

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope** and **joy** in the Catholic faith.

February 2021

Immaculate Conception Church Family
Rev. Randy C. Tochtrop, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

Struggle and prayer

During hard times, we can bring our true emotions, concerns, and fears into prayer. Lay it all at the feet of Jesus. Let His wisdom and love provide confidence and hope, even when our own emotions are in disarray.

Struggling is normal and helpful to growing in faith. Standing before God in truth is a sign that we are in a right relationship with Him.

The human person

Human beings are the clearest reflection of God among us. That makes human life sacred. The Catholic Church proclaims that the dignity of human life is the foundation of a moral vision for society.

Catholics are called to work to uphold the dignity and rights of all people. Catholics work for the good of everyone, especially working to support marriage and family.

"In all created things discern the providence and wisdom of God, and in all things give Him thanks"

(St. Teresa of Avila).



Grow in love during Lent

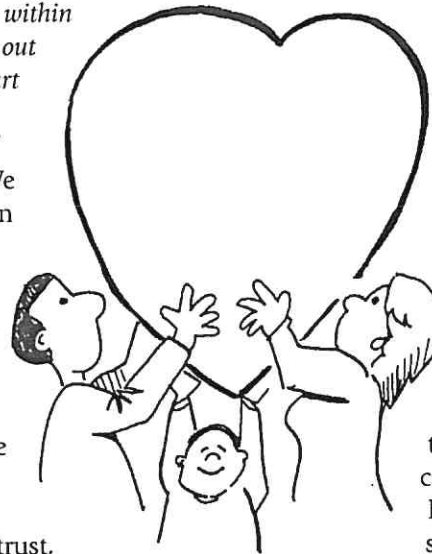
The point of the season of Lent is to transform our hearts – to become new, ready to greet our new life at Easter. "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). We can use this time in the desert to live lives of love for God and for one another.

Affirmation: Recognizing and acknowledging the valuable qualities of a beloved builds feelings of trust, safety, and wellbeing. Offer God praise from your heart. Don't keep

it to yourself, speak it out loud. Tell others how awesome He is and what He can do for them.

Attention: Spending time with God, one on one, is vital to getting through the day in His friendship. Give Him your attention each day, tell Him everything, and listen to what He says back to you. Being a good listener will benefit all your relationships, too.

Gifts: There is no point trying to impress God. He needs nothing that we have. However, we can give Him a gift from the heart. We can tithe, offer service, attend Mass, repent, change our lives to live His law. We can act as His hands and feet on Earth.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God, asking for good things in harmony with His will. Christian prayer is the lifeblood of an intimate relationship of the children of God with their Father, with

Why do Catholics pray?

his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit who dwells in their hearts.

All religions, and salvation history in particular, testifies to the human desire for God. And God continues to draw every person to the mysterious encounter known as prayer.



Simple ways to live a better life

One consequence of a protracted pandemic is that we are almost forced to rethink the way we go about our daily lives. It's a good time to think about simplifying the way we live:

Live in the moment. We can't change the past and dwelling on the future is unproductive. The choices we make right now are all that count.

Avoid drama. There will always be someone whose situation is worse than our own. If you find yourself seeking attention and sympathy from other people – or get drawn in by

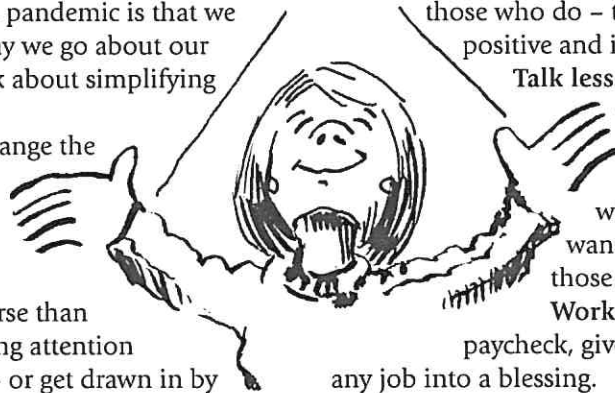
those who do – try substituting activities you find positive and interesting instead. Prayer helps.

Talk less. Weigh your words before you say them. Spend more time listening.

Spend time with happy people.

Connect in safe and healthy ways with people who are positive and want to improve their lives. Let go of those who drain your energy.

Work happy. No matter how you earn a paycheck, give it your very best effort. That turns any job into a blessing.



from Scripture

Luke 9:23-36, Lingering on the mountaintop

While the Transfiguration was a fantastic encounter, it was not particularly joyful. Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about "his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem" (9:31). They referred to Jesus' death, as the shadow of the Cross loomed. Like Moses' exodus from slavery in Egypt however, Jesus' exodus would deliver His people from the slavery of sin.

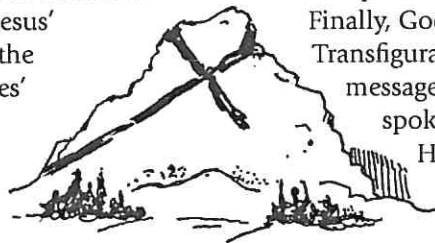
When he offered to build shelters for the three men, Peter clearly wanted to remain on the mountaintop in this holy moment. Sometimes we have an

inspiring experience and want to stay there avoiding the realities of daily life. Yet, like Jesus, we cannot linger on the mountaintop but must come down to take our place in the Kingdom.

Finally, God used the Transfiguration to speak a message – the same one He spoke at Jesus' baptism.

He confirmed Jesus as His son, the Messiah, and added, "Listen to

Him." The son of God has God's power and authority. If we believe that Jesus is the son of God, then surely we will want to do what He says.



Q & A

Is it possible for real people to be holy?

On its simplest level, being holy means living a life centered on God. This is done by talking with Him continuously, imitating His behavior, and respecting His creations. It also means being part of the Church He established on Earth to help us be holy. Try this:



Talk to God. Spending time together is the best way to get to know God better.

Practice sharing. God wants us to take care of each other. Look for ways to share your money, time, and talents with someone who needs them.

Celebrate the Sacraments. Make Sunday Mass the highlight of your week. Attend if you can do it safely, stream it if you can't. Just don't miss it.

Be a voice in the wilderness. When you notice an injustice, speak out and take action. Treat all people with the dignity they deserve as children of God.

Share your faith. Talk about God with anyone who will listen. We can't keep His love to ourselves. We have to pass it on.

Feasts & Celebrations

February 11 – Our Lady of Lourdes (1858). A heavenly lady who called herself, "The Immaculate Conception," appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous, a poor girl from a village in France. After the first vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a spring with miraculous healing waters emerged from a nearby cave.

February 17 – Ash Wednesday. Marking the first day of Lent, ashes from the palms of the previous Passion Sunday are blessed and placed on the forehead as a sign of penance. One form of Lenten observance is to pray before the Stations of the Cross,

meditating on Jesus' walk to Calvary.

February 22 – St. Peter's Chair (1st century). We celebrate St. Peter's establishment of the Holy See and pray for the preservation of God's Church.

February 23 – St. Polycarp (156). As Bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp faithfully cared for his flock despite being surrounded by pagans and a government opposed to his religion. Before being martyred, he thanked God for making him worthy of a martyr's death.



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