



Carmelite Spiritual Center

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Life is Worth Giving

NEW TRADING CARDS BRING OLD SAINTS BACK TO LIFE

by Fr. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.

Catholic youngsters are heading back to the future as an old idea, trading cards featuring spiritual heroes and heroines, gently move them towards the spiritual side of life. Few male Senior Citizens who grew up in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s can fail to remember their cherished collection of baseball heroes such as Babe Ruth, Jackie Robinson, Warren Spahn and other great athletes of the baseball diamonds. Such trading cards provided hours of enjoyment both in collecting and trading for youngsters.

Introduced early in the 20th Century, trading cards first highlighted American baseball players, then other athletes, and also famous people and places. They were often given out as instant premiums with bubble-gum and other products. Literally thousands of youngsters bought the latest cards, but also spent hours studying the backs of the baseball cards and then were able to commit to memory every statistic known about every player in both major leagues. Few educators realized it at the time, but the trading cards were among the greatest teaching tools, especially for boys, ever invented. And they are still a notable part of childhood culture.

Holy Trading Cards

But nowhere, except on the original holy cards distributed by the parochial school teaching sisters for good conduct or good scholastic work, did the saints merit trading cards. And there was no bubble gum given with them!

That was, however, until a 40-ish enterprising fellow by the name of Jim Shanley of Boynton Beach, Fla., came up with the idea of combining holy cards with trading cards. After all, a hero is simply a great person who accomplishes much in life — whether on an athletic field or a spiritual situation.

"It was just a flash of inspiration," explained Shanley who is a member of St. Thomas More parish in Boynton Beach. His plan is to rekindle interest in trading cards with a new type of a spiritual card aimed at grade schoolers. In this way, he hopes to offer youngsters information, especially about their Catholic Heritage. In this way, ^(too,) he hopes to foster a lifelong commitment to faith and even encourage more religious vocations.

Opting for the saints as his subject matter for the new type of trading cards, Jim Shanley, with the help and great encouragement of his wife, Betsy, and others, adapted a sports-type of card with an angled text and a photo in a four-sided frame.

Thus he created the inviting image he wanted on what he dubbed his "Holy Traders" cards. On the back of each card there is a brief biography of each saint and what he or she accomplished for the Lord and others in life. In addition, there is a "Check it out" box which includes a list of Catholic words and terms, plus information on different devotions associated with our Faith.

Help and Inspiration

During the two-year period he took to complete the project, Jim Shanley received spiritual and emotional support from family and friends. He also considers his getting involved in such a project something of a special grace in his life. But his two young daughters added to the inspiration to focus the cards on the younger generation. As Shanley explains the situation, he wanted to provide them with spiritual and moral guidance.

"Within a few minutes of getting the idea," he added, "I had the basic concept down: do a high quality card, give the kids information, and print the cards in large quantities."

Family and friends also helped research and write the texts for several of the cards. During the initial stages of the project, Jim Shanley returned home each day from his day-time job as a photo-finisher and devoted another four to eight hours on his spiritual project.

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It was, indeed, a labor of love and faith encouraged by his family and friends.

Selecting Saints

But how to select saints whose life and work would truly appeal to youngsters of the 21st Century? Each biography of the 40-card set was selected to emphasize that the saint is a real person who lived in the world with which the youngsters could somehow identify. And this was especially true if the saint lived in a different time and place.

The saint's holiness is also presented in a way which encourages present-day children to emulate the example and make it a part of their own lives whenever possible.

Much of the artwork, too, came from various religious orders contacted by Jim Shanley, and is designed to focus on the saints as real people who lived great and good lives.

The set includes such familiar saints as St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Dominic Savino, St. Maria Goretti, St. Elizabeth Seton, ~~St. John Bosco~~ St. John Bosco, ST. JUDE, ST. THOMAS MORE, AND ST. PATRICK.

Initial Printing

Confident in the value of the "Holy Traders" project, Shanley decided to print 10,000 sets with his own funds. They are marketed through many Catholic outlets at \$7 per set. For information, call: 1-800-242-8467, or write: Aziriah Company, 1827 Stonehaven Dr., Boynton Beach, FL 33436.