Why Totus Tuus?

I wasn’t raised by wolves. And this was a tragedy, at least according to 1st grade me. My favorite movie was the Jungle Book simply because I wanted to be like Mowgli. He was raised by WOLVES! And my family only had a shaggy dog, whom I loved deeply. But he didn’t quite cut it. I figured if only I could find some wolf parents, life would be complete. If you asked me who my hero was at age 6, my answer would have been Mowgli. Because wolf parents. But that all changed the first time I went to Catholic summer camp.

I’m not going to pretend my first experience with summer camp was great - because it wasn’t. I was in 3rd grade, homesick half the time, it rained the other half, and I didn’t know anybody. I did make one friend named Lucas, but he spelled his name wrong, so there was only so much friendship possible there. Despite all these flaws, my life was changed because I met a camp counselor who went by the nickname “Cookie”, evidently because he liked to eat cookies.

Cookie was crazy and you could see it in his eyes. He belly flopped endlessly in the pool, played guitar at daily Mass, and was always leading the wackiest chants. And the craziest thing about Cookie was he was studying to become a priest! Now, I had never heard of a seminarian before this camp. Yet, here in front of me was the funniest and most engaging person I had ever met. And he wanted to be a priest??? It was very strange for me because the only priest I knew was old, boring and named Fr. Joe (literally).

For the rest of that week, I followed Cookie around. And I know I wasn’t the only camper who did. I don’t remember anything specific he said or did that week. What I do remember is I had a new hero. No longer did I want to be raised by wolves. I wanted to be like Cookie! Everyone at camp wanted to be like him! I was his number one fan. When I got back from camp, I found some holy water and made my treehouse into a church and baptized all my stuffed animals. If Cookie was training to be a priest, why couldn’t I?

Neither Cookie nor I became priests. But I did follow in Cookie’s footsteps and worked multiple summers at that Catholic summer camp where I played guitar at mass and collected plenty of belly flops to my name. (To clarify, Cookie isn’t crazy and his real name is Jon. He was just high energy for those elementary school weeks.) What he was for me was a role model. Someone I looked up to and tried to become like. This is why I’m excited to bring the Totus Tuus program to Guardian Angels this summer.

Totus Tuus brings four college-aged missionaries who are on fire for their faith, two men and two women, to lead a week-long fun-filled Catholic summer program (similar to VBS). This summer’s program focuses on the Mystery of Salvation and the Sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary. My hope is that one of these missionaries will become a Cookie in the life of your children. Odds are your children won’t remember the specifics of what is taught or the content of whatever program we bring (though that’d be awesome!). But they could walk away with a hero - someone in the faith to look up to and emulate. Perhaps they too will grow and want to be just like the Cookie they met and go on to be missionaries themselves. Or maybe they’ll stick with wanting wolf parents. Who knows?

Registration opens: **March 1st**
Questions: Lukas Steffensmeier - lsteffensmeier@guardian-angels.org (651-789-3162)
What is Totus Tuus?

**Totus Tuus** (Latin for “Totally Yours”) is a summer Catholic youth program dedicated to sharing the Gospel and promoting the Catholic faith through catechesis, evangelization, Christian witness, and Eucharistic worship. The goal of Totus Tuus is to help young people grow in the understanding of, and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ. This program will be here from **June 17-23**.

This program is a fun and energetic parish-based summer catechetical program for grade school children and junior and senior high school youth. Totus Tuus is run by four college-age missionaries (usually one is a seminarian) who are trained and sent out to spread the Good News in our Archdiocese. They will run two separate programs. One for Grade School (entering 1st-6th) and one for Junior/Senior High School (entering 7th-12th)

**Grade School Program** (Monday, June 19 - Friday, June 23) - 9:00am-2:30pm

For children entering **1st-6th grades**

- Drop off: 8:45am
- Pick up: 2:30pm

Online Early Bird Registration (before May 1st): $30 per child. Family maximum - $75

Online Registration (after May 1st): $40 per child. Family maximum - $100

**Junior/Senior High School Student** (Sunday, June 18 - Thursday, June 22) - 5:30pm-8:45pm

For youth entering **7th-12th grades**

- Dinner: 5:30pm
- Programming: 6:30pm-8:45pm

Online Early Bird Registration (before May 1): **FREE**

Online Registration (after May 1): $20

Online Early Bird Registration opens: **March 1st**

**Volunteering for Totus Tuus**

While the programming is organized and led by the missionaries, we still need plenty of volunteers! If you would like to help out at Totus Tuus by providing snacks, coordinating meals, helping in the classroom or at snack/lunch time, greeting children, hosting part of the team, or providing a lunch for our four teachers, please contact me at **lsteffensmeier@guardian-angels.org**

Additionally, our four missionaries will need a place to stay while serving our parish. We need two homes willing to host our missionaries for the week of June 17-24. If you are interested, please let me know!

**Grade School Volunteers:** Ages 17+ (June 19-23, 9am-2:30am)
**Jr/Sr Volunteers:** Ages 22+ (June 18-22, 5:30pm-8:45pm)
**Hosting missionaries:** Any parishioner **without** children under 18