

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

April 2024

Holy Family Church

A community empowered through the Holy Spirit to promote the Kingdom of God

One Minute Meditations

St. Gemma Galgani

Born in Tuscany to a devout family, St. Gemma was attracted to prayer early on, mystically conversing with Jesus, Mary, and her Guardian Angel. Although she was hard working, kind, and a good student, her ecstasies earned her ridicule. She received the stigmata (wounds of Christ) in her body. She lost half her family to tuberculosis and struggled with poor health herself. Although this prevented her from entering the Passionist Order, she was posthumously accepted by them. .



We are one Body

On the road to Damascus, Jesus told Saul that when he attacked Christians, he attacked Jesus. "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 26:15). Our Lord cannot be separated from the members of his Body. We stand united with all who suffer for Christ.

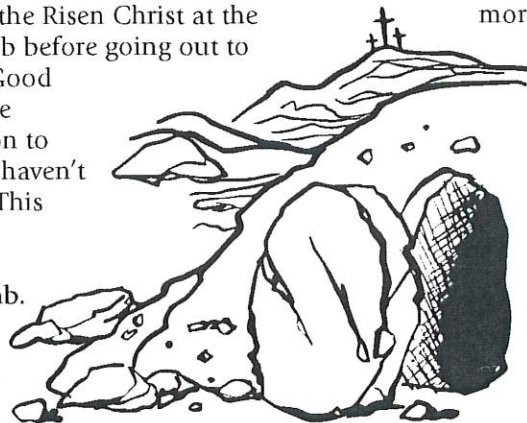
"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:84).



This Easter, meet Christ at the empty tomb

The Resurrection, more than Jesus' other miracles or teachings, shows His divinity and His Lordship over creation, and His victory over death. Every Easter Sunday, we're called to encounter the Risen Christ at the empty tomb before going out to bring the Good News of the Resurrection to those who haven't yet heard. This Easter:

Visit the empty tomb. Scripture is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12), so the events of Jesus' life can still impact us today when we pray with them. During the Easter season, read through John 20:1-18, and picture yourself there. Read with an open heart. No one who meets the Risen Christ remains unchanged.



Renew your commitment to Him. Can you remember a moment when Christ called your name and invited you to follow Him? Renew your commitment to follow Christ more faithfully this Easter.

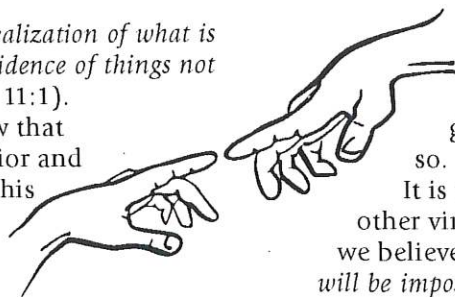
Commit to daily prayer. Offer your errands for the souls in Purgatory. Resolve to go to Confession more often. Don't let anything get in the way of weekly Mass.

"Go to my brothers and tell them" (John 20:17). Our job is to make more disciples for Jesus

(Matthew 28:19). Invite someone to Mass, pass on inspiring spiritual reading, answer questions about our Faith, be ready to talk about your love for God and your hope for eternity (1 Peter 3:15).

Why Do Catholics Do That?

"Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Christians know that Jesus is our Savior and our lives are in his hands. We also know that by virtue of his



Why do Catholics need faith?

suffering, death, and Resurrection, we have hope of sharing in his glory in Heaven. He said so.

It is through faith that all the other virtues flow. Through faith we believe, "For with God, nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

3 Ways to be a better communicator

When people encountered Jesus, they knew they were heard, seen, known, and loved by the Father. A large part of this was how He conversed with them. As Christ's disciples aiming to convey the same message, we can become better communicators with these three skills:

Know which conversation you're having. There are three types of conversations: social, emotional, and practical. Maybe someone offered a solution in which a listening ear was needed or made a corny joke at the wrong time. When in doubt, say something like: "Do you want me to fix this or just listen?"



Ask good questions. Jesus asked questions about people's values, past experiences, and perceptions.

Ask open-ended questions, find out what interests them, ask their opinion on a given topic. Seek to understand them. You don't have to agree.

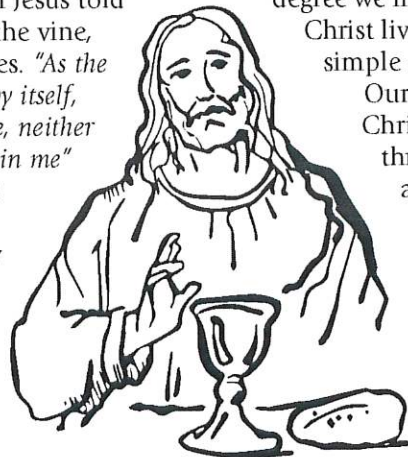
Really listen. Recall the rich young man whom Jesus looked at with love before challenging him to follow Him (Mark 10:21). Avoid checking your phone or thinking about your next response. Give the gift of your full attention.

from Scripture

John 15:1-8, Bearing fruit that will last

This Gospel passage takes us back to the Last Supper, when Jesus told His disciples that He is the vine, and they are the branches. *"As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me"* (John 15:4). This shows the closeness of the friendship and intimacy Christ wants to draw us into.

Yet, this isn't just a luxury for the few, but a vital necessity for all. *"For apart from me you can do nothing"* (15:5). As Jesus is who He says He is (God), then we can only have a truly fulfilling,



meaningful, fruitful life to the degree we live in Christ and Christ lives in us. It really is as simple as that.

Our connection with Christ is nourished through daily prayer and the Eucharist, and is healed in Confession. We are part of the Vine when we humbly obey Christ's commands, carry out our duties and acts of kindness with love, and offer our sufferings to God. Only then will our lives bear lasting fruit.

Q & A What is a Spiritual Communion?

Pandemic lockdowns that prevented us from attending Mass in person prompted the rediscovery of Spiritual Communion, the "ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him" (St. Thomas Aquinas). Thankfully, we have returned to in-person Mass

attendance, but we can still benefit from this devotion. Spiritual Communion keeps us connected to Christ and deepens our awareness of His love throughout the day. Best friends don't only see or speak to each other once a week or when they need something. They stay in contact daily. Certainly, we have no closer friend than God.

The saints encouraged frequent Spiritual Communion because the practice opens us to much-needed graces. St. Alphonsus Liguori encouraged making three Spiritual Communions during Mass – at the beginning, during the consecration, and at the end – even when we receive the Body and Blood.

Spiritual Communion isn't a substitute for Sacramental Communion. Instead, making frequent Spiritual Communion can enrich our experience when we do receive Communion in person.

Feasts & Celebrations

April 2 – St. Francis of Paola (1507). St. Francis founded the Minim Friars who lived an ascetic life. Known as a miracle-worker, he also had the gift of prophecy. He died in Plessis, in a monastery built for him by the king.

April 8 – The Annunciation of the Lord (1st century). The angel Gabriel visited the Blessed Virgin Mary with the extraordinary news of her role as the mother of God. She had confidence in God's grace and trusted His wisdom.

April 24 – St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen (1622). In his native Prussia, St. Fidelis became a lawyer and championed the poor and oppressed. He joined the Franciscans. During the Protestant Reformation, St. Fidelis worked hard to bring people back to the Catholic faith, until his martyrdom.

April 27 – St. Zita (1271). Born in Monsagrati, Italy, St. Zita became the servant of the wealthy Fatinelli family. Famous for her miracles in helping the sick, the poor, and the imprisoned, she is the patroness of domestic workers.



Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.
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Because we are Catholic



Funds raised through the **Because We are Catholic Annual Appeal** are directed to Community Services, Education, Vocations, and Parish Life programs and activities throughout the Diocese. The distribution of dollars, which are held in a Trust that is restricted for these purposes, is monitored by a group of volunteer Trust Advisors who represent parish communities in Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton, and Schuylkill Counties

COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Counseling services and pregnancy support for expectant mothers.
- Food assistance programs in Allentown, Reading, and Pottsville.
- Affordable Housing Services throughout the Diocese of Allentown.
- Senior living programs and support including care for our retired priests.



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Because we are Catholic



Why does the Diocese need to conduct the Annual Appeal?

Through the Annual Appeal, the Diocese provides funding for a wide range of services and ministries which are larger than any one parish could support. By coordinating efforts and pooling resources, the Diocese enables parishes and parishioners to serve thousands of children, adults, and families throughout Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton, and Schuylkill counties.

Are Annual Appeal Funds used to pay legal fees or settlements from the sexual abuse crisis?

No. The Annual Appeal does not fund legal fees or the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program for victims and survivors of abuse.

Why should I support the Because We Are Catholic Annual Appeal?

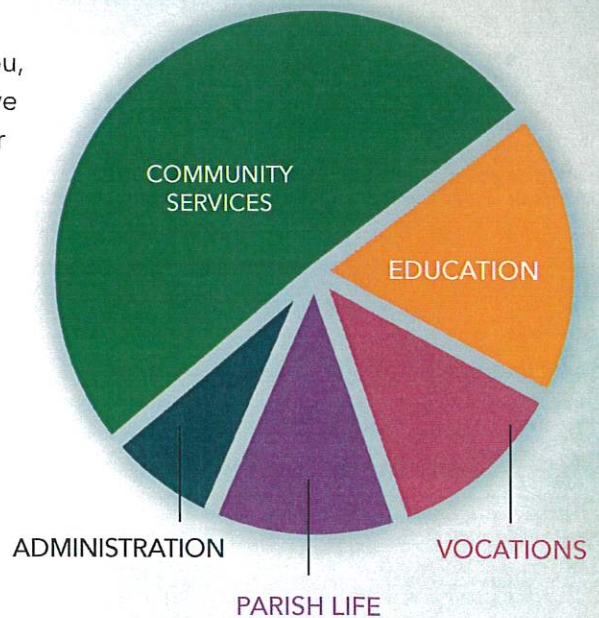
Our Catholic family of faith in the Diocese of Allentown is committed to helping those in our community who are most in need. Your support of the Annual Appeal helps to ensure that you, your loved ones, your neighbors, and your co-workers have help when it is needed. Your gift is an outward sign of your faith in God and the work of His Church.

How does the Appeal support my parish?

The Annual Appeal provides financial support for parish life programs including adult formation, marriage preparation, natural family planning, youth ministry, and outreach to our Hispanic community. Additionally, the Appeal generates incentive rebates for parishes.

How can I make a gift?

For your convenience, pledge forms are available at every parish. You can also make a gift by phone (1.800.831.4443) or online at www.BecauseWeAreCatholic.org



The administrative cost of running the Appeal is approximately \$265,000/year, which is about 7.4%. In other words, every one dollar spent on the Appeal makes an additional \$15 available for direct service, ministries, and pastoral care.

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