

# Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

December 2022

Church of Saint Joseph

Rev. Msgr. J. Brian Bransfield, Pastor

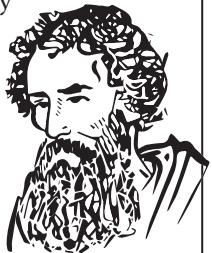
## One Minute Meditations

### Begin in His presence

Jesus came among us to be with us. When you first wake up in the morning, but before you get out of bed, place yourself in His presence. Take a few minutes to focus on a sacred picture or an image that will help you to "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

### Holiday advice

The holiday season is an exciting time but it can also be a time when money worries, family worries, and every kind of worry intrudes. Instead, try to follow this advice from St. Paul, "Finally, brethren,



whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things," (Philippians 4:8).

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins"

(Matthew 1:21).



In mercy. Experience God's mercy in Confession and His loving presence in the Eucharist.

Then, like Him, offer mercy to anyone who may have hurt you. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

In prayer. Jesus came to live among us so He could be intimate with us. He wants to connect on a deep level - more than rushed prayers or perfunctory devotions. During Advent, find quiet time to give Him your full attention and speak to His heart to heart.

In watchfulness. Live this Advent with a new awareness of the presence of God. Be awake to who He is and how precious you are to Him.



## Encounter Christ this Christmas

God came to us in the most vulnerable human form possible so that He could draw us to Himself for all eternity.

This Christmas, answer His call and come close to Him:

**In song.** Listen to and ponder the words of your favorite Christmas hymns. Imagine the reality of heavens filled with angels and faraway kings answering the call to pay Him homage.

**In service.** The newborn Jesus is the physical sign of God's love for us. When we give of our time and resources in His service, we become an instrument of that love. Share His love in your parish, in your neighborhood, in your community.

### Why Do Catholics Do That?

God gave us body and soul, so it makes sense actions that combine prayer and movement help us to most fully participate. During Mass, each posture means something. We stand to show respect when the priest (representing Christ) enters and

### Why do Catholics stand, sit, and kneel at Mass?



leaves, when the Gospel is read, and when we proclaim the Creed. We sit to focus on the homily, and kneel during the Consecration, showing adoration and humility. We genuflect to the tabernacle and altar to demonstrate ultimate respect.

# Spread the “Good news of great joy”

After the shepherds visited Jesus, they told others who didn't yet know about Him. Pope St. John Paul II urged us to do the same: "If we truly encounter Christ again and again, we cannot keep him to ourselves." As disciples, we are required to make disciples.

**Practice urgency.** Those who do not have a personal relationship with Christ suffer the misery of our fallen world. Worse, they cannot enter eternal life. Our Catholic Faith holds the key to



peace in this world and salvation in the next. Sharing our knowledge and love for Him is urgent.

**Spend time in the Word.** The world desperately needs to know the Truth contained in the Word. Those who spend time with

Scripture grow deeper in their relationship with God and can share that knowledge.

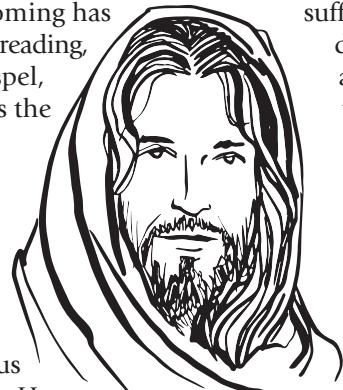
**Actively listen.** It is through listening that we earn the right to be heard. Active listening helps us discern where our companion is in the faith journey. Then we learn how best to share the gospel message.

## from Scripture

### John 1:1-18, Who is Jesus Christ?

Our faith hinges on knowing Christ – who He is and what His coming has meant for us. This Scripture reading, the Prologue of John's Gospel, gives us the answer. Jesus is the divine Word who always existed, the Second Person of the Trinity, and the source of life. Grace and truth come to us through Christ. To know Jesus is to know God.

At the Annunciation, Jesus took on our human nature. He became like us in all things except sin. Yet even though He was God and perfect Man, He still suffered. He got tired, hungry, and thirsty. He worked,



wept, slept, and prayed. He suffered temptation in the desert, and was abandoned, rejected, and wounded by those He loved. God understands us.

Jesus Christ made a bold claim. He said that He is truly God and truly man, and that our salvation comes through Him.

Will we choose Him as our Messiah? Will we live our lives as children of God? If our answer is "yes," then Jesus is the one to whom we turn for enlightenment and grace.

## Feasts & Celebrations

**December 9 – St. Juan Diego (1548).** St. Juan Diego was visited by the Blessed Mother at Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. She asked that a chapel be built and sent him with roses as a sign. When St. Juan emptied the roses before the bishop, his cloak retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

**December 16 – St. Adelaide of Burgundy (999).** A Burgundian princess, St. Adelaide escaped from a murderous plot for the throne. She married King Otto I, the Holy Roman Emperor. As Queen of Germany, she was

known for charitable works, including founding and restoring monasteries.

**December 20 – St. Dominic of Silos (1073).** St. Dominic was a Benedictine monk, born around 1000 AD in Navarre, Spain. Recognized for his leadership abilities, he was appointed abbot of St. Sebastian's monastery at Silos.

**December 28 – Feast of the Holy Innocents (1st century).**

On this day, we remember the infants massacred by King Herod's soldiers (Matthew 2:16-18). We also pray for the safety of unborn children.



## Q & A

### What does Our Lady of Guadalupe teach us about Christmas?

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) occurs during Advent. Almost 500 years after Our Lady appeared to St. Juan Diego, we can still learn from her miraculous image on his tilma (cloak).



**God is the source of life.** Viewed upside down, the flowers on Our Lady's dress take the shape of hearts with arteries coming out, representing life which originates from God. He sustains us with His grace, especially through the Sacraments.

**God draws near.** A four-petaled flower on Mary's dress symbolizes the Aztecs' highest deity, perceived as distant and unmoved by their concerns. The flower's placement over Mary's womb shows that the Almighty God draws close in love and humility, even becoming one of us.

**Humility and joy.** Aztec gods were painted looking up and ahead, yet Our Lady's head is bowed in humility and prayer. She is from Heaven, but is not God. She is a messenger of His love, modeling a humble, joyful response to Him and ready to bring His love to others.

## Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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