Growing in FAITH™

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

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Piscataway, New Jersey

One Minute Meditations

St. John Henry Newman

St. John's path to Roman Catholicism began when he read the Church Fathers while tutoring at Oxford University. After much prayer, study, and the guidance of a Passionist priest, he converted in 1845. He was ordained a priest in 1847 and founded an Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Birmingham. In 1879, he was nominated cardinal. His famous works include *A Grammar of Assent* and his *Apologia*. He spent his office writing and offering spiritual advice.

God is closer than you think

It's easy to take God's presence for granted because we already know He is everywhere. Yet His presence is personal and relational. He is with us because He wants to be with us. We see this throughout salvation history: in the Incarnation, His earthly ministry, the Cross, the Resurrection, and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

God seeks us, draws near to us, and remains with us. So whether your "today" feels like Good Friday, Easter Sunday, or an ordinary Tuesday, God is with you. And in the Eucharist, He invites you to draw near and be with Him.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

5 Ways St. Francis can help deepen your love for God

People often associate St. Francis with nature, peace, and simplicity. Yet his entire life was centered on God, His mysteries, and His love. His example offers five ways to encounter God's love more deeply:

Christ-centered life: St. Francis was a man deeply in love with God. He put honoring God first. He embraced radical poverty yet gladly accepted the finest vestments, altar linens, and vessels for the Mass. In imitation, we can ask ourselves often: "Does this honor God? Is it aligned with the Gospel?"

Seeing the person: Captivated by the Incarnation, St. Francis sought to treat each person as "another Christ," regardless of health, wealth, or status. We follow his example when we learn to see every person as a beloved child of God.

Delight in God's creation: St. Francis famously delighted in and cared for creation, praising it as God's handiwork. Even a sunset, flower, or beautiful landscape can become an invitation to praise God and grow closer to Him.

Simplicity of life: Most of us aren't called to literally "leave everything" to follow Jesus. But we can declutter our homes, make room for silence, or limit digital distractions, freeing more of our attention for God and neighbor.

Humility of heart: St. Francis' humility flowed from his desire to love the person before him. He wanted people to walk away knowing, "God loves me!" When we're with others, do we make the conversation about elevating ourselves, or about loving them?

"At all times and seasons, in every country and place, every day and all day, we must have a true and humble faith." –St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis experienced God's love deeply and wanted everyone else to experience that same Love. His radical life points us back to the extravagant love of God and the life we're called to live in response.

Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics have items blessed?

Sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church to praise God for His works and gifts and dedicate them to His service. While sacramentals take different forms, they involve the Church's prayer and often a blessing of a person, place, event, or object according to an approved rite. For example, wedding rings are sacramentals; marriage is the Sacrament. The rings don't make the marriage sacramental but remind and encourage spouses to live their vocation faithfully. Sacramentals deepen our devotion, support us on the path to salvation, and prepare our hearts to receive God's grace.

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Climb the mountain. Bring Jesus along.

Time in prayer is not a luxury or secondary to service, mission, or productivity. Nothing we do all day is more important than spending time with Jesus. Prayer gives life to our mission, and mission draws us back to prayer. We need both.

Climb the mountain: People may rightly say, "My work is my prayer." Yet spouses would struggle to stay close if they only met to divide the chores. In the same way, we need time with God apart from our work. Following Christ requires knowing Him. We sit at His feet and let Him teach us. In His presence, we learn to see as He sees, value what He values, and love as He loves.

Return to the plains: We aren't meant to stay on the mountain. Jesus sends us back into ordinary life carrying what we received in prayer: a peaceful presence, a new insight, a kind word at the right moment. Some even begin the day by asking God to place in their path the people He wants them to encounter.

The Christian life moves between the mountain and the plain: drawing close to Jesus in prayer, then carrying His presence into the world. And in both places, He remains at our side.

from Scripture — Matthew 22:34-40, The Two Greatest Commandments

The Pharisees sought to test Jesus with a difficult and much-debated question. Jewish tradition identified 613 commandments in the Torah, and a lawyer asked Jesus to name the greatest. Of all the commandments governing Jewish life, which mattered most?

Jesus answered by going to the heart of them all: love God with your whole being, and love your neighbor as yourself. Everything begins and ends with love. And loving God means learning to love what, and whom, He loves. Jesus taught that these two commandments are the foundation of the entire Law.

Loving God may seem easier than loving our neighbor. Loving others means welcoming people we might naturally exclude, dismiss, or avoid. Jesus drew near to sinners, outcasts, the sick, and even those who opposed Him. Our love of neighbor is tested especially in how we treat the poor, the vulnerable, the difficult, and even our enemies. This is how God loves, and He calls us to love the same way.

Feasts & Celebrations

October 2 – Feast of the Guardian Angels. All of us have a guardian angel in charge of protecting us and watching over us: *"For I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 18:10). Remember to thank the Guardian Angels for the work they have done in helping us.

October 7 – Our Lady of the Rosary. Pope Gregory XIII named this feast because it was believed that Christians won a critical victory at the Battle of Lepanto after praying the Rosary.

October 15 – St. Teresa of Ávila (1582). Teresa joined the Carmelites, against her father's wishes. In 1563, she was inspired to reform her order. Despite serious opposition, she founded more than 17 convents of Discalced Carmelites and helped reform the Carmelite friars.

October 16 – St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1690). Margaret joined the Sisters of the Visitation at Paray-le-Monial when she was twenty-four. In 1674, she began having visions of Jesus Christ, in which He asked for a feast dedicated to His Sacred Heart to acknowledge His love for us and to encourage reparation for sins.

October 18 – St. Luke the Evangelist (First century). St. Luke was a Christian physician from Antioch. His Gospel and Acts of the Apostles were probably written between 70 and 85 A.D.

October 19 – Saints John de Brebeuf, Isaac Jogues, and Companions (1649). Six Jesuits and two laymen became missionaries to Native American tribes in North America. After spending more than 20 years in a difficult ministry, St. John de Brébeuf won the Iroquois' respect by his valor in death. St. Isaac Jogues escaped only to return to his ministry but was also murdered.

Q & A — What is the Franciscan Crown?

The Franciscan Crown is a devotion that meditates on seven joys in Mary's life: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of Jesus, the Adoration of the Magi, the Finding of Jesus in the Temple, the Resurrection, and Mary's Assumption and Coronation as Queen of Heaven and Earth. The devotion is prayed using seven decades of Hail Marys and is also known as the Franciscan or Seraphic Rosary.

According to Franciscan tradition, the devotion began with a young man named James, who regularly wove crowns of roses to honor the Blessed Mother. After joining the Franciscans, he could no longer continue the practice and became so discouraged that he considered leaving the Order. Tradition holds that Mary appeared to James and gave him a new way to honor her: the Franciscan Crown.

Like the traditional Rosary, the Franciscan Crown is addressed to Mary but centered entirely on Jesus. By meditating on Mary's seven joys, we contemplate the joyful and miraculous events of Christ's life through the eyes of His mother. Rooted in the Gospel and marked by Franciscan simplicity, the Crown offers a distinctly Franciscan way to draw closer to Christ through Mary.

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