

"PRETZELS FOR GOD"



Committee:

Patron: Kateri Tekakwitha "Lily of the Mohawks"

Spiritual Director: Rev. Cornelius O'Mara, S.J.

President: Marlene Mc Cauley

Vice-President: and Treasurer: Dorothy Westfall

2nd Vice-President: Marion Severence

Secretary: Noreen Tobin

Executive Officer: Maryanne Scanlon

Speech delivered to the
National Pretzel Convention
Warwick, New Jersey
October, 4, 1974

PRETZELS FOR GOD

On behalf of the "Pretzels for God" committee, we are most grateful for the opportunity to speak here today. Father Francis Xavier Weiser, my former Philosophy Professor from Emmanuel College, Boston and a scholar in the field of Christian customs, sends his regards and appreciation for having been invited to speak, however, due to a three months lecture tour in Europe, he could not come.

A reporter once said to me, "You are the first "pretzel" missionary I know. You might say I am a missionary for prayer, penance and families for God and the pretzel being symbolic of prayer and penance is a small but powerful instrument in bringing families to God.

Eighteen years ago, after graduating from Emmanuel College in Boston, I went to New York to become an actress. One day, a good looking Irishman followed me out of a cafeteria on Broadway. Catching up to me with some glib small talk and a distinct twinkle, I wondered how many other girls did this rogue follow out of restaurants that day? Leaving him to return to my job of interviewing actors and models, I found the phone ringing upon entering the office. The voice said, "Hi, it's Allan. Thinking it was an Allan I had been dating, I asked him to call that night at St. Mary's since I was busy. I wondered why he asked for the phone number. The call that evening revealed that it was not the "Allan" I thought it was! I accepted the date, and shortly thereafter, fell in love. Since he was the first man I was ever serious about, I decided that it was best to leave New York for a brief period so as to have a better perspective on the situation. I was given the opportunity to join the circus and when I announced to Allan that I was leaving for the "greatest show on earth," he scratched his head, in bewilderment. The nuns at St. Mary's prayed that I would miss the train bound for Sarasota, Florida so that I would come to my senses. I missed the train and took one the next day.

Dancing, riding an elephant, doing a comedy act with the late Otto Griebling,

famous tramp clown, sketching everybody in sight and composing the skeleton of a book on the circus for the day I hoped to get published was all so very excitingbut I missed Allan.

Six months later, Allan and I were married in the actor's chapel, St. Malachys, by Father "Ed" Sullivan, Known internationally as the "circus" priest. Father Weiser, whom we just mentioned, knelt in the sanctuary of the altar and prayed that our marriage would be a solid, happy one, growing in the grace of God's love.

Both priests were dedicated to family life. Since Father "Ed" traveled with many circuses, he grew to know, love and admire circus families. He always said that the strength of the circus family was that they worked and prayed together. There was little family breakdown or delinquency in the circus community. Five years ago, while Father "Ed" was blessing the circus trains in Venice, Florida, he died of a heart attack and the circus lost a true friend. His spirit, wisdom and love, however, has never left us. Reliving my circus adventures, my five children and I have been performing circus puppet shows since our first major appearance at the World's Fair in 1965 with "lawyer-dad" as official prop man! Our life has been a happy circus ever since!

Father Weiser, a native of Vienna, has been a promoter of the enrichment of family life through the practice of Christian feasts and customs. Being a scholar in this area, Father traces customs to their origin, showing how they develop through the ages, documenting the facts throughout. Two popular books of his are Year of Our Lord in the Christian Home and Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs. Father stresses in these books, the importance of making the home a "little kingdom of God." He suggests that the key to happiness in the home lies in creating an atmosphere that will radiate the glory of God. I'll give an example. In his Christmas book, dedicated to George von Trapp of "Sound of Music" fame, a dear friend of his. Father Weiser writes about the Advent Wreath, a custom which has its source in Luthern Germany. A wreath of holly which has three purple candles and one pink

is placed on the table four weeks before Christmas. Each week, a child of the family takes a turn at lighting a candle, after which, a prayer proclaiming the coming of the feast of the birth of Christ, is said. The three purple candles signify preparation. When the pink one is finally lit, the children know that Christmas is near. In 1950, a group in New England initiated a movement publicizing the Advent Wreath and the custom spread like wildfire. Today it is part of our Christmas tradition. This is but one of many customs we have been using in our home for the past seventeen years and we can unequivocally say that such practices within the home, enrich its members and truly help to make it a "little kingdom of God."

This leads us to the tradition of the pretzel and an explanation of its symbolism.

Since first reading about the pretzel in Father Weiser' book, I have been sharing this knowledge with others.

There was an article which appeared seven years ago in the Phoenix paper that told about an ecumenical gathering in our home, to view slides of Israel shown by a Rabbi. The article also mentioned that I served pretzels and told the history of them. This interesting bit of information was received well by all.

As Father Weuser explained, in the fourth century, the early Christians spent the forty days prior to Easter, fasting extensively and praying. They could not eat food from animals; no eggs, no milk, cream, butter, cheese, bacon, lard, meat nor pastries made with sugar. They created the "pretzel" made of flour and water and salted for nourishment, shaped the way they prayed with their arms crossed and called this bread, "bracellae," There is a picture and description of the pretzel in the Vatican Library (of the 5th century) in the manuscript-codex #3867.

The pretzel is a symbol of "prayer" and "penance." Prayer is lifting our mind and heart to God; praising Him, thanking Him, asking personal favors and invoking Him to help others. The term "penance" means striving for a change of heart, giving ourselves to helping others and accepting everyday trials and crosses for the love of God and betterment of mankind.

I heard a priest tell a group of first graders one morning: "our love for God should be as hot as the Arizona sun and as deep as the Grand Canyon!" A world renowned Philosopher, Deitrich von Hildebrand, a dear friend, said once, "Man's soul is such that it yearns to move upward and if it isn't moving in that direction, it is miserable."

The pretzel symbol of "prayer" and "penance" can be effective in helping to put America in order. God has been cast aside. The old immorality is now the new morality. Sex that is something beautiful designed by God is no longer considered sacred. It has become a marketable commodity. Ponographic movies and literature are all over the place. My husband walked into a restaurant one Sunday and saw a man wearing a shirt with the most obscene word printed on it that one could imagine and no one in the place reacted against this public vulgarity. The sign outside the business place said, "Shoes and shirt must be worn,"---but, wear Satan's garment and it is permissible. Crime is running rampant and dope is killing our youth. The philosophy of hedonism; live only for today, is a cancer in our society. We are being pulled into the machinery of evil becoming prisoners of ourselves and in the meantime America is weakening at the core. Either we are for God or we are against him; there is no middle ground.

We are dignified beings made in the image and likeness of God; not herd animals of a savage race. PFG seeks a spiritual renewal in prayer, penance and families for God! When the family is strong, society will be strong!

This painting that you see here is of Kateri Tekakwitha, a little Mohawk Indian, born in 1656 in Auriesville, New York and died in 1680, Caughnawaga, Quebec. She is patron of the PFG movement. "Kateri" is Catherine in English and "Tekakwitha" means "putting things in order."

Charity, flowing from an intense love of God was the main virtue dominating Kateri's life. She is called, "Lily of the Mohawks" because of the purity in which she lived.

She spent her life in helping the sick and poor of her village and practicing prayer and penance for the evils of her nation. In spite of many obstacles, including loss of her family at four years of age, partial blindness and a scarred face from having had smallpox, persecution and exposure to the most wicked of evils; she kept close to God in prayer and blossomed as a lily, bringing God's love to everyone. Ultimately, she escaped to the Christian village of Caughnawaga, Canada, where she lived in perfect peace and joy, with Indians of all clans. (Algonquins, Hurons and Iroquois) to name a few. These tribes who were formerly savages became lambs through prayer and penance for God. Kateri is a model of true peace in the world; teaching all that whatever be the race or color, man must understand and love one another since they have but one Father, the Creator of all. Father Weiser published a book on Kateri, in 1973. I painted this picture of Kateri with live models in Nahant, Massachusetts this past July as a small contribution toward peace and brotherhood as well as to fulfill a need for a pictorial representation of our PFG patron.

How and when did the PFG movement begin?

In April, 1973, Father Weiser visited Phoenix for a series of lectures on three subjects: "Passion of Our Lord," "Kateri Tekakwitha" and "Key to Happiness in the Christian Home." Father had quite a large following since people had

grown to know and love him from past talks. It was a busy time for us with Easter puppet shows and arranging Father Weiser's lectures, but very gratifying. I asked Father if he would give a brief explanation of the pretzel before his main talk on "Passion of Our Lord" when he spoke at St. Francis, our parish. He agreed and we served a pretzel to each person who came. There were over three hundred people. When they looked confused as to why they were handed a pretzel, we simply explained that they would soon find out.

During Father's talk, I felt very inspired to stimulate some enthusiasm to get something moving. After his lecture, I said a few words, stirring people on to start a movement which would revive the pretzel tradition. The seed was planted and families promised their support.

Like the Advent Wreath, the pretzel symbol would make a lasting impression on children, proclaiming the deep spiritual message of Lent; prayer and penance for God. A pretzel served at each member's plate at the main meal would serve as a constant reminder. After permission was granted from our Bishop to distribute leaflets, a "pretzel prayer" was written by Father Weiser and given Ecclesiastical approval.

Our family along with thousands of families said the prayer at the evening meal this past Lent, with the pretzel highlighting each plate. It truly was enriching spiritually and helped to motivate each member to strive for perfection, seeking the spiritual treasures of this earth as did the early Christians.

As we know, symbols express visually a truth for which many words would be required. Symbols were used both in the Old and New Testaments to instruct or to convey a message, for example; the fish, the boat, bread, wine and the lamb.

A popular symbol in our home at Christmas puppet show time has been the lamb. For the past eight years we have been adopting an orphaned lamb for our Christmas

shows, which we dress with a red satin ribbon and nurse with a "pop" bottle throughout the season. To our children the lamb, "Puffy," has always been an integral part of the shows. When we get our lamb, the children's enthusiasm for rehearsing Sky-Rockets!

Getting back to the pretzel symbol, judging from the multitude of letters we received from across the nation, people were truly inspired to hear that the pretzel was rich in tradition and the bearer of a truly spiritual message. We are deeply grateful to the Pretzel Baker's Institute for their efforts demonstrated in helping to bring the true origin of the pretzel to the public.

At St. Francis Xavier Church, Phoenix, our first step was to get the publicity machinery moving steadily so that we could educate the people about the history of the pretzel. Articles were written in every diocesan magazine, bulletin or paper available. Every aspect of the media was contacted; press, TV, radio and public service signs. A pretzel bake sale was planned, highlighting the campaign. It took place on "Pretzel Sunday," designated by our Pastor as the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. After committees were formed, the show was on the road. Groups met to make pretzel necklaces, banners and to package "Pretzel for God" bags, supplied to us by a local distributor. The "Pretzel Necklace" workshops of teenagers met periodically at various homes to make the "Bracellae" necklace to be worn as a carrier of the message of "prayer and penance." I am wearing one. It is made of a bavarian pretzel, shellacked and decorated or left plain. This is the "Pretzel for God" bag which were sold at the bake sale. Enclosed in this bag is all the information needed to practice the Lenten ceremony in the home. Notices were put in advance in Church bulletins, suggesting that people of all faiths, share a "PFG" bag during Lent with their friends.

Pretzel Sunday was highly motivating for all. The priests gave beautiful sermons on the Lenten theme with an emphasis on family prayer and scripture reading. The pretzel symbol was used to demonstrate the "prayer and penance" aspect. People came out of Church highly spirited to see colorful banners hung from trees or placed on easels. Colorful helium balloons added to the festive atmosphere. The long tables were lined with "PFG" bags, tied with purple ribbons... soft and candy coated pretzels as well as an array of "bracellae" necklaces decorated the tables.

The pretzel bake sale stimulated a genuine community interest, making the season more meaningful and enriching to everyone. People of all denominations attended the sale and were delighted to know of the facts of the pretzel. Later Churches of other denominations requested literature so that they too might implement the pretzel ceremony. The idea caught on to the extent that Christian schools were using the pretzel ceremony as part of their Lenten program. A religious gift store was an outlet to sell our PFG bags during Lent. Letters came in from across the nation, praising the movement, and requesting literature, stating that they would like to do exactly what we did at St. Francis.

We were contacted by a Lutheran Chaplain from the Air Force Academy in Denver, Colorado, requesting all information about the pretzel and the details of the movement, advising that he was contemplating using the pretzel ceremony for an ecumenical group of 5,000. He also indicated a need for suitable music. Coincidentally, our son Francis Xavier, age 15 was deeply involved in composing a pretzel song. Having completed the melody and putting some finishing touches to the lyrics; in less than a month later, the pretzel ceremony and song were used at the Academy with great results. Chaplain Sylvester's letter reads as follows!

Dear Mrs. Mc Cauley:

Our gratitude to you is overflowing! How very, very, kind of you to not only share the information, prayers and history of the pretzel but to crown it all with the music and the recording by your son on the "Pretzels for God." Needless to say our "Hunger Banquet" on Palm Sunday evening was a most moving and inspiring experience for the Parish. I hope your ears were ringing for we were really talking about you.

To show our appreciation to you and for you, we are sending this Pretzel Plaque as a momento of your kindness to us. I hope it'll always remind you of the contribution you have given to the "Pretzels for God." In fact we're thinking of having thousands of them made in miniature as a hallmark for the Chapel and calling them "Pray-tzels."

We are still using the tape recording and will return it to you shortly.

Thanks again and God's best to you always.

Sincerely,

That the PFG movement and all it represents was newsworthy and caught on nationally is now past history. Father O'Mara from St. Francis Xavier Church and myself were heard and seen on a multitude of nationwide TV and radio broadcasts promoting the pretzel ceremony. Many mornings were spent being interviewed by radio stations from coast to coast. These broadcasts were highlighted by associated press and CBS world news releases.

So much for the past.....now before we conclude with our plans for the future, I thought you'd enjoy a little fun and diversion by a couple of the Pretzel players!



Rev. Cornelius O'Mara, S. J. holding Lenten Christian Symbol of Prayer and Penance
Students from Central High School wearing "Bracellae" Necklaces--("Little Arms")



Kateri Tekakwitha: "Lily of the Mohawks"

Born: 1656, Auriesville, N. Y.

Death: 1680, Caughnawaga, Quebec



Rev. Francis X. Weiser, S.J., author of Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 750 Third Avenue, New York, 17, New York.

Year of Our Lord in the Christian Home, Liturgical Press, Collegville, Minnesota.



PRETZEL MAKING IS FUN

SOFT PRETZELS

(This recipe is easier to make — for youth groups)

1 cake yeast dissolved into 1½ cups warm water.
Add 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 tablespoon sugar.
Blend in 4 cups of flour.

Knead dough until smooth. Cut into small pieces. Roll into ropes, and twist into desired shape. Place on lightly greased cookie sheets. Brush pretzel with 1 beaten egg. Sprinkle with coarse salt. Bake immediately at 425° for 12 to 15 minutes.

(For hard pretzels, use only 1¼ cups water, and add ¼ cup melted butter. Make pretzels smaller and bake until brown. These keep well over a period of days.)

Reprints Available in Bulk

"PRETZELS FOR GOD"

St. Francis Xavier Church, 4715 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, Arizona 85012

1. Pretzel Leaflet (History, Prayer Ceremony, Song, PFG, Patron) Offering of \$3.00 a hundred or \$15.00 a thousand, all post-paid.
2. Pretzel Recipes (Suitable for Home and Organizations) Offering of \$1.00 a hundred or \$9.00 a thousand, all post-paid.

Single Copies — Since this is a non-profit organization, we ask that you enclose a donation of five cents with a self-addressed stamped envelope to cover printing cost of leaflet. Pretzel recipes will be sent with single leaflet upon request, as a special courtesy of PFG.

Puppet Script with Directions for Making Puppets — "Mac the Mouse and the Pretzel" (suitable for CCD, Sunday School classes and Organizations) written by Marlene McCauley.
Theme: Prayer and Penance for God Donation: 25 cents per copy (includes printing and mailing)

As a special courtesy, PFG will give you suggestions as to how to make "Pretzel Sunday" and a "Pretzel Bake Sale" a tremendous success for your Church organization. (upon request)

PFG Motto: Prayer for God
 Penance for God = Families for God

CEREMONY OF THE PRETZEL

With ecclesiastical approbation (Diocese of Phoenix, Arizona)

1. On Ash Wednesday, father or mother, may explain the origin of the holy pretzel, so that the children will understand its significance.
2. The pretzel might be served at dinner each day until Easter.
3. Added to the grace before meals, is the following prayer.

We beg you, O Lord, to bless these breads which are to remind us that Lent is a sacred season of penance and prayer. For this very reason, the early Christians started the custom of making these breads in the form of arms crossed in prayer. Thus they kept the holy purpose of Lent alive in their hearts from day to day, and increased in their souls the love of Christ, even unto death, if necessary.

Grant us, we pray, that we too, may be reminded by the daily sight of these pretzels to observe the holy season of Lent with true devotion and great spiritual fruit. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



PFG seeks a spiritual renewal in prayer and penance of families for God. The pretzel being symbolic of prayer and penance is a small but powerful instrument in bringing families to God. (Prayer is lifting our mind and heart to God; praising Him, thanking Him, asking personal favors and invoking Him to help others.) (The term penance means striving for a change of heart, giving ourselves to helping others and accepting everyday trials and crosses for the love of God and betterment of mankind.)

Prayer and penance draws individuals near to God. When man loves God, he will become closely united with his family and God. The family is the root of society. When the family is strong in God's love, America is strong because (God promises His peace and good will to individuals and nations that honor His commandments.)

LENT AND THE "PRETZEL"

By Francis Xavier Weiser, S.J.

*Lent is a period of fasting, self-denial and prayer, in imitation of our Lord's fasting, forty days and forty nights, and in preparation for the feast of Easter. It comprises forty days, not including Sundays, from Ash-Wednesday to the end of Holy Saturday. The term "penance" should be made clear to children. It means a "change of heart," a victory over sin and a striving for holiness. The sacrifices of fasting and self-denial are only means and signs of this spiritual penance.

A traditional means of reminding the family that it is the holy season of Lent is the Lenten foods which are served only this time of the year. Thus parents and children realize, even at their meals, that prayer and penance should be practiced during these days.

The pretzel has a deep spiritual meaning for Lent. In fact, it was the ancient Christian Lenten bread as far back as the fourth century. In the old Roman Empire, the faithful kept a very strict fast all through Lent: no milk, no butter, no cheese, no eggs, no cream and no meat. They made small breads of water, flour and salt, to remind themselves that Lent was a time of prayer. They shaped these breads in the form of crossed arms for in those days they crossed their arms over the breast while praying. Therefore they called the breads "little arms" (bracellae). From this Latin word, the Germanic people later coined the term "pretzel."

Thus the pretzel is the most appropriate food symbol in Lent. It still shows the form of arms crossed in prayer, reminding us that Lent is a time of prayer. It consists only of water and flour, thus proclaiming Lent as a time of fasting. The earliest picture and description of a pretzel (from the fifth century) may be found in the manuscript - codex No. 3867, Vatican Library.

That many people eat pretzels today all through the year, that they take them together with beer in taverns and restaurants, is only an accidental habit. In many places of Europe, pretzels are served only from Ash-Wednesday to Easter, thus keeping the ancient symbolism alive.

There seems to be no reason why our Christian families should not return to this beautiful custom of our ancient Roman fellow-Christians, especially since we still have these breads everywhere. The children will be delighted and greatly impressed when they hear the true story of the pretzel.

*Rev. F. X. Weiser, S.J., **The Year of the Lord in the Christian Home** (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1964) pg. 89, pp. 93-94.



Kateri Tekakwitha: "Lily of the Mohawks"

"LILY OF THE MOHAWKS" — Artist: Marlene McCauley — Painted: July, 1974; Nahant, Mass.

This painting is of Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk Indian, born in 1656 in Auriesville, New York and died in 1680, Caughnawaga, Quebec. She is patron of the PFG movement. "Kateri" is Catherine in English and "Tekakwitha" means "putting things in order."

Charity, flowing from an intense love of God was the main virtue dominating Kateri's life. She is called, "Lily of the Mohawks" because of the purity in which she lived.

She spent her life helping the sick and poor of her village and practicing prayer and penance for the evils of her nation. In spite of many obstacles, including loss of her family at four years of age, partial blindness and a scarred face from having had smallpox, persecution and exposure to the most wicked of evils; she kept close to God in prayer and blossomed as a lily, bringing God's love to everyone. Ultimately, she escaped to the Christian village of Caughnawaga, Canada, where she lived in perfect peace and joy with Indians of all clans. (Algonquins, Hurons and Iroquois) to name a few. These tribes who were formerly savages became lambs through prayer and penance for God.

Kateri is a model of true peace in the world; teaching all that whatever be the race or color, man must understand and love one another since they have but one Father, the Creator of all.

Note: Medals, prayers and books can be purchased by writing to:

Kateri Center, Box 70, Caughnawaga, P.Q., Canada



Rev. Francis X. Weiser, S.J., author of **Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs**, 1958, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 750 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

Year of Our Lord in the Christian Home, Liturgical Press, St. John's Abbey, Collegville, Minnesota.

Kateri Tekakwitha, 1971, Kateri Center, Box 70, Caughnawaga, P. Q., Canada.



PRETZELS FOR GOD

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH

4715 North Central Ave.

Phoenix, Arizona 85012



Prayer for God = Families for God
Penance for God