

Women's conference speaker will share personal encounter with the Holy Spirit

By MATT McDONALD
THE ANCHOR



Courtesy photo

Patti Gallagher Mansfield

CHESTNUT HILL — An intense encounter with the Holy Spirit more than 40 years ago led Patti Gallagher Mansfield to devote her life to encouraging devotion to him who is sometimes referred to as the forgotten member of the Blessed Trinity.

Mansfield, 61, who now serves with her husband as a liaison to the Archbishop of New Orleans in the archdiocese's Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office, plans to speak at the Boston Catholic Women's Conference April 18 at Conte Forum at Boston College.

Her topic is "Joyfully Living Through the Power of the Holy Spirit," a theme of her life since the late 1960s.

As a college undergraduate, she participated in a retreat in February 1967 at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

As she recounts in an article about the experience, on a Saturday night during the retreat she went into an upstairs chapel to invite anyone who might be there to a birthday party downstairs.

"Yet, when I entered and knelt in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I literally trembled with a sense of awe before his majesty. I knew in an overwhelming way that

renewal movement in the United States.

Christianity is supposed to lead its followers to a personal relationship with God, but Mansfield argues that for many Catholics religion often presents itself more as knowledge of facts about God.

"For many Catholics who have even been through 12 years of Catholic school there is a knowledge of the faith that's not always connected to an experience of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," she said in an interview and follow-up e-mail message.

That means proclaiming the Word of God isn't just about trying to connect with non-Christians or non-Catholics, "but reaching Catholics who have been catechized but not evangelized, who still need to make a journey from the head to the heart, from what is theoretical to what is personal ... to experience the living God. The exercise of faith and prayer directed to the Persons of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, that's what needs to take place in the lives of Catholics."

Mansfield said the Catholic charismatic movement emphasizes an experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, what St. Paul describes in Chapter 5 of his Letter to the

Speaker update

The schedule of speakers for the Boston Catholic Men's Conference has changed since the publication of our March 28 story, "Genocide survivor returns to address men's conference." According to organizers, Immaculee Ilibagiza is no longer scheduled to address this year's men's conference.

Romans as "the love of God poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."

The effect can be profound. Mansfield points to recent readings at Mass concerning St. Peter, who famously denied knowing Jesus three times after Jesus was arrested. But not long after the resurrection, after Peter and John have called down healing on a crippled man at the Beautiful Gate, Peter refuses to kowtow to threats from the leaders of the Sanhedrin that he and John stop preaching in the name of the Nazorean.

"This same man, after the Holy Spirit came upon him, is giving this fantastic sermon, full of boldness," Mansfield said. "So when Pentecost happens, which is another way of saying when the Holy Spirit comes, in a personal way, there's this transformation from timidity to boldness."

Using personal stories of encounters with God is one of Mansfield's approaches.

She notes and credits a movement within Catholicism toward explaining Church tea-

chings with the use of Scripture and the history of the Church's teaching authority, known as apologetics. But her approach is more personal than apologetics, which appeals first to the intellect.

"That is effective in many ways, but the simple telling of how Jesus has helped you, healed you, that simple telling of the Gospel in one's life can be an effective way of bringing the faith to others," Mansfield said. "You are the only Bible some people will ever read."

The Boston Catholic Women's Conference is Friday, April 18 from 5 to 9:30 p.m. Mansfield said she hopes her listeners will model their lives on Mary Magdalene, who was one of the first to see Jesus after the resurrection and then reported what she had seen to the disciples, who initially had trouble believing what they were hearing.

"My prayer would be that we women, following the example of Mary Magdalene, or in her train, you might say, would encounter the living Jesus and then go forth to proclaim him," she said.

A one-time anti-Catholic, Kimberly Hahn embraces and spreads her faith

By MATT McDONALD
ANCHOR STAFF

CHESTNUT HILL — As a young wife and mother with a master's degree in theology, Kimberly Hahn thought she knew all she needed to know about God.

She had gotten a strong Christian upbringing from her father, a Presbyterian minister, and her



KIMBERLY HAHN

mother, who taught Religious Education. In 1979 she had married a man intent on becoming a Presbyterian minister, which he did.

Enthusiastic Protestants, she and her husband were also enthusiastically anti-Catholic, in an intellectual sense, seeing the Church of Rome as the Whore of Babylon described in the Book of Revelation.

So she had no interest when her husband in the early 1980s started asking unsettling questions about the foundations of their beliefs, like whether the Roman Catholic Church was right when it said there

marriage. Moreover, feeling settled in her faith, family and life path, and with a second baby on the way, she resented his questioning.

"I didn't want to have to rethink theology. And in the humiliation and the humility of having to realize that I had a lot of questions I couldn't answer," Hahn said in a recent interview. "God used that."

Her husband, Scott Hahn, read small forests' worth of books on points of Scripture and theology, finding over time that he couldn't refute any Catholic teaching and finding himself drawn to the Church.

Eventually, at Easter 1986, Scott was received into the Roman Catholic Church.

But Kimberly found herself in a no-man's-land, unable to argue her husband out of his movement toward Catholicism and unwilling to join him.

Paradoxically, her good Christian upbringing got in the way.

"It seemed like the genuine strength that I had received became a stumbling block, because I had to struggle with the humility that I could be wrong," Hahn said.

She describes those years as "high heels skiing in the mud," as she dug in against her husband's faith journey without feeling on solid ground herself.

"And yet I think God in his mercy kept pursuing me and trying to draw me back into a deep trust in him," she said.

Finally, at Easter 1990, she joined the Roman Catholic Church, too.

Hahn, now 50, co-authored a

Church called "Rome Sweet Home" in 1993.

She plans to speak at the Boston Catholic Women's Conference on April 18 at Boston College's Conte Forum in Chestnut Hill. (The one-night conference is scheduled to run from 5 to 9:30 p.m. that day.)

Her theme is "The Strength of the Humble."

For most Catholics, Mary the mother of Jesus is the most obvious example of humility.

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Hahn differentiates her acceptance of God's will when the Angel Gabriel tells her she is to give birth to God's son without the assistance of a man from Zechariah's doubts about whether his wife Elizabeth in her old age could possibly conceive a child.

"His response is not immediately submitting humbly to God's will, and Mary's is," Hahn said. "And I think in those moments in our lives when God is asking something of us, he will give us that strength of humility to do his will, in imitation of Mary."

As anyone familiar with the Hahn method will know, Kimberly and Scott Hahn quote Scripture with the specificity and ease of Protestant evangelists, which they once were.

In an interview, Hahn referred to a passage in St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians where Paul says he asked God three times to take away "a thorn in my flesh." Paul doesn't elaborate on what the problem was, but he does say what he got as a response from God: "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Weakness isn't a popular goal but St. Paul says he delights in it since it allows the power of Christ to take over.

"And in the idea that in the very experience of weakness, in the midst of suffering, whether it's physical or emotional, whether it's feelings of heartache or inadequacy, it's in that place that Christ needs us ... because his power is made perfect in my weakness," Hahn said.

"The question isn't, 'Am I qualified to do what God is asking me to do?' The question is, 'Am I available?'" And if you're feeling weak you're qualified."

Men's Conference speaker to tell how lukewarm faith was fanned into a flame

Editor's Note: Next weekend conferences designed to inspire zeal in Catholic men and women are scheduled to take place at Conte Forum at Boston College in Chestnut Hill. The second annual Boston Catholic Women's Conference is scheduled for 5 to 9:30 p.m. on April 18. The fourth annual Boston Catholic Men's Conference is scheduled for April 19 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

By **MATT McDONALD**
ANCHOR STAFF

CHESTNUT HILL — Could you get rid of your TV?

Tarek Saab did, about four-and-a-half years ago, as part of a life makeover in his mid-20s that brought him closer to God.

To that point, everything seemed to be going great. At 24 he had a good job making \$135,000 a year, was renting a nice condo in California's Silicon Valley, dated

beautiful women, wore designer clothes, and drove a fully loaded four-wheel drive Nissan Pathfinder with leather interior.

"Everything that really embodies the bachelor dream," he said in an interview.

At 25, Saab decided he didn't have that much after all.



TAREK SAAB

"And sadly over time I realized I wasn't happy. I was insatiable," Saab said.

He started thinking that maybe all the investments he had made in education, work, and money were short-term, and that he should be thinking more about his future.

"I ultimately came to the conclusion that success in life and business begins by focusing on death," Saab said. "There's no question that forms a man's identity more than the answer to the question, 'What happens when I die?'"

Saab, now 29, grew up in New Bedford. Of Lebanese ancestry, he grew up attending Our Lady of Purgatory, a Maronite Catholic church in New Bedford.

As he describes it, as a young adult he was the kind of Catholic familiar to many — believing in the Church and to some extent follow-

ing it, but listless.

"I had a lukewarm Catholic belief. I never had an extended period of time without going to church on Sunday. But going to church was like checking a box on a laundry list of items," Saab said.

Examining his life from the perspective of preparing for heaven led him to take stock of how he was spending his time.

He realized that between watching professional games on television, watching highlights on sports shows, and participating in fantasy leagues, he was devoting about 20 hours a week of his life to sports. He also noted that while watching mainstream networks he was being hit constantly with invitations to lust, largely through commercials.

It was around that time he jettisoned his television, and began filling up the time reading about his faith instead.

Reading about Catholicism intensified his commitment to it. Among the influences he cites from those early days are St. Augustine's "Confessions, The Spiritual Combat" by Lawrence Scupoli, "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis, and "Introduction to the Devout Life" by St. Francis de Sales.

He volunteered in youth ministry at his parish. The kids looked up to him, and he started longing to be the sort of person that the kids imagined he was.

While he made a commitment to change, getting rid of his television didn't mean dropping out of the culture.

In 2006 Saab participated in "The Apprentice," the NBC television show in which ambitious young adults in business competed to work for Donald Trump. Each episode of the so-called reality show famously

ended with Trump firing one of the contestants.

Saab lasted about 10 weeks before hearing "You're fired." It hurt, but not as much as he expected, because he was feeling a sense of detachment from the world and its concerns.

Saab writes about his experiences and the conclusions he draws from them in his new book "Gut Check: Confronting Love, Work, and Manhood in Your Twenties," which was released March 1 by Spence Publishing. (The book can be purchased online at www.BuyGutCheck.com.)

In an interview, he emphasized that his own experience has been a journey, not an immediate about-face. But it starts with making a commitment to God.

"Once you make the decision to make your spiritual life the priority, you don't become a saint overnight. You have to make some changes that hurt," Saab said.

Saab, who now lives near Fort Worth, Texas, married in May 2006. He and his wife are expecting a baby in August.

He and a partner now run a line of Christian men's apparel, including symbols from early Christianity. Saab is one of the featured speakers at the Boston Catholic Men's Conference, which is scheduled for 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., April 19 at Boston College's Conte Forum.

Saab is also scheduled to speak at 7 p.m., April 17 at St. Anthony of Padua Church in New Bedford.

He also plans to speak the morning of April 17 at Tabor Academy in Marion, from which he graduated in 1996.

He is scheduled to give a talk at Boston College at 4 p.m., April 18 and to sign books at the Boston Catholic Women's Conference later that day.