

Family Theater

While a priest in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, New York, Father Patrick Peyton got involved with The Holy Rosary radio programs that were aired by stations in the Albany and Schenectady area. These initial radio contacts combined with an acquaintance with the local *Variety* correspondent, led to Father Peyton's first national radio effort. In 1945 he organized a Mother's Day broadcast over the Mutual Broadcasting System featuring Bing Crosby, who Father Peyton had cold-called about hosting the event.

For the next two years Father Peyton toiled to bring an ongoing series to the air that would focus on Peyton's indomitable belief in the power of prayer and its role in family life. Mutual again would be his landing place when the system's president, Edgar Kobak, agreed to donate a time slot. In return Kobak wanted a first-rate production as well as Peyton to cover all the production expenses.

During his last two years of efforts to bring a new radio series to the air Father Peyton had made many contacts in the film and radio industries. Tom Lewis, Bob Longenecker, and Al Scalpone were brought on board to take care of behind-the-scenes operations and *Family Theater* premiered on February 13, 1947. Originating from KHJ's Hollywood studios, the program was heard from coast to coast though not initially at the same time or even the same day.

Every week the guest host would intone "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." In focusing his series on prayer, Father Peyton frequently found himself gently resisting pressure from the Catholic Church hierarchy to slip more doctrine into the scripts while still creating an environment that welcomed a variety of Hollywood stars, many of whom found a bit of positive publicity for their efforts.

Family Theater was never sponsored, nor did Father Peyton ever attempt to turn it into a commercial show. He worked relentlessly to raise the money needed to cover the production costs week in and week out. The quality of the show was recognized by a number of awards over the years and *Family Theater* aired new episodes at least until 1957, ten years after its debut, and was still heard in reruns on Mutual into the 1960s, well past radio's Golden Era.

This synopsis is based on information published in Karl Schadow's *Family Theater: Every Home* (Radio Spirits *Family Theater* release #47252, 2015), courtesy Radio Spirits and the author, and John Dunning's *The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*.