

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

February 2014

St. Cecilia Church

Rev. James L. Secora, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Scholastica

Twin sister of St. Benedict, St. Scholastica founded a

Benedictine community for women five miles from her brother's monastery. The twins visited annually for prayer and spiritual consultation. One year, Scholastica asked her brother to spend the night but he declined in compliance with his own rule requiring monks to sleep in his monastery. Scholastica prayed and a thunderstorm erupted, preventing Benedict's departure. Three days later, Benedict saw a dove rising from his sister's convent and realized she had died.

Live unafraid

Christ suffered, died, and rose to free us from our fears. "I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20b).

"We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary." Pope (Emeritus) Benedict



What to do when God feels distant

There are times when God seems so close that we are filled with a glorious feeling of love. At other times he can seem so distant it's as if he has turned his back. God lets this happen for our good. Still, that distant feeling can be hard to bear.

Look for a cause. Sometimes we cause distance to crop up between us without even realizing it. We may have become overly-confident of our spiritual strength and yielded to temptation. Or, we neglected prayer or Sunday Mass.

Pray your way back. Distance can lead to discouragement, but don't let that keep you from prayer. Reaching out to God is the surest way to find

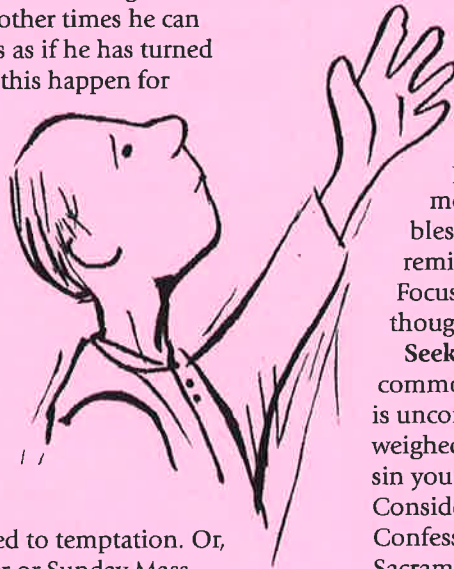
your way back. Enlist the help of the saints or the Blessed Mother.

Meditate on what you know.

Regularly repeat God's promises of salvation, Jesus' pledge of eternal love, memories of God's past blessings, anything that reminds you of his love. Focus on these beautiful thoughts over and over.

Seek Reconciliation. A common cause for distance is unconfessed sin. Are you weighed down by a fault or sin you are avoiding facing? Consider making a full Confession and seek the Sacrament regularly. Perform

an act of penance, such as fasting, to take the focus off yourself. Then you will find he has been beside you all along.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Catholics evangelize (spread the Gospel) because Jesus said to, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have

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commanded you" (Matthew 28: 19-20).

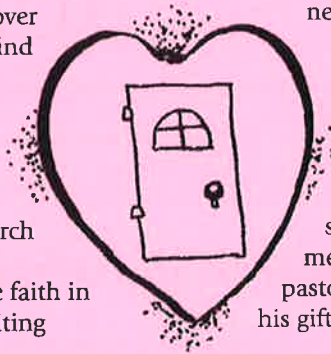
Some ways we bring new disciples to Jesus include treating others with love, living a holy life, passing on the faith to our children, supporting our parish ministries, and by telling others about God.



Open your door, open your heart

Despite warm and welcoming parishes all over the country, many Catholics still struggle to find a parish home. Large parishes can be intimidating while plugging into smaller, established ones can be difficult, too. What can we do to welcome new or returning Catholics to our parish homes?

Open your door – Masses in the early Church were held in the homes of believers. New or prospective Christians were introduced to the faith in loving, personal environments. Consider inviting



new parishioners to your home for dinner and introduce them to other parishioners, or become part of your parish hospitality efforts to welcome new or returning Catholics.

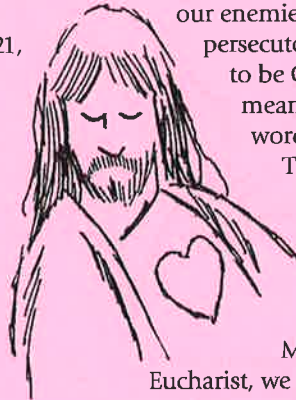
Open your heart – Look for those in your family, among friends, or in the workplace who might be searching for a spiritual home. Invite someone new each month to share Mass and a meal. Give a tour of the church and introduce the pastor. Let your visitor know that your parish can use his gifts and he will find a new family in your parish.

from Scripture

Matthew 5:38-48, Heart speaks to heart

The ancient concept of justice, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," is from Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21, and was originally meant to limit retribution from escalating into blood feuds between clans. It was later misused to exact a form of personal justice. Instead, Jesus proposed a new approach, one that leads not to justice on Earth but in Heaven.

Loving our enemies or those who have offended us repeatedly requires forgiveness. Sometimes forgiveness seems



impossible but we are to teach and treat others the way Jesus does even to loving our enemies and praying for our persecutors. As Christians, we are to be Christ to others. That means teaching not just by our words but by our actions, too.

Then Jesus directed us to "be perfect." That we cannot do without the help of the Holy Spirit to guide us, and by faithful attendance at

Mass. Through the

Eucharist, we are nourished by the very body and blood of Jesus. He gives us the strength we need to live a more perfect life.

Q & A Can I receive Communion if I am returning to the Church after many years?

Welcome back! There is a step to take before you can be in full communion with Christ. In order to be properly disposed for the Eucharist, "A Catholic must be in a state of grace to receive Holy Communion, and anyone aware of being in a state of mortal sin must first receive absolution in the Sacrament of Penance" (CCC, section 1415).



When you were away from the Church, you may have missed Sunday Mass, for example. That is considered a mortal sin for a baptized Catholic and requires seeking God's forgiveness through the Sacrament of Penance.

You may feel anxious or nervous about going to Confession after a long absence from the Church. Please remember that the primary purpose of this Sacrament is to reconcile us to Christ who waits patiently for us when we have turned from him. Remember also, that one of a priest's great joys is being able to convey God's forgiveness to those sincerely seeking it. He will be happy to guide you through it.

Feasts & Celebrations

February 8 – St. Jerome Emiliani (1537). St. Jerome Emiliani was imprisoned by the enemy when he was a militia officer. In prison he taught himself how to pray and was inspired to escape safely. He later became a priest and with his own resources opened orphanages, a homeless shelter, and a hospital.

February 11 – Our Lady of Lourdes (1858) A heavenly "lady" appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous, a poor and sickly girl from a small village in France. Soon after the first vision, a spring with miraculous, healing waters emerged

from a nearby cave. The "lady" revealed herself as the "Immaculate Conception" – the Blessed Virgin Mary.

February 23 – St. Polycarp (156). Bishop of Smyrna, Asia-Minor, Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle St. John and a friend of St. Ignatius of Antioch. He faithfully cared for his flock despite being surrounded by pagans and a government opposed to his religion.

Before he was martyred, he thanked God for making him worthy of a martyr's death.



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