



A LEAP OF FAITH

Article and photos courtesy of Joe and Helen Drakeley

A call came from out of the blue. Our friend Pierre Koshakji, co-founder of the Authentic Leadership Foundation (ALF), was offering an opportunity.

“House of Blues? Never been there, Pierre. Who’s performing?”

Imagine spending an evening with friends and family, seated front and center stage to experience Raymond Arroyo’s “Christmas: Merry and Bright” concert, featuring himself, The NOLA Players, and special guests Jose Feliciano and Jim Caviezel (dressed as St. Nick himself!). What a surprise! What an experience! What a night to remember – any night of the year!

Many know Raymond from his national and international award-winning news media contributions, from his work as founding News Director, Managing Editor, and Lead Anchor for EWTN News, and creator of The World Over, an international news magazine show, or from his recurring guest features on The Ingraham Angle on Fox News, or from the New York Times bestselling books he has authored. And now, perhaps an even greater number of fans will engage through a completely other facet of this incredible performer!



Magical. Memorable.

His show made us feel like we were in the presence of Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, with maybe just a flash of Mick Jagger and Chuck Berry. He moved joyfully across the stage, interacting with his jazz band, while filling us, his audience, with that special elixir of Hope and Joy.

This production didn’t just happen. Things of this magnitude never do. But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. There is a backstory. Jose Feliciano was born blind to a large family in Puerto Rico and “amidst poverty,” he related. After moving to Spanish Harlem in New York City, his dad presented him with his first guitar at age 9, and from such humble beginnings, the world was given “Feliz Navidad” – who hasn’t heard that popular tune? It’s one of the most requested Christmas songs each year.



Pierre and ALF co-founder, Darren Smith, encourage and develop authentic leadership in a world desperately seeking direction. They focus on their unique Principled Decision Making (PDM) framework for youth and educators. Their leap of faith brought ALF to reality, and they have already helped hundreds of participants since its inception in 2021. Publisher of this magazine, Diane Voirin, also took a leap of faith as she felt a calling from God during the COVID-19 pandemic to launch these Faith publications for our community, to bring Hope and Inspiration during this challenging time. And Jim Caviezel's latest leap of faith was taking on another tough topic when he helped bring Sound of Freedom to theaters everywhere, bringing awareness to very difficult topics that need God's Hands for our hearts to heal.

One day after Raymond's musical concert, he keynoted for the ALF's "Bring Out the Greatness" annual fundraising event, which honored Annie and Scott Powell, founders of Camp Wojtyla, a Catholic camp in Erie, Colorado. Renowned auctioneer Louis Murad brought his special rapid-fire persuasion, raising funds for the continued growth of the mission. "God meets you, but only after you make the first move," Raymond noted, adding, "And when God does meet you, He only shows you part of the process or result." Raymond's authorship of virtue-focused literature and the Powells' gracious unwavering commitment to our youth, brought our message full circle.

As you consider your next leap of faith, also consider this gem from the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:6,

Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude. Then God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus.



Undaunted determination. Compassion. Teamwork. Awareness. Love. Just what the world needs now! That and some toe-tapping music, laughter, and joy!

We leave you with more words of wisdom from Raymond, "Constant prayer does acquaint you with the will of God. It does lead you to unexpected places. So, be forewarned – this is what God wants – He wants each of you to conform to His Will and to do it daily. In each moment, allow Him to take the wheel. When you follow God – the direction will be unpredictable."

Entertainers Joe and Helen Drakeley took their own leap of faith following the Texas banking collapse in 1987 when they formed Drakeley Magic. Later, in 2019, they obtained charitable status through "There's Value in a Smile" FSP via United Charitable (501(c)3) . . . Magic with a Mission: Spreading Joy, Hope, & Laughter!