

Growing in FAITH™

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

September 2018

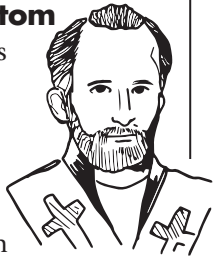
St. Raphael Catholic Church

Rev. John M. Connell, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. John Chrysostom

St. John received his name "Chrysostom" ("golden-mouthed") for his eloquent homilies.



Born in Antioch around 349 A.D. and raised by a devoutly Christian mother, he wanted to be a monk, but was ordained a priest instead. He later became Bishop of Constantinople. His calls for reform of the wealthy and his criticism of the powerful and corrupt earned him exile. He was known for his personal holiness, faithful teaching of the Gospel, and generosity to the poor.

Take the long view

Our nature urges us toward satisfaction now, but we often learn the necessity of taking the long view. For example, saving means financial security later in life. Our faithfulness to God now will lead us to great reward later.

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1).



Find joy in Church

Worship is God's idea. He intends our connection to him to be joyful and exhilarating. Yet, when our worship in church becomes routine, we can lose the sense of joy. Try these ideas to recapture the fun in faith and worship.

Mass is a celebration when Heaven and Earth meet. Approach each Mass as you would any great occasion. Dress your best. Imagine the other guests who will be there. Anticipate the food you will receive – food no one else can serve. Fast for an hour before to whet your appetite.

"And I commend enjoyment, for man has no good thing under the sun but to

eat and drink and enjoy himself ..."

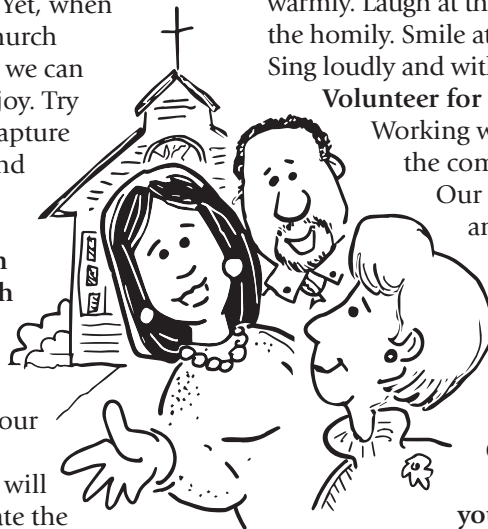
(Ecclesiastes 8:15). Greet your neighbors warmly. Laugh at the priest's jokes during the homily. Smile at the cute altar servers. Sing loudly and with vigor.

Volunteer for a parish ministry.

Working with others toward the common goal of serving Our Lord is rewarding and can be just plain fun. Laughing and joking with others on a team while using our talents to serve others builds up the Church.

Find out who needs you. There are few

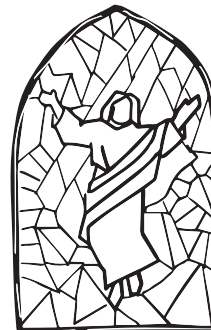
better ways to feel loved than to joyfully give love first. Call the parish office to see if anyone needs a ride to Mass, help getting groceries, or just needs prayers.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholic Churches have stained glass windows?

In the days of the early Church, most churchgoers couldn't read, so the images were teaching tools. They told stories of Christ's life or of the saints. Today, these beautiful windows inspire us to reflect on our own faith.



Stained glass windows also remind us that we are in no ordinary building. Here, "the truth and the harmony of the signs ... should show Christ to be present and active in this place" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1181).

Giving from a grateful heart

In Old Testament times, a faithful farmer gave the first of his harvest to the temple for God's use. He understood that it was through God's blessing that he had a harvest at all. We, too, can give to God from our grateful hearts.

Give God the first, best moments. Many of us rush through our day from the moment we open our eyes. We forget that it is by God's grace that we are even able to see a new day. Instead, give the first moments of the day to God in prayer.



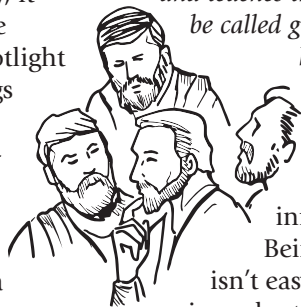
Pay God first. Most of us pay pressing bills first – housing, food, insurance – and give to the Church from what is left. Then we grumble when our parish fundraises to meet its needs. Yet all we have is through God's blessing in the first place. In fact, if we each give to the Sunday collection for God's use a first portion of our income – the Biblical 10%, for example – all our important needs will be met.

from Scripture

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48, The discipline of discipleship

In this Gospel passage, the disciples hear of an unknown man who healed in Jesus' name. In their jealousy, it seemed the disciples were more concerned about losing the spotlight than in healing. Jesus put things into perspective. The man had the same goal as the disciples – to build up God's Kingdom. They gained a teammate, not an enemy.

Discipleship means making a change of heart and mind. Jesus was very clear: if we choose to follow him, we can't foster private sins, too. If, through those sins, we lead others into sin, our responsibility is doubled.



These are grim words, but the opposite is great news: *"Whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:19).

God rewards us for the good we do to and for others. Our example is powerfully influential.

Being a faithful disciple isn't easy. Rooting out personal sin and setting a good example is difficult, but we're not alone or without grace to do the job. No matter what we sacrifice, the reward is infinitely better.

Q & A What can we find in every Catholic church?

Each Catholic church is decorated differently, but some elements stay the same. Here are a few items you can find in every Catholic church.



Crucifix: One of the defining features of a Catholic church is the presence of a crucifix – a cross with Christ's body on it. The crucifix reminds us of Christ's saving sacrifice, made mysteriously present again at Mass, and of God's infinite love for us.

Baptismal fonts: Blessing ourselves with holy water recalls our own baptism, which washed us of Original Sin and made us members of the Church. In blessing ourselves, we renew our baptismal promise.

Statues of Saints: Having statues and images of the saints in church helps us recall their examples of heroic virtue and faithful love for God. In honoring them, we honor God who created them.

Tabernacle: Every Catholic church has a tabernacle – a box that contains the Eucharist (look for the red candle to show it is occupied). Here Jesus, really present in the Eucharist, waits for us to visit him.

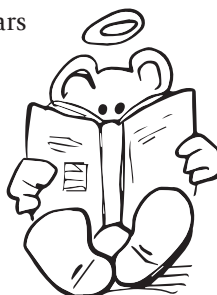
Feasts & Celebrations

Sept. 3 – Pope St. Gregory the Great (604). St. Gregory resigned as chief prefect of Rome to become a monk and turned the family estate into the Abbey of St. Andrew. As Pope, he used his political skill to make peace with the invading Lombards, save Rome from famine, and restore order within the Church itself.

Sept. 8 -- The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1st century). Tradition says Mary was born in Jerusalem after her mother, Anna, and her father, Joachim, had been married

more than twenty years without children. Mary's birth brought her parents joy, and we are joyful too – because Mary brings salvation to all of us with the birth of Jesus.

Sept. 23 – St. Padre Pio (1968). Born to farmers in southern Italy, Padre Pio was an inspiring confessor and counselor. He received the five wounds of Our Lord's Passion (stigmata) eight years after he became a Capuchin Friar. Despite intense personal and physical suffering, he remained dedicated to prayer.



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