

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

January 2021

St. Raphael Catholic Church

Pastor, Fr. John M. Connell

One Minute Meditations

Tough times?

Throughout history, God has proven his faithfulness and care over and over again. He promises that He 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.



Tune out the world and tune into Go

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). Talk to Him often, but make a point of listening for God's voice.

"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).



Give the gift of friendship in the New Year

When times are tough, it can be our family and friends who help us through. There wasn't much Jesus wouldn't do for His friends. In fact, He was more concerned with being a good friend than with having one. In our current pandemic situation, we can care for our loved ones as Jesus would:

Make spending time together a priority.

Connections between loved ones are critical now. When meeting in person isn't possible, phone calls, letters, and emails can keep us connected. Video conferencing has become a staple of daily life; consider organizing regular get togethers with friends and family using your favorite conferencing program.

Help other people feel important. No matter how you interact, give the other person your full attention in conversation, and show appreciation and understanding for what he is saying.

Celebrate your friends' successes. A true friend is genuinely happy when something good happens in the other's life.

Value differences. Don't try to change your loved ones.

Celebrate their diversity.

Be willing to apologize. You may let each other down but a sincere apology can bring friends closer together.

Don't forget old friends. Call someone you haven't been in touch with for a long time. Don't know what to say? Try, "I don't want another moment to go by without being in touch. I've missed you."



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics honor the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

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.



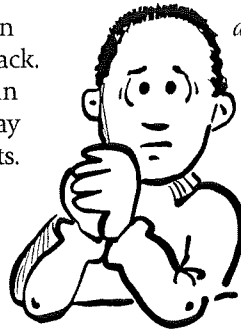
Jesus' love for us burns bright and intense like a flame. His heart is pierced by the lance representing our sins and the crown of thorns and the cross remind us of the death he suffered to bring us life.

“What do you want from me, Lord?”

God gives to us freely, but what does he want in return? Simply put, God wants us to love Him back.

Know Him. God made each of us with a space in our heart just for Him. Until we discover it, we may try to fill it with earthly things, but nothing else fits. When we turn to Him, the reward is beyond our dreams.

Love Him. Jesus said, *“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul,*



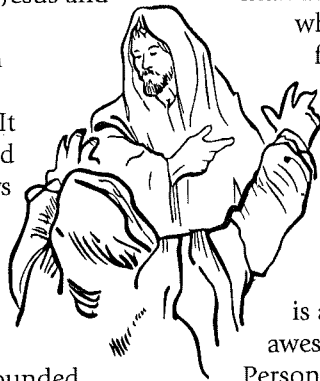
and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). He wants us to surrender to his infinite love. Show your love by praying frequently, seeking Communion with Him often, and praising Him continually.

Serve Him. *“Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”* (Matthew 25:40). When we make sure everyone has enough to eat, warm clothes to wear, and a place to stay, Jesus takes it personally. It’s what he wants from us.

from Scripture

Mark 1:21-28, God’s authority is not a formality

In this Gospel passage, Jesus and his apostles entered the synagogue at Capernaum where Jesus taught those gathered at the Sabbath. It was customary for learned teachers to say, “Thus says the Lord...” Instead Jesus said, “I say to you...” He taught as one who spoke with the authority of God.



man at the synagogue recognized who Jesus was. They were forced to obey Him when he commanded them to depart, despite their reluctance. In fact, God’s power and authority isn’t just a formality. What God says, happens.

Our kind and gentle Savior is also our powerful and awesome Lord. As the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus has supreme majesty and we will one day appear before Him to be judged. Yes, he is our divine savior and mediator. But if we say, “Jesus is Lord,” then we give Him our loyalty and obedience.

His calm authority astounded Jesus’ listeners. Just as they began to wonder what it meant, he gave them a sign. He further demonstrated his authority by performing an exorcism. Spirits that bedeviled an unfortunate

Q & A How can I choose Catholic references that are accurate and faithful?

One good way to determine whether or not a book or pamphlet accurately reflects Catholic doctrine is to look for an “imprimatur” printed in the first few pages of the book. The presence of an



imprimatur generally means that a bishop’s office has determined it to be free of doctrinal or moral errors. It may be accompanied by a “nihil obstat” (Latin for “nothing stands in the way”) which means that someone well-versed in Catholic theology has reviewed the contents and found the same thing. Keep in mind that neither the imprimatur nor the nihil obstat imply agreement with the content or opinions.

It is particularly important for a book that purports to teach about the faith of the Church to carry the approval of the Catholic Church. There are many well-meaning people who intend to educate others about God’s infinite love but may have an imperfect understanding of Catholic doctrine. When choosing materials to learn more about our religion, you will want to be sure that they are accurate.

Feasts & Celebrations

Jan. 1 – Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. Today, we honor Mary, but also Jesus as God. In their honor, pray a Rosary. Because this feast day is on a Monday, Mass attendance is optional (but encouraged) this year.

Jan. 25 – The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle (1st Century). Setting out for Damascus to carry on the persecution of the Christians, he encountered Christ (Acts 9:1-19; 22:5-16; 26:12-18) while on the road to Damascus. He was struck blind from

the experience until he was baptized by Ananias three days later. He converted and began preaching the faith as he travelled around the Mediterranean.

Jan. 26 – Sts. Timothy and Titus (1st Century). Timothy was a convert of St. Paul’s and later became his trusted friend, joining him in apostolic work. He was with Paul at the founding of the Church in Corinth. Titus, also a friend of Paul’s, served the early Church as a peacemaker and administrator to a community on Crete.



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