

St. Anne “Faith in our Future” Co-Leader Witness Talk May 2008

Mark Rogan

My name is Mark Rogan and this is my wife LeAnn. LeAnn and I are with you today to talk a little bit about ourselves, our walk in Faith that we are on, and about the “Faith in the Future” campaign that you should have heard about over the past couple weeks.

We, along with our two children McKenna and Adam have belonged to Saint Anne for almost 9 years. We have become known to many people at the 10:15 Mass as the “front row Rogan’s”. It all started pretty innocently, we wanted our children who were 3 and 5 when we joined to be able to see the miracle that Jesus gave us each week as we attended Mass. As the weeks, months, and years pass we tend to find our place in the front row. From time to time we do get shuffled to a different section, Adam will always bring it to our attention that he likes the front row better. I agree.

As I spent the last couple weeks thinking about my talk today and my journey that I am taking with God, I would like to refer to one of my favorite subjects. Music. If someone asked me who the greatest band of all time is, I would have to say The Beatles. Some of you may disagree but many of you may be on my side. Here is where I may go out on a ledge, my favorite of all of The Beatles was George. He was the quiet one that had a passion building in him for all the years the Beatles were together. The showing of his spirituality started to build when he met the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi when he was 24 years old.

As I thought more about this quiet genius, I thought about his desire for peace in his spiritual life which built for a couple years and then had to fully blossom after a down time in his life. The relationship that I found, came up as I thought about the last song that the Beatles recorded before their break up in 1970 - 3 years after he met his spiritual guide. The song’s name was I, Me, Mine. George wrote the song in regards to the way that the individuals that he worked with and loved so much, had come to a point when it was all about I, Me, Mine. For couple years of my life I was in a similar world. I attended church as a youth and drifted away for a couple years – that would be the I, Me, Mine part. After these couple years I found myself yearning for something that was missing in my life. It was my walk of faith. I slowly started coming back to the church and then found myself wanting to do more and be involved more. The I, Me, Mine part of my life was fading and the journey was in full swing. Just like George, I was 24 years old. Where has this journey taken me over the years? I got involved at our old parish in Racine trying to be the voice of the youth. I guess my voice wasn’t loud enough yet – they weren’t listening. As our children started to grow, we decided that where we were was not where we wanted our children to be – along with ourselves. So we heard about Saint Anne from a neighbor and here we are today, 9 years later still driving from Racine. In the past 9 years, I have been involved in the Reading ministry, Communion ministry, Cross Bearer ministry, Acolyte ministry, Parish Council member, Catechist, CFM member, Saint Anne Supper Club, Chairperson along with LeAnn and Kathy and Jim Jalensky for the first “Building Fund Appeal”, Steering Committee for the “Faith in the Future” campaign, and finally Chairperson for the “Faith in the Future” campaign along with LeAnn, Judy and Gary Hutchins.

When I was working on the Steering Committee for this “Faith in the Future” campaign, my job was to work with a group of other parishioners and try to come up with a list of people who might be good leaders and be willing to help on this campaign and then give them a call and see if they would be interested. When I was getting to the end of my calls, I was talking to someone

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from the parish (who will stay nameless) whom I always loved talking to about parish things and church things because she is willing to ask questions that make me think. These questions take me out of the I, Me, Mine state that I sometimes fall back into and make me think about others. In her wondering if she should get involved, she asked me if I thought this campaign was worthwhile. I right away said yes – then I had to step back and think my answer through. I originally joined because Fr. Don asked me to – it’s hard saying “No” to him. I thought I had an easy job of finding some people who might want to help out and then I could disappear. And then her question came. So I thought about it and I realized I still really believe in the campaign. It is about not being I, Me, Mine – it is about the future – hence the name Faith in our Future. It is not about the past and what we have done, it is about making our parish, our home here at Saint Anne a stronger church. It is also about our mother church – the Archdiocese, who have been so helpful to us in our first 10 years of growth in strength, knowledge, stewardship, hospitality, and a few pains along the way. It is about the future of where we are going over the next 10 years and 10 decades. Some day we will all be gone from this place and our names will not be looked at in too many of the books, but we need to think about our children and their children and what kind of church do we want to leave them with. Is it about the whole or is it about I, Me, Mine?

LeAnn Rogan

We’re not only music buffs; we’re movie buffs, too. In fact, when the kids were little we didn’t want to sacrifice family time for a night out at the movies, but we still wanted to go to the movies... so Mark and I would opt for the late night film after tucking in our own kids and hiring a babysitter to essentially just “house sit”. You might know how that is...a responsible teenager gets to eat *your* chips and talk on *your* phone and you don’t have to sacrifice any time with your children because they’re asleep anyway...What we did have to sacrifice was OUR sleep because the late movie often ended closer to midnight. There’s always a trade-off...hmm...sleep vs. family time. For us, family time wins. Sleep gets sacrificed.

The other thing about movies is that Hollywood rarely puts out anything I can be proud of them for, so, on the rare occasion producers make a really great film that mimics our own family values, I feel like thanking them. Now, no-one in Hollywood is going to listen to anything I have to say with words, but money talks...so I often go twice to the really good films just to make a statement, and I invite friends to join me. What we choose to spend our money on says a lot about what’s important to us.

Something I used to spend a lot of money on was hair color. Anybody remember me being more blonde than gray??? A certain orange Christmas two years ago made me change my mind about artificial hair color. It was difficult to give up. In choosing to sacrifice my vanity I’ve saved us enough money to send BOTH McKenna and I to visit our sister parish in the Dominican Republic this summer. Maybe the sun there will bleach me back to blond for free...Anyway, giving to La Sagrada Familia seems like a much better place to divert our funds.

Did you know that the words give, giver and giving are mentioned over one thousand six hundred times in the Bible? To me that says that God thinks of giving as pretty important. Like a parent’s mantra of “Clean your room” and “Be nice to your brother”, God feels the need to repeat Himself... perhaps because we’re not listening, or our walk doesn’t match our talk.

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Mark and I, like you, struggle to listen well to what God is teaching us about having Faith In Our Future, about trusting Him to take care of all the details for us, about clinging to Him rather than the material gifts He’s given us. We are, of course, followers of the World’s Greatest Giver. None of us can out-give God. He doesn’t ask us to. He doesn’t even ask us to out-give each other—Not equal gifts, just equal sacrifice. Mark and I choose to tithe, giving to St. Anne’s and other charities BEFORE taxes, BEFORE tuition, BEFORE bill paying and certainly BEFORE frivolous spending, knowing deep in our hearts that God, the Father, will provide for us. He never stops blessing us. We give because we are grateful, and follow His example.

It can be hard to start doing something in a new way, even little things like movies and hair color and... long division..., but Jesus is always challenging us to do things in new and better ways. Even in today’s Gospel, the Jewish crowds did not want to take the time to understand this new teaching about Christ as Living Bread. It made them uncomfortable to learn something new. In fact, if you go home later and read a little past the end of today’s Gospel from John you’ll hear the people say, **“This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”** Living a life of stewardship IS a hard teaching. Who CAN accept it? Will you? Will you?

Next week at Mass you will be given a commitment card to fill out and leave here with Fr. Don. *This* week you are asked to pray, together with your whole family, and privately, too, about what you are able and willing to give to St. Anne’s and our brothers and sisters in the larger

Archdiocesan Church. There’s something you should know before arriving at your decision. Two things... One is that we asked for an advance commitment from some of our families here at ST. ANNE’s and had a wonderful response: 20 families have already pledged to contribute \$120,000 above and beyond their regular stewardship !!!! Secondly, 40% of monies collected for this capital campaign will be entered into a Trust, managed by our bishops AND a board of lay advisors who, like you and I, want our clerics to be held to the highest standards. There are 6 parts of that Trust to be used for Faith Formation and Catholic Schools. 3 of the 6 parts are endowment funds from which only the interest can be drawn upon to use for Faith Formation and Catholic Schools, and *only* for Faith Formation and Catholic Schools. That means that the principle amount, which, if all the churches in our Archdiocese meet their goal, could exceed 105 million dollars! That principle amount, whatever it may be based on our generosity, can NOT be touched.

A large percentage of that 105 MILLION DOLLARS stays in an interest bearing account and grows, multiplying your gift for years, for generations to come.

THAT, my friends, is good stewardship. THAT is fiscally responsible. THAT action deserves to be honored with a gift. I choose to trust the Trust.

Scripture gives us lots of help in figuring out what to do. For instance, Philipians 2:14 says “Do all things without arguing or complaining”. I tape *that* one to my vacuum and dishwasher! Malachi 3:10 says, “Bring the WHOLE tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My House. Test Me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” I want that blessing in my life...and I want it for you, too... Consider a true tithe, 10% of your gross income, or *any* gift above and beyond what you are giving now, and expect God to work miracles in your life. God bless you!