

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

April 2023

A Gift to You from St. Mary's Growing Our Faith Group

One Minute Meditations

The God-shaped hole

St. Augustine wrote, "You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee," (*Confessions*, Saint Augustine). Humans are created with a longing for something good, true, and beautiful. We long for God. We can try filling that void with things of the world. Unless we fill that longing with God, however, we can never be satisfied.

Grow in love

Having received the gift of divine life, we must give it to others. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). When we share God's life and love, we grow in that very life and love.

"But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay'" (Matthew 28:5-6).



Powerful gifts of Eucharistic devotion

As the "the source and summit of our faith," the Eucharist is the greatest of God's gifts. During the Easter season, resolve to look at the Eucharist with new eyes of gratitude and strengthened devotion:

Return love for Love:

The Eucharist is not a symbol; it is Jesus Christ. He loves us beyond imagining — personally, closely, sacrificially, and tenderly. In adoring, receiving, and loving the Blessed Sacrament, we're returning love for Love.

Fuel for the fight: The Eucharist nourishes and strengthens our souls. "How can we last...without hearing Jesus say, 'I love you' – impossible..." (Mother Teresa). The Eucharist strengthens against temptation and

protects from mortal sins.

Source of joy: The Eucharist is a glimpse of Heaven, a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, and a pledge of future glory. St. John Vianney commented, "If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy."

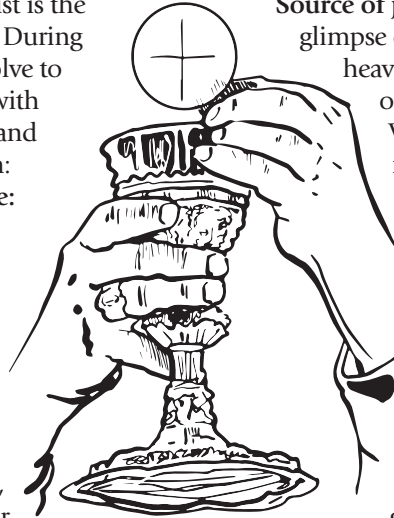
Wisdom and guidance:

As Chancellor of England, St. Thomas More received Communion daily for "light and wisdom" in his administrative decisions. We can turn to the Blessed Sacrament for guidance whenever we have

weighty decisions, questions, or doubts.

Communion empowers us to love:

"Even as I have loved you...you also love one another" (John 13:34). Jesus specifically told his followers to love others as we've been loved. Receiving the Eucharist worthily empowers us to love like Him.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics celebrate Holy Week?

Holy Week is a sacred time, specially devoted to celebrating the work of our redemption — the suffering and Death of Jesus on the Cross. The events honored during Holy Week, especially on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, remind us of



an amazing truth: God loved us first, even when that love cost Him everything. On Easter, He rose gloriously from the dead, offering redemption. This event is so tremendous we need a week to prepare our hearts to receive it.

Choose new life at Easter

"... I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days ..." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

When the Israelites were poised to enter the land God had promised them, Moses wanted all to understand what was at stake. He didn't want them to just enter the Promised Land, Moses wanted them to remain there with God's



blessing. So Moses put the choice facing all of God's people in the clearest possible terms. When we choose to follow God, we choose life over death.

The choice is still ours. We can say "yes" or "no" to God's love. While our choices lead to consequences, it is still up to us.

When we live within God's laws, we choose life. Honesty over lies and deceit, self-control over sinful pleasure, generosity over selfishness. This is how we choose new life with God.

from Scripture

John 10:1-10; Trusting the Good Shepherd

In this Scripture passage, Jesus used the image of a shepherd to reveal who He is, how He cares for us, and more importantly, how He wants us to relate to Him. The image of a shepherd was a powerful choice.

A good shepherd knew each sheep in his care individually. He never left his flock. Many sheep-pens didn't have doors, so the shepherd would sleep in the entry way to prevent enemies from getting to his flock. Predators would have to go through him first. If a sheep got lost, hurt, or was attacked, the shepherd took care of it, even risking his



life for the sheep.

Jesus' illustration is clear. Without the constant care, guidance, and protecting presence of the shepherd (God), the sheep (us) wouldn't survive. That's uncomfortable because it means we're dependent and vulnerable. But the deeper truth is that Jesus, our Shepherd, knows us each personally,

individually. Our Shepherd heals us, provides for us, and protects us, even to offering up His own life. He asks us to trust Him and ultimately, lead us Home.

Q & A

Am I wrong to have doubts?

There is good doubt and bad doubt. Bad doubt that says, "I won't believe this unless you prove it," can become sinful and should be avoided. Good doubt ("I'm struggling to understand this") is a sign you're ready to go deeper into the faith.



Sometimes doubts arise from genuine or incomplete understanding of Church teaching. Archbishop Fulton Sheen famously said, "There are not one hundred people in the United States who hate The Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they wrongly perceive the Catholic Church to be." With questions, turn to the Catechism, reference the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (usccb.org), ask your priest.

If, after all that, something still doesn't make sense, then it really is a mystery and that's the point at which we humbly allow Christ to conform our ways of thinking to His (not the other way around). Entrust everything to God, and He will resolve it, in His own way, in His own time. "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

Feasts & Celebrations

April 2 – Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion (1st Century). On Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, we recall Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when He was greeted by crowds waving palms and cheering. This Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week.

April 9 – The Resurrection of the Lord (1st Century). Easter, the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection of the dead, is the holiest day of the year. The Season of Easter lasts for 50 days from Easter Sunday until Pentecost.

April 13 – Pope St. Martin I (665).

St. Martin was elected to succeed Theodore I as pope. He was arrested and dragged to Constantinople after censuring the Byzantine Emperor Constans II for heresy. He died in exile.

April 16 – Divine Mercy Sunday (1931). Jesus asked St. Faustina to ensure that the Sunday after Easter become the "Feast of Mercy." He promised that anyone who honors Him as the King of Mercy and prays The Chaplet of Divine Mercy will receive special graces and great mercy.



Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

Success Publishing & Media, LLC
Publishers of Growing in Faith™ and Partners in Faith™
(540)662-7844 (540)662-7847 fax
<http://www.growinginfaith.com>

(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)