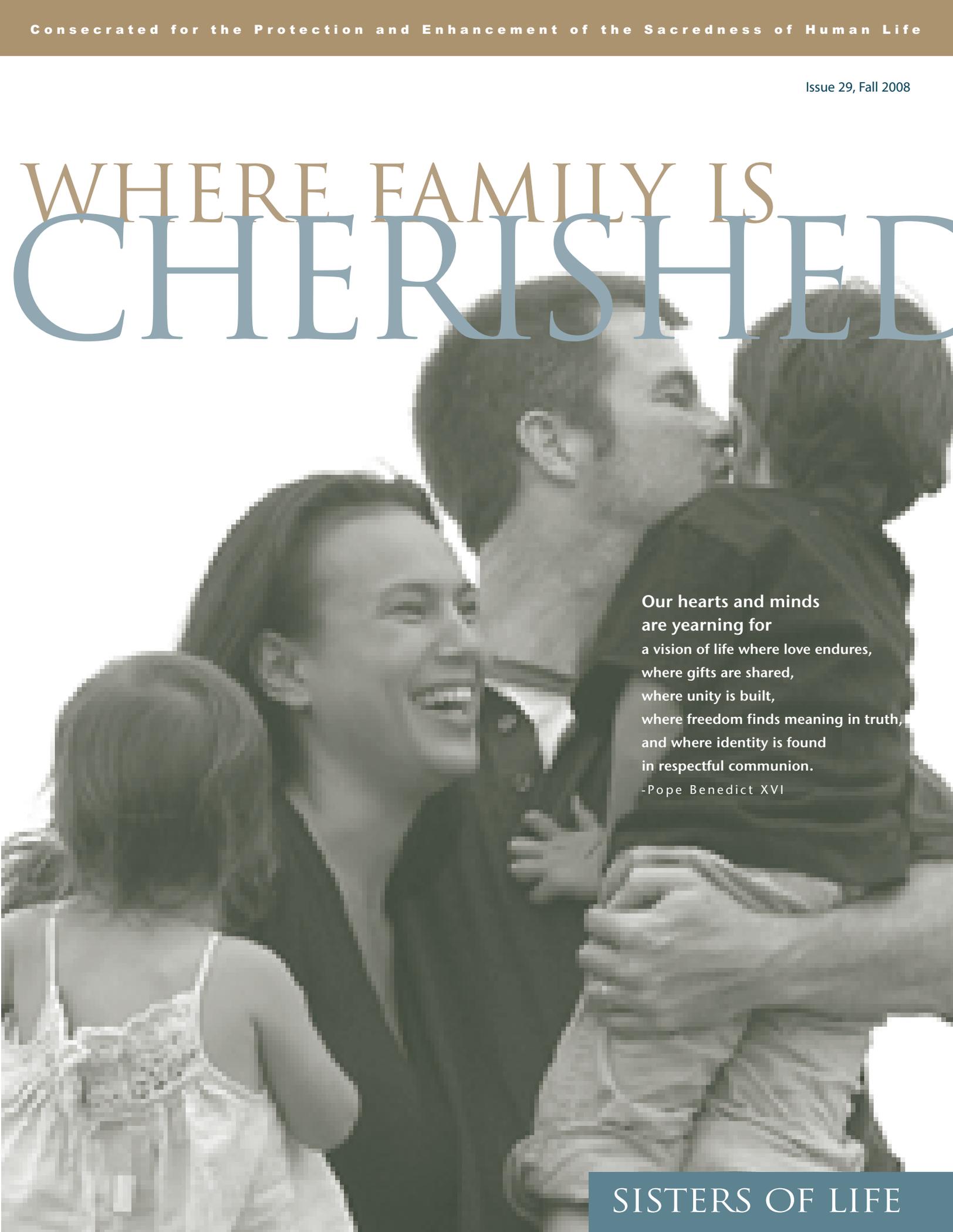


WHERE FAMILY IS CHERISHED



Our hearts and minds
are yearning for
a vision of life where love endures,
where gifts are shared,
where unity is built,
where freedom finds meaning in truth,
and where identity is found
in respectful communion.

-Pope Benedict XVI



The Beginning of

"Family become what you are!" (Familiaris Consortio, 17).

These few, powerful words seem to echo through the spectacular events of the last several months. Words can't describe the experience of gathering with hundreds of thousands of other Catholics to pray with our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI,

here in New York; and, then with the young people of the world in Sydney, Australia during the World Youth Days. There was no mistaking the effects of the presence and spiritual paternity of the Vicar of Christ. United with our Holy Father, open to the Holy Spirit, and renewed in dedication to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, those gathered tangibly experienced the reality that as The Church we are one family. The beauty of the Church, and the marvel of each member, was so clearly revealed.

Then in late summer, our community gathered to witness the first profession of seven of our young Sisters. How could these same words not ring out again? Entering a spousal "alliance of love" with the Lord Jesus Christ consecrated to the sacredness of human life is a wonder in itself; to live so dedicated to one another in a religious family speaks of the sheer overflowing life which God desires to pour into the hearts of His chosen ones, for the sake of all His people. The call to religious consecration is simultaneously a call for each young consecrated woman to become a true sister to all her Sisters, as a member of a religious family, encouraging one another to live deeply and well the vows professed.

In this edition of our newsletter we highlight the vocation to marriage and family life. We, as Sisters, are blessed in our efforts to build a culture of life to encounter many vibrant married couples who have made the arduous journey from "me" to "we"; and who, along with their children, are for us icons of God's love. In their generous and uncompromising embrace of God's plan for love and life is born a vitality and deeply rooted peace capable of amazing the world. Their heroic witness of family life inspires us all.

This year, we celebrate the anniversaries of two papal documents written to protect God's gift of married love and the dignity of women: the 40th Anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life) and the 20th Anniversary of *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women). These beautiful teachings remind us all that we are stewards of God's precious gifts of love and life. This fall as we cast our votes in the upcoming national election, let us do so prayerfully, remembering all within the family - especially our vulnerable unborn brothers and sisters - and let arise from the heart of this great nation the cry: Family of America, become what you are!

May God bless you and your families,

The following is an excerpt from the blog of writer, Rocco Palmo, the day of the Holy Father's departure from New York this past April.

The account provides a window into what came to be known as "the vigil of prayer," organized by the Sisters of Life and the young adults of NYC in order to provide an opportunity for them to bring their faith to the streets and express their love for their "Papa." The vigil began with prayer, praise and worship and Eucharistic Adoration in several Manhattan Churches and then, in a candlelight procession, converged into one jubilant crescendo at Archbishop Migliore's residence where Pope Benedict was residing while in New York.

There was singing and chanting and a heightened anticipation as the numbers increased. When word reached the Pope that over a thousand young people were gathered in prayer outside the residence he surprised all by venturing out to the street to greet and bless those gathered. It was a moment we will never forget!

One young person described the vigil in these words: "We would have stayed all night. We wanted our Holy Father to know how much his words and teachings inspire us to remain faithful and strong in faith. We love him!"



THE NEW



PENITENT COST

April 20, 2008

A friend in Midtown told me that Friday at St Patrick's was like a Sunday in terms of turnout, people flooding the place. Once I made my own way into town, it was easier than usual to find crosses or rosaries around necks abounding on the streets, and the feeling was just... Good. Encouraging. Supportive. Enthusiastic. All in a way it hadn't felt here, or anywhere around here, in a long time. Later in the evening, while waiting to do a radio interview, I sat by the big fountain behind 30 Rock -- the GE Building, NBC Studios, etc. -- to kill time and just soak up being back here again. It was a picture-perfect night, with just enough haze/smog in the air to give the lights of Times Square a brilliant shade of a "halo" effect. And then... from the distance... music could be heard. Voices and guitar. Joyous song. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Over and over again. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" With each iteration, it came closer. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Repetitive, exuberant chants are no surprise to anyone used to this place -- but from the sound, it became clear that these weren't the Hare Krishnas everyone's used to seeing roam the downtown streets.

And then they appeared: Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, Sisters of Life, a host of other orders male and female, cassocked sems and, more than any other, layfolk. Fifty, maybe 70 of 'em. All young. All together. All one. All looking just like me. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Each bore candles, turned heads and kept the singing up, making it a bit louder as the horns

and engine-noises of 6th Ave. right by Radio City on a Friday night sought to drown them out. I couldn't help but smile, simply to find that, in the midst of the city some have sought to portray as the global seat of the secularist behemoth, I wasn't alone. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Seeing a beaming onlooker, one perceptive Sister of Life jumped out of the crowd and handed me a prayer-card. "We're heading down to where he's staying to sing 'Happy Birthday,'" she said. Clearly, no further explanation was necessary. "You're welcome to join us." With a studio cameo on deck, I couldn't... and only later did I learn that, from all over the city, crowds like this one were walking, making station stops at the various parishes -- many of which stayed open, many welcoming large crowds of their own into the night -- all to congregate at the Mission House to sing and pray together. In a word, it was... amazing. It blew me away. The contagious joy that marked each face, the light each carried -- not the candles -- broke through a darkness that's long existed on these streets... one that could never be measured in watts or stops of sunlight.

It's common knowledge that the busiest day of the year at the House That Hughes Built isn't Christmas or Easter, or even St Paddy's Day... but Ash Wednesday, when no less than 60,000 penitents pour through its doors. They come from all backgrounds -- CEOs and housecleaners, teachers and technicians, Anglo, Latino, Asian, African... even Hindu,

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Jewish, Jain and Evangelical. Along these lines, it's been said that, for all the grief and pain of these last years, anyone -- anyone -- who doesn't have a bit of burnt palm on their forehead in the city that day gets looked at funny. That same sense of identity showed itself last night. But this time, it wasn't Lent they were claiming... but Easter. The New Pentecost. Indeed, their energy, their desire seemed to say that the light-bulb would never suffice and the moment had come to bring the Fire back to the heart of the church in the very midst of this "capital of the world."

(Burn, baby, burn.)

Seeing that felt so good, words still can't describe it. And long after they left, something hung in the air that hadn't in a good while, and never before in my memory. (To back this up, even my cousin on the Upper West Side said she could feel something stirring in the city that day which she couldn't exactly pinpoint.)...



Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth...of this earth... of this church! These have been amazing days, friends, ...it became clear that, as in a miracle, the tide had, at long last, begun to turn. His own energy-level at an apex unequalled over his three-year reign, Papa Ratzki might be heading home tonight... but, church, our work is just beginning. It's been said before but bears repeating: "the Holy Spirit is ready -- but the answer depends on us." It's the call of our time, and the work of renewal is already underway in our midst. But it can only happen if each of us go "all in." Gratefully, it's not a question of programs, budgets, committees or technologies. All it takes is just one word -- YES.

It's time, gang -- our time.
All in, all together, let's get to it.

(By Rocco Palmo. Reprinted with permission from <http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/>)



● **World Youth Day 08**
sydney, australia

FAMILY REUNION

Pope Benedict XVI called it a **new Pentecost** and there wasn't anyone in Sydney, Australia this past July who didn't experience some effect from the outpouring of grace that was World Youth Day. A hyper-secular city, Sydney was taken by holy storm as young people on fire for the Lord flooded the streets to welcome the Vicar of Christ to "the ends of the earth." The Love and Life Site, co-hosted by the Knights of Columbus, the John Paul II Institutes and the Sisters of Life, transformed a University courtyard into a microcosm of life and prepared to receive pilgrims from all over the world. They soon arrived, and with languages so diverse as to almost require a new Pentecost!

The floodgates opened, our Sisters and the Knights of Columbus Collegians worked continuously from early in the morning until late at night welcoming over 12,000 pilgrims to our little corner of WYD. And what a line-up! Under gigantic bold banners proclaiming "To live is to love without limits" and "It's Time to Live," there was non-stop Eucharistic adoration, catechesis from Bishops and Helen Alvarez in the mornings, an energy-packed Youth Festival in the afternoons and evenings, loaded workshops on pro-life issues and Theology of the Body (in three languages) and concerts by

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Matt Maher, Scythian, Celtic Spring and the CFR Catholic Underground band which had everyone out of their chairs. Our screening of *Bella* welcomed Eduardo Verastegui, star of the movie, and Bernadette Black, who, with



WORLD YOUTH DAY

her 14-year old son gave a powerful testimony of her own teen pregnancy. Pilgrims fed their bodies for free at our café and fed their souls by adoring the Blessed Sacrament, a large image of Our Lady of Guadalupe keeping watch. The final night, a beautiful Eucharistic healing procession sealed the gifts already given and prepared hearts for the graces to come from the next day's walking pilgrimage and vigil with the Holy Father.

As soon as Pope Benedict arrived, his spiritual paternity was evident. At the vast WYD gatherings, the Holy Spirit and the communion of Saints were palpably present. It was hard to miss that this was one big family reunion! The joy and blessings experienced by pilgrims overflowed into the City - fruit of reconciliation with God (confessions were non-stop throughout) and a renewed acceptance of His gifts which make us capable of loving without limits. We heard of countless personal transformations, conversions and healings that took place over the days. Belonging to this family brings the hope our hearts are made for – tasting it reminds us of how different are the fruits of sin which force us to merely survive in the midst of a gnawing weariness. With renewed courage and love, this family calls to the world: "It's Time to Live!"

For stories from World Youth Day or to listen to podcasts of the talks given at the Love and Life Site, visit the website: www.lovelifelink.org and check out the blog!



We received the following letter providing a glimpse into the marvelous out-pouring of graces given at our Love and Life Site. May it be a special “thank you” to all of you, our readers, who supported our efforts at World Youth Day either financially or through your prayers.



Dear Sisters of Life,

...On the Friday night of World Youth Day week, I came across a crowd of pilgrims enjoying the performance of ‘Celtic Spring’ in the campus courtyard [at the Love and Life Site]. Their infectious rhythms made me linger for longer than I had planned. Such talented young performers -- (fancy Irish dancing and playing the fiddle at the same time!) It was there that a Sister of Life invited me to the Eucharistic Healing Procession in the church. I thought, ‘why not’?

What can I say? It was one of the most memorable events of my life. How many hours I sat in that church I cannot recall, and how it seemed like nothing at all; time evaporated as I remained there, suspended in the presence of Our Lord. The musicians who sang and played echoed the sentiments of my heart: *‘Lord my God, I call for help by day. I cry at night before you. Let me come into your presence. O turn your ear to my cry.’*

The words of the psalms and hymns formed the substance of my prayer, a prayer that felt entirely new, honest and sincere. In me descended a deep and reverent quiet that I had never felt before. I seemed to know nothing. Everything astonished me: the pool of silent tears in which I found myself -- tears which never seemed to cease --; a warm hand on my shoulder; the waves of grief and anxiety inside me that I had not been aware of; a longing for peace. And there, in the presence of Jesus, it all came out.

I was reminded of the lyrics of a recent pop-song by Nada Surf: *‘I wanna know what it’s like on the inside of love. Can’t find my way in. I try again and again.’* And there, with all these strangers, I found the inside of love. It was an experience of complete and radical surrender to the will of God. The beauty, the simplicity of this shone as a revelation. It gave me great relief.

I felt a communion with the others there in the church, especially the elderly man beside me who sang quietly, and the beautiful Sister who put her hand on my shoulder as I wept. I marveled at all these people from all over the world kneeling before the blessed sacrament, reaching out for the ‘cloak of Jesus’. It was an experience like no other.

It must be that moments like these lie outside time, as Leonardo da Vinci once said: *“The years and seasons pass, and will always pass, but a moment of grace illuminates your entire life. Such an instant is outside of time.”*

I attended the final Papal Mass at Randwick...There was a part of his Holiness’ homily I found particularly powerful: *“But what is this ‘power’ of the Holy Spirit? It is the power of God’s life!... And the light which opens our eyes to see all around us the wonders of God’s grace.”*... When I heard this. I had the image of ... your Love and Life Site transforming the world... I thought of Friday night and all the beauty of it.... And this is the wonder of God’s grace...