

Growing in FAITH™

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

January 2010

One Minute Meditations

A fresh start

The New Year offers the chance to make a fresh start. Choose one area you would like to change in yourself or your life, making sure it is reasonable and doable. Each day, renew your commitment to the change you chose. Then partner with the Holy Spirit to make a fresh start.

People of God

What do people of God look like? *"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience"* (Colossians 3:12). People of God are the hosts, not the guests. They comfort rather than seek comfort. They give rather than demand. People of God look like Christ.

God's shoulders

As Catholics we know that we can trust God to give us what we need, but do we really trust God? *"Do not be afraid; just have faith"* (Mark 5:36). Lean on God with your whole weight. His shoulders can take it.



God gives credit for good effort

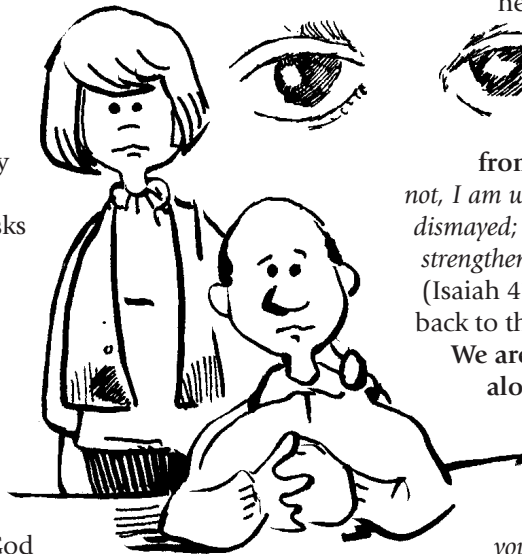
Even though we intend to grow in holiness, life sometimes gets in the way.

Household expenses can leave little for charity, work may take away from family time, daily tasks encroach on prayer time, and so on. It can be discouraging when we stumble, but it's important to keep trying. God watches our efforts with loving eyes.

God knows we won't always get it right. Our Father understands that we are human and that we struggle. Even Peter, Jesus' close friend, promised complete devotion to Jesus but then

denied even knowing him (John 13:37-38). Not only did Jesus forgive him, he made Peter the first head of his beloved Church. Don't let fear of failure keep you from trying again. *"Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed; I am your God. I will strengthen you, and help you"* (Isaiah 41:10). The key is to get back to the plan.

We aren't meant to do it alone. Jesus is our partner and wants to help us get it right. *"Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me"* (John 15:4). *"Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power"* (Ephesians 6:10).

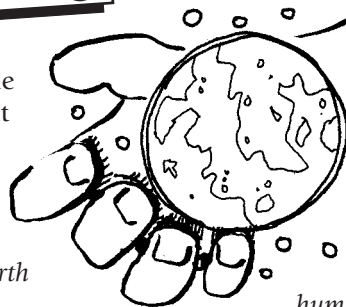


Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics believe God created the world?

How God created the world is a mystery but the Bible tells us he did. The first words are, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ..."* (Genesis 1:1).

Further references throughout



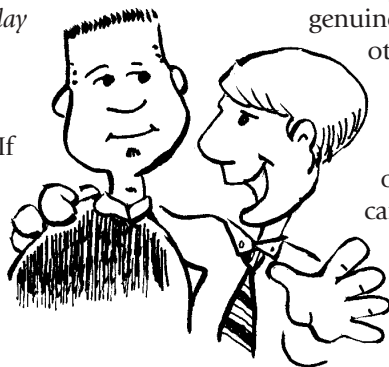
include, *"... Look at the heavens and the earth and see all that is in them; then you will know that God did not make them out of existing things; and in the same way the human race came into existence"* (2 Maccabees 7:28).

No greater love ...

There wasn't much Jesus wouldn't do for his friends. He said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). Consider these suggestions for becoming a better friend:

Make spending time together a priority. If schedules are a problem, combine visits with other activities. Meet after Mass on Sunday. Run errands together. Have coffee before going to work.

Help others feel important. Give your full attention in conversation, and show appreciation for what is said.



Celebrate your friends' successes. A true friend is genuinely happy when something good happens in the other's life.

Value differences. Don't try to change your friends. Celebrate their diversity.

Apologize when necessary. You may let each other down once in a while but a sincere apology can bring friends closer together.

Don't forget old friends. Call someone you haven't been in touch with for a long time.

Don't know what to say? Try, "I don't want another moment to go by without being in touch. I've missed you."

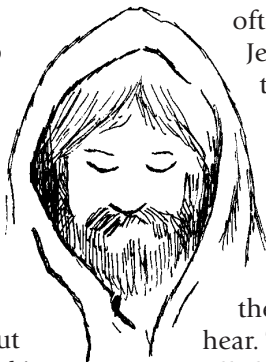
from Scripture

Luke 4:21-30, Live the truth

From the time God promised a Messiah, his people imagined a triumphant king with extraordinary abilities who would defeat Israel's enemies. They didn't expect someone ordinary, or even familiar, like Jesus.

Still, his friends and neighbors heard reports about his amazing deeds and were excited when he read Isaiah's prophesy about the Messiah and announced its fulfillment in him.

All of that changed when they heard the tough message Jesus had for the children of Israel. They wanted a



comforting message from him, not one that reminds them of how often they failed God. And when Jesus mentioned God's grace to the Gentiles, people they thought inferior to themselves, the people became angry and threw him out. They forfeited his blessings because they rejected his word.

There is no substitute for the truth, even when it is hard to hear. Turning our backs on the truth will close the doors to the kingdom to us. For a follower of Jesus, there is no substitute for the truth. Living it is the only way to enjoy God's blessings and grace.

Q & A What is wrong with talking about other people?

Talking about other people can hurt you and them.

Even if you meant no harm but disclosed something that wasn't true and caused a negative impression of someone, you could be guilty of a serious sin called, "calumny." Plus, fixing what you created is nearly impossible.



If you believe the negative reports you hear about others without verifying the facts, you will be guilty of rash judgment. False reports contributed to Jesus' condemnation and death. Having suffered from them, one can imagine that Jesus takes a dim view of calumny and rash judgment.

"Detraction," is another serious sin that involves disclosing someone's faults or misdeeds to listeners who didn't know about them, without an objectively good reason. Such a disclosure almost always impacts a reputation.

Rather than risk hurting someone or sinning yourself, follow grandma's wise advice, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all."

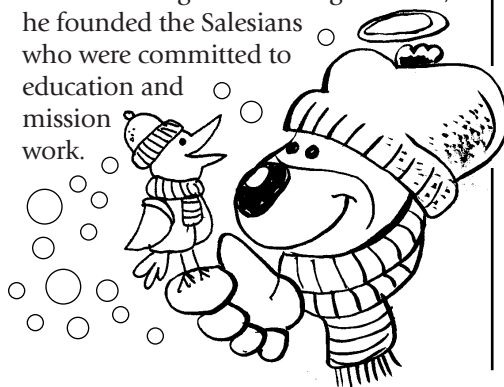
Feasts & Celebrations

In January we celebrate the Holy Name of Jesus. "...at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Philippians 2:10). The English letters IHS –the first three Greek letters in Jesus' name – used to be written over the doors of Christian homes.

January 3 – Epiphany of Our Lord. Epiphany is Greek for "manifestation." When they honored the infant Jesus, the three wise men bore witness to the fulfillment of God's promise of a savior.

January 10 – The Baptism of the Lord. Jesus began his public ministry by

getting baptized by St. John the Baptist. **January 31 – St. John Bosco (1888).** St. John Bosco taught young men and women how to incorporate their spiritual life into their work and play. He opened the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and provided workshops for boys in shoemaking and tailoring. In 1859, he founded the Salesians who were committed to education and mission work.



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