

# Growing in FAITH™

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

January 2011

## One Minute Meditations

### Mass matters

Jesus said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you." (John 6:53). Don't miss a single Sunday or Holy Day opportunity to have Jesus' life within you.

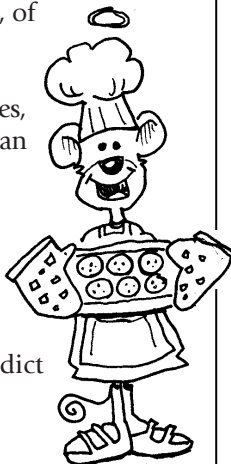
### Tough times?

God will help you through whatever tough times you face. "God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Lean on him.

### The Holy Father on joy

"The Holy Spirit gives us joy. And he is joy. Joy is the gift in which all the other gifts are included. It is the expression of happiness, of being in harmony with ourselves, that which can only come from being in harmony with God and with his creation."

(Pope Benedict XVI)



## Find a way to the real world

As real as this life seems, it is just a stopover. The real world for us is Heaven and the eternity we hope to spend there. A sure way to get there is to live a holy life on Earth.

**Follow the model.** When Jesus said, "I am the way" (John 14:6), he meant for us to follow him and live as he lived. Jesus didn't retreat from the world. He ate, slept, worked, and cared for friends and family, much like we do. Search the Gospels for clues to how you can imitate Jesus in your own life.

**Eliminate distractions.** Are there thoughts or activities which hold your attention longer than they deserve? For

example, do you watch more television than you should, or spend too much time on the

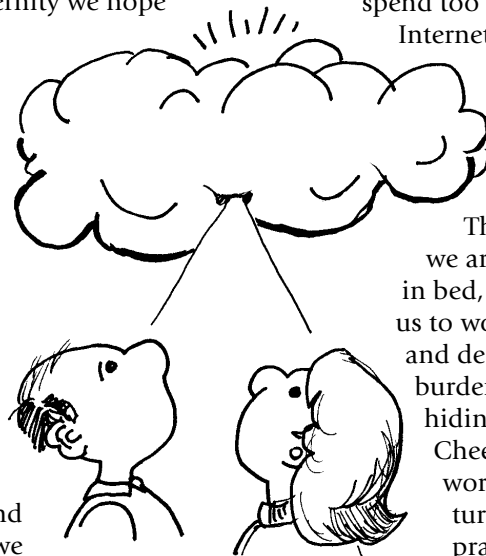
Internet? Cut back and give the time you save to God in some way.

**Embrace the tough stuff.**

There are days when we are tempted to stay in bed, but God intends us to work (Genesis 2:15) and deal with our burdens instead of hiding from them. Cheerfully handling work and suffering turns problems into prayers.

**Look over your shoulder.**

God is with us each minute of every day in a very real sense. Become more conscious of his presence and you will increase his influence over your actions.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

### What does the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus mean?

The image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a symbol of Christ's love for us. It is often a heart surrounded by flame, pierced by a lance, topped by a cross, and circled by a crown of thorns.



Jesus' love for us burns bright and intense like a flame. His heart is pierced by the lance representing our sins and the crown of thorns and the cross remind us of the death he suffered to bring us life.

## Tune out the world and tune into God

In our noisy world, it can be hard to hear God's voice over the din. Yet, listening is as important as talking during prayer. *"By waiting and by calm you shall be saved, in quiet and in trust your strength lies"* (Isaiah 30:15). Try these ideas for some quiet listening in your day:

**Quiet sight:** during daylight hours, go to a window and look out. Ask God to help you see the familiar sight with new eyes. Discover something you hadn't noticed before.



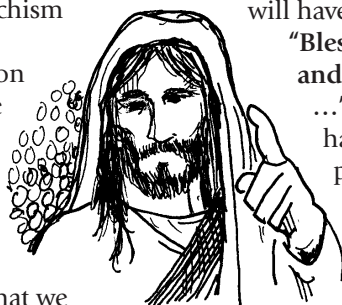
**Quiet reading:** Bring your Bible or devotional reading to a quiet spot. Read at least 10 verses and take 15 minutes to meditate on them. Be still and allow God to speak to you by whatever means he chooses.

**Quiet retreat:** several websites offer mini retreats as a way to enter into quiet prayer during your day. This is especially helpful if you spend a lot of time during the day in front of a computer screen. See [www.loyolapress.com](http://www.loyolapress.com) and click on 3-minute retreat, for an example.

### from Scripture

#### Matthew 5:1-12, paths to happiness

God wants us to be happy. When he created us, he put into our hearts the desire to be happy (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1718). During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us the Beatitudes – guaranteed ways to obtain peace here and happiness in Heaven.



**"Blessed are the poor in spirit ..."** Recognize that we need God to compensate for our weakness. Depend upon his help.

**"Blessed are they who mourn ..."** God knows what you need even better than you do. Trust him to strengthen you and bring you comfort.

**"Blessed are the meek ..."** Jesus is meek and gentle. Imitate him and you will have everlasting peace.

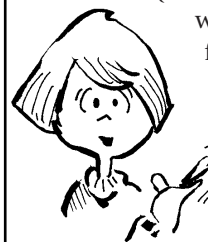
**"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness ..."** Peacefully accept whatever happens knowing that Jesus promises to give you courage.

**"Blessed are the merciful ..."** Mercy is love in the face of sin and injury. If we show

mercy, we are guaranteed mercy. Perhaps the real secret to happiness is remembering that when we follow Jesus, there will always be a happy ending.

### Q Can I be forgiven & for the bad things A I have done?

God loves us so much that he is ready to forgive anything we have done. Jesus said, *"I did not come to call the righteous but sinners"* (Matthew 9:13). He knew we would sin and need forgiveness. The key is to ask.



As difficult as offering forgiveness to others can be, forgiving ourselves may be even harder.

Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love God. But second to that is to *"... love your neighbor as yourself"* (Mark 12:31). That means he wants us to behave in a loving way toward all people God created – including ourselves. Forgiveness is critical.

The first step is to ask God's forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance). Don't worry that you may shock the priest by what you tell him. If he has been a priest for any length of time, he won't shock easily. When you finish the penance he gives you, resolve to avoid sin and start fresh. If God is ready to forgive you, can you do any less?

### Feasts & Celebrations

**January 17 – St. Anthony the Abbot (355).** Born to a rich family around 250 A.D. in Egypt, St. Anthony gave up his riches to live a life of simplicity in the desert. He is the founder of monasticism.

**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 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.

**January 28 – St. Thomas Aquinas (1274).** St. Thomas was a Dominican teacher and scholar. He is considered by the Church as the preeminent spokesman for the Catholic tradition of reason and of divine revelation.



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