

Growing in FAITH™

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

February 2016

St. Francis of Assisi Parish

Rev. Anthony Francis Spilka, OFM Conv., Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Josephine Bahkita

Born in Darfur, Sudan around 1869, she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Her captors gave her the name Bahkita, which means "fortunate." After several years of serving under cruel masters, she was bought by Augusto Michieli. The Michielis sent Bahkita with their daughter to Italy, where Bahkita encountered Catholicism. Overjoyed, she was baptized and took the name Josephine. In 1893, instead of returning to Africa with the Michielis, she decided to enter the Institute of St. Magdalene of Canossa.

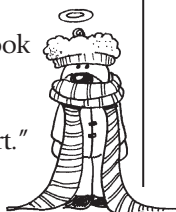


Forgiveness

The advice, "forgive and forget" isn't easy to follow. Forgiveness means letting go of your anger so you are free to heal. Do you need to forgive anyone? Pray for the grace to forgive as God forgives you: freely, totally, and quickly.

"He who knows how to forgive prepares for himself many graces from God. As often as I look upon the cross, so often will I forgive with all my heart."

St. Faustina



A heartfelt conversion leads to Christ

During Lent, the Church invites us to purify our souls so we can begin again at Easter. We do this in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and by converting our hearts, our goods, and our time to God's purposes.

Convert heart. Jesus sparks renewal in a contrite heart, one that acknowledges its weaknesses and sins and is prepared to change. True conversion is demonstrated when we put new heart into our work or study and in the way we care for our family or friends. When we make life more pleasant for those around us and make our work more effective, we strengthen our conversion.

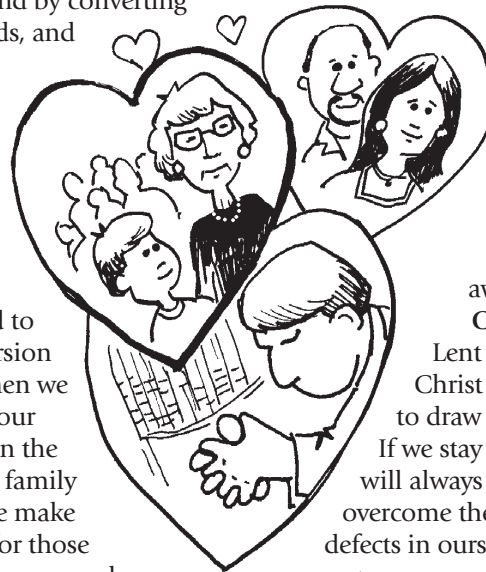
Convert goods. Earthly goods are

not bad in themselves, but we can't focus on acquiring goods and still be dedicated to holiness. Christ can't fill a heart bogged down with earthly distractions.

Instead, convert your possessions into instruments for God's purposes. What God can't use, give away.

Convert time. Picture Lent as a time when Christ is calling each of us to draw closer to him again.

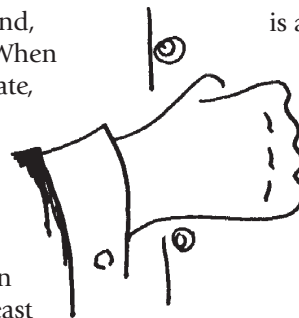
If we stay close to Christ, we will always find the strength to overcome the weaknesses and defects in ourselves that we can't conquer on our own. Use whatever free time you may have this season to pray, meditate, and read about Christ to learn and love him better.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics gesture during the Confiteor?

Prayers involve the mind, heart, voice, and body. When our bodies also participate, we tend to pray with greater attention. For this reason, during the Confiteor, we strike our breasts at the words, "through my own fault." Striking one's breast

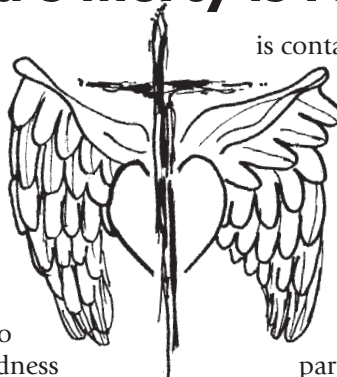


is an ancient symbol of repentance and sorrow. In the Confiteor, we recognize and profess sorrow for our sins by word and deed. This helps prepare us for a more holy participation in the sacred Eucharistic celebration that itself can affect reparation for sins.

God's mercy is real

Pope Francis recently said, "Mercy is real. It is the first attribute of God." How can we experience God's mercy ourselves in a powerful and personal way?

Practice it. Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." In order to receive mercy, we must offer it ourselves. Release your debtors, whether it is a material, emotional, spiritual, or psychological debt they owe to you. Then learn to ask for mercy from others. You will find that kindness



is contagious and God's mercy will flow through you.

Open the door to it. The door of your parish church is the door to the path of salvation. Use it at least weekly to attend Sunday Mass.

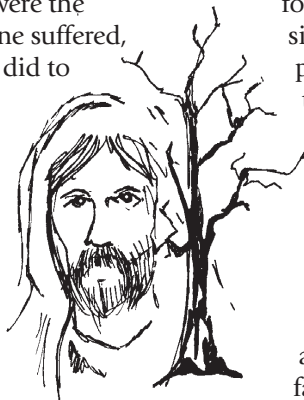
Ask for it. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the offer of mercy God never withdraws. We may be afraid to ask. To return to the embrace of our Father, all we need do is recognize our wrongs, ask his pardon, and to seek his love in the Sacrament.

from Scripture

Luke 13:1-9, Sin is a tragedy

In Jesus's time, it was thought that physical suffering and death were the punishment for sin. If someone suffered, neighbors wondered what he did to deserve his ill fate. Jesus explained that tragedy and death are part of life and he referred to two senseless tragedies to illustrate.

In the first, Pilate's soldiers killed Jews offering sacrifices. The second tragedy was a collapsed tower. Jesus explained that not every tragedy signifies a sin. The real tragedy, Jesus pointed out, would be if the people had died without repenting for their sins. Life is temporary. Heaven is eternal.



God is always ready to offer forgiveness to repentant sinners. Jesus told a parable about a barren fig tree. A tree without fruit should be cut down but it was given more time at the gardener's request. Jesus said that God, like the merciful gardener, wants to give us more time to repent and follow him more faithfully. The tree may still respond to care. While God's love, grace, and mercy are freely given to us, they should not be taken for granted.

Q & A Does following the Beatitudes mean I have to be miserable to be happy?

The Beatitudes can seem contradictory or confusing. Yet Jesus meant them as foolproof ways to obtain happiness here and in Heaven.



When he created us, God put the desire for happiness in our hearts (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1718*). Knowing how to read the Beatitude blueprint is the key to that happiness.

For example, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*" (Matthew 5:3). That doesn't mean we should be unhappy in order to get to Heaven. Rather, it means that instead of trying to go through life on our own, we can surrender to our dependence on God and he will lead us to Heaven.

Jesus demonstrated how to live the Beatitudes. When he saw suffering, he mourned, and didn't give in to his desire to "feel good." He was pure of heart and lived by God's laws. When he was insulted, he refused to react in violence. He showed mercy by forgiving his tormentors, returning good for evil.

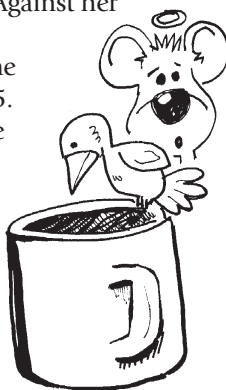
Feasts & Celebrations

Feb. 2 - Presentation of the Lord. Today, we celebrate when, in accordance with the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to make the prescribed offering forty days after his birth. Simeon tells Mary of the anguish she would experience at Jesus' crucifixion.

Feb. 11 - Our Lady of Lourdes (1858). A heavenly "lady" appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous, a poor and sickly girl from a small village in France. Soon after the first vision, a spring with miraculous, healing waters emerged from a nearby cave. The "lady" revealed

herself as the "Immaculate Conception" - the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pilgrims still flock to Lourdes today.

Feb. 13 - St. Catherine of Ricci (1590). Baptized Alessandra Ramoala, St. Catherine was born in 1522 to a prominent banker. Against her father's wishes, Alessandra joined the Dominicans in 1535. She is known for the visions of the Lord's Passion, which she experienced every week, beginning on Thursday night and ending on Friday afternoon for several years.



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Publishers of Growing in Faith™ and Partners in Faith™
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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)