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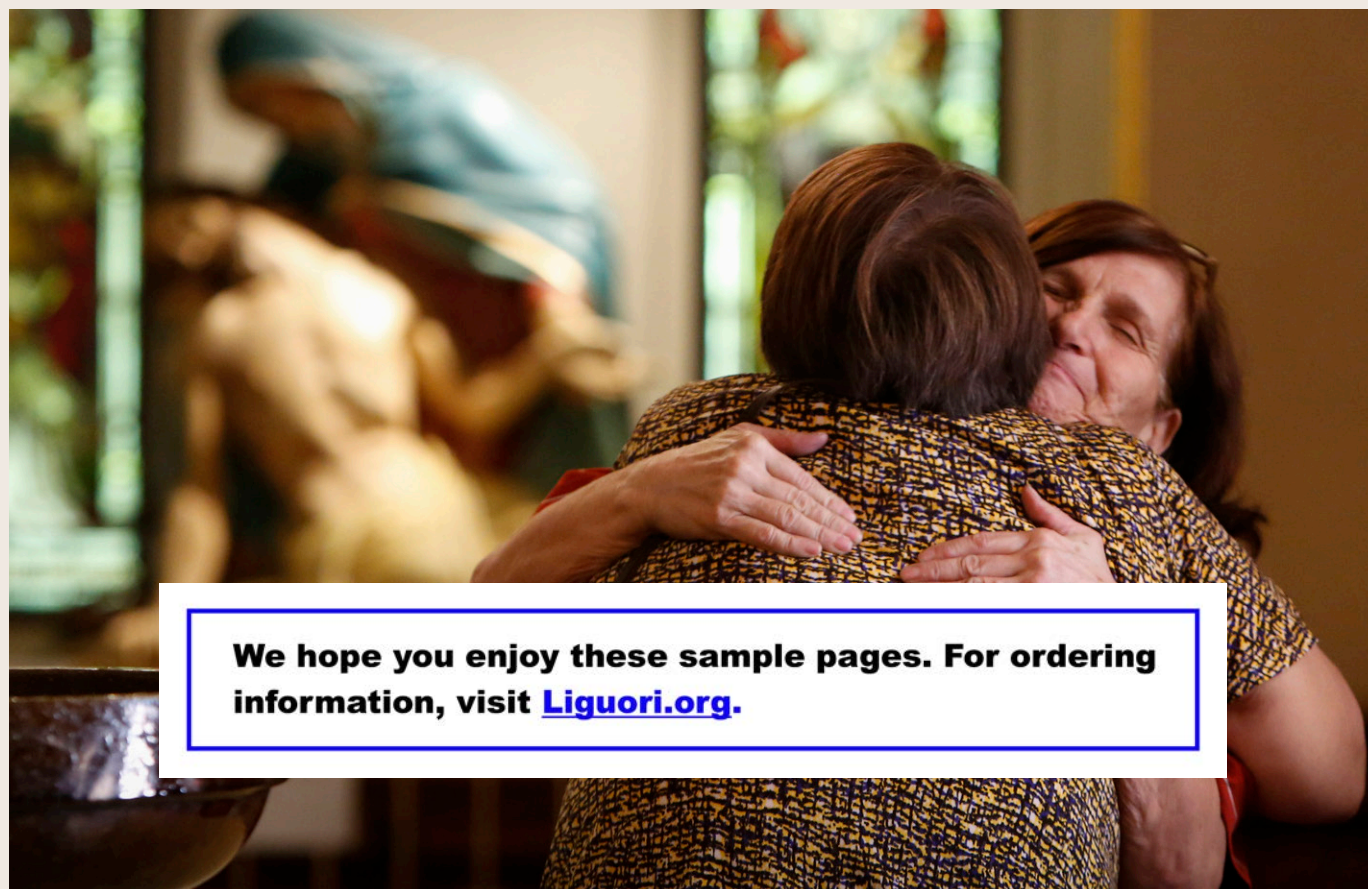
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INVITING LOVED ONES TO REDISCOVER THEIR CATHOLIC FAITH

BY MELANIE RIGNEY

All Catholics have the opportunity and responsibility to bring members back into the fold. And always, it's at the Lord's invitation and, sometimes, his prodding and pushing, manifested in the welcome his people provide.



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They start out life as Catholics, maybe even celebrate all their sacraments, and then...

something changes. But the “something” that changes might not be the issues that first come to mind.

“Twenty years ago, people left feeling let down by the Church,” says Father Thomas A. Kane, CSP, director of the Paulist Fathers’ international ministry to those considering a return to Catholicism. Today, he says, people often drift away.

Their reasons frequently are less about doctrine and more about boredom, disillusionment with “church people,” or lack of engagement. That should give hope to those of us with family and friends away from the Church. It also should give us pause, for it means all Catholics have the opportunity and responsibility to bring members back into the fold.

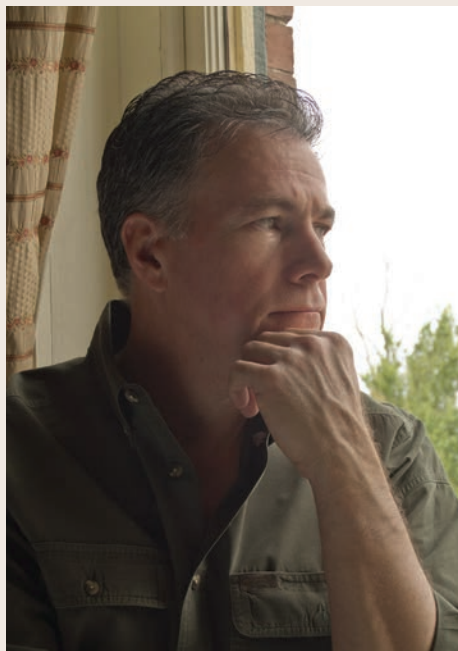
WHY THEY LEFT

“Part of the reason I left the Church is that I looked around at Mass and found a lot of Catholics who seemed unhappy to be there, like they showed up to Mass out of obligation,” says Lauren Puzder, a woman in her late 20s who works in politics in the Washington, DC area. She stopped going to Mass during college.

Another woman watched as her father worked for the Church during most of her childhood. Now known as Sister Theresa Aletheia Noble, FSP, she says this “exposed me to many beautiful people who lived their faith very well, but it also exposed me to hypocritical behavior on the part of some laypeople as well as some priests and religious. As a child, I thought, ‘If being really involved in Catholicism makes people act this way, then I think I’m better off on my own.’” Eventually, she became an atheist.

Judy Landrieu Klein found herself moving away due to her experience at, of all places, a Catholic college. “The teachers of my philosophy and theology classes asked many questions that challenged my faith but never gave

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the answers,” she says. She was away from the Church for about eight years.

Barbara Hosbach started questioning her faith in high school. Then, in college, she says, “I was exposed to a number of philosophies that seemed intriguing at the time, like the idea of divine metaphysics or reverence for the god of the intellect. At times, I also tried to go it alone spiritually and follow my own personal philosophy.” She traveled what she calls an “active but meandering spiritual path” for more than twenty years.

A hunger to learn more about the word of God sent Margaret Reveira out of the Church on February 12, 1995. “I began to attend a series of nondenominational churches.” At a New York City megachurch, she met the man she would marry in 2001. They both became active volunteers.

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