

Growing in **F A I T H**

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

November 2006

One Minute Meditations

Distractions during prayer

Do you get frustrated because your mind wanders when you pray? Don't get discouraged, prayer doesn't have to be perfect. In fact, it's the time when God guides us and shows us the ways in which we are to grow. When you feel yourself getting distracted, just refocus and keep going.

"Harmless" gossip

What we call "gossip," the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) calls "calumny" and "detraction." Talking about someone else – true or false – in a way to influence others negatively is a grave sin. "Everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect" (CCC 2477-2479). If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all – for both your sakes.

God is a great partner

When David faced insurmountable odds against the Philistines, he turned to God for help. He asked whether he should fight, he followed instructions carefully, and he gave God the credit for his victory. That's a guaranteed formula for success.

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Celebrate the freedom forgiveness brings

Ever find yourself so angry you don't want to forgive someone? The trouble is, when we hold onto an injury we get trapped in the pain indefinitely. Forgiving frees both people to move on. Try these tips for offering forgiveness as Jesus would:

Start with a sign. Even if you are the one injured, let the other person know you are ready to forgive by offering something tangible: flowers, a card, homemade cookies, a hug. "*Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; Though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool*" (Isaiah 1:18).

Separate the offense from the offender. God doesn't write us off when we sin. He loves us no matter what and asks that we do the same for each other.

Forgive and forget. You can't have one without the other. Forgiveness entails cancelling a debt, whether by God or another person. "*(Love) does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things ...*" (1 Corinthians 13:5-8).

Celebrate. A mended relationship is stronger than one that has never been tested.



Why do Catholics offer Masses for the dead?

Jesus said, "... *Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come*" (Matthew 12:31). And 2 Maccabees 12:46 reads, "*Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.*"

When we die in God's friendship we eventually go to Heaven, but if we haven't properly atoned for certain sins we have to be purified in Purgatory first. We pray for the souls in Purgatory to help them pass through faster than they would otherwise.

"Is God's love for real?"

God's love isn't earned and it can't be lost. It's not like human love, and that makes it hard for us to understand. Then how do we know God's love is real?

He sent his son to save us. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).

He died for us. *"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us"* (1 John 3:16).

He watches over us. *"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well"* (Matthew 6:31-33).

He never leaves us. *"I am with you always, to the close of the age"* (Matthew 28:20).

Q&A What is the origin of All Saints Day and All Souls Day?

After Christianity was legalized in 313 A.D., each saint and martyr was celebrated with a feast day. However, so many Christians were persecuted that there weren't enough days in the calendar for each one. So churches in the different countries began designating one day to commemorate all the saints and martyrs together. Eventually Pope Gregory IV designated Nov. 1 as All Saints Day throughout the Holy Roman Empire.

All Souls Day on Nov. 2nd came a little later. In the early Church, the names of the faithful departed were posted in church so that they could be remembered in prayer. Special emphasis was given to the souls in Purgatory. In the 11th century, the Cluniac monasteries, the Benedictines and Carthusians all started commemorating the Feast of All Souls on Nov. 2, the day after All Saints Day. The rest of the Church followed shortly thereafter.

from Scripture: John 18:33b-37; Christ, the real King

Throughout the years of slavery and occupation, God's promise of a king kept Israelite hope alive. In fact, many clung to the image of an avenging savior who slays their enemies.

Jesus, bound and seemingly powerless before Pilate, was not what they had in mind. They didn't want a king who talked of love, suffering, and service. They wanted one who would wipe their enemies off the face of the earth. They wanted him to come down off the Cross.

Yet Jesus is king. As the very name Christian implies, we who follow Jesus are to share in his work of preaching and working for God's kingdom. In Baptism and Confirmation we are brought under his kingship. Our lives should manifest our concern for God's kingdom.

Jesus' kingdom is about peace and justice and his concern for the poor, the needy and the marginal in society. Do our lives and actions reflect that awareness? As Christians we are challenged to become more "Christ-like" in our lives, and that means more like Jesus, the King.

Feasts & Celebrations

In November we pray for the dead, especially our loved ones and souls in purgatory. Our prayers and sacrifices can help them get to Heaven faster.

Nov. 4 – **St. Charles Borromeo** (1584). After earning doctorates in civil and canon law by the age of 21, he was called to Rome by his uncle, Pope Pius IV, to be cardinal and bishop of Milan. He led by example to reform his diocese and tirelessly worked for poor and sick in his care.

Nov. 10 – **Pope St. Leo, the Great** (461). Pope St. Leo helped the Church stay united despite attacks from false teachers and warring tribes. He is famous for his explanations of the faith.

Nov. 11 - **St. Martin of Tours** (397). The patron of soldiers, St. Martin was forced to join the army at the age of 15 in what is now Hungary but left to become a priest. He founded a monastery near Poitiers, France, and later became bishop of Tours.