Egged on by the Spirit

Finding God in all situations

Book Excerpt
Burning with Love for God

Servant Branch
Door-Knocking in the Suburbs

South Bend
LaSalle’s Chief Morale Officer
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Emily Hagens took this picture of Lisa Ficker (both Vancouver-Portland) the second week of January during the area’s worst storm in 20 years. A foot of snow in 24 hours forced the cancellation of two weekends of community meetings and closed Trinity Academy for five days.

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FRONT COVER
Mercy transformed an unwelcome encounter with an egg into a time of encouragement.

BACK COVER
Andy Grams (Servant Branch) took this photo of the Duluth Harbor North Breakwater Lighthouse in January of 2014.

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Splat.

An egg hit the window of my blue Prius and broke. The yolk ran down the glass. I was just a block from my home in the northern Virginia suburbs, driving my family back from a Trinity play. Anger suddenly rose up within me. What if I had lost control? My family could have been hurt. I could have hit someone! I'm gonna get the perpetrator!

I pulled over, got out of the car and started searching. No one was on the street, so I stalked into the backyard of one of the houses, but it was empty. My wife Karen pointed to some egg on the ground near a driveway. I knocked on the door of the house. No answer.

We drove home, and I switched cars and went back, parking nearby. Sure enough, soon a high school-age boy came out of one of the houses and began wiping egg off the street. I got a good look at him, went home and called the police.

The officer who came out told me he couldn't do anything since no one had witnessed the incident. I replied that I felt compelled to go back and talk to the boy's parents. If one of my children had thrown an egg, I'd want to know, I reasoned.

A few hours later, my resolve about returning to the house had weakened. My peace had returned, my car was clean and I was back to my life. I was ready to move on and really didn't want to go up the street and confront anyone.

But something inside of me—I'm convinced it was the Holy Spirit—urged me to return. I walked over to the house and noticed a car in the driveway, and a man, the boy's father, watering some plants. He looked at me warily. I explained what had happened.

"Did he have blonde hair?", he asked.

"Yes."

"That's my son," he replied. He apologized courteously, telling me that his son wasn't home, but that he would have him apologize to me and clean the car.

I thought about ending the conversation and returning home, but again the Spirit prompted me. "Is there some adversity going on in your son's life?," I asked.

Soon the dad was in tears, telling me that his wife had left them that fall. As he shared his story, I consoled him and prayed with him, telling him that he was a hero for doing all he could for his children during such a hard time. Before I knew it, more than an hour had passed, so much time that my wife later told me she had been worried about me.

The next day, I went down the street again and met the boy, but by that time my heart had done a 180-degree turn. I felt no need to give him a piece of my mind. I was an advocate and encourager instead of the adversary I had been the previous day.

Over the next few months, I stopped by the house to visit the father and son, taking time to joke, listen and encourage and pray with them. I became friends with the father, and the son and I developed an easy rapport. Eventually, the family moved from the neighborhood and we lost touch, though the father and I remain friends on Facebook.

This experience has reminded me that good can come from anything that the world or the devil throws our way... even an egg.
In December Greenlawn Press published a new book by Paul DeCelles and Mary Frances Sparrow (both South Bend), *Burning with Love for God: A Guide to the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*. The book is addressed primarily to directors of the Spiritual Exercises, but Paul and Mary Frances believe it will also be a help for all “those who want to live and move and have their being as God’s friend.” With that in mind, we’re reprinting most of the first chapter of the book here to give you a taste for it. Some brothers and sisters have found it profitable to use the book in their daily prayer time, reading perhaps a few pages at a time and then praying about them. You may find it helpful to approach this chapter that way, and we hope that it will be a help to you in your friendship with the Lord. If you would like to purchase the book, you can order it online from Lulu.com or Amazon.com.
n the Spiritual Exercises Ignatius does not often mention the love of God. In fact, in his Principle and Foundation he declares that “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord” (23), seemingly excluding the love of God and of one another from the fundamental purpose of human beings. Nevertheless, most people who have made the Exercises would probably say that the heart of the Exercises is love. They lead to union with God and with one another.

By setting the Exercises in the context of love, we are changing them, but not substantially. Some might say we are subverting them, but we believe love is the fulfillment of the Exercises. Service and the obedience it entails are transformed through love. The imitation of Christ becomes participation in the life of Christ. Consolations are a movement of love which arise out of an encounter with God. The three kinds of humility become three kinds of love. Discerning the will of God becomes making a free choice out of love for God. The Spiritual Exercises are all about love. We want them to be read and studied and used in light of this context.

So many people have written about love: poets, philosophers, theologians, novelists, songwriters, playwrights and so on. It’s a difficult subject to write about because the one word “love” seems to have an incredible variety of meanings, perhaps as many meanings as there are people. We have, however, found one book in particular to be especially helpful in articulating and describing the experience of love. It’s called Love and Friendship and it was written by a Jesuit, Jules Toner. Here in this chapter and throughout the book our discussion of love will rely on and echo Toner’s analysis of love.

In order to understand the Exercises, it’s important to realize that there are different types of love. A person’s love for another person—be it another human being or one of the three Persons of the Trinity—can be what we are calling “implemental love,” “semipersonal love” or “personal love.” Personal love is love in its most fundamental or radical sense. When a person experiences personal love for God, that love can, given the right conditions, develop into a friendship with God. Often, a person’s love is actually a mixture of these three types of love, although usually one type or another predominates.

Although personal love is difficult to describe, most people have an instinct and a desire for it. We’re not satisfied with being known and loved as a kind person or a generous person or a courageous person. After all, lots of people are kind, generous and courageous. We want to be loved on account of who we are. We want to be loved personally. We certainly aren’t satisfied with being loved because we are useful or pleasant to be around. We aren’t even satisfied with being loved on account of the kind of person we are. We long to hear the words, “You are the reason I love you.” So, when we love someone with personal love, we aren’t loving him for ourselves or for his good qualities. We are loving him—the full splendor of his personal reality. This is love in its most radical or fundamental sense.

Personal love arises in an encounter or a meeting with another person. In that encounter I experience that person acting: his words and deeds. I also experience the kind of person he or she is—his or her qualities—but sometimes I catch a glimpse of something more. I encounter a person who is revealed in his or her acts and qualities, but who is more than that, and I love that person. It’s relatively easy to talk about how useful someone is to me, and with some effort I can describe a person’s qualities, but it is impossible to define a person. When I encounter someone personally I am encountering something indefinable. We can talk ceaselessly about someone, but everyone knows that words can’t substitute for meeting the person.

We can love God, not on account of what He does for us and not on account of the kind of person He is, but simply because He is who He is. Our love for Him
can become personal. When we love Him personally we aren’t simply responding to His acts and gestures, nor to His wonderful qualities which are revealed in everything He does and has done. We are responding to Him. Such moments of personal love are profoundly intimate and difficult to talk about, but very real. Many people, although certainly not all, long for genuine personal encounters with God and want to love Him more and more personally. It’s certainly true that God wants to be loved personally by us, not because it would be satisfying and fulfilling for Him, but because it’s really good for us to love Him personally. He knows that we’ll become alive in a way we didn’t know was possible by loving Him in this way.

Ignatius of Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises are an extremely effective tool for enkindling love of God. Some may embark on the Exercises and in the process see for the first time how useful God is and then begin to love Him that way—as useful. They begin to love Him as their Savior and their Lord. This love can be life-changing and may be the difference between heaven and hell for a person. Such people leave the retreat intent on obeying the laws of God and participating well in the Church. Others may embark on Ignatius’s retreat, experience implemental love for God and then experience something more. They begin to see and relate to God as someone who is really admirable. They love Him for His traits and they want to imitate Him. They leave the retreat pursuing a life of virtue. Others experience even more. Somewhere in the retreat, God does something, and they catch a glimpse of Him, and they begin to love Him for His own sake. They leave the retreat identifying with their Savior’s life and eager to participate in it. The other graces of the retreat pale in comparison to this one.

A person must of course cooperate in order to get something out of the Exercises, but their effectiveness is remarkable. People who are engaged in serious sin can embark upon the Exercises and come out of them with a new life centered around their personal love for God. People who want, sometimes desperately, to think of themselves as loving God but who aren’t at all attracted to Jesus’ personal life of insults and contempt, poverty and humility as portrayed in the Gospel can come out of the Exercises changed. They end up wanting to share their Lord’s life in every way and even asking to share His poverty and humiliations. They find themselves accepting and admiring God’s revelation of Himself in Jesus and beginning to love both Jesus and His Father personally. Some people who do the Exercises take small steps toward personal love of God. Others come out of the Exercises ablaze with love on account of one or several personal encounters with their Lord.

As desirable as it is, in and of itself,
when people do talk about it, it sounds as if one person becomes larger than life, and the other fades into the background. As wonderful as it is, poetic language sometimes gives this impression. “He is everything,” a poet or songwriter might say. The unity that friends experience doesn’t come about because one person becomes everything, be it by domination or by self-abnegation. Friends become one, yet remain distinct persons. One thinks, of course, of the Trinity: three persons, but they are one.

One of the best or at least most useful descriptions of friendship we’ve found is by the philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592):

In the friendship I speak of, the souls mix and work themselves into one piece with so perfect a mixture that there is no more sign of a seam by which they were first conjoined. . . . The union of such friends, being really perfect, deprives them of all acknowledgment of mutual duties, and makes them loathe and banish from their conversation words of separation and distinction, benefit, obligation, acknowledgment, entreaty, thanks, and the like; all things—wills, thoughts, opinions, goods, wives, children, honors and lives—being in effect common between them; and that absolute concurrence of affections being no other than one soul in two bodies (according to that very proper definition of Aristotle), they can neither lend nor give anything to one another.

Friends who “hate and banish from their conversation words of separation and distinction” don’t speak of “my life” and “your life.” They speak of “our life.” It’s not “my success” and “your success.” It’s “our success.” They have the life of one another in personal love for God can also be the building block for something more. When a person experiences personal love for God, that love can, given the right conditions, develop into a friendship with God. “Friendship” is another one of those words, like “love,” which can mean different things to different people. When we say “friendship” we aren’t referring to acquaintances hanging out together, no matter how much they love each other with some mixture of implemental, personal and semipersonal love. We aren’t even referring to people who experience many moments of personal love, but whose lives run, so to speak, on parallel tracks. Rather, we have in mind a relationship where two people have “one life lived wholly by each and wholly by both together” (Toner, p. 255). We are thinking of a relationship in which two people have each other’s life in common.

The unity that is present in friendship is very difficult to talk about. Sometimes,
common. They share everything: all they possess, all they think, all they feel, all they do and all they are. They are one.

The Spiritual Exercises can take a person to the place where the exercitant and his Lord have the life of one another in common. They are a tool not only for enkindling personal love but also for building friendship with God. If a person continues to do the Exercises even after he has finished the retreat, he can within a year or two begin to experience a measure of true friendship with his Lord and God. Friendship isn’t, of course, a goal to be achieved; it’s a way of life that becomes deeper and richer as time passes.

At this point it’s tempting to expound more on friendship, especially friendship with God. We hope to do so in a future work, but for now the topic is the Exercises. It is, however, very important to realize that the Exercises are ultimately all about personal love for God and even friendship with God. The Exercises are like a path. It’s important to know where this path is headed; otherwise, the director and the exercitant might stop along the way, mistakenly thinking they have reached the final destination. For example, for some exercitants the move from implemental love to semipersonal love for God can be very labor-intensive. Since implemental love is rooted in a radical love for self, their experience of the Exercises involves a radical turning from self toward God. They can then mistakenly conclude that the Exercises are all about overcoming and conquering one’s self. They mistake a step along the way as the final destination. Likewise, many exercitants are dazzled by their Lord’s many good qualities and want to imitate Him. This is a wonderful fruit of the Exercises, but it’s a mistake to conclude that the Exercises are only about imitating the Lord and growing in virtue. After all, imitation implies words of separation and distinction. The Exercises are ultimately all about shared life. Likewise, exercitants who are consoled with an experience of personal love for their Lord need to know that even more is possible. They can be one with their Lord habitually, as friends are with each other. The Spiritual Exercises are a tool. In order to use this tool well, it’s imperative for the director to be aware of everything it can do.

Is friendship with God really possible? Can a human being be friends with God? Is it really possible for two such radically different beings to live one life? Can two people be friends, one of whom is submitted to the other? It looks like Jesus lived one life with His Father, all the while acknowledging and submitting to His Father’s authority. It’s not too hard to imagine Him saying to His Father, “Your ways are my ways. All that you have and possess, all that you are, all that you think and do—it’s all mine in you.” And one can imagine God the Father saying the same to Jesus. It would appear, then, that friendship can exist between two persons, one of whom has authority over the other, but the more fundamental question remains: Can a human being be friends with God?

THE HEART OF THE EXERCISES IS LOVE. THEY LEAD TO UNION WITH GOD AND WITH ONE ANOTHER.
The short answer is yes. In Christ, as Christ, friendship with God our Father is a real possibility. We are something more than mere mortals. For “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” Or, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church points out, quoting Pius XII, “To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body and the whole Spirit is in each of the members” (797). With Jesus and on account of Jesus, reality has changed. We are a new creation, as St. Paul said, and we have the whole Spirit of God. In the centuries following Paul, the great Fathers of the Church elaborated on this revelation. The Catholic Church offers us some of their reflections in the Liturgy of the Hours:

Our nature is transformed so that we are no longer merely men, but also sons of God, spiritual men, by reason of the share we have received in the divine nature. (Cyril of Alexandria).

Through the Spirit we acquire a likeness to God; indeed, we attain what is beyond our most sublime aspirations—we become God. (Basil the Great).

My dear brethren, there is no doubt that the Son of God took our human nature into so close a union with himself that one and the same Christ is present, not only in the firstborn of all creation, but in all his saints as well. The head cannot be separated from the members, nor the members from the head. (Leo the Great).

Just as the trunk of the vine gives its own natural properties to each of its branches, so, by bestowing on them the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, gives Christians a certain kinship with himself and with God the Father. . . . (Cyril of Alexandria).

Is it possible for a person to be a friend of God? Yes. After all, as the author of 2 Peter boldly proclaims, we “share the divine nature” (1:4, NJB). Not only is friendship with God possible, it looks like it is our baptismal birthright. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that friendship with God is the conscious realization of our baptismal identity. Of course, these passages from our forefathers in the faith beg for theological reflection, but at the very least they proclaim a hope: a hope of glory, “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27).

Burning with Love for God: A Guide to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, by Paul DeCelles and Mary Frances Sparrow, can be purchased on Lulu.com or on Amazon.com.
PAT RATH
Chief Morale Officer

by Chris Meehan

At Rath (South Bend) retired in December of 2016 after 42 years of work for two community enterprises, Charismatic Renewal Services (CRS) and the LaSalle Company. A former banker and computer programmer who had worked in Boston and Los Angeles, she began her work for the community in a small house with a shipping warehouse in the basement, earning $2.74 per hour. When she retired she was the LaSalle Company’s vice-president and unofficial chief morale officer, responsible for human resources and the company health plan. Along the way, she answered hundreds of health insurance questions, made sure everybody’s paychecks arrived on time and managed numerous state and federal filings. In the big picture, she helped spread baptism in the Holy Spirit worldwide through charismatic conferences in Rome, Kansas City and Dublin, and laid the groundwork for a book distribution business that produced millions of dollars to support the mission of the People of Praise.

She began work in January of 1974, a few months after the community decided to take responsibility for the South Bend branch of CRS, serving as an assistant to Clem Walters, the general manager. CRS was then located in two small houses a few doors down from each other. “In those early days, Pat was my right arm,” Clem recalls. “We were a small crew and we had to figure out how to do things we hadn’t done before like running a major international conference in Rome. We were also shipping books and pamphlets about the charismatic renewal around the world. From the start, Pat was game for whatever job needed to be done.”

As the charismatic renewal grew, so did the conference office and book distribution center, moving to the LaSalle Hotel in 1975. The number of full- and part-time employees grew to over 40. According to a 1982 issue of Resource, the community’s newspaper, the company shipped 115 tons of books in 1981 and by 1982 more than 200,000 people had attended CRS-administered conferences. Pat took responsibility for payroll and administering the health insurance plan, becoming personnel manager and assistant to CRS president Dick Keusch. During this period, she also returned to school, shoehorning in classes to become a CPA while working full-time.

In 1979, CRS began selling Bibles and textbooks to Catholic parishes and institutions. This new textbook business grew gradually, with profits increasing even as conferences shrank and sales of charismatic renewal literature began to drop off. Bob McDonough, who served as president from 1987 to 2010, recalled, “Pat proved to be a jack of all trades. It seemed like she could do anything. She could take apart a computer. She was a CPA and helped people with their taxes and served as a notary public. I knew quite a bit about finance from my years as a banker, but she taught me the book business. As the company’s main person concerned with the welfare of employees, she could be tough but fair. She expected people to do their jobs and do them well. She played a big part in our success.”

Her day-to-day responsibilities continued to evolve. She
worked at the receptionist’s desk and in the company’s retail bookstore. As vice-president, she kept things running smoothly during three time periods when the president or general manager was incapacitated for an extended period.

Tim Slowiak, a long-time manager, consulted with Pat on a number of personnel matters and recalls how she constantly exhorted him to err on the side of mercy and generosity. “Pat’s words to me embody the respect for others that permeated her relationships, and the dignity with which she treated our employees. Her advice may be the best advice I’ve ever been given.”

Denise Hurley, who has worked in several different departments, said, “I remember Pat emphasizing to me that maintaining good relationships in the office was the most important thing to remember.”

Pat often used humor to communicate her messages, and loved to tell stories about her family members in Maine—in a perfect Maine accent. She wore a shiny green wig on St. Patrick’s Day and once dressed as R2-D2 from Star Wars for a companywide costume party.

She had a knack for giving a human touch to the reams of paperwork she processed. Christine Ziegler, who has taken on some of Pat’s responsibilities, points to the bulletin board in Pat’s old office, filled with photographs of babies. Over the years, as employees contacted her in order to add their newborns to the health insurance plan, Pat would ask them to send along a picture.

“Pat is heroically generous,” said Paul DeCelles. “She lived with us in household in the late 1960s and early 1970s, eventually moving out so she could live in the rat-infested apartment of another single sister in the community. This sister was a recovering drug addict who lived in a dangerous neighborhood plagued by drugs and violence. Pat emptied her checking account to pay this sister’s bills as well as a debt she owed to a drug dealer who was threatening her. That is typical of Pat’s great generosity, which she showed many other times during her years at the LaSalle Company.”

My favorite memory of Pat occurred on a winter day in the early 1980s, when she came back to the office late after swimming at the YMCA, which was therapy for her bad back. She explained to me that her car battery had run down. A young brother in the community offered to jump the car. He succeeded, even though he was not mechanically minded, and shared with Pat his delight at his success. Pat felt his joy so deeply that she later told the Lord she would be willing to undergo similar difficulties in the future if they would encourage others.

That attitude of wanting to help others was evident in Pat’s closing remarks at a luncheon held in her honor on December 9 at the LaSalle Company. After exhorting everyone to keep sharing God’s love with the company’s customers, vendors and suppliers, she reminded them that, even though she was no longer an employee, she still loved them all. “If there’s anything—large or small—that I can help you with, please give me a call. Remember, you have my cell phone number, my e-mail and my heart.”
A few weeks ago I went with my daughter Maria to check out a car she was interested in buying. We drove together to the dealership and looked at an SUV. It was a used vehicle, but it looked spectacular. The paint sparkled. It had new tires and a new battery. There was no trash or clutter on the floor or seats, no dents on the body. We were both drawn to it, and I couldn’t help but notice how different it was from the car we had arrived in. Over the years it had become a little cluttered and a little dusty, with a pair of sunglasses on the console, some smudges on the dash from greasy fingers, some hairpins on the floor, some crumpled-up wads of paper strewn about. Little by little, I had stopped treating my car like the shiny and attractive vehicle it had once been.

This year, as I was reflecting on our covenant, I began to wonder if I have allowed my covenant life in the People of Praise to become a little bit like my car. There are some dusty areas, some places where the carpet could be fixed up and others that could benefit from a little paint. My life may not be as attractive to others as I would like it to be. Now I’m not a theologian or a historian or a journalist. I’m an orthopedic surgeon who operates on feet and ankles, but you might be surprised to know that a big part of my job involves interviewing patients, collecting their histories, trying to understand their pasts and their problems. As I was reflecting on our covenant, I wanted to go back to the beginning, to find out what this “car” was like when it was brand new, so I decided to drive to South Bend and spend some time interviewing three of our founders, Clem Walters, Kevin Ranaghan and Paul DeCelles. It was a wonderful experience. I wish I could share everything that I learned, but I want to highlight five themes that caught my attention.

First, the original 29 members made the covenant because they experienced a call from God. Kevin told me that for several years they had been hearing prophetic words about being a community. Tom Noe (South Bend) recorded one example in his journal in 1971: “I am building my kingdom among you. . . . Once you were no people, but now you are a people.” There were words about becoming one, becoming a community of love, becoming God’s house, his building, his people. There were words about taking care of one another and being committed to one another, as Clem told me. The covenant wasn’t merely a human idea, it had been on God’s mind and on his heart, and the first group of brothers and sisters who made the covenant were responding to that divine desire.

Second, all three brothers mentioned a need they felt for stable relationships that
would last longer than a few months or even a few years. Clem told me that he and Julie had been searching for these kinds of relationships, first in their parish, then in the Cursillo movement, and eventually in the charismatic renewal. They experienced the Lord working in all three of these situations, and yet each situation was very fluid. People would move in and out of them, leaving for the slightest of reasons. In the renewal, Clem noted, “We had leaders’ groups, we had prayer meetings, we had national conferences that brought together thousands of people. We had all of that going, and yet we still didn’t have the stick-um, the glue, for our families and for us.” Clem saw the covenant as a way of establishing relationships that they and their children could really count on. “When it came time to make the covenant,” Clem said, “I knew in my heart that this was it. “Why don’t we promise to one another something that really struck me. He said, “Why don’t we promise to one another agreement to belong to one another, to be family, to be faithful to one another, and to be committed to one another and the life the Lord had given us as a community. It was a very strong experience that has stayed with me ever since.” Kevin’s experience is one that so many of us have had over the years: we really are brothers and sisters because of the covenant.

Paul said, “Making the covenant is like that moment when you’re in love, when you dare to take a risk and tell the other person, ‘I love you.’ Making the covenant was stating positively, very out front, ‘I love you all. So let’s all promise that we will live our lives together in Christ, that we’ll do things in common: accepting obedience in headship, accepting a community of goods, accepting a regular community meeting.”

From left: Kevin Ranaghan, Paul DeCelless and Clem Walters.

Paul’s words reminded me of the love I felt when I made the covenant myself in 1985 in Muncie. I want that love to shine through me each and every day, and so I’m going to throw out all the trash that has accumulated in my car, polish the dash and make the paint job sparkle again. I’m going to rededicate myself to personal prayer, to my men’s group and to our branch meetings, to having Lord’s Days and really making them zing, to serving and caring for my brothers and sisters, out of love for God, for all of you and for the whole human race. Glory to God!
Carol Reynolds (Muncie) has been making this fudge for more than 40 years. “Whenever the branch is hosting Lessons and Carols before Christmas, it’s my automatic assignment,” she says.
She also gives it to her neighbors as Christmas gifts and has been bringing it to the Indianapolis and Muncie branches’ joint women’s retreat for at least 10 years. For the past couple of years, health issues have prevented her from attending the retreat, but she has sent the fudge anyway. “It is a tradition,” says Rozann Schenkel. “We all look forward to it. We don’t cut it until after the Lord’s Day opening meal on Saturday and everybody enjoys it.”

Carol doesn’t use a candy thermometer for this recipe, but you may find it helpful if you’re not familiar with making candy. She usually stores her fudge in the refrigerator “so no one takes a corner out of it,” but it’s fine at room temperature if you plan to serve it within a day or so. Carol uses creamy peanut butter, but she says crunchy is fine too. She prefers to use Jif peanut butter and Fleischmann’s margarine.

**PEANUT BUTTER FUDGE**  
*Makes about 4.5 pounds of fudge*

**Ingredients**
- 1.5 cups peanut butter
- 7-ounce container marshmallow cream
- 5 cups granulated sugar
- 12-ounce can evaporated milk
- \(\frac{1}{4}\) cup (1 stick) margarine or butter

**Directions**
2. Combine sugar, evaporated milk and margarine in a small stockpot and bring to a boil while stirring constantly over medium-high heat. Once the mixture reaches a boil, simmer and continue to stir for nine minutes or until it reaches 235 degrees (soft ball stage) on a candy thermometer.
3. Remove the pot from the heat, add the peanut butter mixture and stir until well blended.
4. Pour the mixture into a 9x13-inch glass baking pan and allow to cool at room temperature.
5. Cut into one-inch pieces.
MARY ASSELIN
By Pat Pawlosky

My mother had a sweet nature, with a twinkle in her eye, a sense of humor and a spark for life. Beth Boyle (Servant Branch) wrote, “Mary took a personal interest in others. She had a deep faith and an active intercessory prayer life.”

Mary grew up during the Great Depression, and her mother died when she was 16, leaving Mary to care for the family. She loved horses and horseback riding, which took her to Glacier National Park for a summer service project. She majored in biology at the College of St. Catherine in Saint Paul and met John at a chemistry club event. Together they deepened their faith by church attendance and a Bible study group in their parish, making enduring friendships with several couples. When they joined Servants of the Lord community, they were suddenly in touch with many new fellow Christians, with new ways of serving God.

Mary’s hobbies were growing rose bushes, coin collecting, playing bridge, making greeting cards and sewing clothes—including prom dresses. In 1968, she returned to work and for 30 years prepared tax returns for H&R Block.

Moving at 91 is hard, but Mom took the task to heart, making friends at a senior center, joining a new women’s group and visiting with neighbors. Anita Brand (northern Virginia) said, “It was a treasure spending time with Mary each week. The last day of her life we prayed in tongues together.”

At community meetings Mom could be seen smiling and keeping time to the music with her hands. She enjoyed life so much and she loved the Lord.

ASTRID KRAMER
By Mary Ellen Naylor

Astrid always had a great desire to love and serve God. She loved Scripture and spent her days in God’s word.

In 1986 she began attending a regular prayer meeting at Visitation Monastery which was put on by the Mobile branch. The friendships she formed with the people there nourished her in love and in a strong faith. In time she made a Life in the Spirit Seminar sponsored by the branch. This led to a Community Weekend and her decision to follow the Lord’s call and come underway.

Astrid loved people and was always able to bring much love and laughter to everyone she encountered. She also enjoyed cooking, handicrafts and decorating.

Women’s group was always special to Astrid. Whenever we met in her home, she gave us a big welcome, but was sure to caution us, “Don’t pet the cat,” whom she dearly loved but who was old and tended to be persnickety.

In later years, as her health began to decline, she was confined to bed in a nursing facility. Astrid used the years well, in service of the Lord as a prayer warrior. She always praised and thanked God for everyone and everything. She especially liked the times a member of her women’s group would visit her and sing with her. Her favorites were songs with a fast beat.

Astrid loved all she met, but most important to her were her children, David, Patty, Mary, Rick and Kathy, along with her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She is missed by many.

facts

• Mary Stuart Burfeind was born August 7, 1922, in Minneapolis. She and John Asselin were married on August 21, 1946. After raising five children and enjoying 58 years of marriage, John died in 2005.
• John and Mary made the covenant of the People of Praise April 14, 1985, in Servant Branch.
• At age 91, Mary moved from Servant Branch to the northern Virginia branch to live with my husband Bob and me. She died in our home July 28, 2016.

facts

• Astrid Olsen was born June 10, 1933, and she went peacefully to meet her Lord on April 14, 2016, in Mobile.
• She became a covenanted sister in the People of Praise July 9, 1995.
• When Astrid was working as a dietitian at a local community college, she used this as an opportunity to minister to the students. She took their concerns to heart and to prayer.

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MAY MUITIDJO
By Vince Keaveny

A gentle and generous servant of God, May dedicated her life to raising her children and serving others with a caring spirit that affected everyone who met her. Dana Oldfield Williams (Kingston) recalls: “When I think of May, the words ‘shy, quiet and unassuming’ come to mind.”

On arriving in Jamaica, May had a very limited knowledge of English—not to mention Jamaican Patois. Francis recalls May bravely shopping at the open market, despite the language barrier. She often returned with extra provisions she’d purchased simply because she wanted to help the vendors.

May’s hospitality and prowess in cooking (her noodles were the world’s best) had a wonderful impact on the Kingston and Tampa branches. My wife Dawn (Kingston) recalls what a gracious hostess May was, and how she was delighted when guests enjoyed her cooking. Susan Weilbacher (Tampa) shared, “If I painted a portrait of May, she would be smiling or laughing her joyous laugh. I used to joke with her, just to hear that great laugh!”

Thriving in three quite distinct and different countries was one of May’s major achievements. She nurtured a very cosmopolitan family: her children married spouses from France, Jamaica, Malaysia and the U.S. She loved visiting her five grandchildren, and Joseph reflects fondly, “She loved babies and showered them with affection.”

May’s joy and her practical and straightforward approach to family life stood as examples to all who knew her.

MAY MUTIDJO

- Mariani Tjahjadi was born December 1, 1946, in Jakarta, Indonesia, and died October 21, 2016, in Tampa. She was raised as a Buddhist, but had ceased practicing before she converted to Christianity.
- She married Francis Mutidjo (Tampa) on January 20, 1974, in Jakarta. They raised four children: Esti, Joseph (Kingston), Marcus and William.
- In 1977, May and Francis moved to Jamaica, where Francis worked for various international organizations.
- May moved to Tampa in 2003 and Francis joined her after his retirement. Both became U.S. citizens. They made the covenant of the People of Praise on December 14, 1991.

facts

Roman Schmitt
By Tim Wagner

Roman grew up north of Chicago on a farm. After serving with the US Army in Germany, he entered the University of Chicago, learning from Nobel laureates such as Enrico Fermi, Harold Urey and I.I. Rabi. With a Ph.D. in chemistry, Roman entered the field of nuclear science, pioneering methods for analyzing trace elements using neutron activation. He used this technique in a lifelong study of meteorites.

In 1956 Roman and Jean moved to San Diego and in 1966 Oregon State University (Corvallis) recruited him for its nuclear science program. NASA selected him as one of a handful of scientists to analyze moon rocks from the Apollo missions.

Roman also enjoyed opera and classical music, played golf and was an avid fan of OSU baseball and basketball.

More than all this, we remember Roman as a coworker in the kingdom, steady in prayer, firm in his faith in a loving God. He unabashedly acknowledged God to students, and shared his faith in letters to Nobel laureates and atheist scientists. For years, Roman visited the state prison weekly to talk with inmates. Jean told us, “Roman really loved the People of Praise. He loved his men’s group and he loved our gatherings.”

Roman’s desire to understand “the moon and stars you set in place” led him, as it did the psalmist, to a deeper understanding and love of God.

Roman Schmitt

- Roman Schmitt was born November 13, 1925, in Johnsburg, Illinois. He died September 29, 2016, in Corvallis.
- He and Jean were married in 1954. They have four children, three of whom they adopted.
- In 1972 the National Academy of Sciences presented Roman with the George P. Merrill Award for his pioneering work in rare earth element analysis.
- In 1972, Roman and Jean joined a prayer group and worked with Father Charlie Harris to spread the Life in the Spirit Seminar. They helped establish The Vine and the Branches community, which became the Corvallis branch, and made the covenant of the People of Praise October 14, 1984.

facts
LIFENOTES

Births:
Thomas Joseph, born December 16 to Thomas and Jeanette Duddy (Mission division, Allendale).
Malachi Patrick Murphy, born January 4 to Joe and Lisa Murphy (Servant Branch).

Anniversaries:
Best wishes to these brothers and sisters on their achievement:
Jim and Gerry Sgroi (South Bend), 50 years on December 31.
Ann (Servant Branch) and Tom Boyle, 15 years on January 19.

Graduations:
Congratulations and best wishes to these brothers and sisters who recently graduated:
Pete Gaffney (South Bend), B.S.N. (nursing), Indiana University South Bend.
David Gruber (Servant Branch), B.S. in supply chain and operations management, Metropolitan State University (MN).
Jonathan Willard (Servant Branch), B.S. in economics with a double major in philosophy, University of Minnesota.
Isaac Willard (Servant Branch), M.S. in mechanical engineering, University of Minnesota.
Claire Raway (Mission division, Indianapolis), Associate degree in general studies, Ivy Tech Community College, Indianapolis.
Phil Gordon (Vancouver-Portland), M.B.A. with a specialization in healthcare management, Northeastern University (MA).
Melisa Sturman (northern Virginia), B.A. in fine arts, George Washington University.

Work and Achievements:
Best wishes to Pat Walsh (Servant Branch). As of July, 2016, she is eager to serve the Lord in new ways, after 15 years of working for the People of Praise and 20 years of working for Trinity School at River Ridge.
Ed Konczeski (Tampa) traveled to Cameroon last November for the dedication of a church which members of his parish planned, built and funded. Ed was responsible for the design and construction of the stained glass windows as well as selling stained glass crosses to raise funds for the project.
Terry Bomkamp (Rockford) has begun a new postretirement career as an outdoor adventure leader and back-country cooking instructor, under the name Emmaus Adventures and Outfitting.
Pat Rath (South Bend) retired in December after 42 years working in a variety of capacities for the People of Praise at Charismatic Renewal Services, Communication Center and LaSalle Company.
Mandie Sternitzke (South Bend) retired from the LaSalle Company at the end of December after seven years working in accounts payable.
Jared Gonzalez (Mission division, Allendale) has started a new job teaching at Praise Academy.

Deaths:
We’ve received word of the deaths of these members of the People of Praise. We pray for their families and friends in this time of loss.
Margaret Caneff (Servant Branch) died December 4, 2016.
Bill Kenney (Servant Branch) died December 8, 2016.
John McLaurin (Tampa) died December 13, 2016.
Clarice Wiza (Muncie) died December 14, 2016.

Executive Office Announcements:
Buffalo:
Dana Hammer has been appointed to a three-year term of office as area coordinator, beginning December 18, 2016.

Servant Branch:
Dan Gleason was granted tenure as a coordinator of the People of Praise on December 8, 2016.
Paul Putzier has been appointed to a three-year term of office as area coordinator, beginning January 26, 2017.
Peter Wolney has been appointed to a one-year term as a nonvoting coordinator, beginning January 26, 2017.

Shreveport:
David Zimmel was granted tenure as a coordinator of the People of Praise on December 8, 2016.

South Bend:
Paul Barrett has been appointed to a three-year term of office as area coordinator, beginning January 17, 2017.
Matt Urbanski has been appointed to a second three-year term of office as area coordinator, beginning January 17, 2017.
One Saturday morning in Burnsville, Minnesota, Bruce Olson (Servant Branch) walked up his neighbor’s driveway with fellow branch members Norma Cahill and Pat Murphy. A woman had her garage door open and was getting ready to leave.

“Hi. We’re Christians, and we live in this neighborhood. We’re asking people if they want to pray with us for this country,” Bruce said. The woman paused, then said, “Okay, sure,” and the four of them held hands in the driveway and prayed.

“Is there anything specific we can pray for you for?” Norma asked. “My husband has been having headaches,” the woman replied. “We’ve taken him to doctors, but we haven’t been able to get a diagnosis.” They prayed with the woman for God’s healing and grace, then Bruce looked up and saw tears streaming down her face. As the group walked down the driveway, she called out, “You guys are doing a great thing.”

Over the last two years, a group of Servant Branch members led by Pat Murphy has met over dinner in one another’s homes to talk about outreach in their area. They all live in Burnsville, a Twin Cities suburb that is home to over 30% of branch members.

The composition of the group has fluctuated, but it usually includes Pat and his wife Lee Ann, Bruce and Charlene Olson, Bernadette Fossen, Mary Radtke and Jim and Norma Cahill. “We sensed the Lord wanted us to get together in Burnsville to see what ways there are for us to reach out to people,” Pat said, but whenever the group discussed knocking on neighbors’ doors, many of them felt uncertain. They thought that door-knocking was for poor neighborhoods and wouldn’t work in the suburbs.

Still, urged on by good experiences when door-knocking on the West Side of St. Paul and while visiting the new starts, they decided to set their fears aside. They started going out on Saturdays in groups of three or four. What they found surprised them. “People are pretty open,” Bruce said.

“Even those who didn’t want to pray with us would tell us their life stories.”

In one cul-de-sac they met a woman working on her lawn mower. At first, she seemed cold and didn’t want to pray, as Bruce recalled, but they continued talking with her and she began to tell them about her church. After they had talked for a while, Bruce asked again about praying, and she agreed. A few weeks later, they knocked on her door and she welcomed them warmly. “Her demeanor had changed,” Bruce said. “She prayed with us very openly,” then she brought out a plate of cookies.

One Saturday Jim’s group knocked on a door in a townhome complex and a Muslim woman in her forties, an immigrant from Somalia wearing a long, brightly colored dress and a headscarf came out. She said, “We pray for the country every day.” Joe Frank, who was with the group that morning, asked if she would like to lead the prayer. She prayed, “Allah, bless our country. Allah, bless our neighborhood. Allah, bless our families.” Afterwards, she told them, “My biggest concern being here is living in fear.” Jim and Norma invited her over for a meal, and a month later she and her cousin, who was in her sixties, came to the Cahills’ house for lunch, and they brought the meal. Jim recalls, “We had a wonderful time and were laughing just like neighbors, like old friends.” One of the women said, “This is the first time in 10 years that I feel like I can belong here.”

Bernadette Fossen, who lives in Burnsville with her husband Chuck, met a Vietnamese man who had recently moved to the neighborhood. “I have friends who are Vietnamese,” she said. “That was helpful as an icebreaker, because I understand some of their culture, and a teeny bit of the language. We made a connection, and I’ve stopped over there three times and invited him to different events. To me, it’s the beginning of a friendship.”

Jim sees the door-knocking as a natural extension of the other outreach efforts they’ve been making in their neighborhood for the last few years. The Cahills have hosted root beer float parties on their lawn and wrap-around porch several times a summer, announced by a chalkboard easel at the end of their driveway a few days before-hand. The last two years, they’ve also hosted a three-day camp for kids at their home with help from Action students. When knocking on doors, Jim says, many of the neighbors recognize them from the parties.

The group plans to continue door-knocking into the spring. Bruce explains it this way: “God shows up. Sometimes it seems like he’s in the circle, in the conversation, because people respond to us in a way that seems like they’re more responding to him than to us. He’s touching their hearts.”
“Be watchful, stand firm in your faith” (1 Cor. 16:13).