

The value of radio? Entertainment
is one answer, education another. And Father
Patrick Peyton can prove that there's a third



Charles Boyer and Ethel Barrymore are two of the busy stars who make time to cooperate with Father Peyton.



The FAMILY

By

ROBBIN

COONS

A YOUNG Irish-born priest cherished a memory, a dream, and a faith.

And through the radio program these inspired, he has proved that miracles—even in this materialistic age of ours—can happen in men's hearts. They are miracles wrought by family prayer, the cause to which The Family Theater, presenting first-rate drama with star-studded casts, is dedicated.

The program has received thousands of letters attesting that the memory, the dream, the faith are bearing fruit. The Family Theater, combining prime entertainment with spiritual values and omitting preachments, is helping to restore prayer as a vital force in listeners' homes and lives.

Father Patrick Peyton, C. S. C., remembered his old home in Ireland, where family prayer was "as normal as supptime" and shed its beneficent glow on his growing-up.

He dreamed of reaching millions with the message of the power of prayer—prayer which

is not merely a Sunday thing for inside churches but also an every-day habit inside the heart and home, as much a part of daily life as eating, sleeping, working.

He believed, with a sublime faith strengthened by his own experience, that such prayer could lighten human burdens, uplift men's hearts, save tottering homes, forestall adult as well as juvenile delinquency.

And so, through his efforts, was born The Family Theater, heard over Mutual on Thursdays at 10 P. M. (EDT).

This, then, is the inspiring story of Father Pat and his phenomenally successful program which, unsponsored and non-commercial, commands the services of Hollywood's greatest stars to sell a spiritual commodity, the power of prayer.

As virtually anyone who's tried can tell you, it is essential to know the ropes if you would make your place in radio. The beginner's path is strewn with thorns, nails, ground glass and



It couldn't be done, till Father Peyton did it: stars whose time is measured in gold give it, for nothing, to the dramatic productions of Father Peyton's Family Theater. Mutual contributes the time—Thurs., 10 P.M. EDT.

that PRAYS TOGETHER"

carloads of hard commercial facts, and heartless hucksters lie in ambush at every turn.

You wish, for instance, to persuade Bing Crosby to take the air for you. You've half lost already. Bing's a busy fellow. He has movies to think about, and his own radio show, and benefits, and his ranch, and his family. "Oh, you couldn't possibly get Bing," you'll be assured.

Father Pat in his zeal didn't think about all this. He is a huge broth of a man, six feet four, 207 pounds, now aged forty years, sandy-haired, pink-faced, and by some accounts naive.

To begin near the beginning, one day in 1945 Bing Crosby took a telephone call from New York.

"Bing," said the voice, "I'm a Catholic priest from Albany and I want you to do something for Our Lady."

"Certainly, Father," said Bing.

And on Mother's Day that year, at 7 A. M., Bing Crosby went (Continued on page 86)



Loretta Young was one of Father Peyton's first Hollywood friends.

"The Family That Prays Together"

(Continued from page 29)

alone to a broadcasting room at Hollywood's KHJ to participate in Father Pat's first network Rosary program. On the same half hour, speaking from the East, appeared Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Sullivan of Iowa, parents of the five Sullivan brothers who went down with the cruiser Juneau.

And Father Pat, who had engineered free network time on his promise to produce a major star, found it a thrilling thing and undertook to investigate the possibilities further.

He learned, early in the quest, that free air time dedicated to prayer was virtually unthinkable. But if he could procure free stars—who knows? Armed with permission from his superiors, Father Peyton boarded a train and headed west. In Los Angeles he asked to be directed to the church nearest the Union Station, and so reported to Msgr. John J. Cawley at St. Vibiana's.

THE Monsignor was sympathetic. He arranged for Father Pat to speak at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Beverly Hills, where many Hollywood stars worship. Shortly Father Pat was talking personally to Loretta Young, and had her promise to cooperate. Joseph Cotten, Maureen O'Hara, Ruth Hussey, Bing Crosby, Barry Fitzgerald, Pat O'Brien, Maureen O'Sullivan, Don Ameche, George Murphy, Rosalind Russell, Ethel Barrymore, Irene Dunne, —the stars no sooner met the padre and heard his "little story" than they agreed to take part.

Within six weeks he had thirty-one stellar names, and he had even remembered—a detail he overlooked at first!—to get their written signatures to contracts.

The idea by now had grown. Instead of a strictly Catholic Rosary hour, the program now would appeal to people of all faiths, to Protestants and Jews and Catholics alike, with its emphasis on the power of prayer. Especially in these troubled times, with nations quarreling and homes breaking and the souls of men assailed by the complexities and strains of modern life, especially now could this power exert its saving force.

Radio advertising men—Tom Lewis, Robert Longenecker, Al Scalpone—pitched in along with the stars. On February 13, 1947, the first Family Theater, starring Loretta Young, James Stewart and Don Ameche, went on the air. Since then about 150 different stars have appeared, in simple uplifting dramas all bringing home the message: "The family that prays together stays together."

But the real beginning of Family Theater goes back a number of years to the little town of Carracastle, in County Mayo, Ireland, where a small boy named Patrick Peyton grew up, fifth in a family of eleven children.

"From the time I attained the age of reason," Father Pat recalls today, "I had a beautiful picture of my mother and my father on their knees together, saying the Rosary. For nineteen years of my growing up those daily ten minutes of adoration, all of us taking part, were as normal as suppertime. We were a poor family, but spiritually my father's house was the home of a millionaire. We children grew up knowing that there might be a thousand

little annoyances on a home's surface and yet—where there was family prayer—a rich unity at bottom that nothing could assail."

Pat and his older brother Tom were among the children who came to Scranton, Pa., in 1928, trying to find work in the coal mines. Tom became a miner, but Pat worked as janitor at St. Peter's cathedral, and here the urge to join the priesthood rose in him. Soon Tom came from the mines with the same ambition. The two boys, Pat, nineteen and Tom, twenty-one, received scholarships to Moreau Seminary at South Bend, Ind. They were graduated together, served their novitiates together, and after four years at Notre Dame college were graduated together in 1937. They became American citizens, and were sent to Washington for further study.

Near the end of their long preparation for the priesthood, robust, healthy Pat fell victim to tuberculosis and his hopes were dashed. He had a faith, however—and a family—equal to the scourge.

"I believe in Our Lady as a human person," he testifies now. "I believe in Her as somebody's daughter, Who has not forgotten what it is to be human, Who has never forgotten me when I needed Her. I prayed, and—"

His mother, back in Ireland, prayed likewise, offering her life. His sister Nellie, in Scranton, offered a vow of perpetual virginity, and her life, if Pat and Tom might be ordained together. The mother is dead now. Nellie is dead. Pat, fully recovered, and Tom were ordained at Notre Dame on the same day in June, 1941.

IN GRATITUDE to Our Lady, in gratitude for "beautiful memories of family prayer," Father Pat conceived the plan of a Rosary by radio. This began modestly in his charge at Albany, N. Y., in 1943, when thirteen girls told their beads over a local station's air. But Father Pat dreamed of greater tribute to the Virgin, of a wider audience for the message of prayer. This dream found fruition in the Mother's Day program by Bing Crosby, Cardinal Spellman and the Sullivans. Father Pat dreamed bigger, and worked on...

From these beginnings grew today's Family Theater, dedicated to the cause of prayer and to home life, in America and wherever it is heard.

How effectively it is serving its high purpose is attested with each day's mail. Letters of commendation and appreciation have been received from people prominent in national and community life, men like Henry Ford II, FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, Eric Johnston, and other leaders in industry, law enforcement, education, and public welfare. Church men and women, regardless of denomination, have added their praise, and the response from the general public has been equally gratifying.

"It sweetens the air," wrote a Los Angeles business man, and thousands of letters echo a St. Louis listener who wrote "... if we had more such entertainment ... this old world of ours would be much the better place to live in." A Wisconsin lawyer who had seen "the results of broken homes and family ties" wrote glowingly. From every state, from Canada and Hawaii comes the mail—from housewives, farmers, factory and shop workers,

store clerks, office employees and managers, soldiers and sailors and Marines, fliers and seamen, banks and bank clerks, day laborers and judges, people in all stations of life.

And very frequently come the touching, heart-warming and intimate testimonials of men and women, grieving, perplexed and sorely tried, who have found new hope and comfort in the program. Such letters Father Pat treats as confidential, but the tenor of a few may be given.

"I had given up all hope," one woman wrote, "but after listening . . . I started to pray again. Now the greatest prayer of my life has been answered, and I am happy."

Another woman, her husband being lost to drink, heard a program and as a result fell back on prayer. "He doesn't drink any more," she wrote, "and now he also prays."

Typical of many was this: "Our marriage was foundering, we were talking about divorce. Then we heard 'I Give You Maggie' (a divorce story) and it brought us to our senses. We're making a go of our marriage now . . ."

A mother whose son had just been killed in an airplane crash in the Pacific: "I heard your 'Stolen Symphony' with Robert Ryan—such a comfort . . ."

A YOUNG wife who had just lost her second, much-wanted baby: "I was . . . so full of sorrow and rebellion . . . about to despair when I listened to your Triumphant Hour (special Easter program) . . . God's grace seemed to penetrate my heart and give me peace . . ."

The Family Theater, with offices in Hollywood, has Mark Kearney as executive producer and David Young as director. The Family Rosary Crusade (for Catholic homes) has headquarters in Albany, N. Y. Between the two projects Father Pat travels assiduously, by train and plane, raising funds to defray production costs of some \$1,700 a week, mostly for music. Stars performing receive the Guild minimum of \$37, generally turning it back to the show. Three times a year—Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day—a special hour-long program is given.

With Mutual donating Family Theater's regular half hour, Father Pat meets other expenses with contributions from industrial and business firms and individuals throughout the country. His winning way, when he solicits for the cause, is becoming famous. The man is practically irresistible. "Everybody," as Ethel Barrymore once remarked, "adopts Father Pat." Numerous contributions, in small amounts, come from grateful listeners. In several cities, advertising firms have donated billboard space.

Father Pat, unassuming and shy except when working on behalf of Family Theater, believes that through the radio work he is "paying a debt to a grand Person, so wonderful, so kind, so human—and the Mother of God."

"And," he says, "we are selling wares as real as coffee, tires, radios or cars when we sell the power of prayer. In an age when homes are dying, we ask that people of all faiths let God have the chance to save homes. We ask that people realize, through the power of prayer, that peace comes from the inside out!"

And with radio bringing this simple message into millions of homes, the full result—as a housewife in St. Paul, Minn., wrote fervently—"will never be known this side of heaven."