

# Catholics — *in the* — Kitchen



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*Nurturing the  
Bond between  
Faith and Food*

Alexandra Greeley

*Catholics in the Kitchen: Nurturing the Bond between Faith and Food* © 2022  
Alexandra Greeley

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# Author's Note

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Catholics in the food world are numerous, even countless. That number includes farmers, chefs, priests, cookbook authors, restaurant owners, and at-home cooks. All of them not only embrace and live their faith but also head to the kitchen to cook for friends, families, parishioners, and the homeless. Some stand in front of a TV camera to broadcast a food show; others head to their computers to write cookbooks and contribute to Catholic websites. Others own and cook for their restaurants and, when time allows, conduct cooking classes to help shape students' techniques and knowledge of ingredients and cooking utensils. Still others—the priests—dream up parish food events or make sure the homeless or the homebound have sufficient food to nourish the body.

Especially important in the food world, of course, are the farmers. Without their skills and labor and dedication to the land, to their crops, and to their herds of animals or flocks of turkeys and chickens, no farmer's market, supermarket, or website food source would have any product or produce to sell. That's why all of us—in this country, in every country—should give thanks to all the farmers in rural communities who work so hard to produce the food to sustain their fellow man.

Fortunately, reaching out to these nineteen profiled Catholics was easy. I write about food and faith for the *National Catholic Register*, and all except one I had already interviewed, as each has a significant role in the food world. They gave me permission for a lengthier profile and a longer phone interview. Of course, fitting time into each person's busy schedule was challenging, so I am grateful to them all. I also extend my gratitude to the Register for allowing me to reprint parts of my original interviews here.

In the end, what has been and is most inspiring, most gratifying, and most challenging are all the eclectic, somewhat universal, and very creative recipes culinary Catholics come up with. Imagine seeing a Burmese recipe for a pineapple-and-tomato soup, for Korean bulgogi (marinated thinly sliced beef steak), or for Italian lentil-and-rice soup. But that's the delight of the universality of the Catholic food world. Catholicism and love of cooking draw in people from all corners of the earth who delight in assembling delicious dishes to feed others, and to feed the soul.

This book, *Catholics in the Kitchen*, focuses on those people from each corner of the American cooking world, starting with the farmers. And that is why the book is dedicated to James Ennis, executive director of Catholic Rural Life, an organization dedicated to “promoting Catholic life in rural America.” Readers will also learn about so many different people who use their cooking talents to celebrate life and their faith. Learning about their devotion to God should inspire everyone to thank Him for our life-sustaining food.

Alexandra Greeley

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# Introduction

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*“Know that even when you are in the kitchen,  
God moves amidst the pots and pans.”*

— SAINT TERESA OF AVILA —

There is a peculiar passage in the book of Acts that could prove difficult to understand if one did not take the time to study the circumstances and context surrounding it. It is a passage that dramatically changed the course of the apostles' evangelization efforts and strategies.

The moment in question concerns the adventures of Peter as he traversed the lands of Lydda, where he healed a bedridden man, followed by his time in Joppa, where he raised a dead woman. Shortly after these miracles, while Peter remained in Joppa, he went up on a housetop to pray. At the sixth hour, he became hungry and “desired something to eat.” While his hosts went about preparing a meal, Peter fell into a trance and saw a vision: “The heaven opened, and something descending, like a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common’

or unclean.' And the voice came to him again a second time, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven" (Acts 10:11–16).

While Peter sat pondering this strange vision, messengers from a centurion named Cornelius called out to him. They had been sent by Cornelius to retrieve Peter, the former having been directed by an angel of God to seek out the latter. Though a pagan, a Roman, and a Gentile Cornelius was an honorable man who "feared God with all his household." The angel had told him to listen to what Peter had to say.

Peter, up until this point, would not have preached much to the Gentiles. And he certainly would not have entered their house to break bread with them, since their food and therefore their bodies would be unclean. But he heard the voice of the Spirit say to him, "Rise and go down, and accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them" (Acts 10:20).

The next day, Peter obeyed the voice of the Spirit and went to Cornelius. He said to this household, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me" (Acts 10:28–29).

As it turned out, Cornelius desired to hear the story of Jesus. He desired baptism, to be brought into Christ's Church. And he would be that day at the hands of the one Jesus called "the rock."

Sometime later, now in Jerusalem, Peter was criticized by the Jews who demanded an answer for why he would sit at the table with unclean Gentiles. After reciting his vision to them, he argued, "Who was I that I could withstand God?" And when the Jews understood, they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life" (Acts 10:17–18).

And so the Gentiles would be brought into the Church, and so too would all of us, their descendants. Thanks be to God Peter was hungry that day!

All humor aside, this is a vitally important passage for us to reflect on.

For centuries, God had partitioned off His chosen people with a strict set of laws, ensuring they would not mingle with other nations. They had to come to Jerusalem, to the Temple, to gather as a people for the major feasts. There were laws of circumcision, keeping them from marrying and procreating with the Gentiles. And of course there were dietary restrictions, which kept them from dining with “unclean peoples.” If one could not worship, marry, or dine with another, it was difficult to mix their cultures or their families. God placed the Jewish people in a cocoon so He could prepare them for the Messiah. We might say this was God playing defense. He was protecting His people from outside threats (though of course He would let these threats target His people when they fell into sin and idolatry).

*But the strategy changed after Christ came.*

Suddenly, God’s people were put on offense. They were told to “go out and make disciples of all nations.” No longer would circumcision be the law, but baptism. No longer would they gather in the Temple, shutting themselves off, but tabernacles would be spread out all over the world, inviting all who sought the Lord to come in. And, as we saw with the vision of Peter in Acts, the Jewish dietary laws would also be lifted. Peter and the other Christians could now sit at the table with Gentiles. They could dine with them.

It’s probably not all that surprising that the manner in which God’s people worshipped Him, as well as the joining of families through marriage to create new families, would be vitally important to the conversion of the Gentiles. But we see how sacred the act of sitting down to dine with someone is when we consider this was also a means of conversion desired by God. He knew that the human family—His children—shared more than just food when they ate together. They shared their spirits with one another. They shared love.

Thus, the Spirit counseled Peter, and through Peter the other apostles, to break bread with the Gentiles, for the Spirit knew what they did not—that in the breaking of common bread, the Jews and the Gentiles would soon consume the heavenly Bread together as well.



The life of the family and the community more broadly is incredibly dependent upon sharing meals together. This is an area of human life we take for granted until we stop and force ourselves to appreciate it. The dinner table is where we come to know one another, whether it be strangers meeting for the first time, or a married couple of sixty years, or a big, chaotic family. Without the act of eating and drinking, our time together is diminished and can even seem hollow or sterile.

Picture those strangers. Perhaps they're meeting in the office about business. A potential deal might be struck. The talk is cordial throughout the morning, but stiff. Purely business. Each is sizing the other up, wondering where the other stands. Then they go to lunch. A meal is shared. Suddenly the conversation becomes more friendly, more familiar. They talk of their families, of their pasts, maybe their interests. A few jokes are cracked. The food and drink on the table before them has broken down the wall of unfamiliarity. Now that they have shared a meal, there is more of a bond, even if only a small one. Food has brought them together.

Now picture that married couple. They sit watching the news in the early evening. Together in the den, both stare at the television screen. Dialogue is scant. The television is the center of attention. Suddenly, they are hungry. It is time to start dinner preparations. The TV is turned off and they move into the kitchen. Pleasant aromas begin to fill the house: warm steam, tomato sauce, and garlic. The sounds of pots and pans banging together and timers going off enliven the atmosphere. Each is doing something to serve the other. She strains the noodles. He sets the table and fills the water glasses. They sit, bless their food, and begin to eat. They begin to talk. Even after sixty years, they fail to tire of each other's company at the table. They may not appreciate it fully now, but when one of them is gone, this moment at the table is what will be missed, not watching the news.

Now the family: Mom, Dad, three boys, and four girls. The outside world can't believe they have that many kids. But they do. How do you do it all? Isn't it chaotic? Yes, it is. Work pulls at mom and dad in different capacities.

Kids are off to school, to sports, to piano, or to a friend's house. The dog is sick. What is that ominous sound bellowing from the belly of the washer? But the day is nearing an end. Dusk falls outside. Everyone is finally under the roof again. Preparations begin in the kitchen. Smells, sounds, and tastes abound. The kids pitch in, the older ones anyway, setting the table. Don't forget to put the top on Timmy's cup! They all sit when the meal is ready. After a blessing, conversation and laughter ensues. Someone got an A in math. Someone hit a double. Someone's nervous for her piano recital tomorrow. Though all were scattered throughout the day, all are now gathered. As a family.

These are ordinary settings. But food is just as vital at the major feasts of life. At Halloween, children want something sweet to eat, while extended family gather for Thanksgiving and Christmas, centering their time around the dinner table. We eat at weddings, gathering around when the cake is cut. At wakes, we all bring food, making extra casseroles for the departed's family, manifesting our love, our sympathy, and our compassion. Going out to dinner is a special treat, done often to mark anniversaries.

The human body is dependent on food to survive. But human relationships are just as dependent on it. This includes the bond between generations. The passing down of recipes from grandmother to mother to daughter links past, present, and future, right there in the kitchen amidst the pots and the pans. Fathers and sons, brothers and uncles, drink beer by the grill, talking about the game. Lunchtime at school is when childhood friends are made, some that last a lifetime, and parish fish fries at Lent build up the local community.

Food also nurtures our relationship to the land. Hunters take pride in literally bringing in their dinner from the wild, and perhaps no hobby is more of a balm for the soul than gardening, growing one's own vegetables in the backyard. Even those of us who don't know the first thing about milking a cow have romantic aspirations of life on the farm. Why is this? Because when we go directly to the source for our food, cutting out the chain stores, we come closer to the Source from which all life comes. Whether we know it or not, this is the attraction to hunting, to gardening, and to farming. They lead us to God.



Every generation has a tendency to think that theirs is living in the end times. Nothing could be as bad as this, we tell ourselves. There is no doubt a bit of pride in that narrowly biased belief. Nonetheless, we should acknowledge the downfall of civilization when we see it before our eyes. And much has come before our eyes these days.

There is no need to go into detail, but a quick list of the devil's recent impressive work includes world wars, abortion, divorce, pornography and widespread sexual deviancy, a decrease in church attendance, a staggering rise in depression and suicides, militant secularism, and devastating scandals within Holy Mother Church to name just a few. The reasons for this dark list are many and complicated, and this is not the time and place to discuss them. What is pertinent here is to show that, not coincidentally, our food life has also crumbled in recent times, moving right alongside our moral poverty.

Eating is certainly not a sin. But gluttony is. The hitherto praise given to food and the act of eating should not be confused with the worship of food. All the circumstances just described centered on food bringing loved ones together, bringing us into harmony with nature, and ultimately, bringing us to God. Conversely, gluttony is the worship of food. It is an overindulgence of food and drink, wanting too much of it or taking improper pleasure in it, placing that pleasure above all else, including God.

Today, our food is sugary, sweet, greasy, fatty, and processed. Our obesity statistics today would be unconscionable to past generations. (In all the black and white photos from the past, have you ever seen a person grossly overweight?) We are tempted toward eating bad food because it is so readily available, with seven fast food joints off each highway exit, and forty-six different types of sugary cereal on aisle five. We snack so much throughout the day that when we sit down for a meal, it doesn't feel all that special. Temptation to gluttony abounds, but we often overlook these temptations, more so than we do with temptations to lust, which present themselves far more acutely.

Considering that we seem to be stricken with collective amnesia when it comes to appreciating the good, the true, and the beautiful, it is no wonder

that our approach to food has similarly been cheapened, compromised, and robbed of its wholesomeness and purpose. It feels, unfortunately, similar to lust, to what has happened to the natural love that can be exchanged between man and woman, between husband and wife. Sex is a gift from God, as is the act of eating. But both have been corrupted, placing the desire for pleasure over the beauty and true purpose of the act.

Beyond the corruption of our food, the act of eating bringing people together has also faded. The family dinner is sacrosanct and the diminishing of it has contributed greatly to the disintegration of family life in the home and thus the culture more broadly. Life is too hectic now for families to share meals. Couples eat in front of the television. The professionals downtown, instead of striking up a conversation with a stranger, stare at phones while they wait in line for their lunch at the deli, as well as when they go to eat it. Students, too, stare at their phones instead of striking up new friendships in the campus cafeteria.

Like in so many other areas of life, we have lost control of our appetites. The inevitable result of that is to turn inward on ourselves, seeking to satisfy the self and losing our communion with others.

★ ★ ★

The nineteen individuals featured in this work have spent a lifetime trying to turn back the tide of this downward spiral that has buried our heads in the pig trough (and rectangular flashing screens). They have sought to heal our societal indigestion, if only in small ways, in their families and local communities.

They are farmers, ranchers, chefs, cooks, professors, authors, moms, dads, grandparents, and priests.

They own cafés, restaurants, and farm stores. They have their own cooking shows, their own blogs. They've penned cookbooks and founded organizations and movements. They teach cooking classes and feed the homeless. They raise and, when the time comes, slaughter livestock. They've worked

for major food corporations and served musicians, celebrities, ambassadors, and dignitaries. They have appeared on the Food Network, EWTN, and the Catholic Faith Network. They studied their crafts in Paris, Rome, and the Holy Land.

They come from different regions—from Colorado to rural Virginia to the Louisiana Bayou—and from difficult cultures—Latino, Polish, Lebanese, Italian, and Irish, among others.

It is a wide palette of humanity. And yet, the one ingredient found in all of them is the Catholic faith. Some are cradle Catholics, some converts, and some reverts. Their faith journeys are as myriad as their backgrounds and favorite dishes. But each of them call Holy Mother Church their home.

Perhaps this should come as no surprise. While all cultures and faiths value gathering at the table with family and friends, the culinary arts were borne from Catholic culture in France and in Italy. For centuries, monks were the ones who not only taught us how to cultivate the land, but how to make wine and excellent beer. No one has ever accused Catholics of championing a puritanical diet. We Catholics take what the Lord has made, these things He called “good,” and celebrate them as He intended us to. But just as the Church does in all things, she oversees our use of these natural goods and orders them not toward overindulgence or excessive pleasure but toward our sanctification, seeing them as a taste of the heavenly banquet to come.

These nineteen Catholics, no matter who they are, have sought to show others the profound connection between food and faith, to show us that eating is a moral act in more ways than one. The act of growing food, of tending the land and caring for animals, of serving others and passing down recipes, for all of them these are a means to love others and to love God. Their love of food has carried them through difficult times, led them to their spouse, given them a sense of peace, put them on a path back to God, and supported their families for decades.

And here in these pages they have shared with us their favorite dishes, from tilapia to oyster gumbo, from chicken creole to butternut squash soup, from beef steaks and goetta to fizzy tea and “resurrection rolls.” Still there’s

more: potato-leek soup, orecchiette, tabbouleh, and hunter's stew. And for dessert, how does Polish cream cake sound?

Yet beyond the recipes, they show us too how a life close to the land, a life in the kitchen serving others, a life around the table with family and friends, is a life that leads to heaven.

★ ★ \*

Poets have described the Sacred Mass as the place where earth and heaven kiss. This is a beautiful image that helps us realize there is no more important time for a Catholic than time spent at Mass. And let us not forget that the Mass is patterned after a family meal. Just as we gather with family to talk and eat, at Mass we gather with the Body of Christ to talk (the Liturgy of the Word) and eat (the Liturgy of the Eucharist).

This family meal, though, is not just for your family or the one down the street but for the entire world, both geographically and temporally. Geographically because the Church's maternal arms reach to the four corners of the world; temporally because the Mass is a re-presentation of the Last Supper and Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. This means it "makes present again" these sacred moments. It is as if the Mass is a time portal that opens us up to the Passion, the most important event in history. It is God's way of bringing His children together at His table to partake of the banquet that sustains our souls.

Have we considered the miracle that is the Mass? That this human body, so torn by violence and hate, by conflict and confusion, let alone separated by continents and centuries, could carry out a tradition all across the globe for over two millennia without interruption? Does this universal family meal not prove the divinity of the Church?

At its core, this book in your hands is a cookbook. We hope that you will take some of these recipes and make them a part of your family traditions. But more than that this book is a collection of human-interest stories, stories that are interesting, yes, but still not all that much different than your own. These are just ordinary people striving to reach heaven. We hope you find

them inspiring and that in some small way this book leads you to God, that it takes you from the dining room table to the altar, that it feeds your body, but more so, your soul.

*Editor, TAN Books*

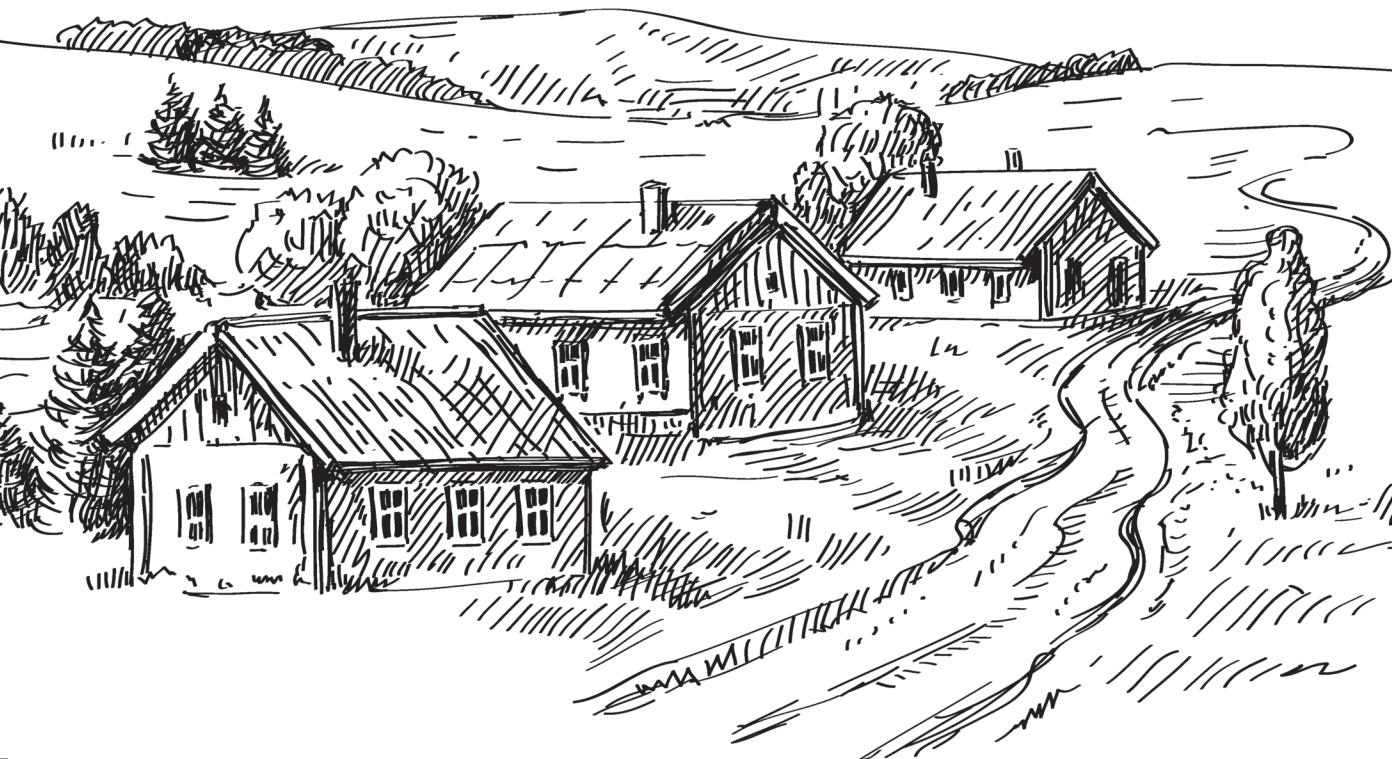
# Farmers

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# A Champion for Catholic Rural Life

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*James Ennis*



## “God Was Fifth in My Life”

There is a proverb in the Old Testament that says, “A man’s mind plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps” (Prv 16:9). This is certainly true in the life of James Ennis, executive director for Catholic Rural Life, an organization based in St. Paul, Minnesota, that works to promote Catholic life in rural America.<sup>1</sup>

“I remember it as if it were yesterday. In the spring of my freshman year in college at the University of California at Davis,” he recalls. “I was sick and tired of my partying lifestyle. One night I ran up to the roof of my dormitory and cried out to God and asked Him to reveal Himself to me.”

A week later, he was invited to a Bible study group. “When my buddies on my floor asked where I was going that evening, I flippantly told them, ‘To a BS session.’ During that first evening, the instructor asked us to list the top priorities. I listed school, family, girlfriend, other friends, and faith. God was fifth in my life. The instructor then shared Matthew 6:33 with all of us: ‘But seek first God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.’”

Afterwards, troubled by the verse, Ennis met with the instructor for lunch. Over a meal, Ennis asked several questions about faith and how to put God first in one’s life.

“Even though I had heard the Gospel reading every Sunday at Mass, I viewed my Catholicism as a religion, not a *relationship* with God,” Ennis said. “I asked the instructor how I could establish a relationship with God.”



James Ennis

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, go to the Catholic Rural Life website at <https://catholicrurallife.org>.

That was the beginning of his faith coming alive. “I felt like I was seeing things I had never seen before. I was more well-disposed to Christ and all he had to say, and it changed how I was and how I treated people.”

## An Irish Home

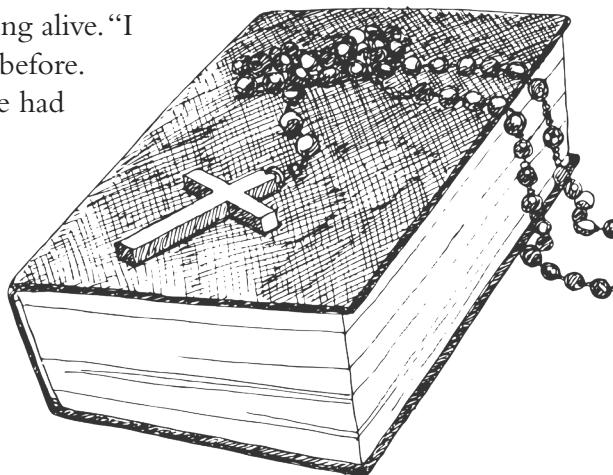
A cradle Catholic born in Southern California, Ennis grew up in a devout Irish Catholic family who attended Mass regularly. Ennis’s eventual interest in the food world began during childhood while he watched his mother cook. As he noted, coming from an Irish Catholic family means relying on eating traditional Irish dishes, such as meals featuring meat and potatoes with a side salad.

“My mom was a great cook, and she prepared everything mostly from scratch. She loved making meat loaf and ham, and our regular fare was really geared to a large family on a budget. We had tuna casseroles, and with five boys and one girl, she had to really spread it. I loved her oatmeal and chocolate chip cookies, all of which she made from scratch. And her pie crusts were great.”

He recalls that his dad also cooked, primarily grilling hamburgers and hot dogs out in the backyard. But the real pull for Ennis was his mother’s meals. “I watched her while she cooked. I learned to peel and mash potatoes and became involved in food preparation.”

As a teenager, Ennis worked summers at the local fire department. One of his duties was to cook for the crew on duty. Working away in the station kitchen, he often ended up on the phone with his mother, asking her about steps, ingredients, and timing.

“As a young adult, I cooked a lot, and a lot of what I cooked was what Mom taught me.”



Ennis studied agricultural economics in college and learned much about our national food system. All that laid the groundwork for his eventual leadership role in Catholic Rural Life and his passion for cooking.

## African Influence



Ennis's life took a significant detour after that night at the Bible study his freshman year. He eventually got involved in student ministry through a Protestant organization. That led him to becoming a missionary on the campus of the University of Zambia in Africa for two years.

In Zambia, Ennis learned a very different way to cook from his Irish food memories. “The staple food in Zambia was maize meal. For breakfast, I mixed maize meal in boiling water to the consistency of Malt-O-Meal hot cereal and served it with bread and tea. For lunch and dinner, I added more maize meal into boiling water to make *nshima*, the consistency of which was very similar to thick mashed potatoes. I would add a side dish of beef or fish in a tomato sauce and some fried vegetables. I used a lot of cooking oil. I would go to the local market to buy cooking oil, maize, meat, and vegetables. That was all from scratch. I ate pretty basic food but ate well.”

Though he wouldn’t realize it until later, Ennis came to see that his Zambian cooking experiences had firmly influenced his passion for food and cooking.

## Coming Home Again

When he returned to the United States, he entered graduate school. “I went to the University of Minnesota for an MBA. I met a lot of graduate students from all over the world. And I would host friends, invite them over to my house, and we would cook from scratch. I learned many different dishes—Indian, Filipino, Indonesian. I did that for two years.”

After graduate school, Ennis worked for six years in corporate marketing for two different food companies: Pillsbury, where he was assigned to

the Green Giant brand, and The Clorox Company, where he was assigned to several brands, including Hidden Valley Ranch products. He eventually moved into the nonprofit world and worked for Cooperative Development Services with its ties to farmers and farmer-owned cooperatives nationwide.

“My work was in the food world in a secular position. I spoke around the country about sustainable agriculture. At some of the conferences I attended, I was troubled by what some speakers asserted concerning environmental degradation and its causes, that Christians were a culprit due to their misinterpretation of the command in Genesis to ‘tend and to till the earth.’”

During this period, Ennis’s family life changed dramatically. “I met my wife, Sally, while visiting a friend in Virginia. Sally was a widow with two young daughters, ages five and six. We married and eventually had three more children. When we both became troubled by some things at the church we were attending at that time, we began a search for a new church home. That search eventually led us to examine the Catholic Church once again.”

While visiting relatives in St. Louis one Christmas, Ennis’s brother-in-law gave him Scott Hahn’s book *Rome Sweet Home*, a story about Hahn’s journey to Catholicism. Ennis read the book over the weekend and discovered the plausibility structure he needed to return to the Church. Over the next two years, Ennis and Sally read several biographies about people’s journeys to Catholicism, in addition to early Church writings. All of this led Jim to re-enter the Church, and the rest of the Ennis family was received on the Easter Vigil of 2002.

## Catholic Rural Life

Several years later, while at a dinner party in 2006, Ennis met a moral theologian from the Saint Paul Seminary. “I had just read Pope John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*, and I needed a *Theology of Creation* on the environment. As it turned out, this particular theologian was working on a book very much like that!”

The theologian went on to say, “A lot of Catholics suffer from a ‘Nature Deficit Disorder,’ a blindness towards the environment. Many view the

environment as simply something to use. We are part of creation, and all of us need to see it and treat it as gift.” That conversation began a significant long-term collaboration between the two men that continues to this day.

The Lord also opened a door for Ennis in 2008 when a position opened up at Catholic Rural Life (formerly National Catholic Rural Life Conference). Ennis applied for the position and was offered the job.

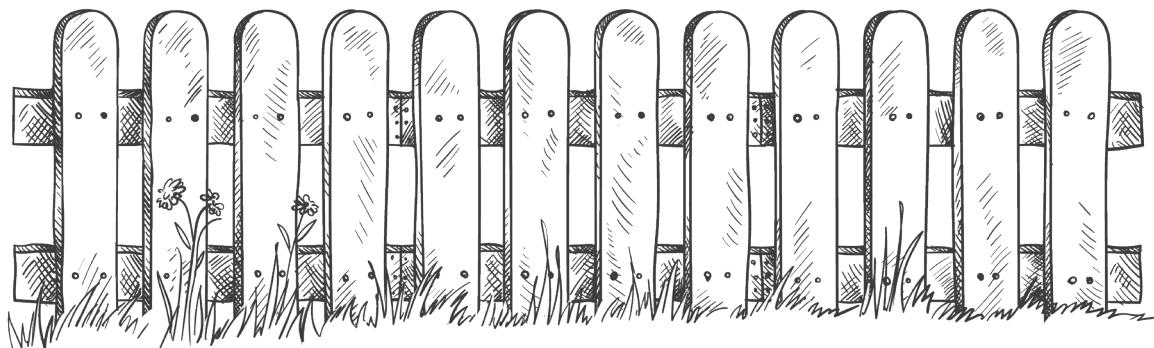
“I became the executive director and joined an organization that has been applying the Church’s teachings to rural life for over ninety-eight years.”

The organization has had a profound impact on rural farmers in the past, and Ennis decided to help redevelop the network of rural priests and farmers around the country and to help promote the Catholic life in rural America.

In the late 1990s, the then-director, Brother David Andrews of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, developed a campaign entitled “Why eating is a moral act.”

“He wanted to build a bridge with consumers to put trust in the food system,” said Ennis. “He asked the important questions: ‘How can we ensure a safe, affordable, and sustainable food supply? How can we preserve the land and the water while providing food for our nation?’” In 2003, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote a letter to all Catholics articulating the Church’s teachings on why food production is a moral issue, giving credence to the mission of the Rural Life Conference.

From its roots, said Ennis, the organization’s focus has been on evangelization, education, and promoting Catholic life in rural America. Catholic Rural Life’s vision is one of a flourishing Catholic life in rural America: thriving families, farms, and parishes that are centered on faith, community,



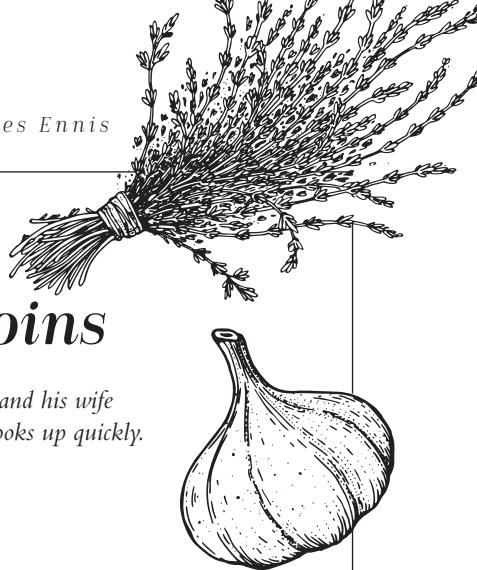
and care of creation. Its work in ethical agriculture and rural ministry supports and builds the rural Church by educating clergy, religious, and lay leaders.

Ennis noted that prior to Pope John Paul II's trip to the United States in October of 1979, an Iowan farmer invited the pope to come to Iowa and speak to rural America. The pope accepted the invitation and added Iowa to his itinerary. Hosted by Catholic Rural Life, the Diocese of Des Moines, and Living History Farms, the pope spoke to over three hundred thousand people, many of whom were farmers, about caring for the land and being good stewards of God's earth. That was the first time that a pope spoke publicly to American farmers about their responsibility to be good stewards of the land.

Today, approximately 17 percent of the US population (fifty to sixty million people) live in rural communities. There are approximately 2.1 million farmers in the United States—down 50 percent from 1960—who provide food for the country. There are also many environmental concerns about soil, water and air pollution in rural America that are related to agricultural production.

As Ennis said, “I work at Catholic Rural Life because it’s where I can live out my passion for Christ and His Church and also get to work with farmers and ranchers from around the country. The Catholic Church affirms all who are involved in agricultural production and who help bring food to our tables.”

Of course, when he is not traveling or speaking at conferences, Ennis, along with his wife, Sally, enjoy time at home. “Sally and I both enjoy cooking—she in the kitchen and me outside on the grill. One of our favorite dishes is pork tenderloin marinated in a sauce for several hours before grilling. I also enjoy grilling fish, especially salmon, and chicken, barbecue ribs, hamburgers, steaks, and shish kabobs. We grill often during the summer months. Even during the winter, we try to grill outdoors once a week. Sally and I both love the outdoors and camping, and cooking food over a grill reminds us of some of our favorite getaways when we go camping on Lake Superior.”



# Ina Garten's Herb-Marinated Pork Tenderloins

*James Ennis said that this is one of his favorite meat entrées, and one he and his wife cook for gatherings. Packed with flavor, the dish is easy to assemble and cooks up quickly. It is a recipe attributed to popular chef Ina Garten.*

SERVES 8

## Ingredients:

- 1 lemon, zest grated
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Olive oil
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic (6 cloves)
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons minced fresh rosemary
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- Kosher salt
- 3 pork tenderloins, about 1 pound each
- Freshly ground black pepper

## Directions:

1. Combine the lemon zest, lemon juice,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup olive oil, garlic, rosemary, thyme, mustard, and 2 teaspoons salt in a sturdy 1-gallon resealable plastic bag.
2. Add the pork tenderloins and turn to coat with the marinade. Squeeze out the air and seal the bag. Marinate the pork in the refrigerator for at least 3 hours but preferably overnight.
3. Preheat grill to 400 degrees F.
4. Remove the tenderloins from the marinade and discard the marinade but leave the herbs clinging to the meat.
5. Sprinkle the tenderloins generously with salt and pepper.
6. Cook the pork tenderloins on all sides until golden brown (5 minutes per side of four sides). Continue to cook the tenderloins for 5–10 minutes or until the meat registers 137 degrees F at the thickest part.
7. Transfer the tenderloins to a platter and cover each tenderloin with aluminum foil. Allow to rest for 10 minutes.
8. Carve in  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick diagonal slices. The thickest part of the tenderloin will be quite pink (it's just fine) and the thinnest part will be done.
9. Season with salt and pepper and serve warm, or at room temperature with the juices that collect in the platter.