Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope** and **joy** in the Catholic faith. November 2026

Church of the Incarnation, Mantua, NJ

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One Minute Meditations

St. Gertrude the Great

Born in Germany in 1256, St. Gertrude was raised and educated by Benedictine nuns before entering religious life herself. Around age twenty-five, she began experiencing visions of Christ that continued throughout her life. She recorded these profound spiritual encounters in *The Herald of Divine Love* for the benefit of her fellow nuns. Renowned for her holiness, compassion toward rich and poor alike, and devotion to praying for souls in Purgatory, St. Gertrude remains an inspiring example of faith.

Loving like the saints

"Consider the example of the saints from every walk of life. What have they not done to love God, and devote themselves to him? … With such a great host of models, what can we ourselves fail to do? They were what we are. What they did was animated by love for the same God and by a desire to acquire the same virtues. Why, then, should not we do as much, according to our condition and vocation, for our cherished resolution…?" St. Francis de Sales

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Don't let Christmas sneak up on you!

Between the shopping lists, work parties, cooking and baking, and that one string of lights that never works, it's easy to reach Christmas morning wondering where Advent went. A few small changes can help you prepare heart and home for Jesus, even during the rush.

Clear some clutter, inside and out. As you tidy up for guests, tidy up your schedule too. Pick one thing to skip this year, like an extra party or one batch of cookies, and use that time for God. Five quiet minutes with your morning coffee counts.

Decorate a little at a time. Put the tree up early if you like, but decorate slowly: lights one week, ornaments the next, the star on Christmas Eve. Let the kids light the next candle on the Advent wreath each Sunday at dinner. The waiting becomes part of the joy.

Spend extra time with Jesus in the Eucharist. Try adding one weekday Mass during Advent, perhaps on your day off or lunch break. Or stop by church for 10 minutes on your way home from errands. You may find He's been waiting for you too.

Receive mercy, then share it. Check the bulletin for your parish's Advent Reconciliation service and mark your calendar. Then think of one person who could use some mercy from you: a relative you've been short with, a coworker, a neighbor who's alone this year. A phone call, a note or a plate of cookies can go a long way.

"The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'" (John 1:35-36).

Notice your blessings. Starting at Thanksgiving, have everyone at the dinner table name one thing they're grateful for each night. While shopping or rushing between parties, remember: people matter more than presents.

At Christmas we celebrate the best news of all: Jesus, the Savior God promised, has come for each of us.

Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics honor old basilicas?

In the Old Testament, the Temple was Israel's sacred place of worship, where God dwelt among His people. For Catholics, the Church is the new Temple and the Body of Christ. Our churches remain sacred spaces where we gather to worship and Heaven meets earth in the Mass. Each church building also symbolizes the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2-3). Recognizing their profound historical and spiritual significance, the Catholic Church honors Rome's four major basilicas: St. John Lateran, St. Peter's, St. Paul Outside the Walls, and St. Mary Major, enduring witnesses to our Catholic faith.

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"Pray, hope, and don't worry!"

St. Padre Pio's timeless advice offers a practical path to finding peace, patience, and joy amid the demands and expectations of the holiday season.

Pray: Although quite busy, St. Thomas More visited Jesus in the Eucharist daily while serving as Chancellor of England. He explained, "I have much very important business to handle and I need light and wisdom; it is for this very reason that I go…to consult Jesus." Amid holiday preparations, prioritize prayer over busyness. Entrusting our concerns to God allows His wisdom to guide our plans and priorities.

Hope: Christian hope teaches us to "desire and expect from God both eternal life and the grace we need to attain it" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*). Even when celebrations fall short of expectations, God's love remains constant. As St. Thérèse reminds us, "We obtain from [God] as much as we hope for." Our deepest joy comes from Christ, not perfect holidays.

Don't worry: Holiday pressures can convince us that everything must go according to plan. Yet even when gatherings disappoint, relationships strain, or unexpected difficulties arise, God never abandons us. We can prepare thoughtfully, love generously, and release what we cannot control. Lasting peace comes not from flawless celebrations, but from trusting God.

from Scripture

Mark 13:33-37, Preparing hearts for Christ's coming

In this Gospel, Jesus calls us to prepare our hearts for His coming. Advent invites us to reflect on three ways Christ comes to us.

First, we remember His coming in history. Through Mary's faithful yes, *"the Word became flesh"* (John 1:14). At Christmas, we celebrate the extraordinary gift of the Incarnation: God entered human history to redeem us from sin and restore our communion with Him.

Second, we anticipate His coming in glory. Christ will return "to judge the living and the dead," as we profess in the Creed. Because we know neither the day nor the hour, Advent calls us to vigilance, conversion, and renewed trust in God's mercy, especially through Confession.

Third, we welcome His coming into our lives today. Christ encounters us through prayer, acts of charity, and especially the Sacraments. At every Mass, His sacrifice becomes present, and He nourishes us with His very Body and Blood.

This Advent, prepare for Christ through repentance, receive Him with gratitude, and carry His love into the world.

Feasts & Celebrations

November 22: The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. On this day we celebrate Christ's supreme authority over all creation and remember that His Kingdom is founded on truth, justice, mercy, and love. As the liturgical year draws to a close, this feast invites us to surrender our hearts more fully to Christ, trusting in His reign and looking forward to the eternal Kingdom He has promised.

November 23: St. Columban, Abbot (615). St. Columban was born into a noble family in Ireland and chose to become a monk. He lived quietly in a monastery on the island of Lough Erne until he was ordained, then traveled to France in 590 to found more monasteries. He was exiled for criticizing King Theodoric II for his scandalous life and moved to a monastery in Bobbio, Italy.

November 29: First Sunday of Advent. During this four-week season, we anticipate the Messiah's birth, remembering the time when He was awaited. During Advent we also look forward to Christ's reign and His coming on the Last Day. We light candles in an Advent wreath each night of the season to signal the coming of the true light of Christ.

November 30: St. Andrew, Apostle. St. Andrew, a fisherman, was one of the first to follow Jesus. Immediately, he told his brother, Simon Peter, *"We have found the Messiah"* (John 1:41). This Advent, follow Andrew's lead and invite one person to come to Mass with you.

Q & A

Why does the Church discourage scattering loved ones' ashes?

The Church's teachings on care for the dying, funeral rites, and burial reflect profound respect for every person and their ultimate destiny: eternal union with God. This reverence extends to the human body, which Catholic teaching recognizes not as separate from the person, but as an essential part of their identity and dignity.

For the baptized, this dignity takes on deeper significance through the Sacraments. In Baptism, we become children of God and *"temples of the Holy Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 6:19). In the Eucharist, we receive Christ Himself, Body and Blood, as supernatural nourishment. Our bodies participate in our relationship with God and life of grace.

In the Creed, we profess our belief in the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. This hope shapes how Catholics honor the deceased. Although the Church permits cremation, it requires cremated remains to be preserved in a sacred place, rather than scattered or divided. Such practices uphold the dignity of the deceased and express our faith that death is not the end of human existence, but a passage toward eternal life in Christ.

Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.
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Publishers of *Growing in Faith*™ and *Partners in Faith*™
(540)662-7844 (540)662-7847 fax
http://www.infaithpublishing.com
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