

# Growing in FAITH™

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

January 2019

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Francis de Sales

Born to a wealthy family in Savoy, near Switzerland, St. Francis became the Bishop of Geneva and worked to revive Catholicism in Chablais, Switzerland. Controversial for his day, he taught that all Christians in whatever station in life could grow in holiness. He was known for his simple but profound sermons, and kindly spiritual wisdom. His famous work, *Introduction to the Devout Life* is still as popular today as it was when he wrote it.

### God stays the same

Although the world changes constantly, God stays the same. He can be trusted to provide love, support, and strength when we need it. All we have to do is ask him. *"For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed"* (Malachi 3:6).

### Pass it on

"Evangelization means to set out with Christ in order to pass on the gift we have received" (Pope Benedict XVI).



## God watches good efforts with loving eyes

We start the New Year with the best of intentions, but life can get in the way of success. Household expenses leave little for charity, work encroaches on family time, daily tasks distract from prayer time, and healthy habits fall away. It can be discouraging when we stumble, but it's important to keep trying. God watches our efforts with loving eyes.

God knows our limits. Our Father understands that we are weak and that we struggle. Even Peter, Jesus' close friend, promised devotion but later denied knowing him (John 13: 37-38). Not only did Jesus forgive him, he made Peter the first head of his

beloved Church.

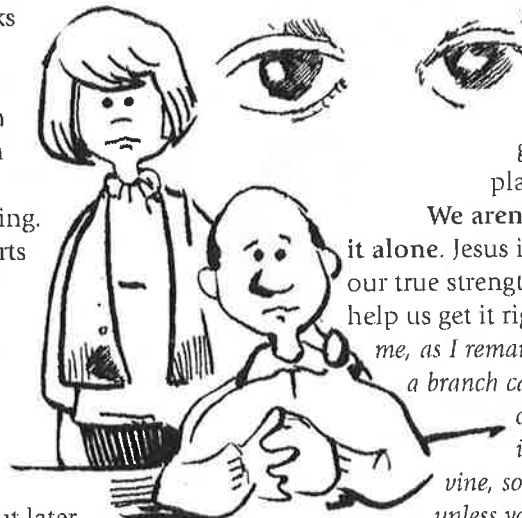
Don't let fear of failure keep you from trying again. *"Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed; I am your God. I will*

*strengthen you, and help you"* (Isaiah 41:10).

The key is to get back to the plan.

We aren't meant to do it alone. Jesus is the source of our true strength and wants to help us get it right. *"Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me"*

(John 15:4). *"Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power"* (Ephesians 6:10).



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

### Why do Catholics call Mary the Mother of God?

When we refer to Mary as "Mother of God," we are saying that Jesus is God. The Church has always taught that Jesus is both God and sinless man. As the Word of God, he always

existed. He took on flesh and became man in history through Mary (John 1:14). Mary is truly his mother: she gave birth to him and raised him. Since Jesus is God, Mary, his mother, is the Mother of God (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #495).



# Forgiveness makes good sense

"My best friend hurt me terribly, hasn't apologized and doesn't act sorry. I refuse to forgive her."

"When my parents died, my brother took more than his share of their estate. I'll never speak to him again."

Refusing to forgive merely prolongs the hurt feelings and traps us in the past. It forces us to dwell on bad feelings and keep them alive. That feels awful. Forgiving is something we do for ourselves.

But when we forgive, the energy that



sustained the anger and hurt is now available for better purposes. That feels better.

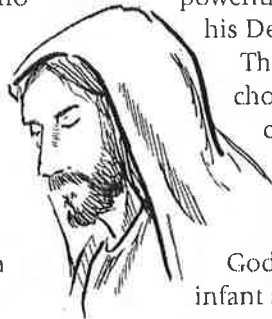
Need another reason? Jesus taught us that to receive forgiveness of our own sins we must forgive those who have hurt us. If we can't or won't – how can we obtain it for ourselves?

Instead, pray for those who hurt you and ask God to bless them. Not only will you find the pain start to lessen, you'll be saying one of God's favorite kinds of prayers. It's exactly how Jesus prayed while on the Cross.

## from Scripture

### Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21; Jesus teaches in the synagogue

In this passage, Jesus returned home to Nazareth to teach in the synagogue. He read the prophecy of Isaiah about the advent of the Messiah, who would come to "bring glad tidings to the poor." Then he said, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." He confirmed that he was the long-awaited Messiah.



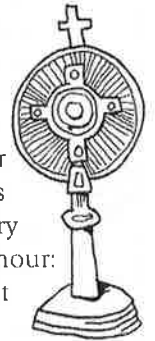
His hearers must have been shocked. They expected the Messiah to be a worldly king from an important city, not a carpenter-turned-preacher from a small town like Nazareth. They expected this

Messiah-king to defeat the oppressive Romans and make Israel a powerful nation. Instead, Jesus conquered the powerful enemies of sin and death by his Death and Resurrection.

Throughout the Bible, God chose unlikely heroes to carry out his plan: think of Abraham, Moses, David, St. Peter, St. Paul, and many others. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth as a newborn infant and lived in humility, poverty, and service. The Good News is that God's love is stronger than sin and death. If he rose to glory, those who follow him will, too.

## Q & A

### What is a "holy hour?"



A "holy hour" is a devotion during which one sets aside an hour for prayer and meditation before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Try these ideas to make a holy hour:

Find a tabernacle with a lit sanctuary lamp. The lamp signifies the presence of Christ. Silence yourself both interiorly and exteriorly. Clear your mind of daily stresses or outside distractions.

Start the conversation. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you, then make acts of faith, hope and charity. Tell God how you believe, trust and love him. Ask for more faith, hope and love.

Adore God. Rather than recite prayers, focus on adoration. God is all powerful, all good, more beautiful than we can imagine, and more real than the distractions on which we focus.

Imagine Christ sitting with you. It's not your love for God, but his for you that saves. God delights in the company of his children (Proverbs 8:31). If you can't pray, then just be with him. That itself is a prayer pleasing to God.

## Feasts & Celebrations

**Jan. 2 – St. Gregory Nazianzen (389).** Born in Cappadocia, Turkey, St. Gregory was awarded the title of "The Theologian" for his faithfulness and eloquence. Preferring the quiet life of a monk, he was unwillingly made a bishop of Sasima by his friend, St. Basil the Great. With St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory helped clarify the Church's teachings about the Holy Trinity.

**Jan. 3 – Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.** We honor Jesus' name, which means, "God saves," and refers to his

mission as Savior (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is "the name above all names," at which "every knee should bend ..." (Philippians 2:10).

**Jan. 5 – St. John Neumann (1860).** The first American bishop to be canonized was born in the present-day Czech Republic in 1811. St. John traveled to New York as a missionary before becoming bishop of Philadelphia. He built up the Catholic school system and established diocesan schools. He also built more than 89 churches, several hospitals and orphanages.



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To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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