

Growing in FAITH™

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

May 2007

One Minute Meditations

Be happy

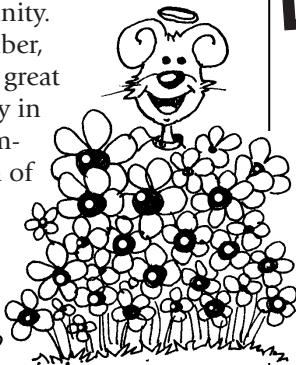
Are you a worrier? When you feel yourself starting to worry, pray to God for what you need. Then act on your belief that your prayer for serenity will be answered. While waiting, substitute positive, cheerful thoughts for negative ones. *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: Rejoice!"* (Philippians 4:4).

The month of Mary

In May we honor Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth. She was Jesus' first and most important Apostle. Grow closer to Mary by praying to her, honoring her feast days, and praising her to others.

Celebrate difference

Are there a lot of foreign-born or people of different races in your neighborhood? Don't just tolerate diversity - celebrate it. Welcome people who are different from you to your home, church, or community. Remember, there is great diversity in the Communion of Saints..



9 Ways to care for God's creation

Everything in the world belongs to God, and our job is to care for it out of love for him and our neighbor. Try these easy and low-cost ways to care for God's creation:

Put up a bird house in your yard or neighborhood. More habitats disappear each year and birds have fewer places to nest.

Limit the use of chemicals and pesticides in your yard. They may be harmful to birds, wildlife, and pets.

Wash laundry in cold water. You'll cut energy bills and find that most clothes are just as clean.

When hiking or walking outdoors, stay on trails, keep dogs on leashes and avoid sensitive natural areas especially during nesting season.

Dispose of oil and other toxic

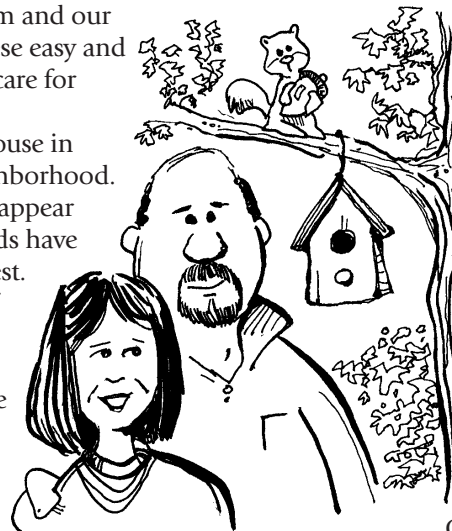
materials properly. One gallon of oil poured down the sewer can contaminate one million gallons of fresh water.

Replace one incandescent light bulb each month with energy-efficient compact fluorescent ones.

Reduce the amount of water your toilet uses during each flush by placing a jar or other closed container full of water into your toilet tank.

Collect rainwater from gutters by placing containers at the end of each gutter. Use it to water your garden or neighborhood landscaping.

Give thanks to God as the Creator at Mass. Our worship of him will make us more aware of all God's creation.

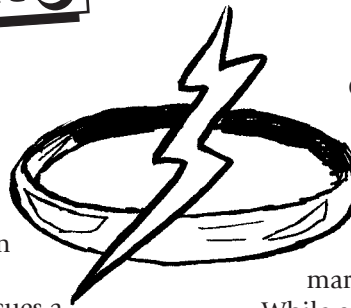


Why Do Catholics Do That?

God requires certain conditions to be present between a man and woman in order to establish a valid marriage between them.

When the Church issues a declaration of nullity (an annulment), it is because the

What is an annulment?



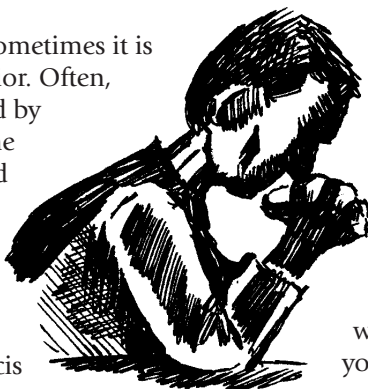
Church has determined that at the time of the wedding, one or both parties in some way failed to meet the Church's requirement for marriage.

While a divorce dissolves a marriage; an annulment says there was no marriage in the first place.

"Why me, Lord?"

Suffering is an unfortunate part of life. Sometimes it is caused by our own foolish or sinful behavior. Often, however, our suffering cannot be explained by anything specific. Then we are faced by the mystery of innocent suffering – as Jesus did during his crucifixion. This helps us to realize our total dependence on God.

Sometimes God uses our pain for good. St. Ignatius Loyola's life was changed during a painful recuperation from battle wounds. God came to St. Francis



of Assisi during a serious illness. Or, perhaps our suffering may benefit others. Soldiers sacrifice and risk their lives to protect others.

Despite your suffering, try to find reasons to be hopeful. Perhaps you can think about the loved ones who support you through your trials.

Turn to God. Even as he faced intense suffering and death, Jesus trusted in his loving Father.

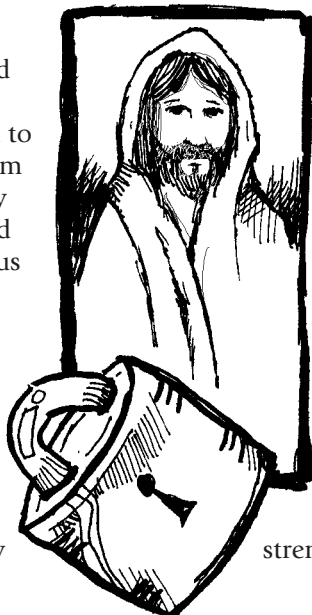
Reach out to others. Jesus' last thoughts on earth were of others. When you care for others despite your own pain, you are like Christ.

from Scripture

John 20:19-23, Open your door to Christ

Despite hearing that Jesus was being spotted around town, the disciples were shocked to see Jesus appear to them in a locked room. They thought the lock would keep everyone out. Jesus appeared to them so that they could be first-person witnesses to his resurrection. But he also came to commission them to carry on the work he started.

The work is why they



were chosen, but Jesus knew they needed strength. So he breathed on them, just as God breathed life into Adam and created a new creature. By doing so, Jesus renewed his disciples, strengthened them, and gave them a new outlook so they could continue his mission.

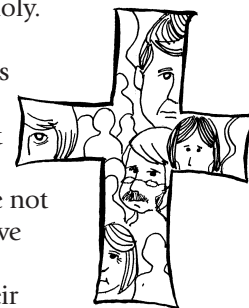
By virtue of our Baptism Jesus has commissioned each of us to spread the word of God's love and the hope of salvation. And he promises to be with us and give us the strength we need to do his work.

Q & A How can the Church be considered holy when there are Catholics who are sinners?

The Church remains holy no matter how many of her members are not faithful to the Gospel. Their sins are not a result of Catholic teaching or laws which remain true and holy.

Those of the Church's members who are guilty of serious sin are not members in good standing. They are not permitted to receive Communion, for example, until their contrition is addressed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In fact, that's why Jesus created the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He knew that the Church would be comprised of good people and wicked people like a barn that contains wheat and chaff (Matthew 3:12) or a field in which weeds grow with the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30).

Don't forget why Christ came into the world. "Those who are well do not need a physician but the sick do ... I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Matthew 9:12-13). Jesus didn't create the Church just for the respectable and holy.



Feasts & Celebrations

May 20 – St. Bernardine of Siena (1444). Known for boundless energy and joy, Bernardine volunteered to run the local hospital and nurse those ill from the plague. At 24, he was ordained a Franciscan and, after a dozen years in solitude, he journeyed across Italy preaching. The symbol of the sun with IHS, the first three letters of Jesus' name in Greek, is attributed to him.

May 25 – St. Bede the Venerable (735). Honored as a saint during his lifetime, he was an extraordinary scholar and writer. From the time of his

ordination at 30 till his death, he was occupied with learning, writing and teaching. He composed 45 books, including 30 commentaries on books of the Bible.

May 27 – St. Augustine of Canterbury (605). Despite mistakes and failures, Augustine persevered as a missionary in rough and dangerous times in England. Wisely, he purified and retained local customs into Christian rites. His efforts would eventually bear fruit in the conversion of England after his death.



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