

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

August 2020

St. Michael's Faith Formation

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One Minute Meditations

St. Alphonsus Liguori

Born near Naples, Italy, St. Alphonsus left his successful legal career for the priesthood. He founded the Redemptorists to educate the faithful. Internal problems resulted in the Order's rejecting St. Alphonsus. Despite failing health, he was made a bishop. He lived simply and was generous with the poor. He combatted Jansenism, which imposed a burdensome, legalistic morality, and promoted a more moderate, realistic morality – one driven by love rather than guilt. He is a Doctor of the Church.



Pay God first

It takes money to do God's work in the world and the top funding source for the Catholic Church's ministries is her generous people. Set aside a portion of every paycheck for charity just as you do for your rent or mortgage. Write that check first. Your parish needs your support now, more than ever.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1).



Lean on our Faith during tough times

Throughout the history of God's dealings with humanity, He has continually brought good out of evil. During this unprecedented time of pandemic, we can remember this history and lean on Him.

Participate in weekly worship. If public Mass is not an option for you, find ways to join in worship safely. Participate in Mass online and don't miss a Sunday. Support others by setting up a prayer group or Bible study with friends through calls, chats, or online meets.

Practice listening during prayer. Even though our schedules may have slowed down, our thoughts probably have not. Make mental space to listen to and hear from the Holy Spirit, and

allow Him to bring truth and consolation.

Look for the ways God is working in the crisis. Our fear and anxiety can arise from worrying about what might happen. It helps to look for the good coming out of the crisis.

Can you spot unexpected blessings?

Create a safe space in your home. Create a place – a corner, a chair, a large closet – where you spend at least 15

prayerful minutes each day. Take this time to remember that you are not alone.

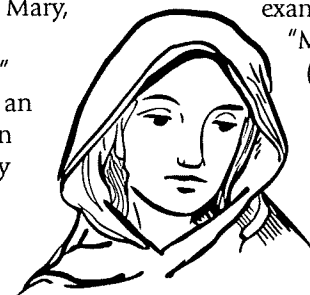
Be not afraid. Choosing to trust God is a decision we can each make. It comes from a determination to surrender with confidence knowing His love is enough.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics have so many titles for Mary?

Everything we say about Mary, ultimately, is about Jesus, including her "devotional" titles. Each title highlights an aspect of God's saving plan and Mary's role in it. Many of them have to do with her sinlessness and her motherhood. For



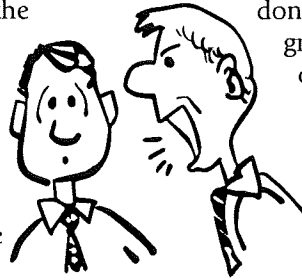
example, Mary is called the "Mirror of Justice," Theotokos ("God-bearer"), "Seat of Wisdom", "House of Gold," etc. Mary's titles – like Mary – are meant to draw our focus not to Mary, but to Jesus. Mary always leads us to her Son.

Turn conflict into growth

Criticism can bring you down if you let it. Instead, finding a gracious way to handle criticism can be the key to improving your life, attracting new friends, and becoming a better Christian.

Stay calm. The person delivering the criticism may be having a bad day or seeking attention. Or, she may really want to help and just not be skilled in delivering criticism. Staying calm and avoiding defensiveness helps you look for the rose among the nasty thorns.

Thank the commenter, no matter what is said or



how it is delivered. People who make rude comments don't expect you to listen to them, much less be grateful for their comments. Being appreciative is disarming. That's how to turn a critic into a friend.

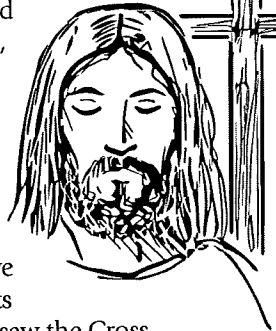
Weigh the criticism. Do the comments contain something helpful you can use to become a better person? Is the person trying to help, to make things better, to keep you from repeating mistakes, to suggest positive improvements? If not, forget it and move on without anger.

from Scripture

Matthew 16:21-27, Our ways are not God's ways

This passage seems like bad news. First, Jesus predicts his own death. This must have shocked the disciples, to whom it was just revealed that their Master was the long-awaited Messiah. Instead of an epic, Roman-conquering battle plan, Jesus told them he would be executed – seemingly tragedy and defeat, not joy and triumph.

Second, Peter did what we often do when God permits setbacks and suffering. He saw the Cross and wanted to flee – and was harshly rebuked. Yet, if Jesus listened to Peter and turned aside, we would have died in our



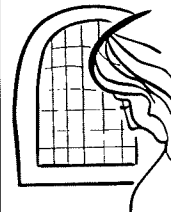
sins, unable to get into Heaven. Instead, he chose the Cross – for us. He chose us. Through our post-Resurrection lens, what seemed a devastating defeat was actually a decisive victory against sin and death.

Let's be clear: our Father wants us to be happy, but he wants us to be happy forever, not just for today. The key is not to avoid the crosses he sends us, but to accept them trustingly, peacefully, as

Jesus did. Jesus helps us carry our crosses, with him taking the heavier end.

Q & A Can the seal of Confession ever be broken?

The seal of Confession refers to the silence binding a priest, under severe penalties, about what he hears in Confession. "[The priest] can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitents' lives." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1467). The penitents are not bound by the seal.



The only two "exceptions" are: If the penitent wants to discuss his previous confession to Fr. X with him, Fr. X must first ask the penitent's permission. Or, if a priest needed guidance from another confessor, he must still ask the penitent's permission and keep the penitent's identity a secret.

In truth, in the Sacrament of Confession the penitent is really addressing Jesus Christ, not the priest, who is simply the "phone line" between the two parties. The purpose of the seal is to encourage people to approach the Lord in complete confidence and experience his mercy. While this enforced silence may seem strange and possibly problematic, the first priority is the salvation of souls. The rest is entrusted to God.

Feasts & Celebrations

Aug. 10 – St. Lawrence (258). A Roman deacon to Pope St. Sixtus II, St. Lawrence presented the poor and destitute as the Church's treasure, in answer to Rome's demands for the church's gold. He was martyred shortly afterwards.

Aug. 15 - The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1950). Declared a dogma of our faith by Pope Pius XII, the Assumption celebrates Mary being taken up into Heaven body and soul at the end of her life. Note: This year, this is NOT a Holy Day of Obligation.

Aug. 25 – St. Joseph Calasanz (1648). Seeing the suffering of neglected children, this Spanish priest founded the Clerks Regular of Pious Schools, called the Piarists to educate them. He suffered opposition for his work, which he bore with patience and humility.

Aug. 27 – St. Monica of Hippo (387). St. Monica is best known for converting her wayward son and pagan husband by her patience, piety, and prayers. Her son, St. Augustine, became a great saint of the Church.



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