

Why Listen to Cassette Tapes?

By Rev. Francis J. Peffley

The typical parish priest is pulled in many directions as he goes about his daily duties. He counsels troubled souls, prepares engaged couples for marriage, says Mass, hears confessions, goes on sick calls, and serves his people in many other ways. By the very nature of his priestly service, his day is often anything but routine, and setting aside time for spiritual reading and continued education is always a challenge. Being interested in spiritual growth, we as priests often desire to expand our knowledge in various areas or simply wish to know more about some particular subject, but typically feel we don't have the time. There is a solution to this problem! I've found a simple and painless way to incorporate into the day real "learning time" into a busy schedule: I listen to cassette tapes.

During my seminary days, in addition to building a good book library, I also began a cassette library and now have over 4,000 audio cassettes which I enjoy while driving to a prison or hospital, to a meeting or a sick call, and especially when stuck in traffic.

Instead of wasting precious time listening to the radio or watching TV, we can redirect that time to a very good use. We can listen to tapes almost anytime: while driving in our car, exercising, jogging, taking walks, shaving, getting dressed in the morning, or riding the subway; it's an extremely easy way to acquire knowledge of just about any subject. For example, during the last few years I have enjoyed tapes on such diverse topics as:

- Catholic Spirituality
- The Bible
- Apologetics
- Marriage counseling
- Improving communication skills
- Public speaking
- How to deal with difficult people!
- Sales and marketing
- Leadership skills
- Time management
- How to negotiate with people
- Public relations
- Foreign languages
- Health and nutrition
- Vocabulary building

There are literally hundreds of subjects that can be learned by merely listening to tapes.

The best place to listen to tapes is in the car. According to the American Automobile Association, the average American car owner drives between 12,000 and 25,000 miles a year. This translates into 500 to 1,000 hours each year that we spend in our car, or the equivalent of 12 to 25 forty hour work-weeks. Brian Tracy, an international speaker on time management, suggests that in order to make maximum use of our time, we turn our car into a "university on wheels", that we never have it moving without an audio cassette playing. He believes a person could become one of the most highly educated people in America just by listening to cassette tapes! Imagine, having 500 to 1,000 hours every year for continued adult education. That's the equivalent of spending three to six months a year in classes, or taking one to two full university semesters each year. A few years ago, UCLA conducted a study which found that if you commute to work in a metropolitan area and listen to tapes in your car, you can gain the equivalent of three years of college education in four years time.

Audio cassette learning has been called the greatest breakthrough in education since the invention of the printing press. Did you know that listening to a 90-minute cassette is equivalent to reading 40 pages of a book? Many programs on time management or public speaking come in a 6 cassette album. I try to listen to at least one 6 cassette program each week which is the equivalent of reading a 250 page book. One cassette a day equals one book per week, one book a week means 52 books a year or 520 books in 10 years! Two cassettes a day would be the equivalent of 1,000 books in 10 years! In a world where the average person reads only one book a year, (or 10 books in 10 years) we priests will certainly have a tremendous advantage in helping to educate and take care of souls if we make this effort to listen to tapes.

You've probably noticed that books on tape constitute a rapidly growing market. There are thousands of excellent audio books available. For example, Ignatius Press and St. Joseph Communications have recorded hundreds of Catholic classics including the Imitation of Christ, the Confessions of St. Augustine, Interior Castle, Introduction to the Devout Life, St. Louis de Montfort's True Devotion, the Vatican II documents, and many of the works of both G.K. Chesterton and Bishop Sheen. Besides listening to these good Catholic books, I've also enjoyed the Old and New Testament on tape. You can enjoy the entire gospel of Mark in about an hour and 20 minutes!

By means of this "tape habit" you become the private audience to many tremendous speakers such as Bishop Sheen, Mother Teresa, Mother Angelica, Fr. Benedict Groeschell, Fr. George Rutler, and Scott Hahn. These tapes are filled with stories, anecdotes and inspiring examples that can be used in homilies at daily and Sunday Masses. I have over 100 tapes by former protestant minister Scott Hahn, whose commentaries on the Gospel of John, the book of Romans, Salvation History, the Seven Sacraments, marriage and family life are excellent. My library contains 140 recorded talks by Father Ken Roberts on Catholic subjects such as the angels, prayer, the meaning of suffering, the Mass, the Rosary, and the Blessed Mother. Gary Smalley, a professional marriage counselor and national speaker, has many albums which I have found to be beneficial for marriage counseling and in the preparation of engaged couples for marriage. The Franciscan University of Steubenville's summer conferences from the last ten to

fifteen years are available on tape. Nightingale/Conant has produced thousands of cassette programs on subjects such as health and nutrition, time management, public speaking, foreign languages and vocabulary building.

My personal tape library has also become a lending library so that parishioners too can gain the benefits of this practice. Hopefully they will all become "Audio Addicts" and pass this practice on to their friends. (Of course, I keep accurate records so I'm sure to get my tapes back). In my area (a suburb of Washington, DC) many of my parishioners commute an hour or two a day and have found that listening to tapes has enabled them to brush up, keep abreast, and learn more about their Catholic Faith while having the added benefit of no longer getting upset or frustrated as they sit in traffic, so listening to tapes can be sanctifying as well!

Our Lord said that the children of this generation are wiser than the children of light. Isn't that the case when we think of all the CEO's and business leaders using their time well by listening to cassette tapes when they drive, jog or take walks, and all for earthly gain? Zig Ziglar, an internationally known speaker, says that he wouldn't take \$100,000 for his cassette recorder if he couldn't replace it. Mary Kay Ash, of Mary Kay cosmetics fame, says that she listens to cassette tapes every day when she's on the road. So why shouldn't we Christians work as hard as the children of this generation? Listening to cassette tapes gives us new ideas, fresh insights, homily material and a broader vision. It exposes us to the styles of different famous preachers and speakers, enhances our vocabulary, and helps develop our skills. There is even a tape on "How to remember names and faces," which has been very helpful to me in recognizing and acknowledging parishioners as they pour out the Church doors on Sunday mornings. The tape "How to Get Along with Difficult People" is also one I highly recommend!

In summary, I believe that it is well worth our time, effort, and money to build a well-stocked cassette library. The knowledge we can gain by simply putting otherwise wasted time to use reaps the harvest of a more attractive gospel preached and hopefully a more effective priestly instrument in the hands of our Lord.

To aid my brother priests in starting, or building, their own cassette libraries here are a few sources for tapes. It is by no means complete, but represents material I've used. You may wish to call or write the following for a free catalogue of their cassette tapes:

Catholic Answers

P.O. Box 17490 San Diego, CA 92177
(619) 541-1131

Catholic Cassette Library (Over 10,000 tapes)

1420 Renaissance Dr.
Park Ridge, IL 60068
(847) 827-4075

Catholic Faith Alive (tapes on Christian dating, Catholic Doctrine, etc.)

1910 Ventura Ave.
Silver Springs, MD 20902
(301) 649-2037

Couple to Couple League (NFP, etc.)

P.O. Box 111184
Cincinnati, Ohio 45211
(513) 471-2000

Eternal Life (tapes by Fr. John Hardon, SJ)

P.O. Box 787
Bardstown, KY 40004-0787
(502) 348-3963

Keep the Faith

10 Audrey Place
P.O. Box 10544
Fairfield, NJ 07004-6544
(201) 244-1990

Franciscan Univ. of Steubenville Press (Summer Conference tapes)

University Blvd.
Steubenville, Ohio 43952
(800) 783-6357

Human Life International (Pro-life, etc.)

4 Family Life
Front Royal, VA 22630
(540) 635-7884

Ignatius Press Books on Tape

2515 McAllister St.
San Francisco, CA 94418
(415) 387-2324

Love Tape Ministry (Orthodox Catholic tapes)

2031 Hemlock Rd.
Norristown, PA 19403
(610) 539-7777

Nightingale/Conant (time management, public speaking, etc.)

7300 N. Lehigh Ave.
Niles, IL 60714
(800) 525-9000

Pax Tapes (tapes by Father Ken Roberts)

P.O. Box 1059
Florissant, MO 63031
(314) 838-5135

St. Joseph Catholic Radio (Apologetics)

P.O. Box 2983
Orange, CA 92859
(714) 744-0336

St. Joseph's Communications (Scott Hahn, etc.)

P.O. Box 720
W. Covina, CA 91793
(818) 331-3549