

# Growing in FAITH™

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

February 2025

## St. Dominic and Immaculate Conception

Fr. Tom and Deacon Stan

### One Minute Meditations

#### St. Jerome Emiliani

St. Jerome led a wayward life while a soldier until he was captured in battle and turned back to God. Soon after returning to Venice, he began studying for the priesthood and was ordained in 1518. With the devastation from the war came famine and plague. At his own expense, St. Jerome cared for the victims left behind, especially the children. For this purpose, he and some companions founded the Clerks Regulars of Somasca, in Somasca, Italy.

#### Imitating Christ in the world

When Jesus said, *"I am the way"* (John 14:6), He meant for us to follow Him and live as He lived. He ate, slept, worked, and cared for friends and family, much like we do. Now, ordinary life, lived in union with Christ, can be an opportunity of grace for us.

"All the feasts in the Church's calendar are events of remembrance and hence events of hope."  
Pope Benedict XVI

## "I choose Heaven!"

Our time on Earth is but a fleeting moment compared to the vastness of eternity. Yet, we often prioritize earthly concerns over preparing for Heaven. Jesus reminds us of the right priority: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you besides"* (Matthew 6:33). When we put God first, He faithfully provides for our every need.

**What are your true priorities?** Your daily routine is a reflection of your heart. Pause and consider: What consumes your time and energy? The things that dominate your schedule are the true indicators of your priorities. If they are pulling you away from God, it's time to reevaluate and make a change.

**Where do you turn for guidance?** When faced with decisions, do you seek advice from friends, social media, or colleagues, or do you turn

to prayer and Scripture? Aligning our choices with God's wisdom leads to lasting fulfillment and peace. Resolve to trust His direction over the fleeting opinions of the world. When we place our decisions in His hands, we can move forward with confidence.

**Do you trust God with your happiness?** God's promises assure us of His perfect plan: *"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe, plans to give you a future full of hope"* (Jeremiah 29:11). If trusting Him feels difficult, invite Him into your doubts and fears. Ask Him to reveal His goodness and faithfulness—He will answer, because He is always near.

Refocus your heart and trust God's plan for your life. Let go of distractions, realign your priorities, and step into the peace that comes from seeking Him first.

### Why Do Catholics Do That?

### Why are Catholics only baptized once?

The Catholic Church teaches that Baptism is the gateway to the Christian life, marking the beginning of our communion with God.

Through this Sacrament, we are adopted as God's children and permanently sealed as His own. Baptism transforms us into new creations, opening our hearts to

grace, strengthening us against sin, and deepening our love for God and others (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1121).

Because this sacred mark is everlasting, Baptism is received only once, signifying our eternal bond with God and call to holiness.

# Trusting God in unexpected moments

Imagine you're at a wedding celebration for your friends. The atmosphere is lively, the music is playing, and everyone is enjoying themselves—until you overhear a troubling conversation. The kitchen has run out of wine. Due to an oversight, the caterers didn't bring enough, and with all the stores closed, the situation seems hopeless. What now?

*"They have no wine"* (John 2:3). Moments of crisis can catch us off guard, but they don't have to shake us. When Mary encountered this dilemma at the wedding in Cana, she didn't panic or place blame. Instead, she turned to the one she knew could help—her Son, Jesus.

With confidence, she simply informed Him of the need, trusting fully in His ability to provide.

*"Do whatever He tells you"* (John 2:5). These profound words, Mary's last recorded in Scripture, offer us a powerful lesson. When we bring our problems to God, He often invites us to be part of the solution. Trusting Him means being open to His direction, even when it leads to unexpected actions. The servants at Cana likely didn't anticipate filling massive jars with water, yet their obedience led to an extraordinary outcome—the finest wine, far surpassing anything they could have imagined. With God, the impossible becomes possible.

## from **S**cripture

### Luke 6:27-38, The demands of merciful love

In this Gospel passage, Jesus challenges our natural sense of fairness by commanding us to *"love your enemies ... lend expecting nothing in return ... and forgive."* These teachings contrast with the Old Testament principle of *"an eye for an eye,"* which aimed to prevent excessive punishment, and the idea of exchanging favors as a sign of gratitude.

However, human justice can lead to destructive cycles of retaliation and diminish the sincerity of generosity. When giving is tied to expectations, it becomes difficult

to discern whether kindness is motivated by love or the hope of something in return.

Jesus invites us to embrace God's justice—one that surpasses human understanding. God's love is not conditional or transactional; it is generous, selfless, and freely given to all, regardless of merit.

As children of God, we are called to reflect His love by extending kindness, forgiveness, and generosity without expectation. In doing so, we move beyond human limitations and participate in God's perfect justice.

## **Q** What do icons offer **&** to our devotional **A** life?

Icons are a revered form of sacred art. These sacred images carry a deep historical and theological significance, rich in symbolism and spiritual depth. Recognizable by their distinctive "flattened" style, vivid colors, and frequent use of gold backgrounds, icons often depict significant events from the lives of Jesus, Mary, and the saints, offering a window into their mystical and spiritual dimensions.

At first glance, the stylized, two-dimensional nature of icons, coupled with the direct gaze of the figures, can feel unfamiliar or even challenging to engage with in prayer. It is often recommended to begin by spending just five minutes a day in quiet reflection before an icon, gradually increasing the duration over time. There is no need to rush—prayer with icons is a contemplative journey, and as we remain open and attentive, the Holy Spirit gradually unveils their deeper meaning to us.

## Feasts & Celebrations

**February 2 – The Presentation of the Lord.** In accordance with the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple forty days after His birth, and Simeon praised God for revealing the long-awaited Savior (Luke 2:29-32).

**February 10 – St. Scholastica (543).** Twin sister to St. Benedict, St. Scholastica established a community of religious women about five miles from her brother's monastery.

**February 17 – The Seven Holy Founders (13th century).** Seven

Italian noblemen who withdrew from the immorality of the times to live in prayer, simplicity and penance. Their order, the Servants of Mary, was later approved by the Holy See in 1304.

**February 23 – St. Polycarp (155).** Bishop of Smyrna, Asia-Minor, Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle St. John the Evangelist, and a friend of St. Ignatius of Antioch. He faithfully cared for his flock despite being surrounded by pagans and a government opposed to his religion. Before he was martyred, he thanked God for making him worthy of a martyr's death.

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