

Growing in FAITH™

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

April 2018

St. Raphael Catholic Church

Rev. John M. Connell, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Gianna Beretta Molla

Born into a large Catholic family in Italy, St. Gianna studied medicine and became a physician. She opened a medical practice in Mesero, where she met her husband. The pregnancy and birth of their fourth child was very difficult, but Gianna was willing to risk her life for the life of the child. St. Gianna gave birth to a baby girl and died a week later. She is the patroness of mothers, physicians, and unborn children.



No guesswork involved

Followers of Christ never have to rely on guesswork to decide what is right. We have a perfect example for our daily lives in Jesus. And to guide us, he gave us the Catholic Church.

"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).



Begin a new life after Easter

The promise of the Resurrection is that faithful followers of Jesus will have new life. Whether we had a fruitful Lent or were lukewarm in our resolve, we can begin now to become new creations.

Make an examination. Call on the Holy Spirit to reveal what is keeping you from becoming the person God intends. Make an examination of your life as you live it. Look at your prayer life, your sacramental life, your dedication to spiritual growth. Do you share your faith? Do you serve others with love?

Face the truth with courage. It can be discouraging to look honestly at our

many faults. Remember, though, that God understands we aren't perfect. He asks us to act with integrity and relentlessly fight against sin.

Being a sinner is not the worst condition – remaining one is.

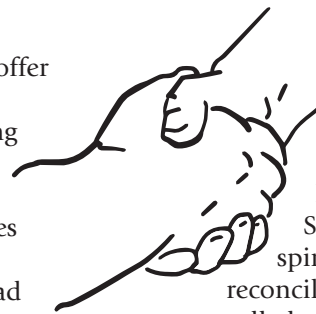
Devise a plan. Decide what needs to change and make a plan. Write it down and commit to it. Sometimes making a brave life change entails leaving bad company behind. Often it means changing entrenched habits. Change may be uncomfortable but growth can't happen without it.

Take the first steps. New life comes through God. Entrust your plan for change to him. Spend at least 15 minutes a day in prayer, asking for inspiration and strength. Then take the first steps toward new life.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

During the Mass, we offer the Sign of Peace in preparation for receiving Communion. After his Resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples in the Upper Room. Although his friends had abandoned him, Jesus



Why do Catholics offer the sign of peace?

forgave them, saying: "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). When we offer each other the Sign of Peace, we imitate Christ. The Sign of Peace is also a sign of spiritual unity. Just as Jesus reconciled with his disciples, we are called to reconcile with each other.

Catholic disciples are called to more

Daily prayer, weekly Mass attendance, and regular Confession form the foundation for a solid Catholic life. Yet, discipleship calls us to more. Discipleship moves us to make a “conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost” to ourselves (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops).

A conscious decision. Disciples consciously resolve to follow Jesus with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. This governing resolution – renewed every day – controls all other decisions in a disciple’s life.

Demonstrated by action. Our discipleship is visible to others by our devotion to the Church and by the good works we perform. Our charitable actions are offered in obedience to Jesus’ example – and instructions – in the New Testament. The Church suggests the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as guidelines.

Despite the cost. “So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). To be Christian isn’t always comfortable. Yet, disciples persist out of love, no matter the cost.

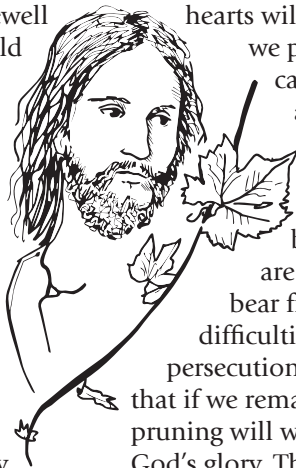


from Scripture

John 15:1-8, Stay faithful to Christ

This Gospel comes from Jesus’ Last Supper Discourse, a kind of farewell speech for his disciples. Jesus told his disciples – and us – that without him, we can do nothing. He used a familiar image to explain. A grapevine has a main stem and smaller branches growing from it. Just as the main stem is the source of life for the branches, so Jesus is the source of spiritual life for us.

We received this life when we were “grafted onto” Jesus in Baptism. We preserve this life by taking his words seriously and



striving to live by them. Then our hearts will become like his. When we pray in Jesus’ name, we can trust that God will answer our prayers. There is a “catch” to following Jesus, though. Just as the branches on a grapevine are pruned – cut short – to bear fruit, we will encounter difficulties and even persecution. Yet, Jesus reminds us that if we remain faithful to him, this pruning will work for our good and God’s glory. Then we’ll become the saints we were called to be.

Q & A What does the Resurrection mean for us?

Jesus’ Resurrection – the most important event in human history – is how we know that what he said and did



while on Earth is true and his promises to us are trustworthy.

During his public ministry, Jesus spoke and acted as God. He promised that if we follow him, we will have eternal life. Either he was God and had the power to make it true, or he was a mere man claiming to be someone he wasn’t.

That Jesus rose from the dead – a fact verified by more than 500 eyewitness accounts – means that his word can be trusted. He warned of the specifics of his own death, predicted his Resurrection, and proved that he really is God. Therefore, his promises of eternal life are real, too.

The Resurrection gives us hope. “By his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #654). All those who die in God’s friendship will live with him forever.

Feasts & Celebrations

April 3 – St. Richard of Chichester (1253). Born in England, St. Richard studied law at Bologna. Known for his holiness and administrative skills, he was named archbishop of Chichester, but King Henry III refused to let him rule until the pope threatened the king with excommunication. Even as an archbishop, St. Richard lived a humble life. He died in Dover while preaching a crusade.

April 8 – Divine Mercy Sunday (1935). In 1931, Jesus appeared to St. Faustina and asked that the Sunday after Easter become the “Feast of

Mercy.” Jesus promised anyone who honors him as King of Mercy and prays the Chaplet of Divine Mercy – the prayer he gave St. Faustina – would receive special graces and great mercy.

April 25 – St. Mark the Evangelist (1st Century). St. Mark wrote the second Gospel largely based on St. Peter’s perspective. Mark accompanied Saints Paul and Barnabas (Mark’s cousin) on their missionary journey through the island of Cyprus and is credited with founding the Church of Alexandria.



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