

Growing in FAITH™

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

January 2015

St. Clement Mary Hofbauer Parish

Conventual Franciscan Friars

One Minute Meditations

St. John Neumann

The first American bishop to be canonized was

born in what is now the Czech Republic in 1811. St. John did missionary work in New York, was ordained at 25, and joined the Redemptorists at 29. At the age of 41, he became bishop of Philadelphia. He attracted teaching orders to the city and turned the parochial schools into diocesan schools, greatly increasing the number of students. St. John also built more than 89 churches, several hospitals and orphanages.



Thanksgiving

What better way to start the New Year than in the spirit of thanksgiving? Thanksgiving is what the word "Eucharist" means. There's no better way to show thanks to God than by living our lives in a new way beginning with Mass each week.

Transformation = Joy

"You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever"

Psalm
16:11.



Becoming who we were meant to be

Happy New Year! These words represent an opportunity for us to transform ourselves into the people that we hope to be. The people God knows we can be. This year, we can bring true joy to our lives by transforming ourselves for God.

Start by seeking God everywhere. Whether it is by acknowledging the constant generosity he shows toward his children or by accepting opportunities to receive him in the Sacraments, God is waiting for us to seek his presence in our lives. All we have to do is look and listen.

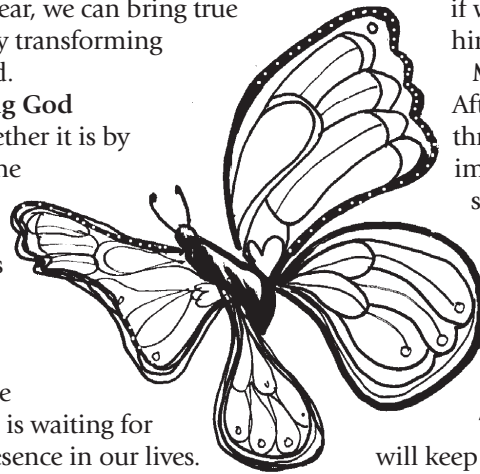
Nurture a healthy faith. To strengthen our faith we must separate ourselves from the habits that distract us from our spiritual needs. That can mean turning off the TV or computer,

reevaluating friendships or just accepting our struggles as opportunities for grace.

Transformation by God can only come if we give ourselves to him completely.

Maintain a clean slate. After we are cleansed through Confession, it is important to quickly surround ourselves with graces, such as receiving the sacraments more frequently, or studying religious materials. These "vitamins" for the soul will keep us spiritually sound.

Aspire to the greats. Throughout history, the saints have experienced every situation we can imagine. When we look for inspiration, we can look to them and let them guide us by their examples.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

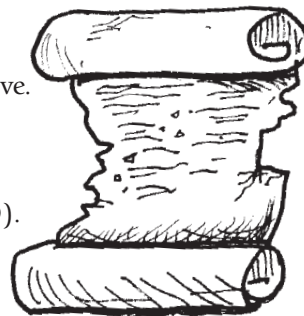
Why do Catholics say the Nicene Creed at Mass?

Reciting the Nicene Creed at Mass helps to remind us what we believe.

The Nicene Creed was finalized at the Councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD). The beliefs expressed in the Nicene Creed are the same as those in

the Apostles' Creed, but are more detailed because it was written to express what the Church taught regarding the heresies of the time.

"Whoever says 'I believe' says 'I pledge myself to what we believe'" (CCC 185).



Aim for perfect faith

Imagine if you had perfect certainty that God was with you in all things. Think how differently you would respond to difficulties, temptations, or hardships if you were convinced that God was in all of it and would use it for good. Worry would be a thing of the past. That's perfect faith and it is possible. Here's how.

Believe in God's love. God is love, so to believe in God is to believe in his love. If God loves you, then he wills your good. *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out*

fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love" (1 John 4:16). Perfect faith comes from believing in God's love.

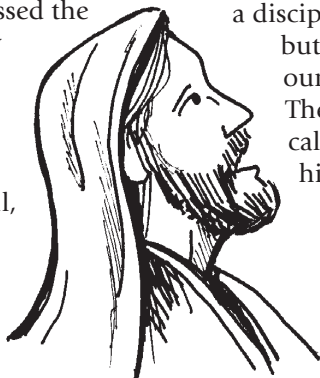


Practice makes perfect. Perfect faith results when we live God's word, not just hear it. Practicing the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes and the two Great Commandments (love God, love your neighbor), we notice God's hand in our lives and trust in him grows.

from Scripture

Mark 1:14-20, The common call.

When we read about the way Jesus gathered his followers, it seems almost casual. For example, he passed the Sea of Galilee, saw Andrew and Simon and called them. It's as if these men left their homes and livelihoods to follow Jesus with little thought. After all, he was a stranger to most. We must conclude that there was something very compelling about Jesus and his call to them.



With hindsight, we know that Jesus' message was worth leaving everything behind. In fact, we know that true discipleship means leaving

everything and surrendering to the will of God. He will provide whatever a disciple needs to follow him but nothing comes before our relationship with God. The compelling part of his call is the chance to serve him and be close to him.

Jesus chose twelve special people to be his closest followers and he became their leader. They went where he told them and did what he asked. Jesus

is still calling people to follow him today. In fact, he has called each of us to follow him.

Q & A What is my responsibility to God?

Once you have come to know God, and what he has revealed about



himself, he must come first in your life. *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind"* (Matthew

22:37). This is not oppressive.

On the contrary, if we love someone, we make changes so they can have a meaningful part of our lives. Their joys and sorrows become our own, and vice versa. This is true of God, whose very nature it is to love.

Jesus said, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). If we truly love him, we would do what he tells us to do: *"Love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends"* (John 15:12-13). God loved us enough to create us, suffer and die for us, rise from the dead for us, redeem and forgive us. How can we ignore a love like that?

Feasts & Celebrations

In January we celebrate the Holy Name of Jesus. *"...at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth"* (Philippians 2:10). In fact, the English letters IHS – representing the first three Greek letters in Jesus' name – used to be written over the doors of Christian homes.

January 1 – Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. When we celebrate this feast, we honor Mary, but also Jesus, as God.

January 4 – Epiphany of Our Lord. "Epiphany" is Greek for

manifestation. When they honored the infant Jesus, the three wise men bore witness to the fulfillment of God's promise of a savior.

January 28 – St. Thomas Aquinas (1274). Kept prisoner for a year by his mother to prevent his priestly ordination, St. Thomas Aquinas became one of the greatest theologians of the Church, honored with the titles, "Doctor of the Church" and "Angelic Doctor." His writings are still fundamental to Christian education today.



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