

This e-mail interview was originally printed in the November 2011 issue of New Earth, the newspaper for the Diocese of Fargo.

Catholic Answers Live host to speak in Fargo and Bismarck

Patrick Coffin, host of Catholic Answers Live, will speak in Fargo and Bismarck Feb. 2 and 3. Catholic Answers Live airs locally on Real Presence Radio from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, with encores from 2 to 4 a.m. each weekday. Presentations are set for:

11:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 2. Coffin will speak on the topic of suffering during a lunch at Sts. Anne & Joachim Church, Fargo. For tickets, e-mail tickets@fargodiocese.org or call (701) 356-7900. The cost is \$15 per person and the reservation deadline is Jan. 23. The lunch is sponsored by the diocesan Respect Life and Communications offices.

Evening, Feb. 2, Coffin will be the keynote speaker at the Real Presence Radio fundraising banquet at the Ramada Plaza Suites in Fargo.

Friday, Feb. 3, he will keynote the Real Presence Radio fundraising banquet at the Ramkota Inn in Bismarck.

For banquet information, to host a table or to underwrite the cost of a table for 8 people for \$250, or to RSVP, call toll free 1-877-795-0122 or e-mail lisa@yourcatholicradiostation.com.

Catholic Answers Live host spins story and magic for Christ

Tanya Watterud, New Earth editor, recently conducted an e-mail interview with Patrick Coffin:

Your bio on AveMariaRadio.net says you are a native of Nova Scotia. How did your homeland shape your Catholic faith and who you are today?

Any residue of my Catholic faith came from my baptism and from having parents who loved me enough to make sure I got a running start. Nova Scotia has no Catholic school system per se, and the cultural ethos in Canada, while very friendly and welcoming to outsiders, is increasingly secular. I still feel Canadian in my bones, however, and am grateful for having grown up in a safe, clean and beautiful country.

Like Blessed John Paul II, you were a stage actor in your early years. How did the creative work of acting enhance or hinder your practice of the Catholic faith?

I would say the answer is ambiguous. As my acting career was starting to sprout wings, I had a reversion encounter with Christ, and found it hard to see how the two lives go together. I was not a household name by any stretch, and was not interested in the life of travel that the theater entails. But drama can be a powerful tool for instilling life-changing values. All depends on the material, and how diligent one is in staying in communion with Jesus and his church.

What led you to study theology?

I first came across the word theodicy, or justifying the ways of God to man. That struck a chord in me for some reason and when I learned about Catholic Answers and the whole world of apologetics, I was hooked. Reading Frank Sheed's classic "Theology and Sanity" was like a jolt of champagne. It made me realize there's nothing more important than helping people understand the biblical and historical basis for what our Savior did for us. To me, learning theology means discovering more about God to love. If you heard that a biography was coming out about your wife, you'd grab it as soon as it came out and read it cover to cover, right? That's theology. But the Bible is more like reading a love letter. St. Jerome is still right — ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.

As a professional journalist, did you begin in secular media, then change to Catholic media?

To me, there's just media. I'm not wild about the bifurcation. There is good and bad in both "spheres." One good thing about a Catholic writing about Catholic interests for a non-Catholic publication is that you can know for sure that the content is going to be accurate. Sometimes, the so called Catholic media world becomes an echo chamber in which writers write for each other instead of engaging our (ideological) enemies. My model for all this is G.K. Chesterton, whose best writing appeared in London newspapers and books written for a general readership.

What three words would you use to describe the experience of hosting Catholic Answers Live?

Thrilling: I get a front row seat to witness the Holy Spirit acting in the life of someone who had no idea what they were getting themselves into when they picked up the phone.

Humbling: I am on a perpetual learning curve and will never see myself as a master of the art.

Grateful: I'm a nobody who found a job that marries my deepest loves with my greatest gifts.

During the Feb. 2 luncheon, you'll be addressing the topic of suffering. Why is that an important topic?

The question of suffering and of evil is, by far, the most difficult to answer using arguments alone. Many people walk around angry at God for "doing this to me." In terms of apologetics, we lose the debate before we start if we assume that words can somehow counteract the emotional kick of suffering. Our arguments must be effective, of course, but will only make an impact if we have a listening heart as to why the person is hurting. And ultimately, all arguments fall silent in the face of the mystery of the Cross. Jesus, our innocent Lamb of God, suffered the most repellant death after enduring the worst possible torture. In him alone can God say to you and me, "I know what it's like to suffer. I'm with you. I love you."

All this came home for us with the death of our daughter, Naomi, who succumbed to a rare form of Trisomy 9 in fall 2006. It's one thing to talk about the cross, but quite another to feel like you're hanging on it. Again, back to Jesus: He is the only resolution, if you will, of the mystery of suffering and evil. When he unleashed every possible evil — every last weapon of hate — at our Lord Jesus Christ, our enemy thereby signed his own death

warrant, so to speak. If one person is helped by my story and the message of God's unspeakable compassion, I'll be very happy.

What are you looking forward to when you travel to the Diocese of Fargo and Diocese of Bismarck for these events?

- 1) Meeting the people who work so hard to keep Catholic radio on the air, and those who are hungry to take the next step in understanding their faith. Connecting with people is a real grace of being on the road.
- 2) I hear the beer in your neck of the woods more closely resembles real beer (i.e. Canadian beer).
- 3) Actual snow. Christmas in Southern California is kind of a joke. You are also a professional magician. Do you use real magic? Let's just say I only use my powers for good, like my mentor in magic, St. John Bosco.

Is there anything else you'd like New Earth readers to know?

The Holy Spirit wants our friends and relatives who have fallen away from the faith to come back home way more than we do. Our job is largely to stay out of his way.

Real Presence Radio can be heard on AM 1370-Grand Forks, AM 1280-Moorhead/Fargo, FM 91.3-Bismarck; FM 89.1-Williston and FM 91.1- Minot.