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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Happy Easter to each and every one of you! My apologies to begin with if you are just now receiving the mailed copy from January/February, life has been rough but each day is still a beautiful one! I know for most of you it is now spring time and the grass is turning green and you are planting a garden and picking those first few dandelions that pop up. Spring is such a beautiful time! Texas spring is a little different.... It was 90 degrees on Easter and boy was I hot and sweaty after hiding the 1,000 Easter eggs for the parish Easter egg hunt! My little herbs out front are getting a little scorched by the sun and heat now and I have come to renew my love of our AC in the house.

It is hard to believe that the school year is nearly over, though I am sure many of you have already made plans for that time. Each year as the graduation draws near I think particularly of all those leaving high school and moving on to start their 'real life'. It is such an exciting and intimidating time. Sometimes you know exactly what you want to do and be and others are completely lost as to what they want to do with their lives. Leaving high school is often a mixture of joy, fear, excitement, relief, and enthusiasm. From my personal experience and observation, those first few years outside of high school will be your most formative ones. I know, I know, a lot of science says that the ages 0-3 are the most formative, and I do not deny that, but these years right after high school are formative on a whole different level. This is when you make the choices for yourself on who and what you will become. This is when you decide the direction that your life will take. This is when friendships are tried, lost, and made. This is when you use your free will with the knowledge and guidance you have been given to follow a path in life.

Now I don't mean to intimidate those of you who are graduating, but I do want you to realize that this is not just a time of 'freedom at last'. And those of you who have not yet decided what you want to be, or rather I should be saying, what God wants you to do, don't worry, He will tell you in His own time. In the meantime, don't just live life waiting, live it fully and completely. In particular, make sure you all live life with a purpose. "Remember that towards which you journey for it will give purpose to your life." Too often when people don't know exactly what they want to be in life, they just do nothing... waiting for that revelation on what and where God wants them. The problem is that there is always something to be striving towards and it isn't just a career path that defines you, quite the contrary. When you meet someone new you aren't struck instantly by their career so much as by their personality and character. Everyone has met that person that just makes you feel welcome. They are always happy to see you and genuinely ask how your life is going. You have probably also met that person who is aloof and seems to always be judging others. Don't let yourself 'accidentally' become one of these people, decide who you want to be and become it!

If you don't know the type of person you want to be then now is a good time to sit down and figure it out. How do you want people to remember you? Think about the people you admire and draw out characteristics from them that you want to imitate. That one mom who always picks up her kids from school with a smile. Well then, start practicing to smile more meaningfully and more often. Your older sister who always has some cool project she is working on. Then start exploring your talents and hobbies and make a list of projects you want to do. That classmate who always manages to find something nice to say about people and tactfully turns the conversation when it becomes uncharitable. Learn from them and practice adding a good word when all others have to say is uncharitable. Don't just let yourself grow up however you happen to, choose WHO you want to be and work towards that.

Now, it won't happen overnight, but I guarantee you will sleep better at night knowing that you are trying to BECOME something. This is YOUR choice. Your parents, teachers, and friends all help to form you and direct you in virtuous ways but in the end you decide who you will be and how you will be remembered. And let me tell you, there is just something wonderful about one day hearing someone say "You are always smiling" when that was one characteristic you were striving for. You know who you are becoming.

Challenge of the Month

Summer vacation! Yay! Everyone loves the sound of vacation and I am sure everyone has their own idea of activities that are involved. For some it means hours to spend reading a book, maybe riding their horse, fishing, frisbee golfing, playing baseball, having picnics, or spending every weekend at a different friend's house. Whatever you imagine your vacations to have, I challenge you to add a new activity. Learn a new game, explore a new park, create a new family tradition. So often we get caught up in the same old activities, which I am sure are fun, but it is good to broaden our horizons and add something different. Here is a list of suggestions:



- Learn a board game (Settlers of Catan, Spot – it, Othello, Blockus, Mad Gab, and Spy Alley are some of my favorites and all very family friendly.)



- Learn/practice an outdoor game; you can even make a friendly family competition. (Frisbee, Kickball, Soccer, Basketball, baseball, ladderball, corn hole, ring toss, mini golf)

- Visit a local area weekly or biweekly (The library - many have special events over the summer, a park – find one with some walking trails, movie theatre, Grandma's house – bring her some craft projects you made or have her help you build a lego village, a nursing home – practice a song, dance, or poem for them and ask them questions about their lives, a museum – some have great family summer passes, the zoo – once again you can often get a good deal on a summer pass, a mom-and-pop ice cream or convenience store – cool down with a cold treat from a local shop and get to know the owners.)



- Create an at-home tradition (Homemade cheese pizza on Friday with paper plates so mom doesn't have to do the dishes, banana splits and puzzles on Thursday nights, eat dessert first on Sunday evening, have a monthly family 'talent show' where siblings show off their new juggling skills, piano piece, painting, lego castle, etc., have a lego building competition, have a formal dinner on the first Saturday of every month, tent out in your backyard every other Friday.)

These are just a few ideas of what you can do, but find something and try it out! Don't get rid of your old activities but add some new ones and you may just find a new favorite!

Pen-Pals (or e-Pals)

Want to meet likeminded girls? Consider becoming a pen-pal or e-pal! It is easy: just send me a message via mail or email saying you would like to be matched with a pen-pal and I will do the rest. You can correspond via letters or email, whichever you prefer. This could be a great addition to your summer activities. In an age where people have 100's of Facebook 'friends', true friendship and communication has become a lost art. So, send me a message and let's keep the art of making real friends alive!

Pleasant Pastimes

This is the hardest section to do because I have SO many ideas that I want to share with you! Thankfully I was able to share some with you in the challenge of the month and I am going to showcase a few specific things that may help you add a new activity to your vacation list.

Viking Chess or Kubb



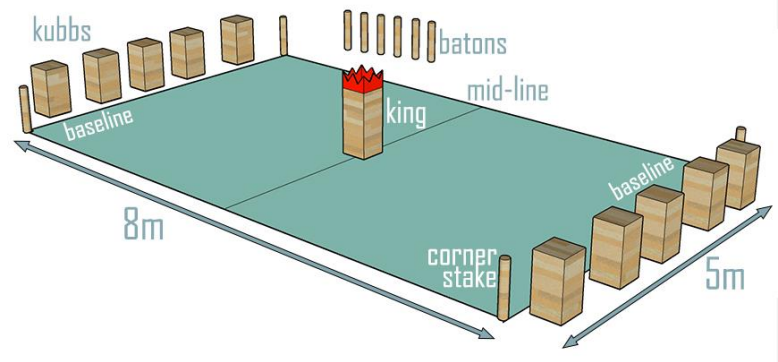
Kubb is a Scandinavian outdoor game which is thought to have originated over 1000 years ago. Legend has it that the Vikings used to played for hours on end during the light evenings during the summer months. Kubb is also often referred to as Viking Chess and is a popular garden game with families allowing everyone to join in with the fun and games.

The purpose of the game is to knock over the King. This can be attempted only when you have knocked down all of your opponent's 'Guard Kubbs' using the throwing Batons. But beware, knock over the King before all of the Guards and you have lost the game!

Kubb is a very simple game to understand and play and it is certainly a game of great skill and strategy. Below is a simple guide on how to play this game and a simple explanation on how to play.

Firstly set up the pitch as in the picture below. Once a decision has been made on who will go first the game can begin. Team A then throw the 6 batons from behind the baseline at the opposition's kubbs which are at the opposite end of the pitch.

Once all of the batons have been thrown the opposing team (Team B) has to gather up any kubbs that have been knocked down. This team then needs to throw them back to team A's side of the field. If they are thrown back into play they are called field kubbs. Any kubbs which land outside of the area or not passing the centre line can be re-thrown by team B. If then the kubb still lands in the wrong place Team A can then place it any chosen spot on the pitch but it must be at least one baton away from the king kubb.



The game then continues with play being alternated between the two teams until one team's entire baseline kubbs have been knocked down. The winner of the game is the team who knocks down all the kubbs in their opponent's half of the pitch and on the baseline and then knocks over the king. But if a team knocks down the king prior to knocking down all of the kubbs that team immediately will lose the game.

Now this may all sound confusing, but I promise, it really isn't! It is so addicting once you get into it and the added bonus is that it doesn't take up much space to play! It is currently on sale on Amazon for about \$30 so go grab one for your family and give it a try! Let me know what you think of it!

Host a Karaoke Night

Now you may be intimidated by this proposition but just hold on one minute. Singing has been proven to boost your happy hormones and also to work as a bonding experience. Now, you may be totally embarrassed to sing in front of others, but maybe now is a good time to step outside that comfort zone and not care what others think and just enjoy life. Besides, you do not have to jump straight into full-out karaoke but can start with just

singing along. Get your friends together and have them join in! Our make it a family night activity. We did this semi-regularly at our teachers' house and it was a much enjoyed event. Here are some simple steps and ideas to get you started on creating a new event or tradition to look forward to with your friends or family.

- 1) **Invite people to come.** This can be your classmates, friends, family, whomever you want. But think about who will know songs similar to you and then invite them.
- 2) **Create a list of some songs you enjoy singing and invite your friends/family to do the same.** There were usually about 4 or 5 of us teachers and we each brought a list of 5-10 songs so that we had a nice variety to choose from.
- 3) **Have a device to play the songs from.** You are going to want a good speaker that you can turn the volume up on as this can help the less confident singers open up and enjoy themselves more. You will also need access to the music. We usually just use Youtube because it has just about every song in Karaoke and sing-along version as well as the words on the screen. You can use CD's or playlists that your family or friends have as well.
- 4) **Sing!** Once everyone shows up and gets a glass of water, decide on a song to play first. The singer can choose to sing solo with just the music playing or can sing along to the lyric version of the song, or everyone who knows the song can join in. It is totally up to you! Do whatever is in your comfort level and build from there. Be sure to get input from everyone about which songs to sing.



Here are some of my favorite songs from our karaoke nights:

- 1) Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears
- 2) Faraway Cookies
- 3) Skye Boat Song
- 4) Danny Boy
- 5) A Million Dreams

Immortal Poets Society

Many are familiar with this poem. I have included the version for girls as well.

If – Rudyard Kipling

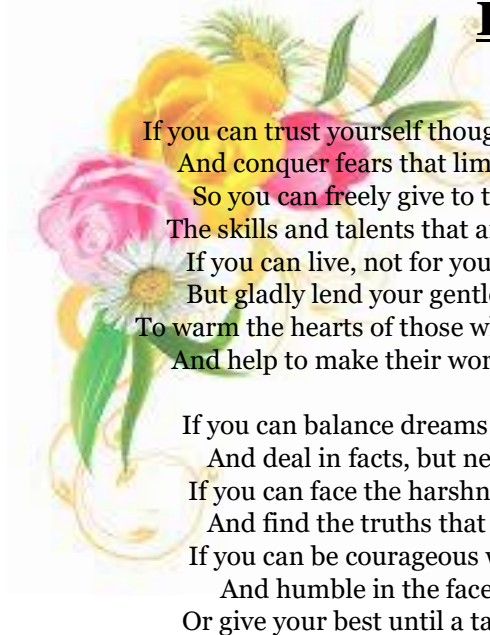
If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

If for Girls - Gale Baker Stanton

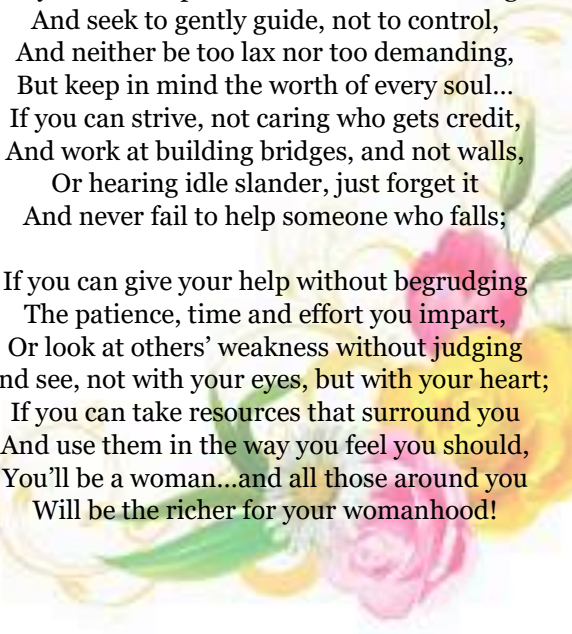


If you can trust yourself though others doubt you
And conquer fears that limit what you dare
So you can freely give to those about you
The skills and talents that are yours to share;
If you can live, not for your pleasure only,
But gladly lend your gentleness and grace
To warm the hearts of those whose lives are lonely
And help to make their world a better place;

If you can balance dreams with practicality
And deal in facts, but never lose ideals,
If you can face the harshness of reality
And find the truths that prejudice conceals;
If you can be courageous when defeated
And humble in the face of victory,
Or give your best until a task's completed,
However difficult that task may be;

If you can temper facts with understanding
And seek to gently guide, not to control,
And neither be too lax nor too demanding,
But keep in mind the worth of every soul...
If you can strive, not caring who gets credit,
And work at building bridges, and not walls,
Or hearing idle slander, just forget it
And never fail to help someone who falls;

If you can give your help without begrudging
The patience, time and effort you impart,
Or look at others' weakness without judging
And see, not with your eyes, but with your heart;
If you can take resources that surround you
And use them in the way you feel you should,
You'll be a woman...and all those around you
Will be the richer for your womanhood!



Delicious Disasters

Frozen Peach Mocktail

2 cups peaches – frozen (remove peels if still on)

1 cup sparkling apple juice

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon lime juice

Blend it all together. Taste and add more sugar if the peaches were not sweet enough. You can use fresh peaches, which will give it a richer flavor, but be sure to freeze them for an hour before blending to make it a cool and refreshing drink. You can top it off with some additional sparkling apple juice if you like. Perfect treat for a summer Sunday afternoon, birthday party, family night, or just because!



That time of Year

It is time for the yearly subscription renewal! The next issue will be the last one for most of the mailing subscribers. If you wish to continue receiving it by mail, please send me a message and a \$5 subscription fee. You can mail me a letter or email me with your renewal. If you would like to stop receiving these, please also respond and we will remove you from the list. You can also choose to receive them by email which is completely free! And if there is anyone you know who may enjoy it, please send me their contact information and I will send them a free issue. Last but not least, thank you for your support on this newsletter. It hasn't been as timely as I hoped, but I have enjoyed doing it and hearing from you. Thank you!

Girls, You're Important — Rev. Father Siekmann

The title of this chapter is "Girls Pray". This is not meant as a command so much as a statement. In the last chapter Father spoke on how boys are attracted to a girl who acts like a girl, and we are drawn to boys who act like boys. Well, one attribute of a girl is that she prays. It is not enough to just dress femininely and know how to look pretty with makeup, a girl must also have a prayer life in order to really be a true girl.

The modern girl knows what it is to pray. She does pray, and earnestly. Most girls realize that they cannot get along in life alone. They need help and protection. How perfectly to be expected that they would turn to God, to His Blessed Mother, and to their favorite saints.

It is truly inspiring to know that many girls start the day by assisting at Mass and receiving Holy Communion. Some do this at great inconvenience. God is surely pleased with their sacrifice. A visitor to a girls' school is always highly edified to see many girls snatch a few moments of free time to stop in the chapel for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Many a girl tries to keep conscious of her guardian angel beside her, tries hard to keep recollected in God, and often renews her intentions to do all for God.

Every day presents many problems. Some are passing and of little importance, yet they seem big at the time. Others are really big and call for decisions that will influence one's whole life. All these problems are handled best in the quiet of prayer. There is certainly no good reason why the modern girl should not be adept at the kind of prayer called mental prayer. It is fairly simple for her to develop the practice of conversation with God. Her confessor or

favorite Sister will be glad to introduce her to the more systematic methods of mental prayer.

Many a conversion from sin, or many a conversion to the true faith is due, no doubt, to the fervent prayers of a modern girl, whom people might regard lightly, but whom God considers His special friend and faithful helper. In an age where divorce and broken homes

play havoc with the sacred institution of marriage, a good girl, thinking about eventual matrimony, will pray that God will let her find a good husband, one who will help her make a happy Christian home. A girl who has learned the power of prayer will later on, as a mother, or as one entrusted with the care of others' children, pass on her spirit of prayer to her youthful charges. Who can measure the vast amount of good she will occasion in the world for generations to come?

The prayer program of the modern girl need not be complicated, yet it can be complete. Upon rising in the morning, she drops to her knees for brief prayers to offer her day to God. If she has the opportunity, she assists at Mass and receives Holy Communion. She tries to find time for visits to the Blessed Sacrament. As difficulties and problems come up during the day she prays for guidance and help. At night before retiring, she again drops to her knees to glance briefly over the day just passed and recommends herself to the mercy and protection of God her Father. Faults she may have committed in the course of the day. But in her brief snatches of prayer she was sorry for them. She took occasion throughout the day to say little indulgenced ejaculations. In that way she removed the temporal punishment due to her sins. A good girl can come to the end of the day with all her faults forgiven, all her temporal punishment made up for, and with much merit to spare.

In her charity she will be mindful to help the poor souls in purgatory. She will do her part to carry on the beautiful work of the communion of saints. While bishops and priests are actively engaged in working for souls she, by her prayers, will be drawing down God's graces upon their work. Without God's favor their work would be in vain. **The modern girl can by her prayers bring untold good to souls.** God must deeply love the generous-hearted girl who does a great, if unnoticed work, by her simple daily prayers.

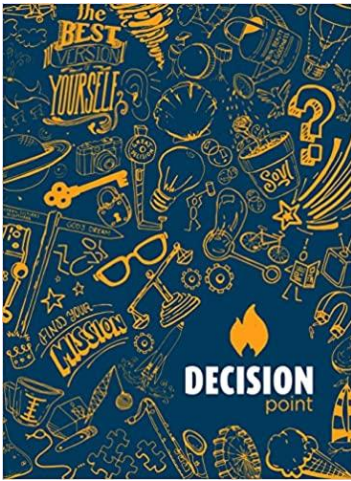
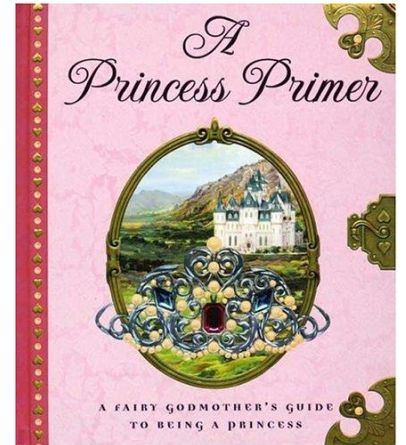


A good girl can come to the end of the day with all her faults forgiven, all her temporal punishment made up for, and with much merit to spare.

Read It or Rue It

A Princess Primer

Every girl needs to read this book at least once in her life, even if she is already 80 years old. Disney has given princesses a bit of a bad name and this book shows what a princess truly means: selfless, disciplined, and dignified. An interactive book that teaches you what all goes into being a princess from choosing your hairstyle to learning proper etiquette. Geared towards 8-10 year-olds this book is a beautiful addition to any family library. The classical style of the artwork is a perfect medium for the message it brings and will help instill an appreciation for true beauty.

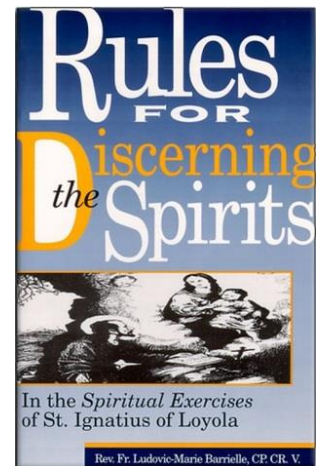


Decision Point – Catholic Journal

This Catholic journal is a fantastic tool for any teen or young adult. Created specifically for those preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation, it walks through the truths of the Faith with guiding questions for meditation both on the mysteries of the church and your own responses to God in your life. Teenagers and young adults can struggle with having open conversations about the Faith and developing habits of mental prayer and reflection. This journal helps them become more confident in putting the Faith into words as well as reflecting on the truths therein and responding to them in their own lives. One aspect that I really love about this journal is that it teaches confidence in God time and time again, something that is so powerful for a teen as they navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood. An excellent gift for any teen, high school graduate, or young adult. It is also very inexpensive and can be found at Dynamiccatholic.com.

Rules for Discerning the Spirits

An essential book for any teenager or young adult. This short and concise book is a helpful reference on how to know what is the call of God or the warning of a healthy conscience and what is the devil bringing unrest or passivity into your soul. It is a short book and presents a sure means of deciding whether your decisions are directed toward fulfilling the will of God. I still reference this book from time to time when there are decisions to be made and I am unsure or when a period of unrest comes upon me. This should be a core part of every person's spiritual reading library.



We read to know
that we are not alone.

- C.S. Lewis

