

Growing in FAITH™

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

November 2016

St. Joseph Church

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One Minute Meditations

St. Albert the Great

St. Albert was the eldest son of a powerful German military official and joined the Dominican Order over the objections of his family.



A brilliant scholar, St. Albert established a house of studies for his order in Cologne, Germany. Thomas Aquinas became his greatest pupil.

Chosen as bishop of Regensburg in 1260, he was also an adviser to the pope. In his old age he traveled to Paris to defend the teaching of his student, Aquinas.

Christ the King

What does it mean to say Christ is King? Do we give him our Sundays only, or the whole week? Set aside ten minutes for God. Offer him the events of your day and say, "Your will be done."

"No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and [the world]"
(Luke 16:13)



Look for God during Advent

The Season of Advent can be a stressful time of holiday frenzy, or we can use the four weeks before Christmas to refocus on God's presence in our lives. *"Draw near to God and he will draw near to you"* (James 4:8).

Clear the air.

Sometimes God seems distant. He never leaves us but we may get lured away by sin, or we avoid him because we are ashamed of having done wrong. Our connection becomes faulty. Visit the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) to clear the air.

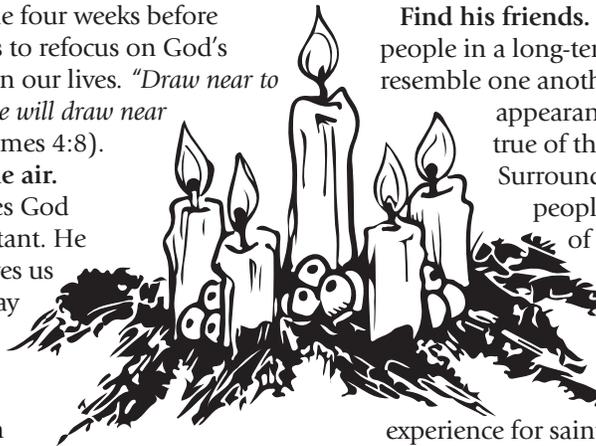
Replay your conversations. Scripture is God speaking to us. Start the day by reading aloud from the Bible so you can

hear his "voice." Repeat it to yourself during the day so you remember it.

Find his friends. Ever notice how people in a long-term relationship resemble one another in manner or appearance? The same is true of those close to God. Surround yourself with people who remind you of him.

Come into his presence.

Encountering God's presence is not just an experience for saints or mystics. He wants to change us, to lure us from the distractions and addictions of a troubled world. During the Season of Advent, find time each day to block everything out and focus on God exclusively. Be warned, genuine encounters with God's presence will change your life.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

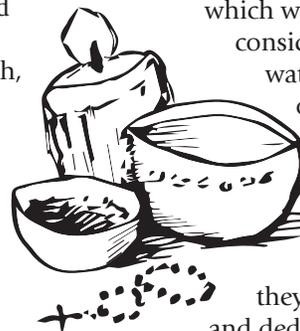
Why do Catholics use sacramentals?

Sacramentals are sacred signs that, through the intercession of the Church, dispose us to receive the effects of the Sacraments. They make holy various occasions in human life (*Constitution on Sacred Liturgy*).

For example, liturgical prayers and actions in

which we participate can be considered sacramentals. Holy water, ashes, candles, and objects used in liturgical celebrations can be sacramentals.

Unlike Sacraments, sacramentals weren't originated by Christ but they remind us to live holy lives and dedicate ourselves to God's glory.



Opt out of the Christmas Craze

Catholics eagerly anticipate Christmas as a holy day, but the practical aspects of holiday preparations can rob us of the peace we want to enjoy. Try these suggestions for managing the Christmas Craze:

Plan perfection. Write down your idea of a perfect holiday. List everything: food, events, gifts. Is it reasonable? If so, your plan can proceed. If not, seeing it in black and white can help you pare down your expectations.



Shrink your shopping list. Focus on giving to loved ones and opt out of gifting at work or to casual friends.

Cook ahead. Don't spend the holidays cooking and baking when you would rather be with those you love. Prepare simple dishes that you can prepare ahead and freeze.

Decorate slowly. Advent is a quiet time of anticipation. Wait to put up Christmas decorations during Christmas Week or decorate a little at a time to build anticipation.

Push back. Feeling pressured to have a particular kind of holiday? Decide what is best for you and stick to it.

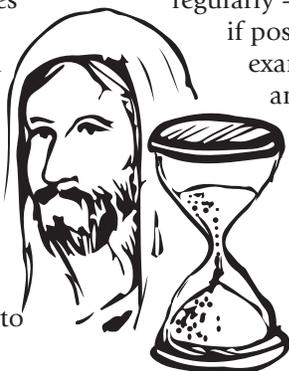
from Scripture

Matthew 24:37-44, Is he here yet?

In this reading, Jesus reminds us that we will never know ahead of time when he will come for us. He urges us to always be ready because he "is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Next month we celebrate Jesus' arrival at Christmas. He will come twice more for certain: at our death and at the end of time. Advent is the time to ask, "What do I need to do to be ready to greet the Lord?"

Start by doing your best to remain in a state of grace. When aware of having committed mortal sin, immediately seek forgiveness in the Sacrament of



Reconciliation (*Confession*). Otherwise make a practice of going regularly – every four to six weeks, if possible. Consider examining your conscience and picking one or two sinful practices you want to eliminate.

Then attend Mass weekly and try to spend more time in prayer. Finally, see if there are ways you can offer yourself in service to others.

Have confidence that when Christmas comes, you will be ready to greet the Lord with joy.

Q & A How does the Church know someone is a saint?

A saint is someone who lived a life of heroic virtue and is now in Heaven.

"Canonization" is the process the Church uses to determine if someone is a saint.

At least five years after a holy person dies, the local bishop may be granted permission from the Vatican to investigate her life. The candidate becomes "Servant of God."

The investigation can take years. A Servant of God's public and private words and writing are examined and testimony is gathered. The bishop sends the results to the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. If the Congregation approves the Cause, it will send a Decree of Heroic Virtues to the Pope for consideration. Upon the Pope's approval, the person becomes "Venerable."

Those in Heaven can intercede for us, so the Church looks for evidence that a miracle was granted at her request. Scientific verification is critical. When the Pope approves the miracle, the Venerable Servant of God is declared "Blessed." A second, approved miracle clears the way for Canonization.



Feasts & Celebrations

Nov. 1 – All Saints' Day. In the early Church, there was a great desire to celebrate the saints and martyrs by assigning each a feast day. However, the persecution of the Christians had been so horrible that there weren't enough days in the calendar for individual commemorations. Eventually Pope Gregory IV designated Nov. 1 as All Saints Day.

Nov. 21 – St. Cecilia (3rd Cent.). A native of Rome, St. Cecilia was forced to marry although she wanted to consecrate herself to God. She eventually converted

her husband and both were martyred for the faith. She is the patroness of musicians.

Nov. 27 – 1st Sunday of Advent. During this four-week season, we anticipate the Messiah's birth, remembering the time when he was awaited. We also look forward to Christ's reign and his coming on the last day. We light candles in an Advent wreath each night of the season to signal the coming of Christ, who said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).



Our Mission

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)