

# Growing in FAITH™

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

February 2018

**St. Raphael Catholic Church**  
Rev. John M. Connell, Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Scholastica

St. Scholastica was the sister of St. Benedict, the founder of the Benedictines.

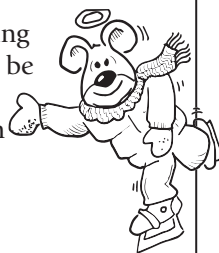
She was born in Italy around 480. She entered religious life and founded an order of Benedictine nuns. Every year, Benedict and Scholastica would meet about spiritual matters. After one of his visits, knowing she would die soon, she begged St. Benedict to stay longer. When he refused, she prayed to God and there was a terrible thunderstorm, forcing Benedict to stay. She died three days later.



### Desire for change

When we decide that change in our lives is necessary, we can be impatient for results. Attitudes, outlook, and habits develop over time and will take time to modify. Sometimes our best achievement may be our determination to persevere for change, despite slow progress. Sincere, consistent effort is all that God requires.

"At the evening of life we shall be judged on our love." (St. John of the Cross, *Dichos*)



## Goals for the Lenten journey

Lent is our gift from the Church to help us move from one state to another, through conversion to peace and joy at Easter. Consider these goals as you travel your Lenten journey.

**Know that you are a sinner.** The holiest people are most conscious of their sinfulness. The better we know God and his perfection, the more clearly we see our own faults and sins. The good news? Identifying our sinfulness leads to healing and cleansing.

**Listen attentively.** Hearing the sound of God's voice during prayer is rare. More often, God inspires us through Scripture, spiritual reading, homilies, prayer meditation. Throughout Lent, use these

opportunities to ask God questions and listen for the answers.

**Grow in authenticity.** God created us to become the best possible version of ourselves. Living authentically means saying "yes" to what helps us become that best self and

"no" to what doesn't. Starting with Lent, work to acquire virtues – saying, "yes" – and exercise self-control to eliminate bad ones – saying, "no."

**Live generously.** It is easy to notice what we don't have but Lent invites us to live in gratitude for what we do have. Gratitude then gives rise to generosity – sharing

God's love and gifts with others. Generous people are encouraging, positive, and appreciative. During Lent, notice and appreciate God's gifts and share them with others.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

Throughout Scripture, there are references to the prayers for the dead. For example, Judas Maccabeus prayed that fallen soldiers he commanded would be forgiven their sin (2 Maccabees 12:46). Jesus discussed the forgiveness of sins "in this age or the age to come" (Matthew 12:32).



## Why do Catholics believe in Purgatory?

All who die in God's friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are assured of Heaven.

Purification after death may be required to achieve the necessary holiness to reach Heaven. The Church calls this state of purification, Purgatory.

## How do I know God loves me?

God's love isn't earned and can't be lost. Such an amazing gift almost sounds too good to be true. So, how do we know God's love is real?

**He sent his Son to us.** "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

**His closest friends told us so.** St. Paul said, "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things

to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

**He watches over us.** "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'... your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well (Matthew 6:31-33).



### from Scripture

#### Mark 9:2-10, The Transfiguration.

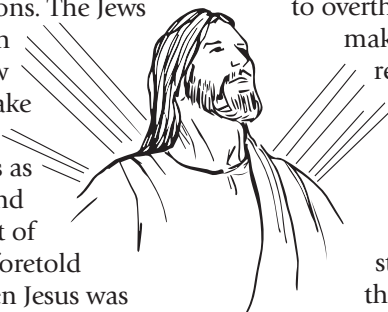
In Jesus' time, Israel was occupied by the Romans. By that point, the Israelites had a long history of being invaded and conquered by other nations. The Jews dreamed of the day when the Messiah would throw off their enemies and make Israel a strong nation.

God established Moses as liberator and lawgiver, and sent them Elijah, the first of the great prophets who foretold Christ's coming. So, when Jesus was transfigured in glory with Moses and Elijah, the Apostles realized that God was revealing Jesus as the Messiah.

Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about his death and Resurrection. Jesus

had warned his disciples that he would suffer and die (Mark 8:31). While everyone was expecting the Messiah to overthrow the Romans and make himself king, Jesus revealed that the Messiah would save his people by his own death and Resurrection.

The Transfiguration strengthened the faith of the Apostles and prepared them for the Passion. The Transfiguration is a reminder that, however difficult this life may be, it is nothing compared to the glory that awaits us in Heaven.



### Q & A What are the Corporal Works of Mercy?

In Jesus' parable of the judgment of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46), Jesus lists the ways we can take care of those in physical need: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me..." (Matthew 25:35).



These are the Corporal Works of Mercy: to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and imprisoned, to shelter the homeless and to bury the dead. Most importantly, "it is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2443).

At their heart, the Corporal Works of Mercy are about being aware of others' needs and responding to them. By this, we make our love for God and others visible and effective. "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

### Feasts & Celebrations

**Feb. 14 – Ash Wednesday.** The first day of Lent. Ashes from the burnt palms of the previous Passion Sunday are blessed and placed on the foreheads as a sign of penance.

**Feb. 22 – St. Margaret of Cortona (1297).** Born in Italy, St. Margaret ran away to live with a young man and had a son. When her lover was unexpectedly killed, St. Margaret returned home with her young son and became a penitent. Eventually, she joined the Franciscans. She founded the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy to

care for the sick and poor.

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



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