

Growing in FAITH™

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

January 2012

One Minute Meditations

Try something new

Do you find that your prayer life feels stale or dull occasionally? Try learning a new prayer. Look in the missal at church or the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' website (www.usccb.org) under "Prayer and Worship." Sometimes learning something new to say to God can refresh your time with him.

Hope

Hope is what leads us to desire and expect eternal life with God in Heaven. Hope gives us the strength to keep going when we are troubled, tired, overwhelmed or burdened. Hope is what makes us strong. Followers of Christ always have hope.

God's ways

How do we become disappointed when it seemed as if God didn't answer a prayer? It is so easy to despair when God's ways don't look like our ways. Instead, we need learn more about God by learning the teachings of his Church and reading his Word. Only then will we come to understand his ways.

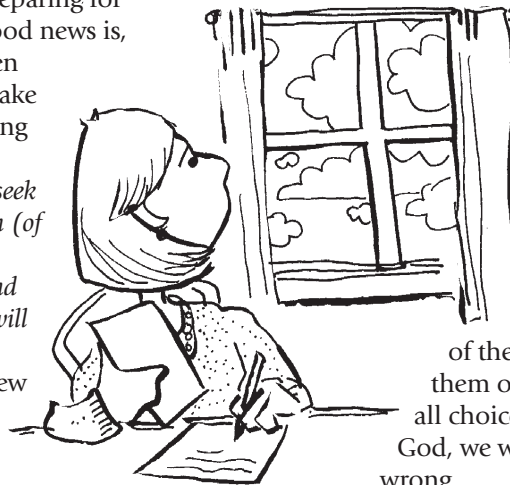


Choose Heaven over Earth

Our lives on Earth last but a moment compared to our time after death, yet we often let earthly matters take priority over preparing for Heaven. The good news is, if we put Heaven first, God will take care of everything else. Jesus promised, "... seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides" (Matthew 6:33).

What is important to you? Although you may have God-inspired values – family, service, work – that may not be what claims your time. Write down a list of what you do each day, from morning to bedtime. Whatever absorbs most of your time and

attention are your real priorities. If they aren't related to God, your activities need to be changed.



How do you make decisions? Do you look to friends or coworkers for advice? Or do you turn to prayer and Scripture for guidance? This year, resolve to take your eyes off

of the world and place them on Christ. If we base all choices and decisions on God, we will never choose wrong.

Do you trust God to make you happy? "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

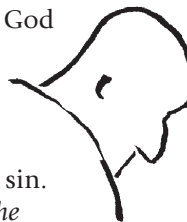
Why Do Catholics Do That?

Every sin has consequences. Obtaining forgiveness through the Sacrament of Penance restores our friendship with God so that we can eventually go to Heaven, but we still must first suffer punishment for our sin.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC,

Why do Catholics ask for indulgences?

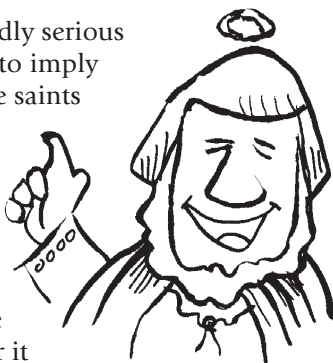
1471) says that through an indulgence, God grants the prayer of the Church that the temporal penalty for sin is reduced or even eliminated. For example, after certain actions and prayers, a plenary indulgence can remove the temporal punishment for sin.



Lighten up with the Good News

If we spread the Gospel and are always deadly serious and anxious, wouldn't our appearance seem to imply that the Good News isn't very good? Even the saints had a laugh now and then.

Humor can give us a new perspective. St. Phillip Neri was a holy priest with a knack for bringing people to God in unusual ways. When a penitent asked permission to wear a hairshirt – an irritating garment worn next to the skin – as a penance St. Philip agreed but ordered the man to wear it



over his clothes. The penance was to bear the jokes and ridicule that resulted.

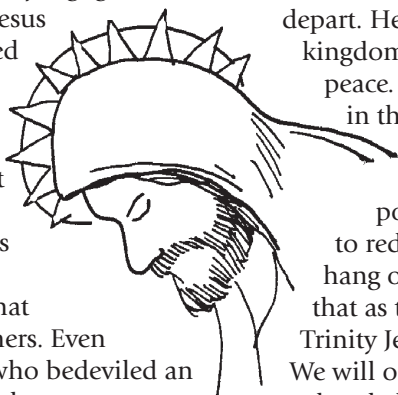
Humor heals. St. Teresa of Avila is said to have complained to God of the rough road he had chosen for her. She was said to have scolded him by saying that if asked his friends to endure so much suffering, “No wonder you have so few.” Joking with God didn't make St. Teresa's road any smoother, but it may have made her feel a little better.

from Scripture

Mark 1:21-28, My buddy or my God?

This Gospel describes Jesus and his apostles entering the synagogue at Capernaum where Jesus taught those gathered at the Sabbath. A human teacher would say, “Thus says the Lord...” But Jesus said, “I say to you ...” He taught as one who had the authority of God. That astonished his listeners. Even the unclean spirits who bedeviled an unfortunate man at the synagogue recognized who Jesus was.

Jesus showed his authority by performing an exorcism on the man.



The unclean spirits had to obey him when he commanded them to depart. He came to announce God's kingdom of justice, love, and peace. There is no room for evil in the Kingdom.

In recent years there has been an attempt to portray Jesus as our buddy, to reduce him to a guy we can hang out with. We can't forget that as the second person of the Trinity Jesus has supreme majesty. We will one day appear before him on bended knee to be judged. He is our divine savior and mediator. He may be our dearest friend, but he is not our buddy.

Q & A Is there a right way to ask someone for forgiveness?

Jesus thought asking for and granting forgiveness was so important, he included it in the Our Father, a prayer we say regularly. There is no one right

way to ask for forgiveness. What is important is to make a start.



Take responsibility for what happened between you. Tell your friend that you are sorry and you want to be back on good terms.

Detail steps you can take together to be sure that a breach won't happen again. Key to real contrition is amending your life.

Give some sign that you are sorry. Shake hands or hug. Such an action will start the healing of your relationship.

In order to be in friendship with God, we have to be at peace with each other. Jesus said, “Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).

Feasts & Celebrations

January 2 – St. Basil the Great (379). St. Basil founded the first monastery in Asia Minor. He fought passionately against the Arian threatening the Church and worked to protect the faith and religious freedom. He is best known for his skill as an orator and for being tireless in his pastoral care.

January 21 – St. Agnes (258). At a young age, St. Agnes pledged chastity for Jesus. Reportedly she was turned in for being a Christian by a suitor whom she refused to marry. She maintained her chastity and her faith and was

executed as a result.

January 31 – St. John Bosco (1888). St. John Bosco combined catechetical training and fatherly guidance to teach young men and women how to unite their spiritual life with their work and play. He opened the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and provided workshops for boys in shoemaking and tailoring. In 1859, he founded the Salesians who were committed to education and mission work.



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