

# Growing in FAITH™

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

August 2013

**St. Cecilia Church**

Rev. James L. Secora, Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Francis Xavier Seelos

The Year of Faith saint for August is Blessed Francis Xavier

Seelos, C.Ss.R. He dreamed of becoming a missionary like his patron saint, St. Francis Xavier. He traveled to Philadelphia, specifically to become a Redemptorist priest and dedicated himself to the mission of preaching. He became an insightful, attentive spiritual director. In New Orleans, he was pastor of the church of St. Mary of the Assumption where he died of yellow fever at the young age of 48 while nursing the sick during an epidemic.



### Our powerful Lord

In the Gospels, Jesus healed people 20 times. Seven times Jesus expelled demons. Three times he raised people from the dead, and eight other miracles showed his power over nature.

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:46-48).*



## Tell me a story

Not everyone has a good faith story of his or her own. Some people haven't personally experienced the love of God or the warmth of a parish.

Perhaps someone in your life doesn't know how to turn to God in prayer or how to lean on him for strength or consolation. Telling a friend, neighbor, or coworker your own story could provide the spark she needs to begin a story of her own. Where do you start?

**A similar situation** – When someone confides in you a struggle he is experiencing, consider drawing an analogy to a similar experience in your own life. Include how you felt and how God supported you.

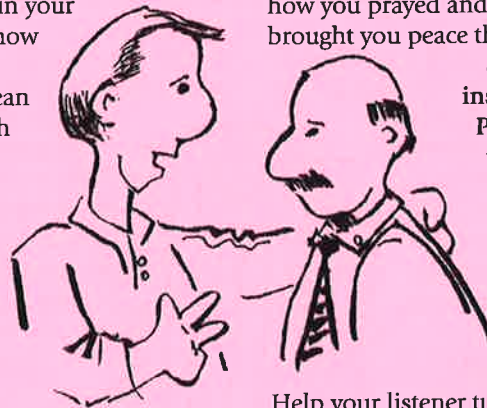
**Peace obtained through prayer** – Not everyone knows how to pray when troubled. Talk about a time you experienced worry or anxiety, describe how you prayed and detail how God brought you peace through prayer.

### Scripture inspiration –

Perhaps there was a time when hearing or reading a Gospel or a homily spoke to your situation and gave you hope or direction.

Help your listener turn to Scripture for inspiration.

We can't all be preachers, but we can all be **storytellers**. We each have a love story of how God has reached out to us. Sharing something so personal can help others see that God can work in their lives, too.



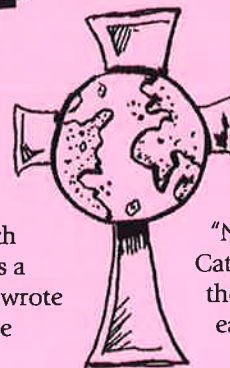
## Why Do Catholics Do That?

## Why do we call the Church Catholic?

The word "catholic" comes from the Greek, "katholikos." It means "throughout the whole" or "universal."

The first record of the Church being called "Catholic" quotes a first-century letter St. Ignatius wrote to the Smyrnaeans, "Where the

bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." St. Cyril of Jerusalem (347) wrote, "Now it [the Church] is called Catholic because it is throughout the world, from one end of the earth to the other."



## Reconciliation breathed into life by Christ

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation was born on Easter Sunday Night when Jesus came through the locked door, breathed on the Apostles and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive are forgiven, those sins you retain are retained." It began with the breath of Christ.

Baptism is a start. Baptism forgives all sins committed to that point. Sins committed after Baptism can be forgiven through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we sin, we harm ourselves, someone else, the Church (by



diminishing the holiness of the Church), and the community. It's necessary to face our sin, confess it, make amends for it, and avoid its repeat.

It's not just for mortal sins. It's imperative to seek forgiveness for mortal sins through this Sacrament but regular Confession is like having a spiritual check-up. Without it, our sense of sin starts to blur. And that is dangerous.

Contrition is more than regret. God cannot forgive sins without our contrition. Contrition looks toward the future. It helps us improve as disciples.

### from Scripture

#### Luke 13:22-30, The narrow gate

When an ancient city was fortified, a central gate was built wide enough for carts and horses to easily pass through. When the city was threatened, the gate was secured and no one could go in or out. Hidden in an unnoticed part of the wall was an opening so narrow no one could pass through wearing armor or carrying weapons. It was often hard to find and difficult to reach.

Jesus used this image of a city wall to help his listeners understand the requirements for



passage into Heaven. Many will arrive at the gates of Heaven, expecting an easy "in" only to find the door securely shut. To enter, we have to be fit enough to find the way and shed the attachments of our earthly life so that we can freely pass through the narrow entrance.

There will be surprises on Judgment Day. Some who think they are entitled to Heaven will be turned away. Only those who work to keep spiritually strong will find the way.

### Q & A Are we still required to fast before Communion?

The Code of Canon Law states: "One who is to receive the Most Holy



Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception only of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy

Communion" (Canon 919, par. 1).

People who are in ill health or who would put themselves at physical risk if they abstain from food or drink should seek the advice of their physician about whether or not to fast before Communion.

Technically, chewing gum doesn't break the fast but it isn't necessarily appropriate during Mass. What do you do with the gum when it's time for Communion? If you swallow it, you are violating the fast. (And you should never stick it under the pew!)

Fasting before receiving the Eucharist reminds us of the great difference between earthly food, which sustains only perishable life, and the food of the Eucharist, which is key for eternal life. By observing the fast we approach Communion with a physical and spiritual hunger.

### Feasts & Celebrations

**August 8 – St. Dominic (1221)**  
Journeying through France, Dominic was alarmed by the popularity of Albigensian heretics who threatened the Church. They rejected material comforts while many Catholic preachers traveled in luxury. Dominic became an itinerant preacher like the Apostles and founded the Order of Preachers, "Dominicans."

**August 10 – St. Lawrence (258)** A Roman deacon to Pope St. Sixtus, II, Lawrence grieved when Sixtus was martyred but rejoiced when it was predicted that Lawrence would be martyred a few days later. Instead of

giving in to Roman demands for the Church's material treasure, Lawrence gathered the poor and destitute and presented them as the Church's treasure. He was martyred shortly afterwards.

**August 15 - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.** Declared a dogma of our faith in 1950 by Pope Pius XII, the Assumption celebrates Mary being taken up into Heaven body and soul at the end of her life. It is a Holy Day of Obligation requiring Mass attendance.



#### Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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# Called to Generosity

## What it means to respond to God's love

by Leisa Anslinger

### How generous is generous?

As a child, I often wondered about my mother's generosity. We had little money, and my parents worked hard. Yet my mother always seemed to give her time and attention to people. I just didn't get it! Now, I understand that my mother knew the generosity of others in many ways through the years. She was a woman of deep faith whose thankfulness for God's love called from her a tangible response. As her gratitude grew, so did her generosity. Now, I am grateful for the lessons I learned from my mother, lessons of generous and selfless sharing.

As we become more mindful of the many ways we are blessed with life, love, resources and more, we also face the need to be more generous.

**What does generosity have to do with our lives in faith?** We might be thinking, "But isn't it enough to go to Mass on Sunday and put a little money in the collection, or give to a local charity?" How generous is

generous, after all? This is where generosity is connected to gratitude: as we become more mindful of the many ways we are blessed with life, love, resources and more, we also face the need to be more generous. Generosity is the fitting response to God's overwhelming love!

**The challenge:** We may not like to admit it, but we are surrounded by a culture that values "me first." Even when we have decided to grow as a good steward, we will be tempted to think, "But I earned the money -- it's mine to do with what I want," or "Enough is enough -- I need more time for myself!" And such thoughts or comments will find plenty of reinforcement from the world around us. We will have to be committed to continue on our path to a more generous lifestyle. Still, when we really give this thought, we realize that each of us has a need to give selflessly. It is in such giving that we find meaning, purpose, and holiness.

**Let's get practical.** Growing in a generous spirit is not something that will happen over night. It is much more likely to take place one step, one decision to share after another. We will also find many more opportunities for generosity once we begin looking for them. We will consider practical steps toward generosity on the reverse of this sheet.

**Let's be spiritual.** "Christian stewards respond in a particular way to the call to be a disciple. Stewardship has the power to shape and mold our understanding of our lives and the way in which we live." (SDR, 42) Just as generosity is tied to gratitude, it is also tied to trusting God in all things. Growing in trust is an intersecting point where faith and life meet. We learn to trust that God who has given us every good gift will be with us in all things. We grow in a desire to give generously in response to such great blessings. This life of trust, gratitude and generosity is a way of living as a follower of Jesus. Jesus, who gave attention to those who were sick and suffering, the lonely, and those in need of spiritual companionship; Jesus, who even when tired and in need of time for himself, "stopped everything" to teach those who came seeking him; Jesus, whose very life was poured out in sacrifice for our sake and for that of the whole world. How can we not respond by giving of ourselves, our time and attention, our talents and resources? To grow in generosity is to see ourselves as a reflection of Christ, called to share Christ's presence with others, as we surely are!



The Stewardship Project  
[www.CatholicLifeandFaith.com](http://www.CatholicLifeandFaith.com)

**"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. ...By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn 13: 34a-35)**



# Practical Ways to Grow in Generosity

## Generous is as generous does

Generosity begins with a desire that grows into an act: a desire to give in response to what one has been given; an act of giving that expresses one's gratitude and trust. Here are some practical ideas for ways to grow in generosity:

**Give first to God:** Give God the first fruits of your time in prayer and by making and fulfilling a commitment to spend your time wisely and willingly with your family, by fulfilling your work responsibilities, and by serving in your parish and community; give God the first fruits of your financial resources by making and fulfilling a pledge of financial stewardship to your parish as well as other organizations.

**Give time, prayer, attention:** Generosity in time and attention to God and others will transform us; begin and end each day in conversation with God; pray for those who have asked for your prayers, and for those whose needs are known only to God; give your attention to someone who is alone; find a need that your time and talent can fill, and fill it!

## Give financially or materially:

Jesus spoke often about money, not because he placed an over-emphasis on financial wealth, but because he understood how money can take hold of us. Search your heart about this. What material resources do you have that another may need? What financial resources can you share, even beyond what may seem comfortable? Make a commitment to stretch a bit. If you truly do not have financial resources to share, find a way to be generous with your time; you will likely find that you don't miss that money or time as much as you might expect, and that giving in such a way is satisfying.

**Give sacrificially:** The mission we share in Jesus' name is that of bringing the Good News to the world. This Good News is the message of undying, sacrificial love. We are created in God's image, meant to be a reflection of Jesus who is perfect, generous self-giving. Like our Lord, we must open our hearts to the will of the Father, who desires that all human physical, spiritual, emotional and material needs be met. We know that such needs will be met through the sacrificial generosity of good and faithful stewards.



"God's Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, subject to decline and decay; it is the everlasting Kingdom of the life to come. But that 'life to come' is in continuity with this present life through the human goods, the worthy human purposes, which people foster now. And after people have done their best, God will perfect human goods and bring about the final fulfillment of human persons." (SDR, 21)



*After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (Jn 13:12-14)*

## How Are You Already Living Generously?

**Living generously requires an intentional choice to be grateful and to give as a response to one's blessings.** We will always have ways to grow in generosity. How are you already living generously? What areas of your life need attention in order to give in the coming year? Use this space to record your thoughts and your commitment for the future: