

# Growing in FAITH™

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

June 2018

**St. Raphael Catholic Church**

Rev. John M. Connell, Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Germaine Cousin

Born to poor parents near Pibrac, France,

St. Germaine

had a deformed right hand, suffered from sores on her neck and was sickly from neglect and abuse. Despite her sufferings, she found comfort in God's presence, and prayed the Rosary while she tended the family sheep. She was generous with the poor, despite her own poverty. She even forgave her stepmother, who badly mistreated her. She is the patroness of abuse victims, people with disabilities, and shepherdeses.

### Mindfulness

When we make efforts to be fully aware and awake to everything we do and all that surrounds us, we become mindful of God's gifts and the grace available to us. "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2). This takes practice, joyful effort, and discipline.

*"The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament proclaims the works of his hands.*

Psalm 19:3



## Spring cleaning for the soul

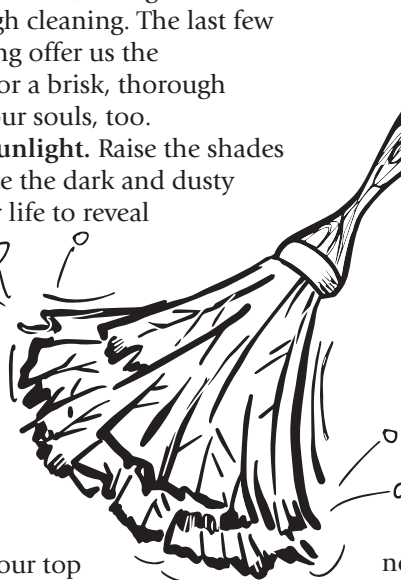
When a home is closed up during a long, stuffy winter, Spring is a time to open it up, air it out, and give it a brisk, thorough cleaning. The last few weeks of Spring offer us the opportunity for a brisk, thorough cleansing of our souls, too.

**Let in the sunlight.** Raise the shades and illuminate the dark and dusty places of your life to reveal whatever is keeping you from a close relationship with God. Is accumulating money or possessions your top priority? Are you trying harder to impress others than working to please God? Do bad habits (excessive food, alcohol, drugs) dominate your

life? Make an honest spiritual assessment and get busy cleaning.

**Clear out cluttered closets.** Is there something stuck in the corners of your conscience that needs to be cleaned out and thrown away so you can put God first in your life? Do you harbor unconfessed sin or an old grudge or unresolved disagreement? Seek forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Confession), perform your penance, make amends, and let it go.

**Freshen up.** What spiritual change have you been meaning to make? Do you need to make weekly Mass more of a priority? Does your prayer life need refreshing? Have you wanted to learn more about your faith? Now is the time.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

### Why do Catholic Bibles have more books than Protestant Bibles?

When Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, he chose to leave out the Old Testament books that weren't originally written in Hebrew: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and parts of Esther and Daniel.



However, the Catholic Church, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, confirmed that the books Luther removed are divinely inspired and chose to keep them (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #120). The Council of Trent (1545-1563) affirmed the current composition of the Bible.

# Take a new look at the Mass

“Mass is the same every week. I don’t always get something out of going.” Sound familiar? A ritual we know so well can seem predictable or even routine. Consider these gifts you get from attending Mass:

**Open your mind to something new.** Within the Mass are lots of intriguing, mysterious, or just plain interesting ideas. Listen during the Scripture readings, the homily, or the Eucharistic prayer for something that strikes you and talk with God about it. He’ll help open your mind to something new.



**Help others without leaving your seat.** We all know people near and far we would like to help. Distances and barriers disappear at Mass. When Jesus becomes present in the Eucharist, the entire Body of Christ is present. So you can pray for anyone you would like to support and the entire Body prays with you.

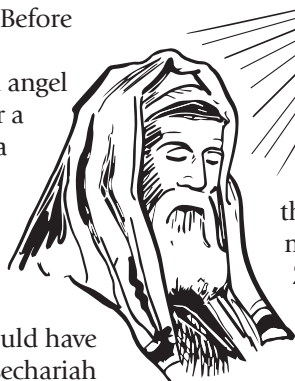
**Make a change.** Find at least one idea within the Mass that makes sense and seems possible and put it into practice. One new idea can change your life.

## from Scripture

**Luke 1:57-66, 80,  
God means what he says.**

Sometimes God has to take drastic action to get our attention. Before John the Baptist was born, Zechariah was visited by an angel and told that his prayers for a son would be answered in a miraculous way. He also said Zechariah’s son would prepare Israel for the long hoped-for Savior.

One might think that the appearance of an angel should have been enough to convince Zechariah of the truth of the message, but he was still skeptical that what the angel said was possible. He wasn’t listening with all his heart, so God shut Zechariah’s mouth



to make it easier for him to hear and see the truth. When the baby was born, Zechariah demonstrated his obedience in deciding to name the child John, just as the angel had said, and his mouth was opened. Zechariah’s first words showered praise on God and told the people around him of God’s faithfulness and awesome love. He reminded us that we can always trust God’s love and care. Listen for God’s voice and remember that all things are possible for God.

## Q & A My prayer life is dull. How can I spice it up?

One of the struggles of many Catholics is “praying more.” More than an item on our to-do lists, prayer is meant to be a conversation between us



and the One who loves us. Here are some tips to “spice” it up:

**When:** Pick a time of the day to pray when you are alert and can do your best thinking. 15-20 minutes is recommended for best results. Pick a time and protect it.

**What:** With so many devotions to choose from, it can be hard to pray well in 20 minutes. Choose one devotion and set a number of days for it – two weeks, a month, two months. If the quality of your prayer didn’t improve afterwards, pick a different devotion.

**Why:** Many times, we go to God looking for answers, which is good. However, prayer’s purpose isn’t about getting information from God, but developing a relationship with him. The best thing we can do is be present to the one who loves us and wants to be with us.

## Feasts & Celebrations

**June 1 – St. Justin Martyr (165).** Justin was a Christian convert who searched for Truth. After his conversion, he held debates with pagans. When ordered by a judge to renounce his faith or die, St. Justin responded, “Nobody in his senses would give up truth for falsehood.” He was martyred for his undying faith.

**June 8 – Solemnity of the Sacred Heart (1765).** At the end of the seventeenth century, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque began receiving visions of Jesus, who urged her to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart. The

image of Jesus with his heart exposed in unquenchable flame – the Sacred Heart – is a reminder of his intense and eternal love for us.

**June 29 – Saints Peter and Paul (1st Century).** Peter was the apostle chosen by Jesus to lead the Church. The Gospels include some unflattering stories of Peter, showing that he was ordinary, made extraordinary by God’s grace. An early persecutor of the Church, Paul became the Great Apostle, also transformed by grace.



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