

# Growing in FAITH™

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

December 2012

## One Minute Meditations

### Holiday advice

The holiday season is an exciting time but it can also be a time when money worries, family worries, and every kind of worry intrudes. Instead, try to follow this advice from St. Paul, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things, (Philippians 4:8).

### Make it last

Since the Church's real Christmas season doesn't even start until Christmas Day, you can actually celebrate the whole season and make your Christmas joy last. Feast of the Holy Family, December 30th. Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, January 1st. The Epiphany, January 6th. And the last day is The Baptism of Our Lord, January 13th.

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).



## Awaken to the presence of God on Christmas morning

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). An amazing truth occurred at the first Christmas. God came and lived among us. Even more amazing is that he continues to live among us. Try these tips to sharpen your awareness of his presence.

### Begin each day in his presence.

When you first wake up in the morning, but before you get out of bed, place yourself in his presence. Take a few minutes to focus on a sacred picture or an image that will help you to "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

**Seek God's Word.** Start your day with Scripture such as the daily mass readings

(found on [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)) or another reading you choose. Ask God to teach you during the day from that selection.

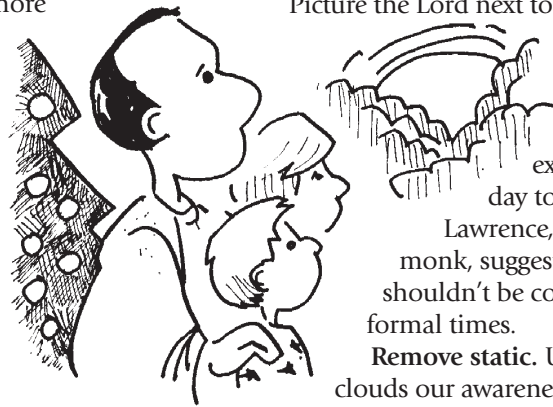
### Speak to him throughout the day.

Picture the Lord next to you throughout your day and talk with him as you experience the day together. Brother Lawrence, a 17th century

monk, suggested prayer shouldn't be confined to formal times.

**Remove static.** Unconfessed sin clouds our awareness of God's presence. Do an examination of conscience daily and visit the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least monthly.

**Pray.** Tell Jesus everything and ask for help in every difficulty. Jesus promised that he will never leave us.

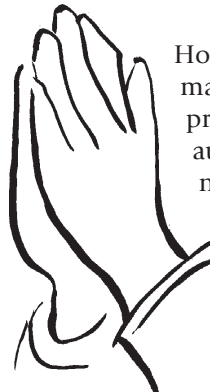


## Why Do Catholics Do That?

A novena is a cycle of prayers offered for a particular purpose spanning nine days, usually one day a week for nine weeks. It consists of prescribed prayers and devotions and usually includes reception of the Sacrament of Penance and

## Why do Catholics say novenas?

Holy Communion. It can be made in common in church or in private. There are 36 novenas authorized by the Church. The nine days are in commemoration of the nine days the Apostles spent in prayer between the Ascension and Pentecost.



## Christmas isn't always pretty

At Christmas time, our nativity sets usually show an idyllic scene of Mary and Joseph kneeling at Jesus' crib with shepherds and kings worshipping in the background. But that's probably not how it was. Being a follower of Jesus isn't always that pretty.

Remember, Mary and Joseph traveled in the last stages of her pregnancy from Nazareth to Bethlehem. On foot or donkey, it was a dirty and exhausting journey. Once there, they had to stay in a stable with animals. After a short time,



they fled to Egypt with their newborn to escape danger, and stayed there for several years. There wasn't a lot of standing around gazing adoringly at the Baby.

Refugees all over the world flee from violence like the Holy Family. Catholics have a special task to protect them and all the most vulnerable: the children, the elderly, and the poor. God has a special job for each of us in his mission of salvation. Ask God what he is calling you to do for him.

### from Scripture

#### Luke 2:41-52; Jesus is found in the temple

The Feast of the Holy Family (Dec. 30) includes the story of finding Jesus in the Temple, a story of love and obedience. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover, as was the custom for Jews of that time. They traveled in a large group for protection against bandits who infested the hill country. So it wasn't surprising that his parents didn't miss Jesus as they started the return trip. Upon discovering him missing, they hurried back to Jerusalem.

On the third day of searching, they found Jesus in the Temple. He was

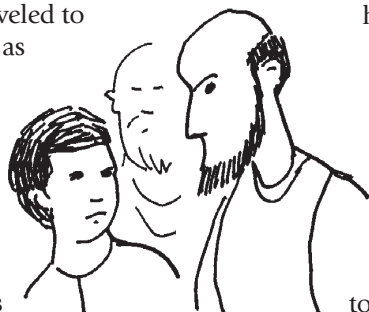
questioning the priests and amazing them with his understanding. However, Mary asked how he could have caused his parents so much worry and Jesus

replied, "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?"

Though they were puzzled by his answer, Mary and Joseph took Jesus back to Nazareth. He

remained there in

obedience to his parents until it was time for his public ministry. We learn from this story to obey not only God but also those in authority over us.



### Q & A What does the Holy Spirit do for us?

Among the many offices the third member of the Holy Trinity performs, we receive gifts from the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Just like a tree can produce fruit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit produce fruits. The fruits "are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of

eternal glory. The Church lists twelve of them: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1832*)

These fruits help us to live the two great commandments: "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your soul... You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31)

As long as we are in a state of grace, the fruits will keep us in harmony with God and with each other. When we exercise the fruits, we follow Christ's example and model to those around us. They are the essence of living the Christian life.

**Our Mission**

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)

### Feasts & Celebrations

**Dec. 14 – St. John of the Cross (1591).** St. John led a reform in the Carmelite order to encourage more prayer and simplicity. Because of a misunderstanding, he was jailed for nine months, but some of his beautiful spiritual and inspiring writing came from this experience. His mystical-poetical reflections showed his love of prayer.

**Dec. 21 – St. Peter Canisius (1597).** Born in Holland, he was ordained into the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) and worked strenuously through his writings and teachings to safeguard the

Catholic faith. His work, The Catechism of the Catholic Church, is still used today.

**Dec. 27 – St. John (1st century).** An apostle and friend of Jesus, St. John was known for his fiery temper. He and his brother, called "Sons of Thunder," once asked Jesus if he could call down fire from heaven on an inhospitable town. Later in his life, he and St. Peter asked the

Holy Spirit to come down on the Samaritans. Friendship with Jesus changes a person.

