

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

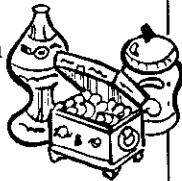
January 2022

The Catholic Communities of Stapleton, Arnold and Callaway
Fr. Thomas Gudipalli

One Minute Meditations

Laying our gifts at the feet of the King

The three Wise Men gave Jesus gifts worthy of a king. We can also present Him with our own royal gifts. While ours may not be actual gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we can still give to Him the best we have. Give God the first and the best of what you have and He will give you more than you can imagine in return.



Fall in love with God

From the moment God created you, he has been deeply in love with you. He made you deliberately so he could love you. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5). He waits for you like a parent anticipates the return of a beloved child. Don't let Him wait long.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5).



Who needs Jesus?

Many today say that they don't have a need for Jesus. They go to work, have homes, put food on their tables, raise families without His help. In fact, daily activities go on but the world can't really make sense without Him.

Truth. The truth is in Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). We cannot understand the truth without Him. To make sense of the world, we need Jesus to lead us.

Life. The life we have will eventually end. To keep living, we need Jesus. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father,

but by me" (John 14:6). Eternal life comes through Him.

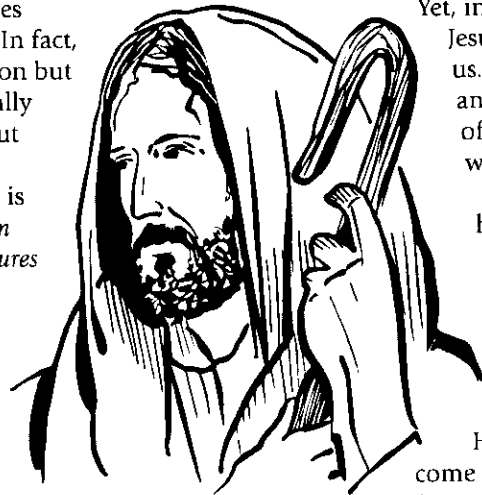
Death. None of us escapes death.

Yet, in the Resurrection, Jesus defeated death for us. It didn't hold Him and He offers the gift of life to each of us if we live in Him.

Sin. Even the holiest of us sins. Without Jesus, what becomes of us? He "gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). If we don't accept

His price, our sins come back to us for eternity.

Suffering. Modern science can alleviate but not eliminate some of the world's suffering. Jesus provides comfort and healing to those who trust Him and surrender to Him.



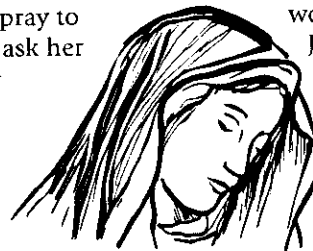
Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics pray to Mary?

Catholics don't pray to Mary, but instead ask her to pray for us. For example, the Hail Mary prayer asks the Mother of God to stay close to us in prayer.

While we don't

worship Mary, we honor her as Jesus' mother. On the Cross, Jesus gave her to us as our own mother (John 19:27). We can approach her with our needs and concerns and ask her to present them to Her Son. Mary always leads us to Him.



Three tips to boost your prayer

Prayer fuels our spiritual life, but praying effectively can be challenging. Even the saints had dry spells. Among these was the mystic and Carmelite reformer, St. Teresa of Avila. Try these suggestions from her to enliven your prayer:

Become aware of God's presence. It may feel as if God is distant, but He is so close. St. Teresa began by enjoying God's nearness. Know that He is with you and wants your company.

Bring a good book. St. Teresa, who struggled with dryness in prayer, kept a book with her. Scripture,



Lives of the Saints, or a book about the Faith can help us focus and spark conversation with Him.

Be honest. It is said that St. Teresa once fell into the mud and told God bluntly, "If this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few of them!" God wants you to share all your experiences with Him – good and bad. Entrust your cares to Him and "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5).

from Scripture

Luke 4:21-30, God's will is unexpected

In this Gospel, Jesus returns to Nazareth after launching His public ministry. He announced He is the Messiah of Isaiah's prophecy. But then comes a twist: Jesus recounts a time when great prophets were sent to call Israel to repentance and were ignored and persecuted.

The response of faith God was looking for in His Chosen People was found elsewhere, in the Gentiles. Jesus' listeners doubted that He was really the Messiah and were deeply insulted at being reminded that "foreigners" had received God's favor instead of them. In anger, they threw Jesus out of the synagogue and tried to

cast Him off a cliff. He passed unharmed through their midst.

God's will can surprise us. For example, He willed that the Messiah-King be a local carpenter. God's favor extended beyond the Chosen People to include Gentiles, who were considered outsiders. Sometimes, we assume we know how God works, and lose faith when He does something that seems illogical. We can pray for the faith to see Jesus as He really is and trust Him, even if He does the unexpected.



Feasts & Celebrations

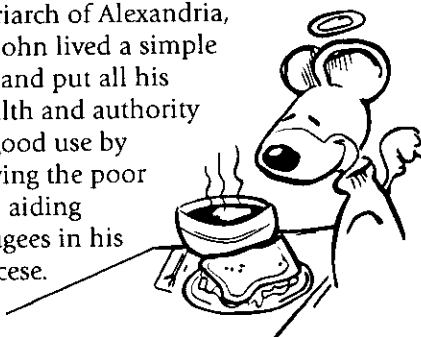
Jan. 1 – Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. When we celebrate this feast, we honor Mary, and also Jesus, as true God and true Man.

Jan. 9 – Baptism of the Lord. Jesus began his public ministry by getting baptized by St. John the Baptist. The Heavens opened up and God the Father spoke, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

Jan. 14 – St. Macrina the Elder (340). St. Macrina was related to St. Basil the Elder and St. Macrina the

Younger. She and her husband were forced to flee during the Diocletian persecutions and endured many hardships. After her return, she helped raise her grandchildren Saints Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great.

Jan. 23 – St. John the Almsgiver (616). Despite being a noble and the Patriarch of Alexandria, St. John lived a simple life and put all his wealth and authority to good use by serving the poor and aiding refugees in his diocese.



Q & A Can you suggest a New Year's resolution to grow in Holiness?

All Christians are called to holiness. "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). There are three tools on which every Catholic can rely to attain greater holiness.



Daily prayer. God meets us in a very real and present way when we come to him in prayer. Start in the morning and pray throughout the day.

Weekly Mass. The Mass is a sacrifice and a meal. We receive Jesus' body and blood as real food for our souls. He said, "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:55-56). That's why we call it, "Communion."

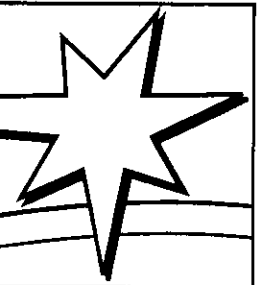
Monthly Confession. Jesus created the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Confession) because he knew we would stray. He also knew we would want to come back. Frequent participation in this Sacrament sharpens our sense of sin, holds us accountable for our errors, and gives us the grace to keep trying for holiness.

Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

January 2022

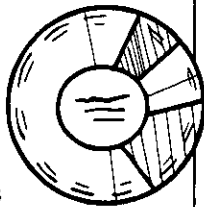
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Thoughtful Moments

The rhythm of our faith

To help us learn about God and his family, the Church crafted the liturgical year. By observing the seasons of our faith, we follow the rhythm that God has created for us. "A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:4).



As God forgives

When we pray the "Our Father," we say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." True forgiveness is hard but God wants us to forgive the way He forgives us. We can't obtain true forgiveness unless we give it.

Celebrate parenthood

Parents deserve lots of praise but don't often get it. Someday your children may look back and appreciate you. While they are young, remember that every kiss, hug and smile you get is a celebration of how important you are every day, all year long.



Share what you love about our Catholic Faith

As parents, we want our children to be Catholic because we know the Church provides the surest way to a strong and loving relationship with God. To help children find Catholic joy, share what you love about our Catholic Faith.

"My grandmother prayed the Rosary every day of her life," said Lisa.

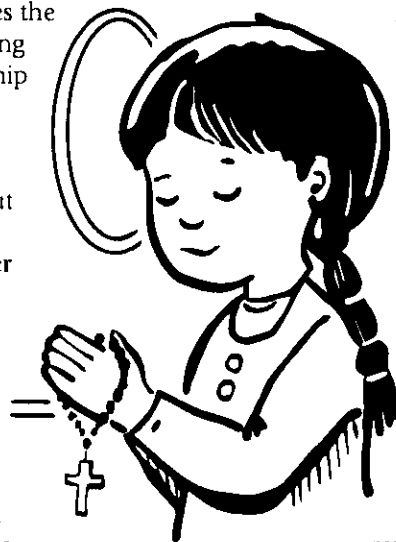
"When I was old enough, she gave me one and taught me how to pray it. The prayers remind me of everything we believe as Catholics. The Rosary has helped me through many tough times in my life and I pray it often with my own children."

"We moved a lot when I was young,"

said Art. "Moving was hard but no matter where we lived, the Mass felt like home. Jesus was always there waiting for me. Now I love taking my children to Mass because I want it to be their home, too."

"I don't know what I would do without Confession," said Brooke. "It's not easy admitting the things I do wrong. I'm embarrassed that I commit the same sins repeatedly. Still, no matter

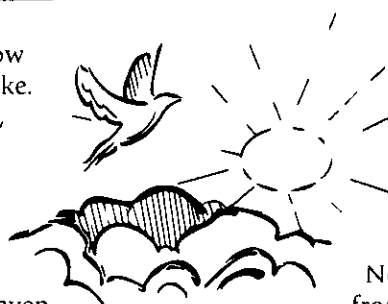
how often I go, it is such a thrill to hear the words of absolution and know that Jesus really does forgive me. Now, we take our children and celebrate God's mercy together."



Why Do Catholics Do That?

We don't really know what Heaven looks like. "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," (1 Corinthians 2:9). Heaven is the fulfillment of our

What do we believe about Heaven?

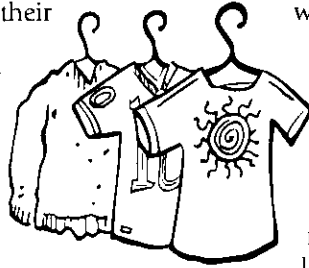


deepest desire of union with God. We know that God has prepared a place for us in His home. All who enter must be in His friendship. Nothing should keep us from our place in the house of our Lord.

Modest dress for today's Catholic kids

Current fashions – even if immodest – often feel right to young people because they see them accepted by their friends and favorite celebrities. Current styles can be too tight or too revealing to be appropriate for followers of Jesus. When children wear such styles, people may be distracted from their personalities, their accomplishments, and their faith. Instead, try these tips to help children dress modestly and fashionably, too.

Layers can make it work. Does your child love low-cut styles or bottoms that show underwear? Try pairing



a tank top under one with a plunging neckline or a wear a pair of running shorts under sagging bottoms.

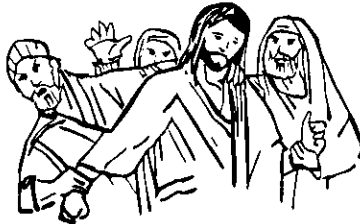
Color me funky. One way to make modesty fun is to take note of what the season's hottest colors are, and then find modest clothing in those colors.

Test the light. Transparent fabric is designed to reveal rather than conceal the body. If you place a layer of fabric over a newspaper and can see the lines of letters through it, the fabric is too sheer.

Scripture LESSON

Luke 4:21-30, God's surprising ways

In this Gospel, Jesus returned to Nazareth, His hometown, soon after starting His public ministry. Everyone had heard about the miracles and signs He had worked. They even invited Him to teach in their



synagogue. Imagine how delighted they were when Jesus announced that He was the Messiah of Isaiah's prophecy.

Still, some were doubtful. How could this carpenter's son possibly be the Messiah, the long-awaited Savior promised in the Old Testament? Jesus' listeners thought they had Him figured out. They had gotten so used to

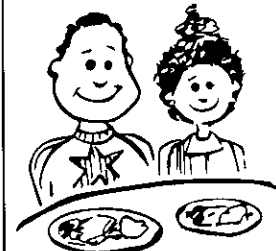
thinking of Him as being "one of them," they couldn't believe there was more to Him.

What can a parent do? Remind children that we can completely trust in God's loving care for us, but we'll never completely figure Him

out. For example, some doubted that Jesus was the Messiah because His life had looked so ordinary to them. Everyone expected the Messiah to conquer Israel's enemies, but Jesus conquered the more powerful enemies of sin, evil and death by His Resurrection. In fact, God's ways are not our ways, and He knows best.

Parent TALK

My husband and I grew up eating dinner with our families around the table each night. It's how we had raised our own family. When the pandemic hit, however, everything changed.



We were all spending way too much time on our devices – the children receiving

online instruction and my husband and I busy with Zoom conferences. Meals were sandwiches in front of screens. It got to be too much. To keep us all from spending day and night on our devices, we decided to make family dinners a requirement. Dinner started at 6:00pm, and began with a prayer. It was expected that everyone would help with clean-up.

At first, it took some adjusting, but regular dinners became a great way to reconnect. We realized this habit has helped us grow closer as a family. Even though schedules have returned to normal, we still try to make family dinners a priority.

Feasts & Celebrations

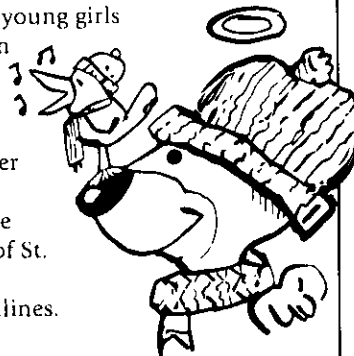
Jan. 2 – Epiphany of Our Lord. Epiphany is Greek for "manifestation." When they honored the infant Jesus, the three wise men bore witness to the fulfillment of God's promise of a savior.

Jan. 3 – The Holy Name of Jesus. In January we celebrate the Holy Name of Jesus. "...at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Philippians 2:10).

Jan. 24 – St. Francis de Sales (1622). As bishop of Geneva, St. Francis bolstered the faith of others by his writings and works. For the laity, St.

Francis wrote *Introduction to the Devout Life*, which is as applicable today as it was in his day.

Jan. 27 – St. Angela Merici (1540). Orphaned at ten-years-old, St. Angela turned to God for strength. At twenty, she became a Franciscan tertiary and taught young girls the Faith. In 1535 at Brescia, Italy, she and 12 other women founded the Company of St. Ursula, or the Ursulines.



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