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REFLECTIONS ON FATHERHOOD

By Arleen M. Kaptur

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Father's Day - stores are filled with gift ideas and cards. There are special programs dedicated to honoring fathers. Yes, fathers are a very special group of people.

This is an open letter to each and every father out in the world. This is directed at you if you currently are living and raising your children, your children are grown, or you have fathered a child but do not have the pleasure of being an integral part of that child's life. Also, if you are a father and do not have or want any contact with a child that carries your physical attributes, this is for you.

A child is a unique combination of genes. Some are from the mother and some are contributed by the father. There are previous generations that also are taken into account. In other words, this child is a burning emblem of civilization and is given the responsibility of carrying the torch of the world to its resting place.

There is so much more than scientific endowments. There are emotions, hopes, dreams, and aspirations. A child is a mirror that reflects only the best of what mankind is capable of creating. It is history in the making, a promise for the future, and the pride of the beholder. A child is a complicated assortment of atoms and molecules, as well as a simple solution to loss of hope. You can dream with a child, and grow in awareness of everything around you. Miracles abound in life with the gift of innocence. Time comes to a standstill and our daily activities are sidestepped so we can look at an insect and marvel, or see a bird and truly see it for the first time. Giggles, hugs, and tickles wrap

up a perfect day. We are one step closer to perfection and yet the small hand of a child holds the keys.

Their steps are tiny and the road is long. They have endurance and capabilities we can only marvel at. A child is simplicity dressed up in its finest.

Missed opportunities of being with your child are irretrievable. Your child will never go back in time no matter how many times you do. Only their shadows remain to haunt and point an accusing finger. If you are not a vital part in your child's life, there will always be a void that no one else can ever fill. This space in the soul of a child will ache and be painful for as long as the child lives. Only your touch, your attention, and only you can soothe and cure. The responsibility is great but the rewards are incomprehensible. You are not complete if there is a void in your child's life.

Taking a rocket to the moon is child's play when compared to raising a child to adulthood. There are no owner's manuals and no guarantees. There are only promises and assurances of tomorrow. Expectations may vary but there are no mistakes. You do the best you can and that is all that is asked. Mistakes also pave the way for growth but absence builds the roadblock. Walls of years of neglect can be torn down with a kiss or an embrace. Past disappointments are just that - the past. It may take time to completely undo what it may have taken years to build but the labor is worth it. Your reflection will always be in your child's eyes and your lifeblood flows in their bodies. Their hearts are equipped to forgive and forget, but they need to know you care. Feelings and emotions can be mended, but abandonment is an open sore that never heals.

On Father's Day take the time to know your child, be a vital part of his/her existence and be grateful that you have contributed to the building of that rocket to the moon.

(Written by someone who never knew their father)

HAVE A HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!

ENJOY!

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Arleen Kaptur has written numerous articles, cookbooks, and the novel: SEARCHING FOR AUSTIN JAMES Websites: <http://www.arleenssite.com> <http://www.Arleens-RusticLiving.com>

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Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

By Lisa M. Hendey

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Book Review - Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

By Albert Haase

Reviewed by Lisa M. Hendey

Certain inspirational sayings and prayers transcend denominational lines, becoming part of the fabric of faith and inspiration for masses of believers seeking solace or comfort in difficult times. In Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi (Saint Anthony Messenger Press & Franciscan Communications, September 2004, paperback 84 pages) author Albert Haase, O.F.M. dissects the classic "Peace Prayer" which is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. In his enlightening introduction, Haase offers a brief history of the prayer, noting that it has been embraced by as a "prayer for all times and all peoples", having been used by such notables as Margaret Thatcher at her inauguration and at the funerals of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Diana, Princess of Wales.

Given today's climate of political upheaval and war in so many areas of our world, contemplation of the Peace Prayer seems to be even more relevant than ever. This compact, twelve chapter book examines each phrase of the prayer in detail. Personal reflections and stories of individuals living out the aspects of the Prayer are offered and draw the reader into a closer understanding of what is meant by each simple expression. Each chapter ends with four reflective questions for individual or group consideration.

For individuals looking to truly live out the concept "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace", Albert Haase's book will become a treasured resource and invaluable prompt to both prayer and action. Groups looking for a concise study should enjoy gathering to read and contemplate the book as they examine how to become peacemakers in their own communities and in the world at large.

For more information on Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi visit <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0867165723/catholicmomcom>

Lisa M. Hendey is a mother of two sons, webmaster of numerous web sites, including <http://www.catholicmom.com>, <http://www.digitalcropper.com>, and <http://www.christincoloring.com>, and an avid reader.

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