

Growing in FAITH™

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

January 2018

Ascension of Our Lord Church
Rev. Walter Austin, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Angela Merici

Born in Italy, St. Angela and her sister were raised by an uncle after the deaths of their parents. Angela received the vocational call as a teenager. Her sister died without receiving the Sacraments, so Angela became a Third Order Franciscan to pray for her. She opened her home as a girls' school for religious education. She was later inspired by a vision to start a religious community to educate young women, and founded the Ursuline Order.



The face of God

God doesn't want us to sacrifice our own wellbeing, but does want us to willingly bring his love to other people. It can be uncomfortable being his loving face to others. This means being patient with those who annoy us, kind to those who are demanding, and forgiving to those who haven't asked.

"Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips" (Proverbs 27:2).



Move closer to God in the New Year

While contemplating your New Year's resolutions, wouldn't it be great to make at least one change this year that brings you closer to God?

Consider these ideas from other Catholics to strengthen your prayer life, learn more about your faith, or serve your parish.

Greg was bored with his prayer routine and wanted a change. His priest suggested he try a novena, nine days of focused prayer. So, Greg chose a novena to the Immaculate Conception. He loved the meditations and felt a connection to Our Lady. Soon, he became hooked on novenas. Once again, he was excited to spend time in prayer.

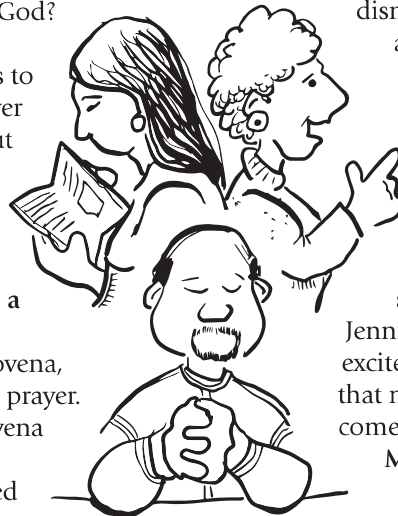
Jennifer's husband is not Catholic

and asks lots of questions about her faith. Her own religious education ended years ago, and she became dismayed when she couldn't answer his questions.

Learning that adult faith formation classes were starting in her parish, Jenn jumped at the chance to learn more.

"Everything I discover helps me to grow stronger in my faith," Jennifer declared. "I'm so excited by what I'm learning that my husband wants to come, too."

Maureen's children are grown and on their own, yet she teaches a religious education class at her parish. "What better way to evangelize our faith than to share it with children? That's where I can do some real good," she said.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

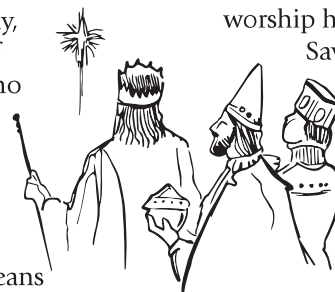
Why do Catholics celebrate Epiphany?

On the feast of Epiphany, we recall the adoration of Jesus by the wise men, who had traveled "from the East." They were looking for the newborn king of the Jews, though they themselves were not Jewish. "Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and

worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world"

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #528).

The Epiphany celebrates the revelation of the Messiah to the Gentiles (non-Jews) and to the rest of the world.



Adopt a three-point plan for holiness in the New Year

All Christians are called to holiness. *“Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48). There are three tools on which every Catholic can rely to attain greater holiness.

Daily prayer. God meets us in a very real and present way when we come to him in prayer. Start in the morning and pray throughout the day.

Weekly Mass. The Mass is a sacrifice and a meal. We receive Jesus’ body and blood as real food for our souls. He said, *“For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is*

drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:55-56). That’s why we call it, *“Communion.”*



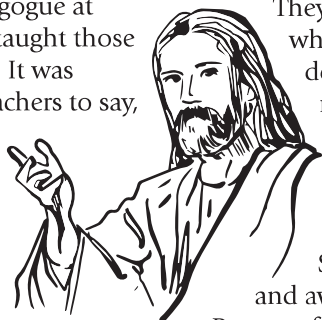
Monthly Confession. Jesus created the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Confession) because he knew we would stray. He also knew we would want to come back. Frequent participation in this Sacrament sharpens our sense of sin, holds us accountable for our errors, and gives us the grace to keep trying for holiness.

from Scripture

Mark 1:21-28, God’s authority is not a formality

In this Gospel passage, Jesus and his apostles entered the synagogue at Capernaum where Jesus taught those gathered for the Sabbath. It was customary for learned teachers to say, *“Thus says the Lord...”* Instead Jesus said, *“I say to you ...”* He taught as one who spoke with the authority of God.

His calm authority astounded Jesus’ listeners. Just as they began to wonder what it meant, he gave them a sign. He further demonstrated his authority by performing an exorcism. Spirits that bedeviled an unfortunate man at the



synagogue recognized who Jesus was. They were forced to obey him when he commanded them to depart, despite their reluctance. In fact, God’s power and authority isn’t just a formality. What God says, happens. Our kind and gentle Savior is also our powerful and awesome Lord. As the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus has supreme majesty and we will one day appear before him to be judged. Yes, he is our divine savior and mediator. But if we say, *“Jesus is Lord,”* then we give him our loyalty and obedience.

Q & A I make terrible decisions. How can I do better?

It’s true that bad decisions can lead to sin. Try to take a formal approach to decision making.



Get all the facts. That helps you know your options.

Pray. Place yourself in God’s presence and ask for his guidance.

Listen to your conscience. Your conscience is the ability within you that helps you discern right from wrong. *“Moral conscience, present at the heart of the person, enjoins him ... to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil.”* (CCC #1777)

Choose to do the right thing, choose to follow your conscience. This requires courage.

Ask for help. When in doubt, ask a trusted advisor.

Be accountable. Take responsibility for any decisions you make and for their consequences. Although blaming others in some cases is justified, it usually is not productive.

Admit mistakes. Learn from mistakes you make and apply what you have learned to future situations. Don’t get thrown by errors. Continue to persevere, despite setbacks.

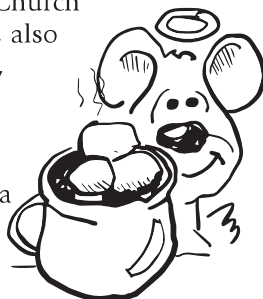
Feasts & Celebrations

Jan. 1 – Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. Today, we honor Mary, but also Jesus as God. In their honor, pray a Rosary. Because this feast day is on a Monday, Mass attendance is optional (but encouraged) this year.

Jan. 25 – The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle (1st Century). Setting out for Damascus to carry on the persecution of the Christians, he encountered Christ (Acts 9:1-19; 22:5-16; 26:12-18) while on the road to Damascus. He was struck blind from

the experience until he was baptized by Ananias three days later. He converted and began preaching the faith as he travelled around the Mediterranean.

Jan. 26 – Sts. Timothy and Titus (1st Century). Timothy was a convert of St. Paul’s and later became his trusted friend, joining him in apostolic work. He was with Paul at the founding of the Church in Corinth. Titus, also a friend of Paul’s, served the early Church as a peacemaker and administrator to a community on Crete.



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)