

# Does God have favorites?



## THE CUTTING EDGE

SISTER MARGIE LAVONIS, CSC

When my father died recently, my brother said, "You were always Daddy's favorite!" I am not sure if that was really true, but it got me to think about God's love for us.

What about God? Do you think God has favorites? Does God love the holy, deeply spiritual people better than those of us who struggle and sometimes fall into sin? Does God favor Christians over Muslims, or Jews over Hindus? Do those who obey church rules perfectly fair better than those who sometimes find them difficult? Are there strings attached to God's love? Will God love us only if we do certain things and act certain ways?

On the contrary, as St. Paul says somewhere in one of his letters, "God's love shows no partiality."

God loves every thing and every person he created. And the amazing part of it all is that God loves each of us individually and personally. God is interested in you and in me no matter who we are or what we do or fail to do. God's love is not general. I actually think sin can be refusing to accept God's love for us.

Related to this, despite what some people may believe or have erroneously been taught, we cannot earn God's love. We don't have to do anything to get it. Some people work so hard saying prayers and obeying all the rules that they forget this fact. There is no way we can earn our way to heaven. Jesus already saved us by the sacrifice of his life.

Does this unconditional love that God lavishes on us give us a license to sin? On the contrary, what we are called to do is to live in such a way that we show our gratitude for his love, which is ultimately expressed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. If we truly love God, then we will want to return that love by the lives we live. We can't, nor do we need to earn God's love, but like in all loving relationships, it is natural to want to reciprocate. We will want to show our love to him. God doesn't need our love, but we need to share ours with him. And the best way to show God we love him is to love the people

and things he created.

It is not uncommon for children to try to please their parents, thinking that will get them to love them more. Sometimes you hear one child ask which of his or her brothers and sisters a particular parent loves the most. As human beings, it is natural to like some people, even children, more than we like others. This is not true with God. He came to save all men and women.

When Jesus became a human being, we all became God's favored ones. God revealed his love for us in Jesus and through Jesus to the world.

When someone is truly loved, that person usually wants to share that love with others. People who do not experience love in their lives usually have difficulty loving others. If we truly believe God loves us and experience God's love, we will want to share that love.

Each one of us is God's favorite, and God's love is unconditional and a free gift. It is up to us to spread this message to those who do not know this. The best way to do this is by being a loving person ourselves, because the ordinary way God shows his love is through us. This is a big responsibility. Are you willing to accept it?

Maybe during this upcoming season of Lent you can think of concrete things you



## YOUNG ADULT PERSPECTIVES

can do to be a more loving person — not just to your friends and family members but to others not in these categories. You won't get any brownie points in heaven, but you will show God your gratitude for his unconditional love.

Sister Margie Lavonis, CSC, a former campus minister and vocation director, works for the Sisters of the Holy Cross communications department. [mlavonis@cscsisters.org](mailto:mlavonis@cscsisters.org).

# Books look at relationships from a Catholic perspective

"Real Life, Real Love, Seven Paths to a Strong and Lasting Relationship," by Father Albert Cutié Berkley Hardcover, ISBN: 0-425-20542-8

Father Albert Cutié has become a recognized name in the Catholic Church and Latino market. He has been dubbed "Father Oprah" by his fans and reaches millions throughout the world each day with his internationally broadcast radio and television talk shows and through his syndicated daily newspaper column.

In "Real Life, Real Love," Father Cutié offers a manual for creating and sustaining meaningful and effective relationships.

By recognizing seven emotional and spiritual "paths" and putting them into practice, couples can learn to speak with an open heart, listen with an open mind, and strengthen their love through good times and bad. With insights and wisdom gained through the years of pastoral counseling, Father Cutié offers techniques to help readers: build solid relationships; respect each other; clarify

their expectations; be honest; communicate; learn to live with their differences; and make a commitment to growth and maturity.

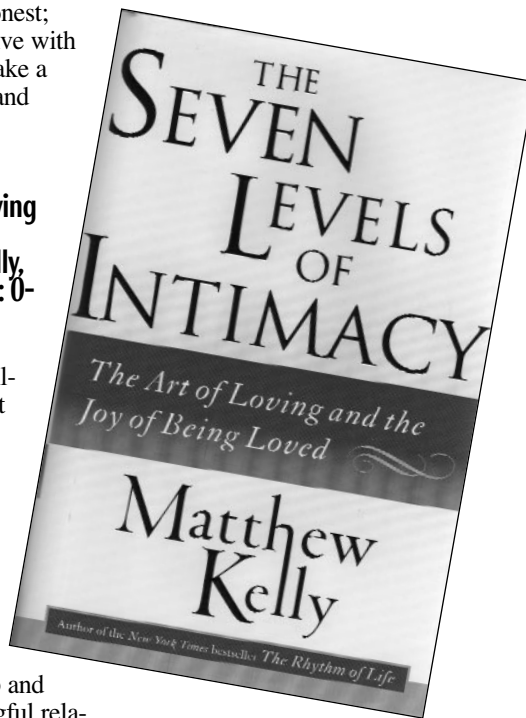
"The Seven Levels of Intimacy: The Art of Loving and the Joy of Being Loved," by Matthew Kelly, Simon & Schuster, ISBN: 0-7432-6511-4

Matthew Kelly, an Australian-born, best selling author, has spoken at many parishes in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. His new book, "The Seven Levels of Intimacy," provides a specific and straightforward plan

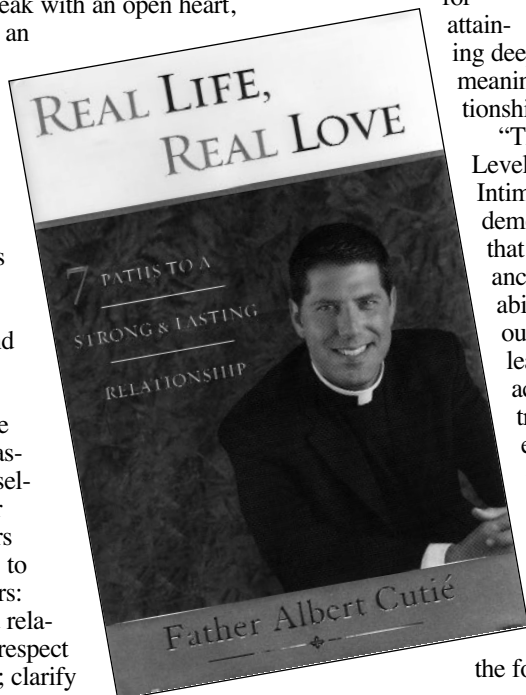
for attaining deep and meaningful relationships.

"The Seven Levels of Intimacy" demonstrates that self-acceptance and the ability to share our true selves leads to accepting and trusting others, which enables us to cultivate meaningful relationships.

Kelly discusses the following:



why some relationships are surviving, but not thriving; the intimacy of opinions — when relationships begin to be challenged; confidently sharing our feelings; the intimacy of faults, fears and failures and becoming free to be yourself; 10 reasons people don't have great relationship; and designing a great relationship — what is your essential purpose.



## YOUNG ADULTS COMMIT AS ASSOCIATES



PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE OF CAMPUS AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Ten individuals made their commitment as associates of the Congregation of Divine Providence at Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne on Feb. 5. Pictured from left to right are Mike Gibson, Elise Goodman, Debbie Leitner, Sarah Hendricks, Nathan Proulx, Steve Brown, Keri Peters, Jeannie Eiserle and Sister Gloria Ann Fiedler, CDP. Not pictured are Rose Henry and Janice Martin.

## Goshen parish welcomes Catholics home

GOSHEN — St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Goshen is offering a six-week session, "Welcoming Catholics Home," designed to reintroduce those who have been away from the faith to look again at the faith in a small-group setting. The next session begins Thursday, Feb. 16.

Topics of discussion include changes in the church since Vatican II.

The sessions are for those who have been away from the Catholic Church for awhile and are considering returning. No matter how long they have been away, no matter the reason, the doors are open to welcome them back.

For more information or to sign up, call Marsha Meyer at (574) 537-0250.