

# Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

January 2023

St Mark Church - St James Church

Emporium - Driftwood Pennsylvania

## One Minute Meditations

### A kinder, gentler you

Kindness is contagious. A recent study found that witnessing an act of kindness produces good feelings and inspires imitation. In the new year, make efforts to be kinder – more friendly, generous, and considerate – and inspire others to do the same.

### Choose not to be offended

In the news or on social media, it can appear that there is more polarization around issues now than in the past. Each side wants to persuade the other. Being right is no compensation for broken friendships, however. If there is someone in your life who deliberately pursues you to argue, don't take the bait. Rather than let arguments create a rift, look the other way when feeling slighted. Being kind is more rewarding than being right.

*"I have told you this that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world"* (John 16:33).



## Fall deeper in love with Christ in the New Year

At the center of all we do as Catholics must be a close and personal relationship with Jesus. He offers to each of us a deep, intimate, "I love you forever" kind of relationship. Make time to fall deeper in love with Christ:

**T-Talk:** Prayer is an amazing privilege. Through it, we have an open invitation: "Call to me, and I will answer you" (Jeremiah 33:3). We have a promise that He hears us: "When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you" (Jeremiah 29:12). The God of the universe wants to hear from you.

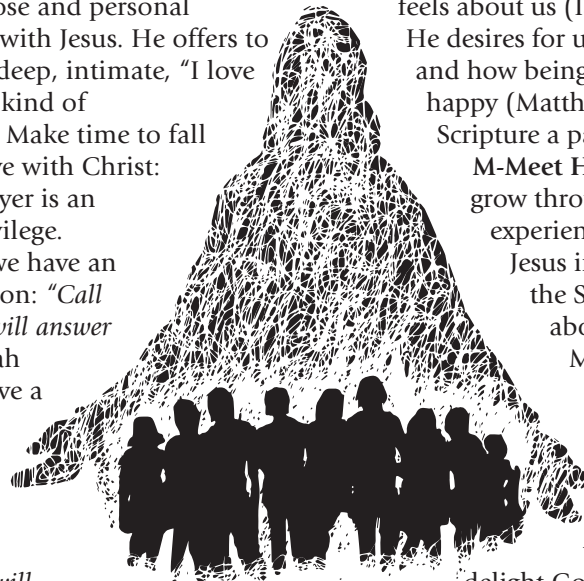
**I-Intimacy:** To love Christ, we must know Him. In Scripture, God tells us

who He is (Exodus 34:6), how He feels about us (Isaiah 43:4), what He desires for us (Luke 12:32), and how being His will make us happy (Matthew 5-7). Make Scripture a part of every day.

**M-Meet Him:** Relationships grow through shared experiences. We meet Jesus in prayer, Scripture, the Sacraments, and above all, during the Mass.

**E-Everything for love:** St. Thérèse of Lisieux discovered that she could

delight God by simply picking up a pin out of love. He wants to hear us, His beloveds, say, "I love you, too," in words and actions. Essential to falling in love with God is making time for Him.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

## Why do Catholics believe things that aren't in the Bible?

Catholics recognize the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God, and we reject beliefs that contradict Scripture. Long before the Gospels were written down, the Apostles passed on to their disciples all that Jesus taught and did. This



is what we call, "Tradition," or what was "handed on." Not everything that was handed on could be written down. It was impossible to include everything Jesus did (John 21:25). Catholic beliefs don't depart from Scripture, but delve deeper into it.

# Make one change for God this year

When making New Year's resolutions this year, consider one change that will bring you closer to God. Here are some ideas other Catholics have used to strengthen prayer, serve the poor, and evangelize our faith ...

**Laura** felt her prayer life growing stale, so when her parish asked for adorers for the perpetual adoration chapel, she jumped at the chance. Now, Mondays at midnight, Laura can be found in the presence of the Eucharist. She



said, "I really look forward to my peaceful hour each week. It's just me and Him."

**Peter's** law practice is incredibly busy, but he takes an afternoon off every month to work at the local soup kitchen serving hot meals to the homeless and working poor. When asked why, he said, "Jesus said, 'When I was hungry, you gave me to eat.'"

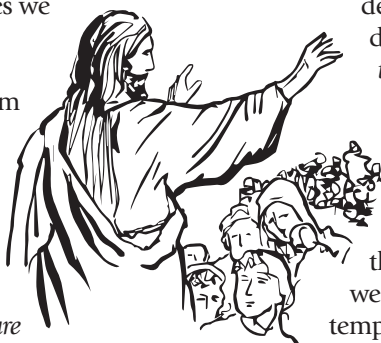
**JoAnn's** children are grown, yet she teaches a religious education class at her parish. "What better way to spread our faith than to children? That's where I can do the most good," she said.

## from Scripture

### Matthew 5:1-12a, Jesus' blueprint for holiness

This passage contains the Sermon on the Mount during which Jesus detailed the Beatitudes – the attitudes we need to be truly holy, and therefore happy. In fact, "beatitude" is translated from the Greek word for happiness. Jesus was saying, "Happy are you!" or "Congratulations!" if you live by these attitudes.

When Jesus said, "blessed are the poor in spirit ... blessed are they who mourn ... the persecuted" He promised that when we turn to God in times of trial, we will be comforted and cared for. When He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart ... those who hunger and thirst



for righteousness," He was showing us that a holy heart will receive what it desires. When He described "the meek ... the merciful ... the peacemakers," He gave us a blueprint for how to act.

We can measure our behavior against these standards. When we are faithful to God in tempting moments, and translate holy inner attitudes into outward actions, we'll know we're on the right path to holiness. When we live by the Beatitudes, we'll be truly happy.

## Q & A What qualities can I pursue to make me a better follower of Jesus?

Actually, when you were baptized, made your First Communion, or got Confirmed, the Holy Spirit conferred gifts to help you grow in strength and holiness. Recognizing these gifts and nurturing them will certainly make you a better Christian.

**Wisdom:** This gift helps us stay focused on God's will and His plan for us.

**Understanding:** Lets us grasp truths. It means seeing with the heart and the mind.

**Counsel:** Also called "right judgment," counsel enables us to weigh alternatives to make the right choice.

**Fortitude:** The ability to remain firm against pressure. (Also called courage.)

**Knowledge:** A person with knowledge sees more than one dimension of an issue to determine the right path.

**Piety:** Helps us think of ourselves as children of God and be eager to serve Him.

**Fear of the Lord:** The wonder and awe God inspires encourages us to respect Him and all his creations.

The more you use these gifts, the more you will grow in faith and holiness. Then you will certainly become a better Christian.

## Feasts & Celebrations

**January 2 – St. Gregory Nazianzen (389).** Known as "The Theologian" for his faithfulness and eloquence, St. Gregory was unwillingly made Bishop of Sasima. He worked to clarify the Church's teachings about the Holy Trinity.

**January 16 – St. Berard and Companions (1220).** St. Francis of Assisi sent St. Berard and his companions to evangelize in the Muslim territories. After being arrested in Morocco, they were martyred after refusing to stop preaching and renounce their Faith.

**January 23 – St. Marianne Cope**

(1918). St. Marianne began religious life as an educator in New York schools, and later became a nurse. In 1883, she helped St. Damien de Veuster serve the leper colonies of Hawaii, continuing his work after his death.

**January 25 – Conversion of St. Paul (1st Century).** Formally called "Saul", he persecuted the Christians until Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, saying, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). After that, Saul became Paul and traveled around the known world, preaching the Faith.



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To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)