

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

January 2022

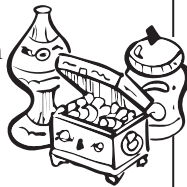
St. Mary's Nativity Church

Rev. Clyde Mahler, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

Laying our gifts at the feet of the King

The three Wise Men gave Jesus gifts worthy of a king. We can also present Him with our own royal gifts. While ours may not be actual gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we can still give to Him the best we have. Give God the first and the best of what you have and He will give you more than you can imagine in return.



Fall in love with God

From the moment God created you, he has been deeply in love with you. He made you deliberately so he could love you. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5). He waits for you like a parent anticipates the return of a beloved child. Don't let Him wait long.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5).



Who needs Jesus?

Many today say that they don't have a need for Jesus. They go to work, have homes, put food on their tables, raise families without His help. In fact, daily activities go on but the world can't really make sense without Him.

Truth. The truth is in Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). We cannot understand the truth without Him. To make sense of the world, we need Jesus to lead us.

Life. The life we have will eventually end. To keep living, we need Jesus. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father,

but by me" (John 14:6). Eternal life comes through Him.

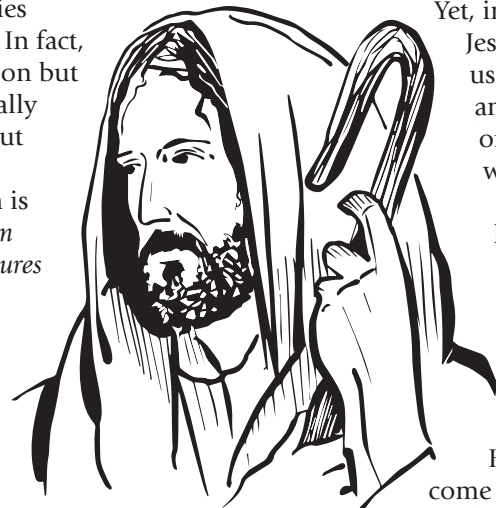
Death. None of us escapes death.

Yet, in the Resurrection, Jesus defeated death for us. It didn't hold Him and He offers the gift of life to each of us if we live in Him.

Sin. Even the holiest of us sins. Without Jesus, what becomes of us? He "gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). If we don't accept

His price, our sins come back to us for eternity.

Suffering. Modern science can alleviate but not eliminate some of the world's suffering. Jesus provides comfort and healing to those who trust Him and surrender to Him.



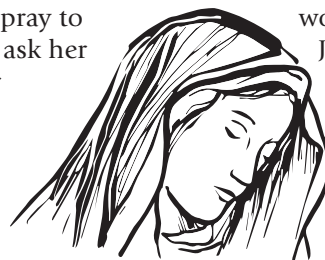
Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics pray to Mary?

Catholics don't pray to Mary, but instead ask her to pray for us. For example, the Hail Mary prayer asks the Mother of God to stay close to us in prayer.

While we don't

worship Mary, we honor her as Jesus' mother. On the Cross, Jesus gave her to us as our own mother (John 19:27). We can approach her with our needs and concerns and ask her to present them to Her Son. Mary always leads us to Him.



Three tips to boost your prayer

Prayer fuels our spiritual life, but praying effectively can be challenging. Even the saints had dry spells. Among these was the mystic and Carmelite reformer, **St. Teresa of Avila**. Try these suggestions from her to enliven your prayer:

Become aware of God's presence. It may feel as if God is distant, but He is so close. St. Teresa began by enjoying God's nearness. Know that He is with you and wants your company.

Bring a good book. St. Teresa, who struggled with dryness in prayer, kept a book with her. Scripture,



Lives of the Saints, or a book about the Faith can help us focus and spark conversation with Him.

Be honest. It is said that St. Teresa once fell into the mud and told God bluntly, "If this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few of them!" God wants to you to share all your experiences with Him – good and bad. Entrust your cares to Him and "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5).

from Scripture

Luke 4:21-30, God's will is unexpected

In this Gospel, Jesus returns to Nazareth after launching His public ministry. He announced He is the Messiah of Isaiah's prophecy. But then comes a twist: Jesus recounts a time when great prophets were sent to call Israel to repentance and were ignored and persecuted.

The response of faith God was looking for in His Chosen People was found elsewhere, in the Gentiles. Jesus' listeners doubted that He was really the Messiah and were deeply insulted at being reminded that "foreigners" had received God's favor instead of them. In anger, they threw Jesus out of the synagogue and tried to



cast Him off a cliff. He passed unharmed through their midst.

God's will can surprise us. For example, He willed that the Messiah-King be a local carpenter. God's favor extended beyond the Chosen People to include Gentiles, who were considered outsiders. Sometimes, we assume we know how God works, and lose faith when He does something that seems illogical. We can pray for the faith to see Jesus as He really is and trust Him, even if He does the unexpected.

Q & A Can you suggest a New Year's resolution to grow in Holiness?

All Christians are called to holiness. "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). There are three tools on which every Catholic can rely to attain greater holiness.



Daily prayer. God meets us in a very real and present way when we come to him in prayer. Start in the morning and pray throughout the day.

Weekly Mass. The Mass is a sacrifice and a meal. We receive Jesus' body and blood as real food for our souls. He said, "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:55-56).

That's why we call it, "Communion." **Monthly Confession.** Jesus created the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Confession) because he knew we would stray. He also knew we would want to come back. Frequent participation in this Sacrament sharpens our sense of sin, holds us accountable for our errors, and gives us the grace to keep trying for holiness.

Feasts & Celebrations

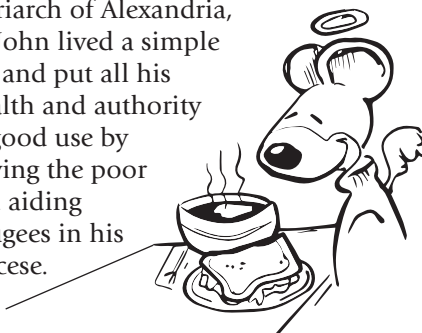
Jan. 1 – Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. When we celebrate this feast, we honor Mary, and also Jesus, as true God and true Man.

Jan. 9 – Baptism of the Lord. Jesus began his public ministry by getting baptized by St. John the Baptist. The Heavens opened up and God the Father spoke, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

Jan. 14 – St. Macrina the Elder (340). St. Macrina was related to St. Basil the Elder and St. Macrina the

Younger. She and her husband were forced to flee during the Diocletian persecutions and endured many hardships. After her return, she helped raise her grandchildren Saints Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great.

Jan. 23 – St. John the Almsgiver (616). Despite being a noble and the Patriarch of Alexandria, St. John lived a simple life and put all his wealth and authority to good use by serving the poor and aiding refugees in his diocese.



Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

Success Publishing & Media, LLC
Publishers of Growing in Faith™ and Partners in Faith™
(540)662-7844 (540)662-7847 fax
<http://www.growinginfaith.com>

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