

Growing in FAITH™

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

August 2008

One Minute Meditations

Pay God first

It takes money to do God's work in the world and the top funding source for the Catholic Church's ministries is her generous people. Set aside a portion of every paycheck for charity just as you do for your rent or mortgage. Write that check first. Donate part of every windfall you get -- even if it's an unexpected \$10 bill you found in your pocket or your purse. Put half of it in the poor box.

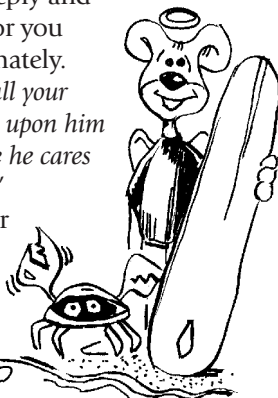
"Me" last, not first

Society says it's okay to pursue our own happiness without worrying about others. But as followers of Christ we know that God holds us responsible for taking care of other people before worrying about ourselves. When we care for others, God will take care of us.

Give it to God

Never forget that God loves you deeply and cares for you passionately.

"Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you"
(1 Peter 5:7).



Make the Bible your own

All that we need to know to live a happy life is in the Bible. God wants us to read it, love it, and live it. The key is to make it personal.

Try this: select the Gospel reading for the following Sunday and use these ideas to experience it in a new way at Mass. (You can find the readings at www.usccb.org.)

Get ready. Before you start reading, quiet yourself and let go of as many distractions as you can. Breathe deeply, in and out, with your eyes closed.

Read slowly. Then read the story as a story and get the main points down. When you are finished, reread it for detail. Then read it out loud to get the

full impact of the words.

Make it yours. One way is to memorize it to internalize the story. Or, take notes on it, jotting down key words or phrases that may be significant or surprising.

Experience it. Put yourself in the place of a person in the story. Imagine the joy of being healed by Jesus or the shame of having him expose your sins.

Live it. Have you felt the same emotions in your life as the people in the Gospel story? Jesus disappointed Martha and Mary by arriving after their brother died. Have you been disappointed that God didn't come on time? Imagine their joy when Jesus came through in a miraculous way. He'll do the same for you.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics believe Mary was assumed into Heaven?

The idea that a person may be bodily assumed into Heaven is from Scripture. Enoch, Elijah, and those who came out of the tomb at Christ's death were all assumed into Heaven (Matthew 27:52-53).

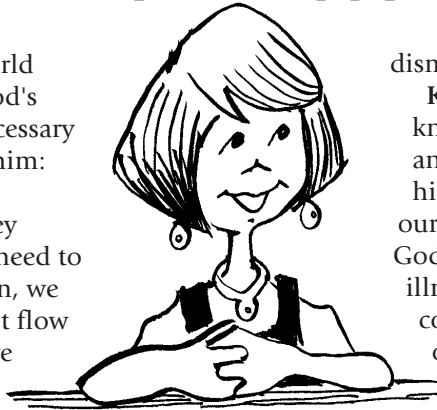


Christians believe that one day we will all be raised (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Mary played a significant part in Jesus' saving work and it makes sense that she would attain its full fruit. She received early the blessings we will all share.

Are you happy?

Just because we live in an imperfect world doesn't mean we have to be unhappy. God's presence in our lives brings the peace necessary for happiness. All we have to do is trust him:

Let joy and pain work together. Truly happy people don't fear pain because they know God will give them the grace they need to deal with it. Instead of running from pain, we need to feel it, deal with it, and then let it flow away from us when we can. Once we have



dismissed pain, we are free to feel joy.

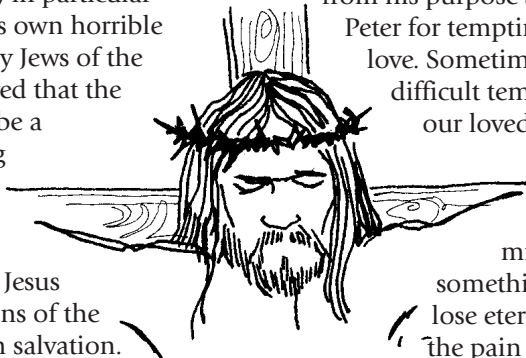
Know the Divine Presence. Happy people know that God is always present in their lives and seek frequent opportunities to celebrate his presence. They know that he is with us in our daily routines, but they also remember that God is with us in the messy stuff, too, like illness, life changes, and tragedy. This confidence leads to joy that spills over to other people - just as God intends.

from Scripture

Matthew 16:21-27, the easy way out.

In this reading, Jesus shocked his disciples - Peter, in particular - by predicting his own horrible death. Like many Jews of the day, Peter believed that the Messiah would be a triumphant king who would trample the enemies of his people. Instead, Jesus blew their notions of the Messiah's role in salvation.

Like any good friend, Peter tried to save Jesus from any discomfort or pain. He hoped there was an easier way. But Jesus knew that unless he suffered and died, we would



all die in our own sins. He couldn't turn from his purpose and he rebuked Peter for tempting him, even out of love. Sometimes our most difficult temptations come from our loved ones trying to spare us pain. Saving ourselves from earthly death might mean doing something that causes us to lose eternal life. Avoiding the pain and sacrifice that comes with being a Christian could cause us to die spiritually and emotionally. The secret of a happy Christian life is not to avoid "the cross," but to embrace it with love.

Q & A I have been away from the Catholic Church but want to come back. What do I do?

The Church is eager to welcome back her children. You may want to start by meeting with your local parish priest or pastor so he can guide you in the process. Every priest is happy to help Catholics come home.



Then, you'll want to experience God's mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. A good way to prepare is to think of ways you may have sinned through word, thought, action, or omission. For guides, use the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

Come to Mass, even if you are not able to receive Communion at first. If you feel rusty, consider buying an aid such as the Saint Joseph Sunday Missal. It is available at many Catholic bookstores and the Daughters of St. Paul (800-836-9723, www.pauline.org).

For more background, you may want to attend parish RCIA classes that prepare people to enter the Church. You can also get a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (800-235-8722, www.usccb.org).

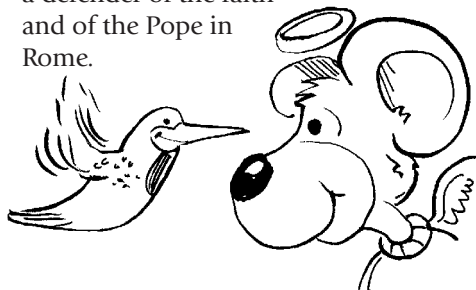
Feasts & Celebrations

August 1 - St. Alphonsus Liguori (1787). He gave up the practice of law in Italy to become a priest and founded the Redemptorist congregation in 1732. St. Alphonsus became a role model for Christians because he was able to stay aware of the loving presence of Christ despite a life of suffering.

August 6 - Transfiguration of the Lord. Tradition says that Mt. Tabor was the site of the Transfiguration during which Christ showed his disciples the splendor of his beauty. The Lord appeared radiant in the company of

Moses and Elijah, and a voice was heard to say, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

August 20 - St. Bernard (1153). At the age of 20, Bernard left home to join the monastic community of Citeaux. His gifts as an arbitrator and counselor caused him to be called often from the monastery to settle disputes. He became a defender of the faith and of the Pope in Rome.



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