



St. Cronan Chronicle

Sharing in faith, our gifts with the wider neighborhood and world community

Volume 9, Number 1

April 11, 2004

“Church People” Visit the State Capitol

By Katie Jansen

On Wednesday, March 10th MCU (*Metropolitan Congregations United for St. Louis*), of which St. Cronan is a part, took a bus filled with leaders from congregations across the St. Louis region to the state capitol in Jefferson City to talk about state issues that affect our neighborhoods, city and region. I’m not going to get into the particular issues we covered, but I need to get something off my chest.

I have never been so angry at members of our state legislature as I was that day. You need to know what’s going on because they are blaming **YOU** for the mess they have created.

I was talking to Senator Cauthorn from Mexico, MO about closing corporate tax loopholes to generate some revenue for our public schools and maintaining tax credits for distressed communities. Not only did he not support those two ideas, he responded saying, “If church people had been doing their jobs we would not be in this situation (budget crisis).”

At first I started laughing at such a ridiculous statement, but the longer the conversation went on, the angrier I got. He was saying that if churches would organize enough food drives, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and other welfare programs there wouldn’t be poor people any more. His comment was unacceptable for two reasons:

- 1) It wouldn’t work. Churches could organize these programs until the end of time or, more realistically, until all of their members were completely burnt out, and the need would not be less than when they started.
- 2) **WE DID NOT CREATE THIS SITUATION AND I WILL NOT TAKE THE BLAME FOR IT.** How did it become “church people’s” fault that the current power structure keeps some people in poverty?

And Cauthorn is not the only legislator who thinks that way. In a letter to another MCU Organizer, Rep. Carl Bearden from St. Charles said, “Individuals and churches

have the moral obligation to provide for the very poor in our society, not the state.”

Apparently, according to Rep. Bearden, the state has no moral obligation. If that is what the people in control believe then I can see how it is so easy for them to justify having money as the bottom line.

Corporations, according to the bulk of our state legislature, are also exempt from any moral obligation to the state. Another quote from Senator Cauthorn, “Corporations don’t pay taxes; tax payers pay taxes.” Many of the largest corporations in the state actually pay less in taxes than an individual does!!

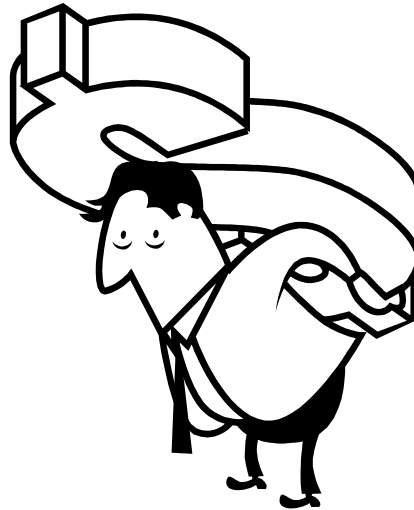
And the other infuriating part of this is that **WE** usually **ACCEPT** the responsibility and with it the **BLAME** for the poorest in our city, state and country. Policy makers and people in power continue to depend on us to clean up the messes they make and many times we do it without questioning. I don’t ever remember anyone asking “church people” to draft legislation on how much people should pay in taxes; on how much funding public schools should get; on how much money should go to defense vs. health care.

When Senator Cauthorn asked me “What is the responsibility of a good Christian?” I responded, “To hold people in power accountable for their actions.” His response was, “I don’t think that’s what it says in the Bible.” I said, “That’s exactly what it says in the Bible.”

2004 MCU Lobby Days:

*Wednesday, March 10th,
Wednesday, April 14th,
Thursday, May 6th, and
Wednesday, May 12th*

Please consider attending one of these days and joining with all of the other congregations around the region who are part of MCU as we continue to fight for justice in our state. “Church people’s” voices must be heard! Call Katie Jansen at (314) 367-3484.



JEREMIAH RUETKEN BUSIEK *By Kim Madden*

We remember the 9 1/2 year old boy with the playful smile who died on Sunday, March 7th at Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital. He was able to share fewer smiles with us these past two years as he struggled against an aggressive brain tumor and was hospitalized most of 2004 with complications of his condition. Like other St. Cronan family members we have lost, Jeremiah was more than simply his age, gender, occupation, or medical condition. During these past weeks, and especially at his wake and funeral mass, there were many wonderful pieces to his "life puzzle" which were shared with us.

The variety of pictures and albums showed us many sides of Jeremiah. He was a proud Boy Scout; happy classmate to numerous students at St. Joseph's School in Imperial; a lover of legos, Yu-gi-oh cards and characters, and Looney-Toons; an avid reader; friend of the outdoors, and, most obviously, the loving son of Mary and Gary, and brother to Kateri. He dressed as a construction worker a few years ago on Halloween, and often dreamed of pursuing that field. Third-grade classmates observed him as an enthusiastic pitcher in some of their kickball games, a reader of Harry Potter books in their school's library, and a focused math lover when his class played a game of "Around the World". In her eulogy, St. Joseph's principal told us that Jeremiah was so very excited (picture a raised fist with a "Yes!") when he would win the math game, as well as a very gracious loser

when he didn't come in first. In his First Communion picture, he is the bald and beaming child who is enjoying the special day.

We discovered that among his many friends were two stuffed dogs: Clifford (the big red pooch) and a small brown dog named "Courage" given to him after 9-11 to signify the many heroes of that unfortunate tragedy. As it was, Jeremiah's birthday was September 11 and he was a courageous figure of the small and playful variety. He loved the colors blue and green, eating hot dogs, Native American drumming, and laughing (when it wasn't painful or prohibited by tubes) at his favorite cartoon characters. A younger Jeremiah sat proudly with his baby sister in one photograph, and in a later one, snuggled contently with Kateri at a time when he was too weak to be his playful self.

A framed and beautiful cross-stitch piece set out at the funeral home proclaimed "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." And

from this same passage we would read "But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, I am only a youth': for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, . . . Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 1:4-8) A boy who seemed truly graced with God's presence, Jeremiah shared his discovered relationship with those around him. Preparing to leave for the last time to a hospital chemotherapy treatment, the gusty wind of a winter day was his cue to proclaim that "the Holy Spirit is in me".

In a poem he wrote at the beginning of this school year, Jeremiah proclaimed:

**I am Lovable! I am nice. I am funny.
I am good. I am holy. I am cold.
Yes! I am Lovable.!**

We thank you for the love you shared with us, Jeremiah, as we continue to pray that your family will be comforted and embraced by the Spirit.



Aidan is Included!

By Joan Wilder Jordan

How is Aidan Jordan doing in Kindergarten? "Great!" we say. And how do we define "great?"

The measure of Aidan's success is not typical. He's not learning to read and write, do arithmetic or inquire about far away places. In fact, he can't speak at all, and doesn't sit, stand, or walk independently; his cognitive level is extremely difficult to measure. But he is making good progress with the support of the school administration and his peers. And he is teaching everybody new ways to understand what it means to be part of the school community.

Aidan is attending the Early Childhood Center in Maplewood-Richmond Heights with all the other children in the district. He is included in a regular classroom, with some parts of his day in a resource room. We are delighted because his presence there is made to look seamless, although this school district has never included a child with such severe disabilities before.

The school prepared the physical environment beginning last school year. We explained what type of seating he needs and they obtained specially adapted chairs that would work for him from Special School District. In addition, they purchased a set of 4 cube chairs (these are those plastic chairs you often see in a pediatrician's office that turn over for different positioning) for his classroom so that Aidan wouldn't be the only one sitting in a cube chair. They purchased 2 bean bag chairs which is a good place for Aidan to relax, but with their insight, another friend can use a bean bag at the same time. So his physical needs were addressed, but without Aidan being singled out to be the only one to use the "special chairs." We made plans for where extra clothes, diapers etc. could be stored and where he could be changed. The principal arranged for his classroom to be next to the Special Ed resource room.

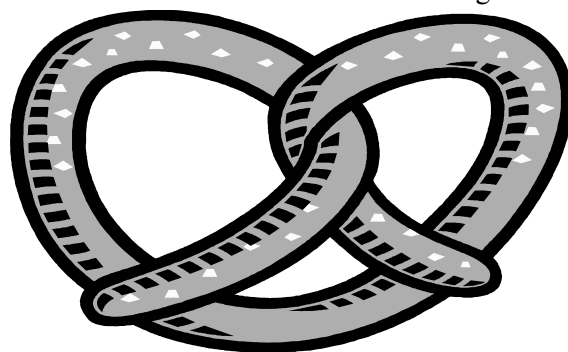
The staff were all apprised of Aidan's coming. They hired a wonderful aide to work with him, without whom much of this would not succeed. Everyone has been friendly and interested in him. If he waves at one of them, the rest of the teachers compete to get him to wave at them. One of the teachers carries pretzels in her pocket so that when she sees Aidan in the hall she can provide his favorite treat. The school nurse spent time getting familiar with his medical history. Although I send his lunch from home, the cafeteria workers are aware of him and his food allergies. The art teacher created a basket of markers and

art supplies for him since he is known to mouth things. We work together with the therapists and teachers as a team - the parents are not the opposition. Most importantly, his classroom teacher has been very clear that although Aidan is not always in the room, "he is a member of the class."

With the classroom teacher and the aide setting the tone, the children have just been wonderful! Kind and considerate, they make sure they move away from him if they have a cup of milk (since he's allergic.) They cheer for him when he successfully puts the number for today's date on the calendar. The children take turns reading to him. They are patient; waiting without complaint or agitation when he takes longer to get somewhere. A boy at school who uses a wheelchair, "lets Aidan win" when they race each other using their gait trainers. They are proud of helping him and like him. One boy even refers to him as his "best friend."

In September, he was invited to the birthday party of a classmate! This is a big milestone, achievable only through the kindness and consideration of another family.

Aidan is learning a variety of things at school. He is making gains in his ability to walk and sit interdentally. He has made significant improvement in tolerating over-stimulating environments - he even was able to participate with his class in the Winter Concert - on stage with lights,



music and action! He communicates his wants and needs by gesture, by leading you to the desired object, and by choosing the picture of the thing or activity he wants. He is also using a voice output device to participate in class. He is comfortable with his daily routine and happy at school.

A year ago, we could not predict how Aidan would fare in kindergarten and we had our concerns about being with all those big kids, but our hopes have been met - he fits in, he's learning, he belongs there.

The Extraordinary Journey of an Ordinary St. Louis Family

By Beth Cuniberti, in the 3/7/04 St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Now he's a grandfather and been through a great many things. But Tom Miles never had a drink until he was 21 years old, at his company picnic.

Born in St. Louis, raised Methodist by a Catholic father and a Methodist mother who read the Bible every day, Tom was about as straight and narrow as a kid could be. That day he was on his first date with Audrey.

Well, actually, whether or not it was a "date" is still a matter of dispute 50 years, six children and seven grandchildren later. Tom worked with Audrey at Equitable Life Insurance and had asked if he could take her to the picnic.

"I assumed I had a date," recalled Audrey, a graduate of St. Elizabeth's Academy. When Tom showed up, two other women were in the back seat.

Tom had innocently offered rides to all the young women who didn't have cars or, like Audrey, didn't drive. After driving them all home, Tom returned to Audrey's house with a watermelon.

It's hard not to fall for a man bearing a watermelon. Tom became Catholic. They married, Audrey stayed home and raised two boys and four girls. They lived in the county, went to Mass every Sunday.

If Tom or Audrey had been contacted by a pollster and asked if homosexuals should be allowed to marry, they would have quickly answered, absolutely NOT. This is the view today of about half of all Americans. Tom and Audrey didn't

hate homosexuals. They didn't even know any, except for Audrey's hairdresser. Somewhere in the attic of their minds, Tom thought homosexuality was "unnatural." To "Audrey, it "just didn't seem right."

When their fifth child, Jane, came home from Mizzou 15 years ago and told her mother she is a lesbian, "I was devastated," said Audrey. "Jane, who wore dresses, sang in a choir, had a boyfriend? Gay? Jane can't be gay. She's not the daughter I thought she was."

Those had been the precise thoughts of Jane herself her entire time at Mizzou. She cried and cried. She forced herself to go out with men.

"For five years, I tired," said Jane, now a student-development coordinator at UMSL.

Audrey and Tom were so distraught, they were in a counselor's office that afternoon, and by evening they were sitting in a room full of total strangers – a support group for family members of gays and lesbians.

Audrey cried at every one of those meetings for a year. She hoped it was a phase.

Jane's sister, Laurie Copeland, no longer wanted her young children to be around Jane.

It took five years of reading, talking with other families and soul-searching for all of the family to just not accept Jane, but to change their minds on the bigger question: Is it wrong?

Even after Tom marched on Washington in 1993 for gay rights,

and they no longer insisted Jane's partner remain in the car in the driveway, and after Tom had cried with joy as he watched his daughter and her partner Chris Reinhard wed by an Eden Seminary minister before 125 guests at the Chase Park Plaza in 2000, in "the most meaningful ceremony of the whole family, including my own," – even after all this, Audrey was appalled when Jane told her she is hoping to have a baby.

"I thought it would be the worst thing in the world," Audrey said. "I thought it would be cruel to the child."

Audrey has changed her mind on this, too. It may be too soon to hope, realistically, for legally sanctioned marriage. But Audrey would like Jane and Chris to be able to have some kind of government-recognized civil union so Chris can be a legal co-parent. They adore Chris.

It is one thing to view this issue from a safe distance and quite another to have it touch deep into your won life. It has been a long journey for the most proper, grandmotherly and grandfatherly looking, 71-year-old Midwestern couple you could hope to meet.

Says Audrey now, "I wouldn't want to change Jane. I think she's a gift. I think everyone should have a gay child. It has opened up a whole world to us we would have never known and missed out on. She's made us more tolerant of all people. Shown us a bigger picture of the world."

St. Cronan's Men Take Time to Examine Their Scars

About two dozen men from St. Cronan shared a retreat experience over the weekend of March 12-14. We gathered at the Griesedieck farm near Annada, MO (many thanks to the Griesedieck family for their generous hospitality) on a weekend when spring tried very hard to wrest the weather from winter's cold grasp.

Many of us had prepared for the weekend by reading Joan Chittister's book "Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope". We spent time over the course of our retreat together to reflect on those struggles that have affected us personally and as a community. We considered how we have become, and are becoming, better for the experiences of struggle in our lives. And we were inspired by one another, knowing that none of us is ever truly alone in our struggles.

Our weekend was not all struggle and deep sharing, though. Several aspiring chefs among us ensured that we were very well fed with a variety of tasty meals. There was time for fellowship, and laughter, and hikes up the nob. We were visited by a local hound dog who instantly befriended us, especially those of us who slept outside without a tent. And it wouldn't have been like two dozen men getting together if we didn't build a great big bonfire (in the rain).

We appreciate the prayers that were offered for us. We pray that our time away allowed us to refresh and rejuvenate our spirit, so that we will continue to serve one another, our Parish, and our community.



WHAT I'M READING

[A Dying Breed of Brave Men: the Self-Written Stories of Nine Married Priests](#), Edited by Robert J. Brousseau, 1st Books Library (209 pages)

Our pastor constantly reminds us in homily and bulletin of the shortage of priests today and in the future. However, the bishops as a group began talking about the priest shortage only three years ago. In a report they had commissioned, one priest put it well: "It's true that the best kept secret is the shortage of priests. We have kept it from

the laity. We cover it up in every way imaginable and pretend it does not exist."

Well, those days are over. The cold hard facts are chilling indeed. Nearly 37,000 American men and 120,000 priests worldwide have left active priestly service! The great exodus began in the era of the Second Vatican Council and its aftermath when they began to *(Continued on next page)*

WHAT I'M READING *(Continued)*

realize that the window flung open by John XXIII was slammed shut. Many of the goals were inexorably aborted, subverted or disfigured. The Council happened but little changed. The status quo was preserved but some of the priests had been shaken from the lethargy of centuries and spirit-dampening ecclesiastical structures that had no life, and no soul. This is the story of nine such men who when they came into conflict with the hierarchy were faced with the choice to fall back in line or leave. "No blessings for a new life were accorded these priests. Just a very cold boot. By and large there was no pension, no severance, no continued medical insurance, no transition payments, no thank-yous for a job well done, no pat on the back, no follow-up phone calls to see how they were getting along, no concern, no care, no compassion, no Christian love. Out you go, good riddance, and don't let the door hit you in the ass."

I warn you some of these stories will make you cry and some will make you angry when you read how these men were treated and when you realize the great loss to the church and her ministry.

The editor writes a brief introduction for each of the nine contributors – how he came to know each one- and then each presents his own memory of ordination, service, expectations, disappointment and the agonizing decision to leave the active ministry. In the editor's words, "We created barely a blip on the screen. The church moved on heedlessly. 'Ingrates, traitors; who cares; good riddance; let them go.' Hence, the effect of the defections was diffused and the defectors became faceless and lost in the great masses."

It is hoped after reading these nine true stories the reader will realize the defection from the priesthood is not a hormone problem nor is the book meant to be a pity book, but rather a call to revisit the whole idea of the priesthood of Jesus and perhaps inspire some to muster the courage to rock the boat.

[Our Fathers – The secret Life of the Catholic Church in an Age of Scandal](#), David France, Broadway Books (598 pages)

This book provides an orderly account of the continuing clerical sex scandal. It is not just the compelling narrative of almost daily revelations but an account of the betrayal by the American bishops, who were covering up as a matter of policy to save "the Church".

[Vows of Silence: The Abuse of Power in the Papacy of John Paul II](#), Jason Berry and Gerald Renner, Free Press (308 pages)

This book explores the Vatican's cover-up through the lives of two priests. Thomas Doyle O.P. and Marcial Maciel founder of the Legionnaires of Christ, one demanding justice and the other a fortress of injustice.

The first part of the book is the story of Fr. Doyle, a rising star canon lawyer on the "Bishop track" who followed his conscience and became the star expert witness in sex abuse court cases, thus scuttling his career.

Anyone who read the DaVinci Code must have been curious about Opus Dei, the conservative Catholic group shrouded in secrecy. Although some priests are affiliated with the group it is primarily an organization of the laity. The Legionnaires of Christ is a much more intriguing and frightening story. The Legion was founded in Mexico in 1941 by Marcial Maciel Degollado. They built a network of schools and universities in Mexico, and branched out with prep schools and seminaries in Spain, Latin America, Ireland, and now America. By 2003 the Legion would claim eleven universities and over 150 prep schools worldwide. In Latin America and Spain the Legionnaires are a major religious movement and in Mexico a national institution. Their stature rose in the eyes of the Roman Curia, because of its excessive secrecy and vows in addition to poverty, chastity and obedience (never to speak ill of its founder and to inform on anyone who did). The authors go to great pains to show this group to be a "church within the church" – basically a cult – but one that has carefully worked its way into the heart of the power structure of the Vatican. They are at the Pope's side night and day and exert their influence on him.

The book is worth reading if for no other reason it gives an inside view of the workings of the official church in this time of crisis and how the power brokers mishandled it.

If any book shows the necessity for drastic change in the governance of the church it is this one. As one reviewer states, "If this were fiction, it would be chilling narrative. Alas, it is contemporary human history brought to you by two American authors who know more about this subject than anyone else writing about it."

Tom Mullen

MARRIAGE MYTHS DEBUNKED

By Joe Moramarco

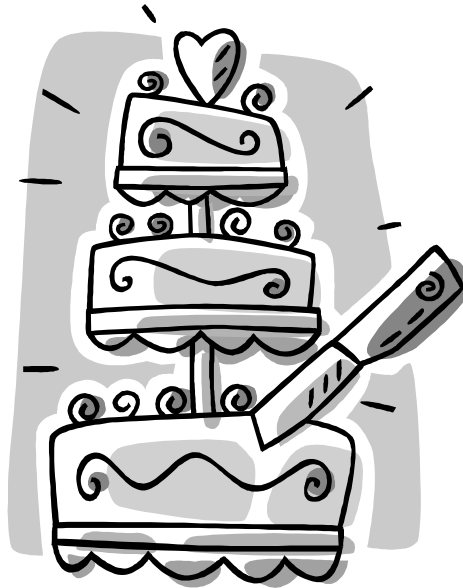
As I have proudly shared with any and all who would listen, Donna and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary this year. Back when St. Cronan Parish had its 101st, the two of us were just tying the knot, lurching happily towards our life of wedded bliss. Several visitors to our new home have commented on the wedding portrait which hangs in our bedroom. Donna has not seemingly aged a minute since then. I am only recognizable by association.

Twenty-five years later, I am here to comment on, if not debunk, certain marriage myths which, surprisingly, still abound to this day.

The first of these is that married partners begin to resemble one another as they grow older. This is absolutely not true. Donna is extremely thankful.

The second is that two can live as cheaply as one. That one may be true, until children make the scene. We enjoyed the substance of this myth for about 14 months, and then Nick came along. At that point, three were not even living as cheaply as three. After the rest of our children had blessed us with their arrivals, the six of us were living about as expensively as 10, particularly once the boys started high school and college and driving and eating like they had never seen food before. Add to this my boys' peculiar and unnatural attraction to emergency rooms, and you have a financial situation in which Donna

and I would have been much better off staying single and throwing our money into the nearest huge, gaping



hole.

By far, however, the most pervasive and insidious marriage myth which makes the rounds even today is that a young lady had better take a cold hard look at her husband-to-be and accept him for what he is now because it will be futile to try to change him. This myth is offered up by seemingly wise mothers and grandmothers to their young female progeny, presumably as a caution against marrying with the intent of excising the future husband's many faults and, basically, domesticating him. On the surface, this seems quite sensible, but I am here to tell you it is simply wrong. I am living testimony. It took every minute of

twenty-five years, and is still ongoing, but the Donna Program of excising and domestication has had profound effects upon me. If I am now the primary dishwasher and laundry processor in our household, it is all thanks to her. If I am a better listener and a more sensitive person, it is all thanks to her. If I know anything about the right way to raise a child and foster self esteem, it is all thanks to her. If I am ever truly generous or selfless, it is because I learned it from her.

Of course, this sword slices in both directions. If Donna ever belches out loud and settles back in her chair with a satisfied look and a wink, you can come find me to thank. If she ever grumbles out loud at a hockey or football game because the referee blew an offside call, thanks to me again. If Donna is ever sitting quietly at the periphery of a conversation or discussion and then suddenly cracks you up with a pointed one-liner, I take full and complete credit.

For better or for worse: it's mostly better. For richer or poorer: less money but richer. In sickness and in health: thank God for health, and for skilled emergency room technicians. In good times and bad: let the good times roll. Until death parts us: only for a while. Donna, thanks for twenty-five terrific years.

I pray God grants us twenty-five more years of love and joy. And I hope you never start looking like me.

FR. GERRY: A GOOD NEIGHBOR

Front Row, left to right:
Sharon Hoffman, Fr. Gerry
Kleba, Mei Huan Lafferty-
Levdansky, Bob Babione

Back Row:
Michelle Bolan, Mary Margaret
Kleba, Joan Lafferty, Shirley
Kammien, Jane Levdansky



This picture of Fr. Gerry was taken recently at a wine and cheese banquet at St. Francis Xavier (College) Church. Midtown Catholic Charities presented him with the “Good Neighbor Award” for all of his work in the Midtown area.

Fr Gerry, we know you help many people in many different ways, and we are very proud of you.

YOUR ARTICLE HERE

Let us all know about your recent activities, interesting places you've been, social-justice issues that you are passionate about, or a good book that you've just read.

Enlighten us. Uplift us. Inspire us.

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Contributions are welcome. To provide material for the June 2004 issue, contact Delores at the rectory at (314) 289-9545. © 2004 by St. Cronan Church. All rights reserved.