

# Growing in FAITH™

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

February 2007

## One Minute Meditations

### Disciples at work

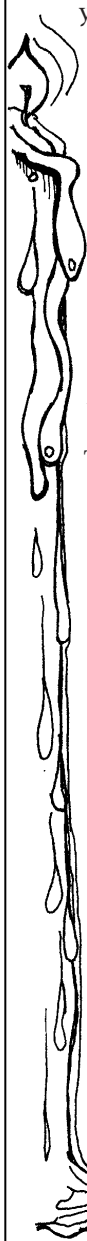
Examine your habits at work and find ways to be more efficient in your job. While on company time, avoid surfing the Internet, answering personal phone calls, or writing personal e-mails. Make your work a prayer you offer to God.

### Lenten abstinence

According to Canon 1252, all Catholics between the ages of 14 and 60 are required to abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and the Fridays during Lent. Those not required to abstain are encouraged to engage in some form of penance in the spirit of the season.

### Why pray?

We don't pray to inform God of our needs because he already knows them (Matthew 6:8). Prayer helps us to get to know God as a loving parent. The more a child experiences the loving care of a parent, the more convinced he becomes of the parent's love. God wants us to be convinced of his unending love.



## Wake up your soul during Lent

Ash Wednesday (February 21st) is our spiritual wake-up call each year. It is when we can identify and eliminate whatever is making us spiritually sleepy. Try these ideas to wake up during Lent this year.

**Get a check-up.** Through prayer and reflection, identify the areas in your life or your relationships that lead you away from God. Make a plan to remove those distractions. Write it down and follow it during Lent.

**Simplify where you can.** Lent is when we demonstrate our detachment from the world by eliminating luxury or comfort. For example, try eating less than you normally eat at meals during Lent, or cut out spices and sauces so that the food is less appealing to your taste.

**Add something back.** Once we remove the "static" between us and God, we need to do something new that will bring us closer to him. If you don't pray a daily Rosary, start now. If you can't get to daily Mass, follow the readings from wherever you are. Find more time for prayer.

**Demonstrate a change of heart.** The Church intends for us to use this season to turn away

from the world and back to God. Show more charity during Lent and refuse to complain, gossip, or lose your temper. Act only with love. Carry this charity beyond Easter.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

Giving something up during Lent can take us in one of two directions. It can eliminate the desire for what we have given up thus making more room for God in our lives. Or, it can create a stronger desire

## Why do Catholics give something up for Lent?

for what we gave up so that when we return to it, we appreciate it all the more and thank God for the blessing.

Either option can bring us closer to God which is the real point of Lent.



## Have you unwrapped your gifts from the Holy Spirit?

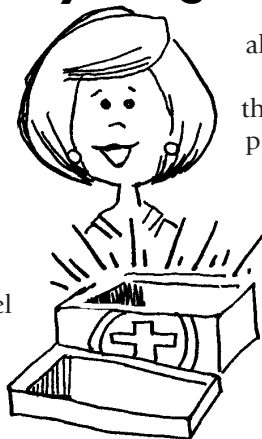
When you were baptized, made your First Communion, or got confirmed, the Holy Spirit gave you gifts to help you grow in your Catholic faith. Have you unwrapped them yet?

**Wisdom:** This gift helps us stay focused on God's will and his plan for us.

**Understanding:** Lets us grasp truths. It means seeing with the heart, not just the mind.

**Counsel:** Also called "right judgment," counsel enables us to weigh all the alternatives to make the right choice.

**Fortitude:** The ability to remain firm against



all pressures. (Also called courage.)

**Knowledge:** A person with knowledge sees more than one dimension of an issue to determine the right path.

**Piety:** Helps us think of ourselves as children of God and be eager to serve him.

**Fear of the Lord:** The wonder and awe God inspires encourages us to respect him and all his creations.

Unwrapping these gifts means identifying and using them. Just don't forget to call on the Holy Spirit for guidance as you use them!

### from Scripture

### Luke 4:1-14, strength against evil

Prior to the start of his public ministry, Jesus spent 40 days in the desert fasting and praying. Spending time with God strengthened Jesus and his connection to God.

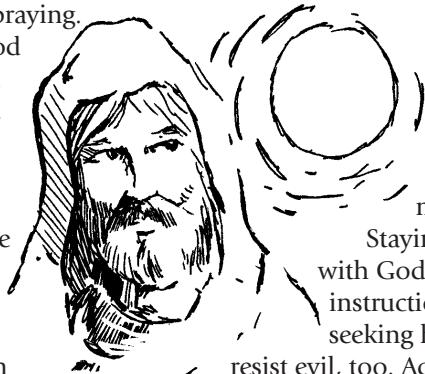
Knowing that Jesus intended to loosen his evil grip on the world, Satan visited him in the desert when he hoped Jesus would be weakest. Satan wanted to turn Jesus away from God, but the combination of prayer, Scripture, and grace helped Jesus resist evil and temptation.

For example, in response to each of Satan's temptations, Jesus referred to

Scripture – God's word – for his instructions and acted upon them.

When Satan quoted Psalm 91 for his own evil purpose, Jesus knew, understood, and acted on God's real message.

Staying in prayerful contact with God, acting on his instructions in Scripture, and seeking his grace will help us resist evil, too. Add more time with Scripture and prayer during Lent this year so you can strengthen your connection with God. Arming yourself with grace ahead of time will make you stronger in the face of temptation.



### Feasts & Celebrations

**February 6 – St. Paul Miki and Companions (1597).** A Jesuit missionary in Japan, St. Paul Miki was arrested along with 25 other Catholics during religious persecution and forced to walk more than 300 miles to the place where they were crucified. It is said that they preached the whole way to their deaths and ran to their crosses singing praise to God.

**February 10 – St. Scholastica (547).** Twin sister to St. Benedict, St. Scholastica established a community of religious women about five miles from

her brother's monastery. One day during prayer, St. Benedict saw a dove rising from his sister's convent and recognized it as his sister's soul rising to Heaven upon her death.

**February 21 – Ash Wednesday. The first day of Lent.** Ashes from the burnt palms of the previous Passion Sunday are blessed and placed on the forehead as a sign of penance.



### Q & A Can you suggest ways I can learn more about the saints?

Following a path is so much easier when you walk behind someone who has already walked it. Learning more about the saints will help you uncover proven ways to increase in holiness.

The classic reference for Catholic saints is *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, available from Liturgical Press

(www.litpress.org, 800-858-5450)

and many bookstores and libraries. You'll learn about the

major saint of each day of the calendar but also many lesser known but very inspiring holy men and women.

St. Anthony Messenger Press (www.americancatholic.org or 800-488-0488) also has a series called, "Saints and Christian Heroes," which includes lives and writings of many saints. Several are printed in Spanish.

Try asking Catholic friends or relatives about their favorite saints. You will be surprised by how many people can pass on personal stories of connection to a patron or special saint. And, of course, ask your pastor or priest.



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