

# Growing in FAITH™

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

August 2007

## One Minute Meditations

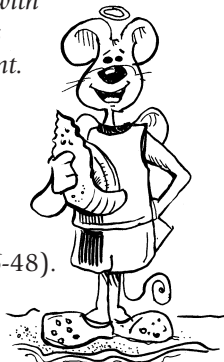
### Old Testament sacrifices

When the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, they complained, *"We remember the fish we used to eat without cost in Egypt, and the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic"* (Numbers 11:5). Plan a meal with grilled fish, cucumber salad, and melon for desert, and remember the great sacrifices the Israelites made to find the Promised Land.

### Our powerful Lord

In the Gospels, we can count: 20 times when Jesus healed people, seven times Jesus drove out demons, three times Jesus raised people from the dead, and at least eight other miracles that showed his power over nature. *"What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the sea obey?"* (Matthew 8:27)

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed"* (Luke 1:46-48).



## 5 Ways to Put God First

Life's busy pace can crowd out a loving God who waits patiently for our full attention. Try a few simple steps to put him back in first place:

**1. Be more active in your parish.** Ask at the parish office where your help may be needed. Can you teach religious education classes, help clean the church, visit the sick or homebound?

**2. Pay God first.** Increase your parish donation and make it as much a priority as housing or health care.

**3. Banish your false God.** Even too much of a good thing can be bad. Is someone or something absorbing too

much of your attention? Find your false God and do all you can to get rid of it.

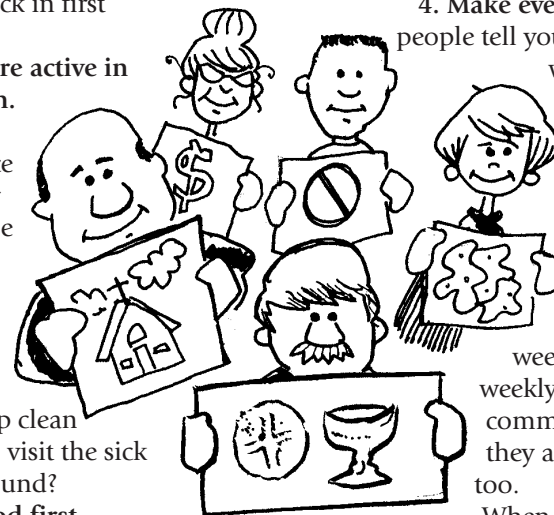
**4. Make everything fit.** Can other people tell you follow Christ by the way you live? If not,

pick one area and bring it back in line.

**5. Go to Mass weekly ... for others.** It goes without saying that you benefit when you attend Mass each

week. But committing to weekly worship with our community tells others that they are important to us, too.

When we care for God's Church, volunteer our time to help others, and worship God with others, we put others before ourselves. And when we do that, we put God first – right where he belongs.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

We believe that God uses many ways to reach his people, including the appearance of supernatural beings. Apparitions of Jesus, Mary, angels, and saints are all part of Catholic tradition.

## Why do Catholics believe in apparitions?

The Church exercises great care in investigating reports of apparitions and most are not found authentic. However, if an apparition is deemed authentic, it doesn't mean Catholics have to believe in the appearance. It simply means that those who do believe will not be harmed by believing.

# Make your home a church

Your home can be a domestic church where you meet God every day. Try these suggestions for creating a sacred space:

Give prayer a central place in your home. Cover a table with a special cloth in the color of the liturgical season. Add a crucifix and small statues of favorite saints, along candles, icons or pictures and leave space to kneel before it. No space for a prayer table? Fill a large basket with pillows, your Bible and Rosary, and books of prayers or meditations and take it



wherever you can spread out for prayer time.

Add sacred objects. Put a crucifix in every room, add holy water fonts, burn incense, use vigil candles.

Displaying sacred objects in each room of your home will help you remember that God is always with you.

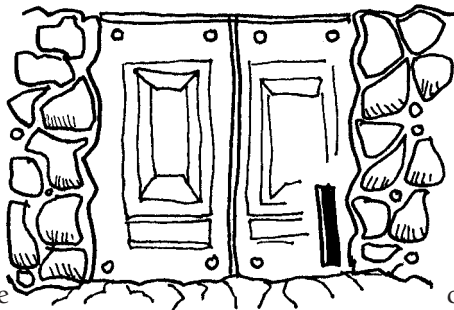
Start some personal traditions around days that are special to you. On your birthday, sing your favorite hymn or recite a prayer you write yourself. Honor a favorite saint on his or her feast day each year.

## from Scripture

### Luke 13:22-30, the narrow gate

When an ancient city was fortified, a central gate was built wide enough for carts and horses to easily pass through. When the city was threatened, the gate was secured and no one could go in or out.

Hidden in an unnoticed part of the wall was an opening so narrow no one could pass through wearing armor or carrying weapons. It was often hard to find and difficult to reach. Jesus used this image of a city wall to help his listeners understand the



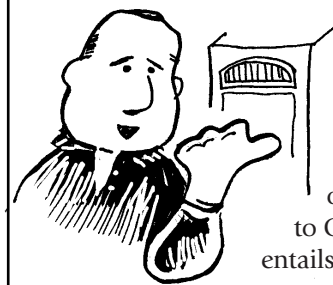
requirements for passage into Heaven. Many will arrive at the gates of Heaven, expecting an easy "in" only to find the door securely shut. To enter, we have to be fit enough to find the way and shed the attachments of our earthly life so that we can freely pass through the narrow entrance.

There will be surprises on Judgment Day. Some who think they are entitled to Heaven will be turned away. Only those who work to keep spiritually strong will find the way.

## Q & A

**A non-Catholic friend asked me what's the point of going to Confession. What should I say?**

You might answer that we go to Confession because it can be a relief to tell our sins to a priest. After all, that is the major activity. And while it's



important, that's not the whole point.

Or, you might point out that going to Confession entails examining

your conscience to find out where you've strayed from God. And while that is certainly critical to making a good Confession, it's not the key.

Perhaps you could talk about the penance you receive so you can show God how sorry you are for failing to love him completely. And certainly that's necessary for receiving forgiveness; we must be sorry and make amends.

But in fact, the whole point of going to Confession is to receive forgiveness. It's when we can hear the voice of Christ saying to us through the priest, "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven." That's the whole point.

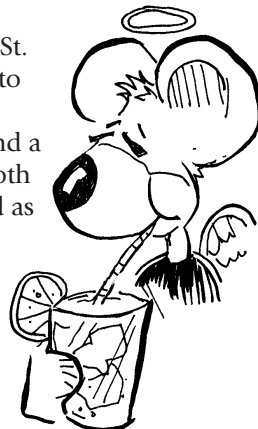
## Feasts & Celebrations

**August 11 St. Clare (1253).** Born to a noble family in Assisi, Italy, St. Clare followed St. Francis of Assisi over her family's strenuous objections. She founded a sister order to the Franciscans called, "Poor Clares."

**August 10 – St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe (1941).** A Polish Franciscan, St. Maximilian was imprisoned at Auschwitz by the Nazis. When prisoners were randomly chosen for execution in punishment for an escape attempt, St. Maximilian offered himself to save a man who had a family. He was first starved and then killed by lethal injection.

**August 15 - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.** Declared a dogma of our faith in 1950 by Pope Pius XII, the Assumption celebrates Mary's taking up into Heaven body and soul at the end of her life.

**August 28 – St. Augustine (430).** St. Augustine turned to Christianity and became a priest and a bishop. He was both feared and revered as a prophet who offered sinners no shelter or escape from personal responsibility.



## Our Mission

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