

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

January 2024

St. Bernard of Clairvaux
Rev. Jack Gleason

One Minute Meditations

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys

Born at Troyes, France in 1620, St. Marguerite consecrated

herself to God and became a missionary. A friend introduced her to the mayor of Ville Marie (now Montreal) in Canada and, on his invitation, traveled to the New World to teach. With several others, she founded the Congregation of Notre-Dame de Montreal – a non-cloistered teaching order that was formally approved in 1676. By her death in 1700, she was called "Mother of the Colony."

Celebrate life

January is the month during which our Church celebrates life. This is when we take time to recognize that we are all reflections of God and have great value in His eyes from the moment of conception to a natural death. Celebrating life means being pro-human every day of the year.

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind" (Isaiah 65:17).



This year, don't neglect "the one thing needful"

When St. Martha complained to Jesus that her sister, Mary, was sitting at His feet instead of helping to host Him, He corrected Martha for neglecting the "one thing ... needful" (Luke 10:42) – intimacy with Him. In the New Year, resolve not to neglect the "one thing needful" and remain intimate with Him.

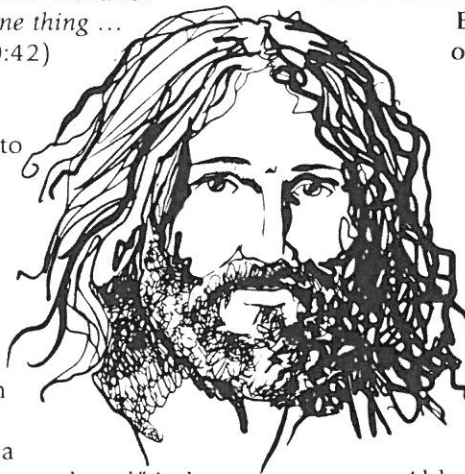
Build an "inner chapel." While on mission in the world, St. Catherine of Siena maintained an "inner chapel" in her soul to speak with God, heart to heart. Jesus urged us to do the same (Matthew 6:6). Shut out the world for a while and take refuge in your inner chapel every day.

Sit at His feet. Mary believed in Jesus and gave Him her best. He must be our hope, our salvation, our all. This is absolutely necessary.

Encounter Him in others. Mother Teresa said, "Until you can hear Jesus in the silence of your own heart, you will not be able to hear Him saying 'I thirst' in the hearts of the poor." The closer we grow to God, the better we'll "see" and love Him in others.

Serve Him.

Although Mary wasn't waiting on Christ like Martha, she was ministering to him in a deeper and truer sense. No one serves Christ better than by hearing His Words and doing His will.

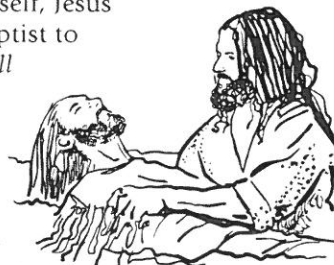


Why Do Catholics Do That?

Although sinless Himself, Jesus allowed St. John the Baptist to baptize Him to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). By this action, Jesus signaled His willingness to take away our sins by His death and bring us new life by His Resurrection. It

Why was Jesus was baptized?

was also by His baptism that Jesus instituted Baptism as a Sacrament – the Sacrament by which we're sanctified and recreated as children of God. We are mystically baptized into Jesus' death, to be raised by Him in glory.



Reclaim the Name

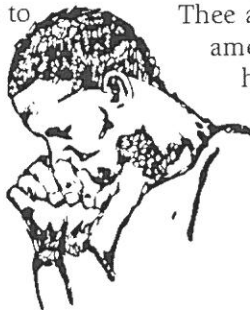
January is the month traditionally devoted to honoring the holy name of Jesus. What can we do to reclaim reverence for His name in a culture that considers it to be just another word?

Bow your head. *"At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth"* (Philippians 2:10). Make a slight, reverent nod whenever you hear Jesus' name in public, in conversation, on TV or in movies.

Offer a prayer. Don't hesitate to ask others not to misuse God's or Jesus' names. If they don't

respond, offer a prayer of reparation: "I kneel before Thee and offer Thee reparation; I would make amends for all the blasphemies uttered against Thy holy name."

Don't normalize blasphemy. Curate the media you watch, listen to, or sing along with. Avoid songs, shows, or movies in which Jesus's name is disrespected. We are called to strive for holiness, not worldliness. More importantly, it's a way to give Christ the reverence and love He is due.

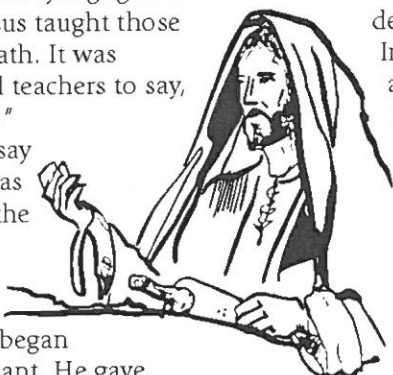


from Scripture

Mark 1:21-28, What God says happens

In this Gospel passage, Jesus and His apostles entered the synagogue at Capernaum where Jesus taught those gathered on the Sabbath. It was customary for learned teachers to say, "Thus says the Lord..." Instead Jesus said, "I say to you ..." He taught as one who spoke with the authority of God.

His calm authority astounded Jesus' listeners. Just as they began to wonder what it meant, He gave them a sign. He further demonstrated His authority by performing an exorcism. Spirits that bedeviled an unfortunate man at the synagogue recognized who Jesus was.



They were forced to obey Him when He commanded them to depart, despite their reluctance. In fact, God's power and authority isn't just a formality. What God says, happens.

Our kind and gentle Savior is also our powerful and awesome Lord. As the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus has supreme majesty and we will one day appear before Him to be judged. Yes, He is our divine savior and mediator. But if we say, "Jesus is Lord," then we give Him our loyalty and obedience.

Q & A What to do when prayer feels flat.

"I just don't feel close to God." "Is He really listening?" In fact, God is constantly pursuing us in love, wanting to share His joy with us (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1). Yet, even the most passionate prayer life can feel flat sometimes. Try these tips to keep prayer fresh:



Cultivate gratitude.

Although God never abandons us, factors like health or mood can affect our prayer. St. Alphonsus Liguori recommended, "Often recall the loving way in which [God] has acted toward you." Reviewing our blessings helps us appreciate God's love for us over time.

Don't wait to ask for help. God's heart is always opened to us. "Good" prayer happens when we're honest with Him. This is an exercise of faith, which He generously rewards.

Treat Him with love. God wants a relationship of love, respect, and faithfulness with each of us. If prayer feels empty, try treating God with the love, consideration, and tenderness you give and receive from those closest to you. It will make a difference!

Feasts & Celebrations

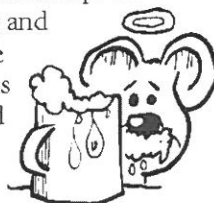
January 1 – Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. When we celebrate this feast, we honor Mary, but also acknowledge Jesus as true God and true Man.

January 8 – Baptism of the Lord (1st Century). Jesus began His public ministry by getting baptized by St. John the Baptist. Jesus was to be baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). This was also when God reveals Jesus as His "beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17).

January 26 – St. Paula (404). After

her husband – a Roman senator named Toxotius – died, St. Paula gave up her wealthy lifestyle for the Gospel, devoting herself to prayer, poverty, and charitable works. She also befriended and supported St. Jerome in translating the Vulgate.

January 31 – St. John Bosco (1888). Moved by the plight of the young, abandoned boys in Rome, St. John opened the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and provided workshops for them in shoemaking and tailoring. In 1859, he founded the Salesians who were committed to education and mission work.



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