

Growing in FAITH™

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

December 2015

One Minute Meditations

St. Thomas Becket

Thomas enjoyed power and riches as a close friend of

England's King Henry II, who appointed him chancellor of England. In 1162, King Henry had Thomas named Archbishop of Canterbury. The King tried to pressure Thomas and the other bishops into agreeing to laws allowing the state to regulate Church matters, but Thomas refused. The King exiled Thomas, who fled to France for safety. To protect the Church, Thomas returned to England and was martyred soon after.

Gratitude and Generosity

Gratitude and generosity often go hand in hand. God is generous in his blessings to us, and often gives us more than we need. Our gratitude inspires us to "give back" to God. Gratitude is the attitude of a generous heart.

"Do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you" (Mathew 6:3-4).



Unwrap the gifts from your Father

God loves to give his children gifts, especially at Christmas. *"Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift"* (2 Corinthians 9:15). This year, unwrap your heavenly gifts ...

Joy – *"Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel"* (Isaiah 12:6). We are joyful because God gave us the gift of himself. Celebrate by talking about God with others. For example, tell how he has blessed you in the last year.

Peace – *"Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which*

will come to all the people" (Luke 2:10). Is it possible to live in the world and not be afraid? Yet peace is what the angel advised Zechariah, Mary, and the shepherds at the

Incarnation. Take the angel's advice and "be not afraid." Accept the gift of peace; avoid worry and doubt.

Love – When God sent his Son to our rescue, he gave us an incomprehensible gift of love. This gift calls for a response,

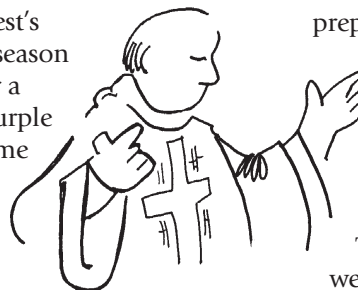
as he invites us to share in his love. *"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God"* (1 John 4:7). Share love at Christmas by spending time, not money, on those you love.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why does the priest wear purple during Advent?

The colors of the priest's vestments highlight a season of the liturgical year or a mystery of the faith. Purple (violet) represents a time of penance and preparation. During three weeks of Advent, the priest wears violet vestments to remind us to



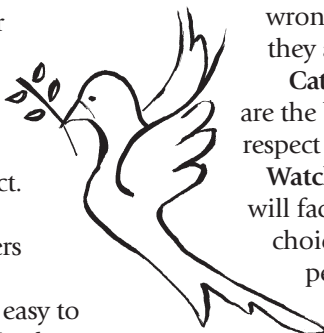
prepare penitentially for Christ's coming. On the third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday), he wears rose vestments to signal the halfway point of Advent. This is a happy time when we anticipate the joy in Christ's coming.

The peacemakers are children of God

This is the season during which we become our better selves. Peace reigns in our hearts while we exchange gifts and pleasant thoughts. The best gift we can offer the King of Peace, however, is to be peacemakers throughout the year.

Bring harmony. It isn't enough to avoid conflict. Peacemaking means admitting wrongdoing and accepting responsibility immediately. Peacemakers give up ground even if they are entitled to it.

Allow small things to remain small. It can be easy to find opportunities to take offense or find others in the



wrong. Peacemakers don't accept every opportunity they are offered for a fight.

Catch others at their best. Gratitude and graciousness are the best remedies for conflict and anxiety. Share respect freely. Bring goodwill to every situation.

Watch for opportunities to spread peace. Daily you will face situations in which you will have to make a choice, take a stand, defend a position, or seek a peaceful resolution. Be prepared to be a peacemaker even when it won't be popular, pleasant or easy.

from Scripture

Luke 2:41-52, Living in the world

In this reading, the Holy Family went to Jerusalem during the year Jesus was twelve. In those days, a Hebrew boy became a man around the age of twelve and was recognized in a ceremony we know as a Bar Mitzvah. At this point a Jewish boy would begin formal education in the Torah and Hebrew Scriptures.

This was an important time in Jesus' life. This reading said that Jesus stayed behind to talk with the scholars and teachers, and told his parents he was doing his Father's work. He had become aware of his duties to his

Father in Heaven, yet he remained mindful of his responsibilities to his parents on Earth and obediently left with them.

Christians live in the world, in neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. Jesus demonstrated his

respect for his ties to his family, yet he continued to pursue his place in God's plan of salvation.

The lesson for us is we don't have to retire from the world to be holy. Instead, we have to find ways to live a holy life in the world.



Q & A Where did we get the Nativity Scene?

The tradition of the nativity scene started in Greccio, Italy. St. Francis of Assisi was amazed that God, out of love for us, would allow himself to be born

in a lowly stable. He wanted to illustrate the humility of the Bethlehem scene for those around him. Three years before his death, he had the chance to do just that. The



chapel his order usually used was too crowded to celebrate Midnight Mass indoors, so St. Francis set up an altar in a nearby cave and celebrated Mass there.

With the permission of the Holy Father, St. Francis also set up a manger in the cave and brought in an ox and a donkey. The nativity scene was powerful in rekindling the faith of the people of Greccio. A former soldier even reported seeing the wax figure of the baby Jesus come to life! Whether the figure came to life or not remains a mystery. Today, it reminds us God *"was made flesh, and dwelt among us"* (John 1:14).

Feasts & Celebrations

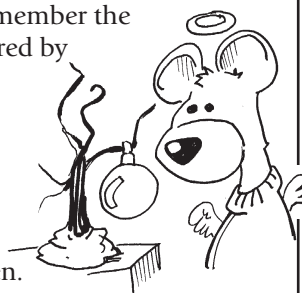
Dec. 8 – The Immaculate Conception of Mary. On this day we commemorate that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without original sin. In addition to attending Mass, praying the rosary is a wonderful way to celebrate.

Dec. 9 – St. Juan Diego (1548). A humble Native American and faithful Christian, Juan Diego was visited by the Blessed Virgin at Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. She asked that a chapel be built for her, and sent him to the bishop with roses as a sign. When the roses were emptied before the bishop, Juan's cape

retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

Dec. 21 – St. Peter Canisius (1597). Born in Holland, Peter joined the Jesuits in 1546, and worked to safeguard the faith through his writings and teachings. His work, The Catechism of the Catholic Church, is still used today.

Dec. 28-The Holy Innocents: On this day, we remember the infants massacred by King Herod's soldiers (Matthew 2:16-18). We also pray for the safety of unborn children.



Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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