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Author Interview – Mommy Come Home

By Lisa M. Hendey

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The New Trend to Tradition:
Bringing Up Your Own
Interview with Sandra Gillmore conducted by Lisa Hendey

In her new book Mommy Come Home, author Sandra Gillmore strongly advocates the role of "full–time motherhood". Some may disagree with the book's premise that mother should eschew career and stay home with children (in lieu of day care or even dad or a relative providing in home care). I found the value of this book to be for readers who have chosen the "stay at home" route and are seeking support and encouragement in this decision. Sandra Gillmore shares a veteran's experience and perspective and has so many wonderful tips and suggestions to share. Women choosing to voluntarily walk away from careers to pursue the vocation of motherhood are often met with resistance, financial concerns and a lack of support. A new mother may find herself isolated and uncertain as she attempts to ascertain her new identity in life. Mommy Come Home is a great tool for women facing or considering such transitions. Sandra Gillmore gives readers many pearls of wisdom to aid them in the journey of parenthood.

LH: Sandra Gillmore, author of Mommy Come Home, thanks for your time and for participating in this Book Spotlight feature. Could you please tell our readers a little bit about your background and your family?

As a single person, I worked in various office positions, and prayed for the Lord to send me a devoted Christian husband. God powerfully answered my prayers to the point that I wrote a song for Dave entitled, "You are the Answer to My Prayers." Dave and I have been married for 20 years and we have been blessed with ten children, ages 19 down to 1 year in age. We both shared the vision for a large family and grew into the homeschool lifestyle. Over the years we've opened our home to exchange students, foreign refugees, college renters and the mentally ill. Currently our quiver is full of our own family members! Our children are very active in sports, music and scouts. I get involved with fundraisers and love to cheer them on in their activities. I enjoy singing for church which occasionally

includes weddings and funerals.

LH: Sandra, what is the main message of Mommy Come Home and what prompted you to write the book?

Mommy, Come Home is my love letter to all moms! I've heard you stress–out on the soccer fields. I've seen you cry at church from the pressure. You told me I was lucky I could stay home. I've tried to console you through the rat race. I've prayed for you. But I never wanted to hurt your feelings. I never had the courage to tell you what was on my heart through the Holy Spirit's leading. The message of Mommy, Come Home is that God is calling each mother to embrace her vocation to motherhood. This is your call that no one else can replace as God intended. (Not even grandma or daddy.) You have been given special gifts to share with your children in a most generous way. This world is not

family–centered. The world wants to pull you away and make you too busy to effectively mother your children. Picture yourself ordering your favorite dessert in a restaurant only to have the waiter bring you one small bite! Wouldn't you want more? 'But it's the highest quality of this dessert on the market,' the waiter tells you. Our children want and need more – not more stuff – more of our time. There is a way out of this madness. You have a choice.

LH: For families who have become reliant upon two incomes, can you offer some creative suggestions to help ease the financial transition when Mom decides to stay home full time with the children.

By eliminating, in large part, the extraneous expenses of working outside the home (such as more gas, wear and tear on your vehicles, or even the need for an additional vehicle, business attire, fast food, childcare) and adding an enormous tool called flexibility to your schedule, you will be set up for a new way of thinking and spending. The focus is on saving instead of earning. Simplicity is the key. Try asking yourself, 'Is this a need or a want?' whether it's a new home, car or a toothbrush. (i.e.: do you really need the \$5 variety or will the 88 cent version do the job?) Try drinking filtered water (from your own filter if possible.) Milk, juice and soda are quite costly and don't offer much in the way of nutrition. Good quality vitamins can prevent a lot of expensive and time–consuming trips to the doctor. Consider shopping at various discount stores and make home–made cooking a top priority. Nothing has to be fancy. Instead of buying ingredients for a recipe, just buy whatever is on sale and then cook accordingly when you get home. If we need fresh produce, for example, I come home with whatever fruit is on sale for that week. This is a great way to keep more variety in your kitchen too.

For vacations, state and national parks are a treasure to behold. If you bring your own food you've already saved a bundle of money. Just pack the cooler(s) and you can make great day trips or camp, or even rent a housekeeping cabin. It's incredibly less expensive than motels and amusement parks. And what could be more exciting than exploring 'God's playground?' For other entertainment, don't forget the library. Many libraries offer free concerts and other entertainment. Also, local museums and zoos almost always offer a family membership. This is usually a wonderful bargain for a family. Make use of this and you won't fall prey to the lure of the expensive entertainment industry, which is usually full of negative messages that conflict with our Christian faith anyway.

Don't be afraid to accept hand–me–downs, shop at thrift shops or garage sales for clothes or other

items. There are some great discount stores around too if you make it a point to scout them out. I personally don't enjoy shopping because it is so time-consuming. However, I make a point to shop during low-traffic times and that makes a huge difference. It's the flexibility factor that will prevent you from feeling rushed all the time and missing out on bargains.

LH: Many "Stay at home" moms feel isolated and lonely. What proactive steps can they take to help themselves overcome these feelings?

Satan loves Christians to become isolated. Then he can trap you into thinking 'no one understands me,' etc. Don't even give him a chance! REACH OUT! Whether you are new to a community or have just been pulled out of a huge social circle in order to stay home, you simply must find ways to be involved. For example, I have hosted lady's Bible studies and support groups just by listing an ad in our church bulletin. Sometimes only one mom has called – but that was all I needed to make a new friend at the time. Then it would grow. You can join a group like I started, or find a local MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers,) La Leche League (breastfeeding support group,) or volunteer for something at church that may be just a few hours per month. Read your local newspaper; look on the internet for local church or community activities. Get involved in politics. You may be nervous at first but reaching out is

essential and will bring you many blessings in new friendships. But remember that God and family come first. We don't need to be supermoms and burn ourselves out. But we definitely need to be supported by and supportive to other moms and people in general.

LH: What role has your Christian faith played in your decisions to be home full time and to homeschool your children?

...so that they (the older women) may train younger women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, busy at home...Titus 2:3-5 (New American Bible)

I think the Lord says in His word that he prefers mothers to be busy at home. Other versions of the Word say 'Keeper of the home' or 'good homemakers.'

The decision for me to stay home came when my husband and I became engaged. He felt very strongly that my role in the home was essential for a strong family to take hold. He felt that God would bless us if we honored him by this devotion to the mother's role. We both loved the prospect of having a large family and I couldn't see the point of bearing a child and giving birth only to leave the child entrusted to someone else's care. It didn't make sense. The entire pregnancy is a bonding experience for an important purpose. It is a beautiful beginning to a lifelong relationship with your child.

Although we do not currently homeschool all of our children, I do believe home schooling gives us the most generous opportunity to fully instill our values into our children's hearts and minds. Homeschooling was still a relatively new idea when we started about 11 years ago. Dave had close friends he admired who homeschooled their children. I thought it all sounded very strange at first. Another family took our advice to home school (even though we didn't do it yet!) and we were amazed at how intimately peaceful and joyful their home had become since starting.) Then we attended a large home school convention and it was very evident that these hundreds of families were bringing up their

children to serve the Lord in a very powerfully practical way. It is more than just an educational movement. It is a way to bond with your children; to have the time and flexibility to demonstrate the faith on a daily basis. And for those naysayers who think the home is not 'real world', I say, 'What is real within our families becomes real within our world.' Currently we have three high schoolers in the public school system who are thriving with prayer clubs and evangelizing when opportunity arises. We home school our four middle children and two of them also attend a church preschool three mornings a week for 3 hours a day. Our toddler is also home full-time.

LH: Congratulations of the publication of this, your first book! What a tremendous accomplishment! Are you currently working on any new writing or creative projects?

Thank you so much. It has been truly exciting to watch the Lord open doors on what otherwise would seem impossible or just plain ridiculous. I have felt called to write a book about special needs families. We have not been blessed with a special needs child, but I have a friend who is legally blind and the mother of nine children. Her family includes two sets of twins, one autistic child, one nearly deaf child, and four vision-impaired children. The book will be about her and some other families that share their experiences and faith-growth through their special needs situations.

LH: What resources can you recommend for new moms?

I highly recommend 'Family Foundations,' a publication of the Couple to Couple League. (<http://www.ccli.org/>) So many moms are told that the number one priority after giving birth should be

birth-control. I do believe in child-spacing but so often mothers are discouraged from having more than two children these days, the 'accepted norm.' If we truly open our hearts to another child, we have more reason to want to stay home because more souls are depending on us. We also are being more open to our husband, accepting both the potential for life and the pleasure of the marriage act. This method of 'natural family planning' automatically builds mutual respect and self-giving in the marriage, which is so much-needed today.

Catholic Familyland (<http://www.familyland.org/Home.htm>)– an awesome family vacation/retreat experience, an apostolate devoted to teaching the true faith by way of books, tapes and videos from top authorities such as Cardinal Arinze, Pope John Paul II, Scott Hahn, Mother Teresa, etc. In addition, they have their own TV network which is on a satellite with many other Christian stations and costs only \$11.99 per month. We love this place. I can't say enough good about it.

Focus on the Family (www.family.org) is a wonderful resource for all sorts of parenting tips. And don't forget the Bible. It's full of proverbs and other parental advice for the finding.

LH: Thank you again Sandra for your time and for sharing your book. Are there any closing thoughts you'd like to offer?

The revival doesn't begin only at church. It begins in the home. Home is not an escape from the world. It's a foundation to build the values of our faith. Then we must share that faith with the world. One family at a time. Thank you, Lisa for this opportunity to share from my heart to other moms. I pray the

book will be used as an instrument of hope and healing to every family's mother that reads it.

For more information or to order Mommy Come Home visit
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1594675627/digitalcropper-20>

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Lisa M. Hendey is a mother of two sons, webmaster of numerous web sites, (including <http://www.digitalcropper.com> <http://www.christincoloring.com>, <http://www.catholicmom.com>) and an avid reader.

"Renee's Mommy is Here"

By Kimberly Chastain

I still remember the scene vividly. I was getting out of my car at the baby-sitter's house and a little boy comes running out the door. The little boy begins to yell – "Renee's Mommy is here!" I remember stopping in my tracks and thinking – "Oh, that is who I am now – Renee's Mommy." My whole identity is now Renee's Mommy – or is it?

As a Christian Working Mom I have multiple roles, I am Renee's Mommy and Zachary's Mommy as well. I am John's wife, Betty and Eldred's daughter, Karen's sister, church worker, school helper, a therapist, professional coach, and a child of God. Do you often wonder who you are? Where do you fit in with all your roles?

Women have had many roles since time began. The Proverbs 31 woman is a: wife, mother, businesswoman, charity worker, and many other roles. You will recognize in here some of the stresses we modern women face. Proverbs 31:15, 18 states she gets up while it is still dark and her lamp does not go out at night. Does that sound familiar? We are often burning the candle at both ends.

Although there are many roles that can be stressful there can be great joy in all our many identities. I love being Renee and Zachary's Mom. There is great joy in watching them grow and learn about God and His world. I also thoroughly enjoy my work as a professional coach and therapist. Work provides me great satisfaction. Christian Working Moms often receive a lot of support and encouragement from co-workers. As Christian wives we give and receive companionship, support, and passion (when we pencil it in) with our husbands. Our work at church and school also gives care and comfort for others. We often receive the greater blessing when we work at church or at our children's school.

As a fellow Christian Working Mom I celebrate and applaud all our different roles. Variety in our roles often allows us to manage turmoil in any one area of our lives. The other parts of our lives seem to compensate for the difficult times and help us to maintain balance. I encourage you to rejoice in all God has given you and your many different roles.

Oh, by the way if we meet virtually or in person I'll answer to Kimberly, Renee's Mommy, Zachary's Mommy

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Kimberly M. Chastain, MS, LMFT is the Christian Working Mom Coach and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who specializes in helping Christian women make the most of their lives. She is the author of the on-line course, "I Can't Say No" and Pearls of Encouragement for Christian Working Moms, a free e-book. If you suffer from "I Can't Say `No" Syndrome, visit Kimberly's site today for the

details on an exciting email course that's sure to set you free!

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"Renee's Mommy is Here"

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