

Joyful Joey

Life is good for Joey Garrison, who is a happy and busy Fourteen-year-old. When he's not doing things with his close-knit family, he's the starting point guard on his high school J.V. basketball team. He practices alone for hours—shooting and dribbling, even during the winter, in the court in his driveway. He plays until his hands are cold and numb, filled with calluses. He even dribbles a basketball to school, causing him to get ribbed by a few other students—but these same kids come to cheer him on during the games.

He is quiet in class and at home, but he loves to wrestle around on the floor of their family room in the basement with his brother Tim, who is ten. He also loves to watch his baby sister Monica, three, when their mom needs to do housework or run errands.

He wouldn't admit it, but his older sister Rachel, sixteen, has been an inspiration to him, spiritually, by the way she prays in the morning, and is so reverent at Mass. Her prayers always seem to be answered. Joey has recently noticed the same thing about his own prayers.

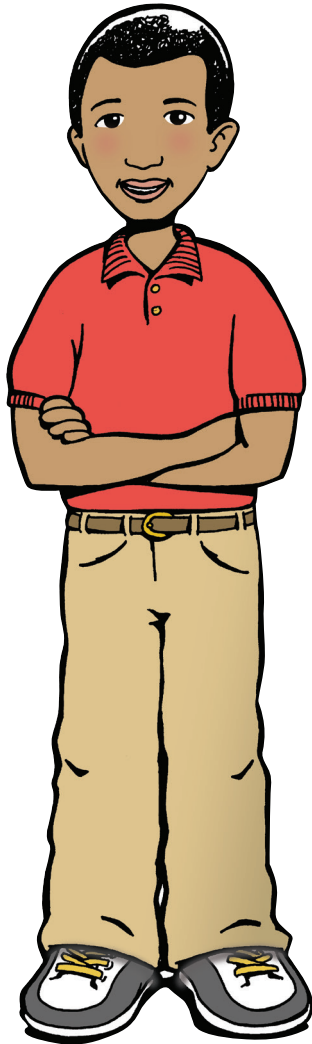
Joey attends St. Thomas Aquinas High School near Philadelphia, and there are nearly 700 students in his ninth grade class. This is a big change from Christian Academy, the evangelical Christian school Joey attended for the previous eight years. He is not used to going to school with so many classmates he does not know by name. His favorite subject is history, partly because he finds it easy, and partly because he loves to learn about what happened in the past. His parents' conversion to the Catholic Faith three years ago prompted the change.

Joey and his family attend St. Philomena, where he and his younger brother are altar servers. His father, Richard, is a product manager for a major pharmaceutical company and his mother works part-time at the parish. Sometimes troubled parishioners call her at home, and Joey listens to his mom, Kathryn, give them encouragement and advice. He tries to remember to offer his prayers for these troubled people during the family rosary.

Joey is a lot like his father, who loves the Bible and the Catholic Church. He is very comfortable reading the Bible and studying it, and talking about it. On the third Saturday of every month, Joey goes to confession with his dad, and then they go out to lunch together, alone, and just talk about life, sports, their faith, and the family.

Joey especially loves these conversations because his father treats him like an adult. Since transferring to St. Thomas Aquinas and being inspired by the example of Fr. Joe, a young priest who comes in to teach religion class, Joey has been considering the priesthood. He is planning to attend a month-long Catholic boy's summer camp in New Hampshire that is run by a religious order. He is going with his friend Mitch, who attended last year and is also thinking about the priesthood.





Doubtful Dan

Dan Wilton loves to play pick-up basketball with his younger brother, Tommy, and Tommy's friend Joey Garrison. What he doesn't like are the clever answers he gets from Joey when they starting discussing religion, particularly about the Catholic Faith.

Although Dan and Tommy are not Catholic, both boys attend St. Thomas Aquinas High School because their parents want them to receive an academically rigorous Christian education. Dan's parents are members of the United Methodist Church.

The decision to send the boys to St. Thomas seems to have paid off. Dan will follow his mother's footsteps to Southern Methodist University, where he is receiving a full scholarship due to being at the top of his class at St. Thomas. He hopes to study medicine or psychology.

Dan attends church, but he is not really into it. His challenges to Joey come more from his desire to tease than real conviction about the importance of faith and doctrine. However, Joey's answers and enthusiasm have started to impact Dan, giving him some doubt about his Protestant faith. He has even begun to pray every morning, asking Jesus to guide him. He has even begun call on his guardian angel. (After all, there are angels all through the Bible, aren't there?)

Dan has been paying attention at church more recently. He also started attending the church's youth group functions. He is not sure whether this is out of a desire for God, or to simply get some answers to Joey's questions. Dan's dad seems to keep repeating the same thing over and over again (like how Catholics persecuted millions of Protestants during the Middle Ages, even after Dan explains to him how this is an impossible statement to support).

One time, Joey gave Dan his rosary after a pick-up game. At first, he kept it in his drawer under his socks, but now he carries it around in his pocket. He is not exactly sure why—he sort of sees them as a good-luck charm, although he knows Joey would cringe at the thought of the rosary being something superstitious.

Solid Sally

Sally McCormick loves God and her family. In fact, she sees her family as God's greatest gift in her life. The third of six kids and the oldest girl in the family, Sally has wanted to become a Carmelite sister ever since her mother took her to Mass at the nearby Carmelite church five years ago and she first heard their angelic singing. She is eleven years old and has always been homeschooled, like her two older brothers, Stephen and Thomas, and younger sister Mary.

Sally is an expert speller. She placed tenth in the California Elementary Schools Spelling Bee Contest, misspelling the word "lugubrious." Her favorite books are C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Her hobbies include playing piano, collecting books, and playing soccer.

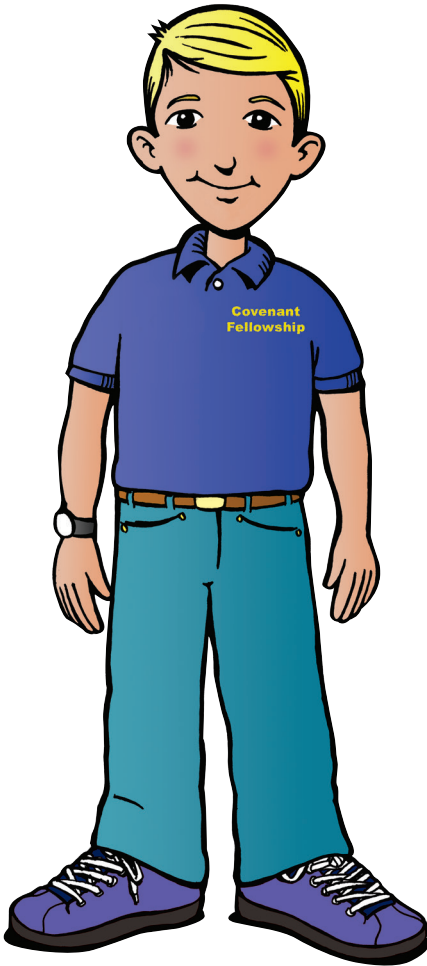
The McCormicks love their parish, St. Thomas More, in Riverside, California, where Mr. McCormick serves on the parish building committee. He works as an engineer for an aeronautical firm, and Mrs. McCormick, who worked as a nurse for a few years before getting married, refers to herself as a "domestic engineer." She's a full-time mother, homeschool teacher, and homemaker. She makes certain that all the McCormick children pull their weight doing household chores. More often than not, Sally does the laundry, like her favorite saint, Saint Thérèse, the Little Flower, did in the Carmelites. Even though it is a little disgusting to go around the house collecting everyone's dirty laundry, there is something satisfying to Sally about pulling clean, warm clothes from the dryer. It reminds her of going to confession.

Sally first started discussing her Catholic Faith with seventeen-year-old Chip Miller about a year ago. They were at an inter-denominational sports day between local Catholic and Protestant homeschooling groups. Chip made a statement about the Catholic Faith that was filled with half-truths and outright misconceptions. Sally charitably and gently corrected him in front of a group of a dozen or so kids and teenagers. Her voice was soft, but her words were convincing.

The conversations between the two have lasted ever since, especially as they waited after the games for their parents to pick them up. On these occasions, they often promise to pray for each other when they say good-bye.



Challenging Chip



Chip Miller is more than a good kid from a good Christian family. He truly loves Jesus. A seventeen-year-old high school senior and the oldest of three kids, Chip has been homeschooled since the fourth grade. His hobbies include scouting (he is close to becoming an Eagle Scout), baseball, and basketball. Most importantly, as his mom says often, he is the core team leader at Covenant Fellowship Church's Young Life group.

Raised in Riverside, California, Chip is heading north for the University of California at Davis in the fall. He hopes to study business and follow his father's footsteps into the corporate world, though he secretly feels that God may be calling him to serve full-time in ministry. Chip's mom graduated with a degree in theology from Biola University, a Christian college in Southern California. Chip's grandfather was the famous Presbyterian minister Grayson Moore. Moore's fame came from his ability to recite from memory the Books of Genesis and Exodus, and from a national radio program he hosted.

Like a few of his friends from the local Young Life group, Chip has some misconceptions about the Catholic Faith that he occasionally lets fly at homeschooling gatherings. But his discussions with Sally, combined with his Uncle Brad's recent conversion to Catholicism, have started to make Chip wonder about things. After knowing Sally, he acknowledges that Catholics are Christians. He also recently noticed that his ears perk up when he sees the pope on television. He has also been reading certain passages in the Gospels that Sally has mentioned with an open mind.

Charitable Charles

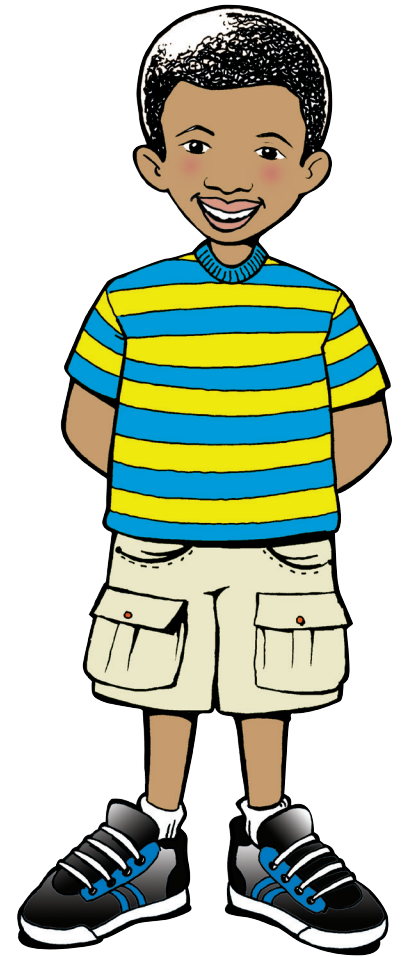
Charles Hill is as enthusiastic about his new Catholic Faith as his father Isaiah, a former Baptist minister who surprised the Atlanta Christian community five years ago, when, after twenty years as a minister, he converted to Catholicism. His father's study of the early Church Fathers and saints led him to reconsider his lifelong faith and begin the journey towards Catholicism. This conversion cost him his job and most of his friendships. Eventually, he caught on as a manager in a company that installs fiber optic cable throughout Georgia.

A fourteen-year-old ninth grader, Charles attends Oakwood Academy, a private Catholic school outside of Atlanta. His favorite subjects are math and science. The youngest of four children, Charles and his three older brothers have always been active in their Christian faith. His oldest brother, Walter, just finished college at Georgia Tech and will soon enter the seminary for the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Charles is now thinking about the priesthood, too. He thinks he would be happy as a Franciscan, going wherever in the world Jesus would want him, serving the poor as a missionary.

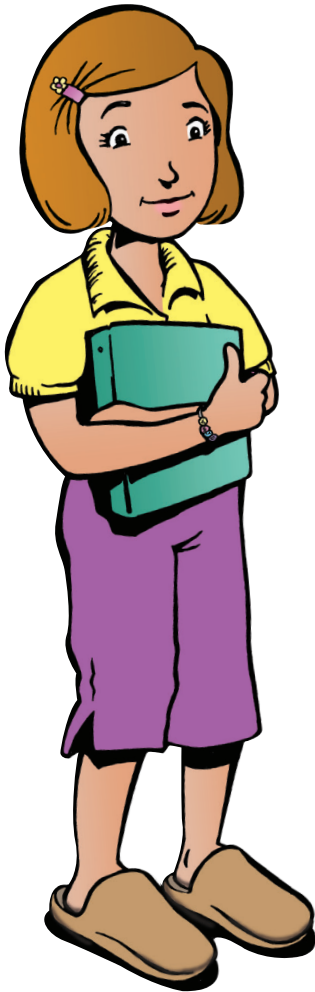
Charles has known Connie Eckerdt since they were five-year-old classmates at Berean Christian Day School. Their fathers were Baptist ministers in the Atlanta area and worked together on various Christian outreach projects.

The Hills still attend occasional summer barbeques together at the Eckardts, but there is an unspoken agreement at these gatherings that the parents do not talk about the differences in their faiths. Charles and Penny have never followed this unwritten rule, sometimes walking off together in the woods behind her home to talk about the Bible. The continued friendship between Charles and Connie has been actually helped keep these two families together.

Charles enjoys spending time with his family, especially when his brothers Walter and James are home from college. He also likes all sports, rollerblading with Penny and her friends, and fishing trips with his dad.



Curious Connie



Connie Eckerdt is the middle child of three. Her father, Paul, is a respected Baptist minister in the Atlanta area. Her mother, Rachel, is the president of the greater Atlanta Women's Aglow, a Christian women's ministry. The three Eckerdt kids attend Easton High School in the northern Atlanta suburbs.

A sophomore at Easton, Connie is a very good student and well liked by her classmates. Although she tends to be the quiet type, she does get energetic when discussing her faith, especially her talks with her long-time friend Charles Hill. Like her friends and family, Connie has a lot of questions and misunderstandings about Catholicism. She doesn't see these talks as any danger to her strong Baptist faith.

Connie has known Charles since their sandbox days in preschool. She enjoys talking to Charles on the phone and at inter-denominational community functions where the Hills are still involved. Her parents, however, are getting a little nervous about her discussions with Charles about the Catholic Faith.

Connie hopes to attend Liberty University, a Christian college in Virginia, and then go on to become a missionary, marry a minister, and settle down.

Her hobbies including playing the violin, going to the mall with friends, watching movies (at least the ones her parents approved!), and riding her bike for miles in the many parks around her neighborhood.

Gracious Grace

Grace Matsuki is a well-rounded and dynamic young Catholic lady, brimming with life, beauty, and confidence in her faith. A sixteen-year-old junior at LaFayette Catholic High School near Ann Arbor, Michigan, Grace feels destined for great things, both in her career and in her faith. She is the president of her junior class and the core team leader at Immaculate Conception's youth group. She also serves as a reader at the youth Mass, and assisted with this year's youth retreat, which was centered around Eucharistic adoration. Since the retreat, Grace has gotten up early to walk to Church for Eucharistic adoration on Wednesdays and Fridays. She prays kneeling, her eyes wide open, her heart open all the more during these precious moments with Jesus. She often offers up her entire hour for her friend Quincy Payne and his parents.

Grace's family has been Catholic for more than 400 years, tracing its heritage to the heroic Japanese Catholic community, which survived fierce persecution from the early 1600s through the mid-1800s. These Japanese Catholics kept the faith without access to priests. One of her distant relatives is said to have died a martyr.

Grace has two younger brothers, Alexander and John-Paul. Her father, Paul, is a respected attorney in Ann Arbor and is pursuing the deaconate. Her mother, Izumi, is an at-home mom who loves to carry on their Japanese traditions, especially by sewing traditional dresses for Grace.

Grace met Quincy and his friends after a Christian concert. Their common interest in music and love of God made their friendship an obvious one. The two have been meeting monthly at the Lighthouse Christian Café in Ann Arbor with friends to study the Bible and discuss Christianity, including the differences between the Catholics and the Evangelical churches. Sometimes the discussions become a little heated, but Grace seems to always have a way of calming everyone down, making a joke, or just diffusing the situation with her winning smile and manner.

Grace wants to be a doctor and attend the University of Michigan, but she is also considering attending Ave Maria University. When not leading her junior class or the parish youth group, Grace enjoys keeping up with ballet and using her babysitting money to fund a growing collection of Catholic books and music.



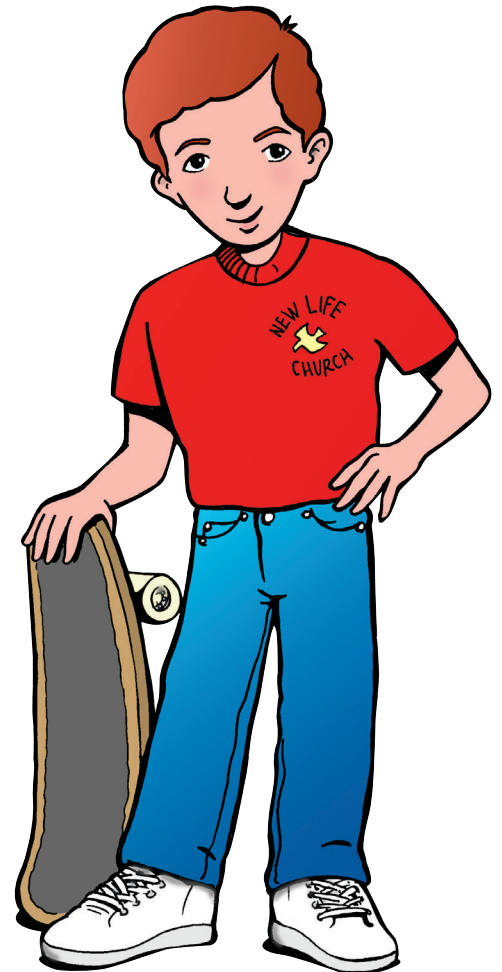
Questioning Quincy

As a sixteen-year-old junior in high school, Quincy Payne has always felt a little bit like he lives in two worlds. He is the baby of the family, with an older sister, Blair. He attends Ann Arbor Preparatory. His sister attends the University of Michigan, where both his parents work. His mother is the chair of the political science department and his father is a professor of mathematics. Needless to say, Quincy comes from a family of thinkers. When he is not reading the Bible or spending time with his friends, Quincy likes skateboarding, collecting and trading *Star Wars* memorabilia, and building and racing go-carts.

Quincy has been seriously re-evaluating his faith in recent days, mostly because of his long and intriguing conversations with Grace at the Lighthouse Café and over the phone. Quincy's parents are basically agnostic. They are from a Lutheran background, but have never practiced, at least not in Quincy's lifetime. This was the certainly the case when young Quincy met Timmy Hinkle, a classmate. Timmy shared his faith with Quincy, and this led to Quincy's accepting Jesus as his savior one night when he attended Timmy's youth group. Tim and his friends prayed over him, their hands on his head and shoulders.

That was two years ago, and Quincy didn't anticipate his parents' resistance to his new faith. They discouraged his attendance at New Life Fellowship, an Evangelical Christian church. Now that he drives, Quincy attends services there each week, though he feels sad that he has to go alone, while Timmy and most of his friends attend with their parents.

Right now, he would like to study astronomy and physics in college so he can work for the NASA space program. It seems like an impossible dream to be a real live astronaut, but he's going to give it a try. When he looks up at night and sees the stars, he sees the handiwork of God, and he wants to get closer to them.



Confident Carlos



Carlos Rivera likes to get down to business. The vice president of his senior class at Allenwood High School in Dallas, Carlos is destined to be a leader like his father, a member of the Dallas City Council and a successful businessman who founded and operates a chain of dry-cleaning businesses.

At seventeen, Carlos has learned the value of "common sense." This is something he has seen all his life from his father. Carlos spent a lot of time working with his father at the family's stores. His reliance on "common sense" is also one of the reasons he does so well in his public school debate competitions. He is well-spoken and logical in his presentations of the facts, whether a city policy or national economic issues. He always does his homework in preparation for his school debates.

Carlos has also used his well-reasoned approach to debate in his discussions with debate team member captain Penny Winston. The topic of discussion between these two friends, however, is not policies or laws but their respective Christian faiths. Carlos prays every night for Penny, and it strikes him as funny because he knows that she prays every night for him. He figures that because he has the Blessed Mother praying with him, Penny will eventually become a Catholic—no matter how long it takes. Carlos believes the logic, truth, and tradition of the Catholic Faith will show Penny the reasonableness of becoming Catholic.

The Riveras attend All Saints Parish. Carlos and his mother, Lucia, are the most active. His mother volunteers as a religious education teacher. Carlos serves at Mass on Sundays, and he is in charge of training the younger altar boys. When his schedule permits, he also attends some youth group functions.

When not hitting for both power and average on the baseball diamond in the spring and summer, Carlos likes to hang out with his friends, go to dances and listen to music. He is also saving money for a car. He wants to buy a brand-new PT Cruiser, but he must first convince his father it won't interfere with his saving for college. As a graduation gift, his father promised to match whatever amount Carlos saved for a car.

Carlos' skills at debate will continue to be put to use next year when he goes to college, which he sees as the "big leagues" of the debate world. When it comes to debating, Carlos is not all facts and figures. He has, according to Penny, a certain charm and a smooth way about presenting his position and leading his team. This calm method is his secret weapon. Carlos has received a scholarship to play baseball at Texas Christian University, one of the better programs in the nation. It is also a leading campus for Campus Crusade for Christ, an evangelical Christian ministry focused on the evangelization of campus students. Even Penny admits that TCU and Campus Crusade for Christ have no idea what's going to hit them in the form of one Carlos Rivera.

Persistent Penny

Penny Winston is the older of two children. She is a senior and one of the most popular girls at Allenwood High School—both because of her beauty and her uncanny way of relating to all the cliques without ever being fully sucked in by them. Penny is the president of the student council, captain of the debate team and co-captain of the band. She also ranks in the top ten of her class of 550 students. Every night she collapses in bed, exhausted, her mind barely able to turn off with all her thoughts and plans.

Penny's father is a deacon at First Baptist Church in Dallas and a vice president of an oil company. She is closer to him than any of her friends are to their fathers, and she knows this is a true blessing. Her mother is an English teacher at a suburban Dallas high school. Penny is also active in the church's youth group and has helped out on few youth retreats, though her school activities are making this more and more difficult.

Penny will attend Louisiana State University to study music and teaching. Her hope is to become a music teacher and to marry and have kids. When not busy at school or studying for exams, Penny likes to read, spend time with her friends, and play the piano. Carlos is the biggest question mark in her life. She is attracted to his charisma and his intelligence, yet struggles with the fact that he's Catholic. She's also curious that he always seems to have sound Biblical answers to her frequent questions about Catholicism. He just doesn't seem to fit into her father's stereotype of what a Catholic should be like.

