

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope and joy** in the Catholic faith.

July 2008

One Minute Meditations

Grow with God

A relationship between two people is most satisfying when it is dynamic and growing but that takes effort and care. Our relationship with God is no different. Spending time with God and making him a daily part of your life will help your relationship with him grow and deepen.

No easy road

In Acts 5:19-20, the angel freed the apostles from prison but sent them right back to where they were arrested in the first place with instructions to keep preaching. We, too, have been freed by God but not to retreat into our own little worlds. God freed us so that we can go out into the world to preach the Good News.

Got faith?

Faith is not about what you see with your eyes. Faith is about what you see with your heart.

"Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe"
(John 4:48).



Our God of second chances

The bad news is that at some point in our lives—probably way more than we would like to admit—we are going to make choices that hurt our relationship with God.

The good news is that our God is a God of forgiveness and second chances. Here are some suggestions for using God's second chances in your own life.

Come to your senses. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-52) left the embrace of his father and ruined himself with bad choices. He finally "came to his senses" and returned home. Realize and admit your own mistakes and come back to your Father's embrace.

Avoid bad company. "Walk with wise men and you will become wise, but the

companion of fools will fare badly" (Proverbs 12:20). Surround yourself with people who will support your Gospel values.

Stay close.

Closeness to God comes through prayer, Scripture study, regular Mass participation and living a Gospel-centered life.

Don't give up.

Jesus spent three years teaching twelve people how to live as his followers. They didn't

always get it right (and they lived with him!), but they kept trying. When you mess up, remember what Jesus said to the woman caught in the act of adultery. "Neither do I condemn you ... from now on do not sin anymore" (John 8:11). Pick yourself up and start again.

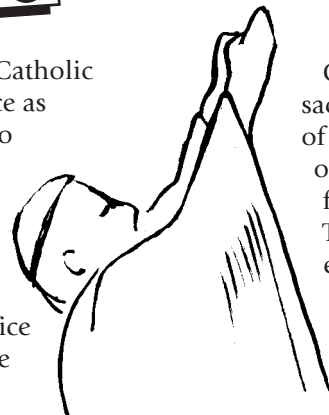


Why Do Catholics Do That?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines a sacrifice as "a ritual offering made to God by a priest on behalf of the people, as a sign of adoration, gratitude, supplication, and communion" (CCC 2099). The perfect sacrifice was Christ's death on the cross.

Why do Catholics make sacrifices?

Catholics can also offer sacrifices to God in the spirit of adoration. However, the outward sacrifice must flow from a spiritual sacrifice. That would entail, for example, forgoing something of value out of love for God and a desire for greater holiness.



A Vacation is no vacation without Mass

Does your summer vacation sometimes include taking a vacation from Mass? Finding a Mass when you are away from home, or fitting it into a summer schedule can mean making special efforts. Here are four reasons to fit Mass into your summer routine:

1. Wherever Mass is said anywhere in the world, millions of people you don't know are praying for you and with you. Where else can you get that kind of help?
2. Attending Mass connects you to the Communion of Saints – the saints in heaven, the souls in purgatory



and believers on earth. That's powerful company.

3. After Jesus ascended to Heaven, his followers formed the early Church to keep his message alive. Every time you attend Mass, you help to keep Jesus' message alive.

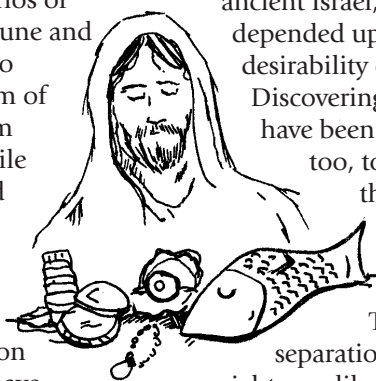
4. God commanded us to keep holy the Sabbath, and Mass is the way a Catholic fulfills that requirement. If God tells you to do something, it's a good idea to do it.

Note: to find a church or Mass time anywhere in the country, call (410)676-6000 or visit www.parishesonline.com.

from Scripture

Matthew 13:44-52, Hidden treasure.

In this Gospel reading, Jesus described several scenarios of extraordinary good fortune and compared that feeling to discovering the kingdom of God. When people from Judah were sent into exile in 587 BC, some buried their treasures in the hope of returning. People in Jesus' audience would have known that coming upon such a treasure would have changed their lives. So, discovering the hidden treasure of the Kingdom now revealed through Jesus can give new meaning to our lives.

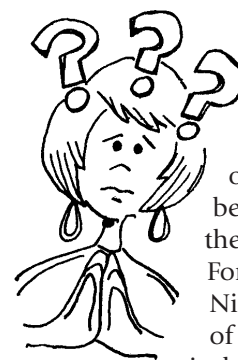


In a barter-based economy like that of ancient Israel, a merchant's fortune depended upon the quality and desirability of what he had to sell. Discovering a valuable pearl would have been irresistible to him. So, too, to someone searching for the truth would be the answers found in discovering the reign of God. Then Jesus described the separation between the evil and righteous like the sifting that takes place when a catch is brought ashore. The message of the Kingdom now takes precedence over any old messages and gives them new meaning.

Q When I pray, should & I pray to God, the A Father, or to Jesus?

If you are asking for a favor, pray to the Father or to Jesus. If it is in harmony with God's will, you may be confident that your prayer will be heard.

You can also ask a saint to intercede for you. In their lives on Earth, many of the saints had special feelings for causes or people and have been known to give them special attention. For example, St. Nicholas is the patron of children. St. Monica is the patron of mothers.



When you pray to a patron, you can ask for the special graces he or she received on Earth to help overcome challenges to what you face. Can you imagine a more powerful intercessor than one who is face-to-face with God in Heaven?

However, the best way to grow closer to the Father and to discern his will is to study the life and teachings of Jesus. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

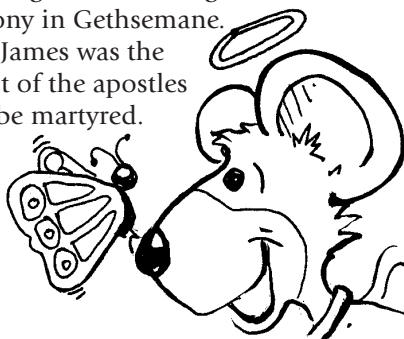
Feasts & Celebrations

July 14 - Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha (1680). A smallpox epidemic in her Native American village left Kateri orphaned, disfigured, and half-blind. Introduced to Catholicism by missionaries, she was baptized at the age of 19 and moved to a Christian village where she lived in holiness.

July 15 - St. Bonaventure (1274). Cured of an illness through the prayers of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure became a Franciscan. As minister general of the order, he cultivated a love of the way of St.

Francis and the order's ideals.

July 25 - St. James (42). When Jesus called St. James and his brother to become apostles, they left their father in a fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee. St. James was one of three apostles to witness Jesus' transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter, and the agony in Gethsemane. St. James was the first of the apostles to be martyred.



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