

Growing in FAITH™

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

August 2009

One Minute Meditations

U.S. Catholic numbers grow

The number of Catholics in the U.S. increased by 1 million last year, according to the 2009 Official Catholic Directory, to 68.1 million Catholics. Approximately one in four Americans is Catholic. That makes the Catholic Church the largest denomination in the country – and it continues to grow.

It all starts with love

“Charity is at the heart of the Church’s social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelled out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law. It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbor ...” (Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas In Veritate)

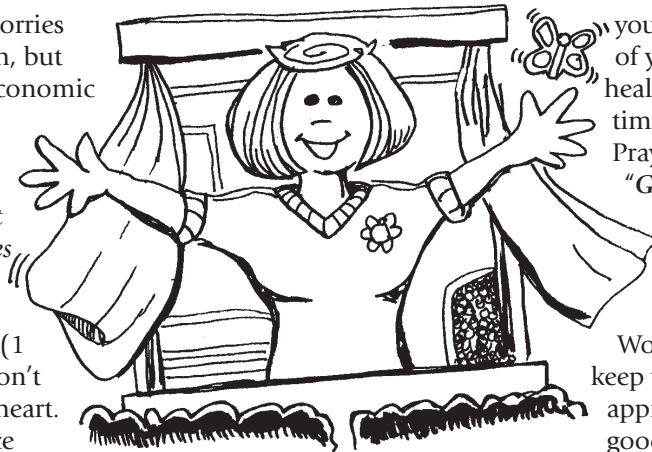
Be a star

With all the bad business news in the media, now is the time to become an all-star player at work. In addition to contributing to the organization, hard work and extra effort have rewards all their own.



“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life ...”

Everyone worries now and then, but the current economic climate may be causing you real anxiety. “Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:1). Don’t lose faith or heart. Try this advice from the Bible.



you take care of yourself. Eat healthfully. Make time for exercise. Pray often. Rest. “Give thanks to the Lord, who is good ...” (Psalms 106:1).

Worry can keep you from appreciating the good in your life.

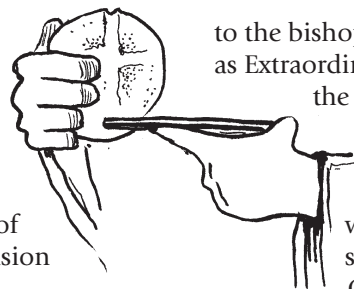
Reserve ten minutes each day to give thanks to God for all you have.

“Give, and gifts will be given to you” (Luke 6:38). One way to escape worry – even for a short time – is to help others. You may need help in one area of your life but be able to give help someone else in a different way. Giving to others takes your mind off your own troubles. Plus, Jesus promised, “For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do people other than priests distribute Holy Communion?

Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are bishops, priests, and deacons. However, the bishop can appoint others to help as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist for an occasion or a period of time.



A pastor recommends parishioners

to the bishop to serve in his parish as Extraordinary Ministers when the congregation is so large that distributing Holy Communion during Mass would take too long or when there are too many sick and homebound for the Ordinary Ministers to visit without help.

Pray the all-purpose prayer

Like us, the disciples needed Jesus' help to grow in holiness. When they asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he gave them (and us) the perfect formula for prayer. In fact, in the "Our Father," he gave us four prayers in one.

First, it is a prayer of praise and gives God the glory that he is due. Recognizing God's greatness is the right place to start.

Second, it is a prayer of petition in which we ask God to provide what we need. He knows



our needs better than we do, but giving it voice helps us to recognize the answer when it comes.

Third, the "Our Father" asks for forgiveness. Plus, we ask for strength to be as generous in forgiving as we would like God to be toward us.

And last, it is a prayer of acknowledgement. It forces us to admit that God knows what is best for us and reminds us to submit to his will rather than our own. That's what makes the "Our Father" an essential prayer.

from Scripture

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 Clean hands vs. clean hearts

The religious leaders sent investigators to check up on Jesus and didn't like what they saw. Not only were Jesus and his followers ignoring some traditional rituals, Jesus scolded some of the leaders who did observe them. He said they were outwardly obedient so they could *look* holy instead of actually trying to *be* holy.

For example, devout Jews performed a cleansing ritual before each meal. The Pharisees liked to believe this ceremony kept them from being considered unclean. They criticized Jesus' followers

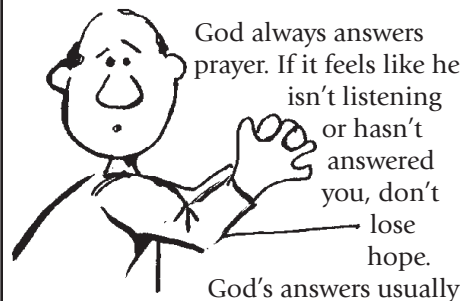
for not performing this ceremony. Jesus told them that they were wrong to think being clean on the outside made them acceptable to God. God cares more about the state of our hearts than our hands.



Hypocrisy is when we pretend to be something we aren't and have no intention of becoming. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites because they went through the motions of worshipping God so they could appear

holy in the eyes of the Jews. We become hypocrites when we follow religious practices carefully but allow our hearts to remain distant from God.

Q & A Why hasn't God answered my prayer?



God's answers usually fall into one of three responses: 1) **Yes**, 2) **Not right now**, and 3) **I have a better idea**. The best approach is to make your request, trust him to do the right thing, and then look for the answer.

Try to remember that God loves you more than you can imagine and only wants the best for you. He doesn't want you to be unhappy, sick, or worried. In fact, he knows what you need better than you do.

Maybe he wants you to wait a while before he grants your request to increase your appreciation or because he doesn't think you are ready yet. Perhaps he has something better in mind. Whatever the answer – and there is always an answer – remember that it comes from his love.

Feasts & Celebrations

August 6 – Transfiguration of the Lord. Tradition says that Mt. Tabor was the site of the Transfiguration during which Christ showed his disciples the splendor of his beauty. The Lord appeared radiant in the company of Moses and Elijah, and a voice was heard to say, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

August 15 – Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Declared a dogma of our faith in 1950 by Pope Pius XII, the Assumption celebrates Mary's taking up into Heaven body and

soul at the end of her life.

August 27 – St. Monica (387). A Christian in North Africa, Monica was given in marriage to a pagan, Patricius, whose bad temper made life difficult for her. Monica's patience, piety, and prayers won over her husband who was baptized before he died. Monica is also credited for influencing the conversion of her son, Augustine. She wouldn't give up praying and watching over him and he went on to become one of the great saints of the Church.



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