

Growing in FAITH

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

April 2007

One Minute Meditations

Easter all year long

“Sunday recalls the day of Christ’s Resurrection. It is Easter which returns week by week, celebrating Christ’s victory over sin and death.”
Pope John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, www.vatican.va.

Practice self-forgiveness

Don’t be too harsh and critical of yourself. Spiritual growth comes slowly if you have too negative an opinion of yourself. Repeat the “Forgiveness Prayer” often saying, “Lord, forgive me. I forgive myself. I forgive them. Lord, forgive us.”

Don’t keep score

When you do something nice for a friend, don’t look for something in return.
“...*When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing... And your Father who sees in secret will repay you*” (Matthew 6:3-4). Besides, good friendships have a way of balancing.

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God always answers prayer

Ever pray really hard for something but got only silence in response? It may have felt like God didn’t answer. Yet, the Bible tells us that if we trust God, we’ll always get what we need and perhaps what we want, too (Matthew 6:25-33). But we have to do our part.

Strengthen your friendship with God. “*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you*” (John 15:7). God wants our friendship all the time, not just when we want something. The closer we are to him, the more likely we are to ask for what is in harmony with his will.

Come clean. Unconfessed sin creates static in the connection to God. The sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) helps clear the line. In Psalm 32, David says that his life was miserable when he avoided responsibility for his sin. As soon as he confessed it, God answered his prayers.

Look for it. God’s answer may not be what you were looking for but may be even better than you imagined.

Don’t give up. Jesus promised, “Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24). God has a wonderful sense of timing He’ll pick exactly the right moment.



Why do Catholics call Jesus, “Christ?”

Ancient Jews used oil in ceremonies such as the enthronement of a king. The king was then called, “anointed” or “messiah” or “messias” in Hebrew. “The Anointed” was the way they referred to the Deliverer promised by God. “Christos” was how “anointed” translated into Greek

After the Resurrection, “Christ” or “the Christ” went from being a title to a proper name, “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus.” That name recognizes Jesus as the one true Anointed One, the promised Messiah of the Jews

Damn those distractions!

Ever wonder how you can be riveted for hours by a mindless TV show, but spend only a few minutes in prayer before your mind wanders? In fact, distractions can help enrich your prayer life. Our minds tend to wander to things that are important to us. We can recognize them and make them a part of our prayer.

For example, “Lord, thank you for the gift of my home. That reminds me that I better clean out the gutters or the roof will leak. That would be bad even if our furniture isn’t as nice as the Spencers’ new living room set. But forgive me Lord for feeling envy, and help me to be grateful for what I have.” And so on.

The idea is to acknowledge that distraction and ask God’s help in overcoming its source. Then use it as a tool to get back on track. Remember, prayer is not a rigid routine we have to get right. It’s a conversation with someone we love.

Q&A

Did Jesus believe God abandoned him when he was on the Cross?

No. That is a common mistake made when reading the words Jesus uttered on the Cross, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46). Those words are the opening phrase from Psalm 22 which begins with a cry of utter loneliness but ends in a triumphant fulfillment of prayer. The psalm also says, “*You relied on the LORD—let him deliver you; if he loves you, let him rescue you.*” And Jesus was mocked with the words, “You relied on the LORD—let him deliver you; if he loves you, let him rescue you” (Matthew 27:43).

Jesus was human and felt the pain and heartache of being abandoned by his friends, unjustly imprisoned, condemned for crimes he didn’t commit, and brutally tortured. Yet he sought consolation from Scripture that reminded him of his trust in God.

And Jesus’ last words were a joyful cry of confidence in his Father, “*Father into your hands I commend my spirit*” (Luke 23:46). Those are not the words of someone who feels abandoned by God.

from Scripture: John 10:27-30, Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

As a storyteller, Jesus used images familiar to his listeners to convey his message of salvation. For example, many people in Jesus’ day depended upon sheep for their livelihood. A village might have a common pasture where the sheep were led in the morning, but at night an owner would call his sheep and they would follow him home.

Jesus used this example to describe characteristics of his faithful followers:

They hear his voice. Jesus said to his Apostles, “He who hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16). Catholics recognize Christ’s voice in the successors of the Apostles: our pope and bishops.

They follow him. Catholics are called to follow Jesus. We follow out of love and we do what he asked us to do, including caring for the poor and vulnerable. We joyfully come when he calls us home.

They will have eternal life. Listening to his voice and following Jesus will guide us safely to the pastures of eternal life.

Feasts & Celebrations

April 24 – St. Fidelis (1622). In his native Prussia, St. Fidelis became a lawyer and championed the poor and oppressed. Later, he joined the Franciscans and gave away his wealth. During a revolt against the Church, St. Fidelis worked to bring people back. He was murdered by an angry mob.

April 25 – St. Mark (1st century). St. Mark wrote the second Gospel reputedly using St. Peter’s perspective. Mark accompanied Sts. Paul and Barnabas (Mark’s cousin) on their missionary journey through Cyprus and is credited with founding the Church of Alexandria.

April 29 – St. Catherine of Siena (1380). A mystic from a young age, St. Catherine had regular conversations with Jesus. At sixteen years old, she joined the Third Order of St. Dominic and served the poor. Although uneducated, she dictated many books on the Catholic faith. She is credited with coaxing Pope Gregory XI back to Rome from an easy life in France.