brightness flared, too huge for simple days,
and hands clasped when the words lost their space.

In that little town, my son, where they knew us together,
you called me mother; but no one had eyes to see
the astounding events as they took place day by day.
Your life became the life of the poor
in your wish to be with them through the work of your hands.

I knew: the light that lingered in ordinary things,
like a spark sheltered under the skin of our days—
the light was you;
it did not come from me.

And I had more of you in that luminous silence
than I had of you as the fruit of my body, my blood.



Like many Catholics, I have a devotion to St. John Paul II. He is the Pope I grew up with for most of my life and the Pope who epitomized strong leadership and yet a tender devotion to the Blessed Mother. More than ever in our chaotic world where the dignity of human life is ever more devalued, we need to remember that we have hope and joy that the Christ Child brings. During this Advent season, we can follow in the footsteps of St. John Paul II and learn from our Heavenly Mother to meet her Son in the “luminous silence.”

What Grieving People Wish You Knew at Christmas

December 21, 2016, article by Nancy Guthrie

“Happy Thanksgiving!” “Merry Christmas!” “Happy New Year!” As the end of the year approaches, everywhere we turn someone is telling us we should be happy.

But for those who’ve recently lost someone they love, the holidays can seem more like something to survive than to enjoy. The traditions and events that can add so much joy and meaning to the season are punctuated with painful reminders of the person we love who is not here to share in it. Many have wished they could find a quiet place to hide until January 2.

While those of us who surround grieving people can’t fix the pain of loss, we can bring comfort as we come alongside those who hurt with special sensitivity to what grief is like during the holidays. Grieving people wish we all knew at least five truths, among others, at Christmas.



1. Even the best times are punctuated with an awareness that someone is missing.

I remember a conversation I had with a friend as we prepared to head out on a holiday trip shortly after our daughter, Hope, died. “That should be fun!” she said. I sensed I was supposed to agree wholeheartedly with her.

What I didn’t know how to explain is that when you’ve lost a member of your family, even the best of times are painfully incomplete. Someone is missing. Even the best days and happiest events are tinged with sadness. Wherever you go, the sadness goes with you.

2. Social situations are hard.

I have never been able to figure out why crowds are difficult when you’re grieving, but they are. Small talk can be unbearable when something so significant has happened. Meeting new people will likely bring questions about family. To walk alone into a room full of couples when your spouse has died, or into an event filled with children when your child has died, can be a soul-crushing reminder of what you have lost.

“For those who’ve recently lost a loved one, the holidays can seem more like something to survive than to enjoy.”

If you’ve invited someone in the midst of grief to your holiday event, let them know that you understand if it seems too hard at the last minute and they have to cancel, or that they may only be able to stay for a short time.

If you’re going to an event, give a grieving person a call and ask if you can pick her up and stick with her throughout the event for support. When you come upon a grieving person at a holiday social event, let him know that you are still thinking about the person he loves who has died, and invite him to talk about his memories with that person. Don’t be afraid to say the name of the person who has died. It will be a balm to the grieving person’s soul.

3. Extended family can be awkward and uneasy.

Grief is often awkward — even, and perhaps especially, with those to whom we’re closest.

My husband and I host weekend retreats for couples that have lost children, and the difficulty of being with family at the holidays is often a topic of conversation among these couples. They know that some family members think they’ve grieved long enough and want them to move on. Others want to initiate a conversation about the person who died but aren’t sure how. What often happens is that the name of the person who died is never mentioned, and it feels to the person who is grieving that they have been erased from the family.

Do you know a grieving person heading to a family gathering for the holidays? You might ask about their expectations when they’re with family. And if they have a strong desire for their loved one to be remembered in a certain way, combined with a fear that it may not happen, you might encourage and help them to write a letter to their family in advance stating clearly what would bring comfort, rather than expect that their family will instinctively know.

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Pastoral Care cont.

4. Tears are not a problem.

For most of us, grief tends to work itself out in tears — tears that come out at times we don't expect. Sometimes grieving people sense that people around them see their tears as a problem to be solved — that tears must mean they aren't doing very well with their grief. But it makes sense that the great sorrow of losing someone we love would come out in tears. Tears are not the enemy. Tears do not reflect a lack of faith. Tears are a gift from God that help to wash away the deep pain of loss.

It is a great gift to let grieving people know that they don't have to be embarrassed by their tears around you — that they are welcome to cry with you. An even greater gift is to shed tears of your own over the loss of the person they love. Your tears reflect the worth of the person who died and assure them that they are not alone in missing that person.

5. It can be hard to remember why Christmas should be so merry.

In "O Holy Night," we sing, "A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices." Grieving people around you feel the weariness of life and death in this world and wonder how anyone around them can rejoice. They are in desperate need of the reality of Christ to break through their loneliness and despair. While we don't want to preach at them, we do look for the opportunity to share with them the comfort and joy to be found in the coming of God himself in Christ to rescue us.

"Tears do not reflect a lack of faith. Tears are a gift from God that help to wash away the deep pain of loss."



Worldwide Marriage Encounter

Marriage Encounter Weekends are a special time for a married couple to get away from all distractions: work, kids, bills, and other pressures and concerns. Weekends take place at a local hotel or facility where communication tools are taught to help couples better connect in healthy, constructive ways on areas that can deepen their relationship.

The next Louisville area weekend is February 2 - 4.

To learn more or register, visit www.wwme.org



Retrouvaille (French for rediscovery) - Help for Hurting Marriages



Retrouvaille is a proven effective, peer ministry for hurting marriages consisting of a weekend experience and six additional four-hour-long Post Weekend sessions.

Space is still available for upcoming sessions the weekend of **January 12-14** in both **Owensboro** and **Cincinnati**.

For more information or to register for an upcoming weekend, call 1-800-470-2230 or check out Retrouvaille's website www.HelpOurMarriage.com!

Up & Coming

Anniversary Mass



Archdiocesan Celebration of Matrimony **Saturday, January 20, 4:00 p.m. - St. Raphael**

This special mass with Archbishop Kurtz is to celebrate couples who have been married for 5, 10, 15, 20 & 25 years in 2018.

Registration information will be sent to the parishes early December.

Helper's Of God's Precious Infants

7:00 a.m. - Mass at Cathedral of the Assumption followed by procession to local abortion facility.

9:00 a.m. - Benediction at Cathedral

Sat, Dec 9 - Fr. Seejo Thandiackal, CMI
Visit: HelpersLouisville.org

Safe Environment Training

Visit www.archlou.org/restoringtrust/safe
for additional dates and upcoming dates in 2018!

DAYS OF HUMAN DIGNITY **Archdiocese of Louisville** January-March 2018



- + **Celebration of National Migration Week Prayer Service**
Saturday 6 January 2018, 11:30 a.m.
Cathedral of the Assumption, 433 South Fifth Street, Louisville
 - + **Celebration in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**
Monday 15 January 2018, 1:30 p.m.
Cathedral of the Assumption, 433 South Fifth Street, Louisville
 - + **Walk for Life**
Friday 19 January 2018, 4:30 p.m.
Cathedral of the Assumption, 433 South Fifth Street, Louisville
 - + **Pro-Life Mass**
Sunday 21 January 2018, 3:00 p.m.
Saint Martin of Tours, 639 South Shelby Street, Louisville
 - + **Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl Lunch**
Thursday 8 February 2018, 10:30 a.m.
Presentation Academy, 861 South Fourth Street, Louisville
 - + **Share the Journey Immigration Workshop**
Saturday 3 March 2018, 8:30 a.m.
Holy Family Parish, 3926 Poplar Level Road, Louisville
- www.archlou.org/days-of-human-dignity

WELCOME + PROTECT + PROMOTE + INTEGRATE

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