

Growing in FAITH

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

November 2003

One Minute Meditations

Famous Catholic Guilt

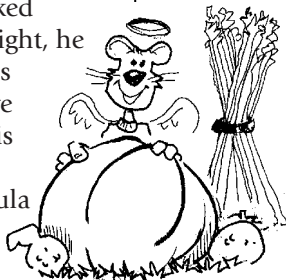
Popular culture often refers negatively to "Catholic guilt," implying that Catholics are unfortunately weighed down by a regretful awareness of having done wrong. Frankly, that's a good thing. Acknowledging real guilt is the first step toward forgiveness.

No such thing as "harmless" gossip.

What we call "gossip," the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) calls "calumny" and "detraction." Talking about someone else - true or false - in a way to influence others negatively is a grave sin. "Everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect" (CCC 2477-2479). If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all - for both your sakes.

God is a great partner

When David faced insurmountable odds against the Philistines, he turned to God for help. He asked whether he should fight, he followed instructions carefully, and he gave God the credit for his victory. That's a guaranteed formula for success.



The rewards of stewardship

For many Catholics, we only think about stewardship when our parish or diocese raises money. In fact, real stewardship is about becoming more fulfilled, having a greater sense of purpose, and being happier with our lives. And while it's not just about money, good stewards have all the money they need.

It starts by taking our place in God's family. All families come together in love to care for each other, enjoy each other, and help each other. In God's family, we come together in his love to care for each other, enjoy each other, and help each other. And, as with any family,

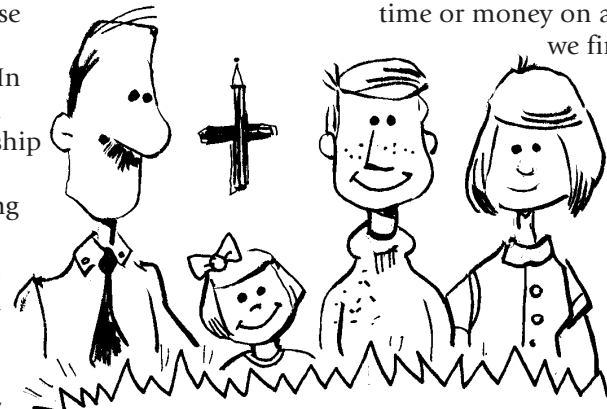
we meet the needs of our family before we think about spending time or money on anything else. So

we find ways to use our time and gifts properly in the service of God's family.

Everything starts with prayer. Ask God what is your place at his table

and in his family.

Take your place at the table. Find out where you can put your talents to work in your parish. Think before spending. Before you commit your time or money to any purpose, make sure you have taken care of the needs of God's family first. Everything we have and everything we are comes from him. He deserves the best we have to give.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Jesus said, "Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:31). And 2 Maccabees 12:46 reads, "Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin."

When we die in God's friendship we eventually go to

Why do Catholics offer Masses for the dead?

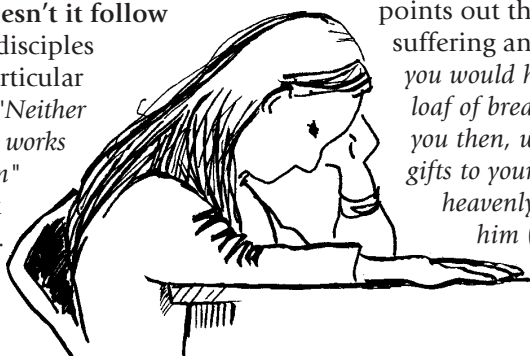


Heaven, but if we haven't properly atoned for certain sins we have to be purified in Purgatory first. We pray for the souls in Purgatory to help them pass through faster than they would otherwise.

"Why does God make us suffer?"

"If happiness comes from God, doesn't it follow that suffering does, too?" When the disciples asked Jesus whose sin resulted in a particular man being born blind, Jesus replied, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him" (John 9:2-3). God doesn't send it, but he uses our suffering to draw us to him.

Suffering comes from living in a world made imperfect by sin. Jesus



points out that God doesn't want our needless suffering and will help us through it. "Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him (Matthew 7:9- 11)?" And he leaves in his wake a trail of discarded crutches, bandages, and bonds to prove it.

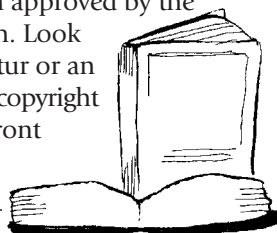
Q & A Sometimes I have questions about our faith but I don't know where to find the answers. Can you suggest some resources I can use?

Aside from the Bible, an important reference of Catholic beliefs and practices is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The glossary and detailed index make it easy to locate answers quickly. The Catechism can be ordered from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017-1194, (202)541-3000, www.usccb.org.

Another useful source of information is *The Catholic Source Book*, a collection of essential teachings and basic texts of Catholic beliefs, prayers, practices, and traditions with reference back to the Catechism. It's easy to scan, contains a

lot of useful and interesting trivia, and provides a great reference for basic facts. The Source Book can be ordered from Harcourt Religion Publishers, 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, 5th Floor, Orlando, FL 32887, (888)677-7357 www.harcourtpublishers.com.

No matter which source you use, be sure that it been approved by the Catholic Church. Look for an Imprimatur or an Imprimi on the copyright page or in the front of the book.

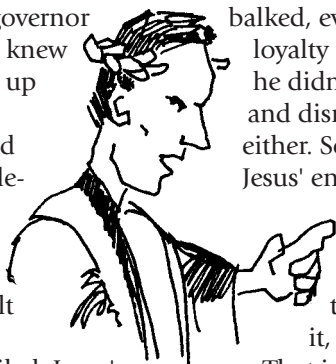


from Scripture

John 18:33b-37,
Any accusation will do.

When Jesus was brought before him, Pilate's main concern as governor was to keep the peace. He knew that false messiahs stirred up crowds and created confusion, so he dismissed Jesus as just another rabble-rouser.

But the temple leaders knew Jesus was different and they wanted him dealt with. When every other accusation against him failed, Jesus' accusers convinced Pilate he needed to sentence Jesus for claiming to be the



king of the Jews. (That would have made Jesus Caesar's rival and a threat to Rome's peaceful occupation of the country.)

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and balked, even though his career and loyalty to Caesar were at stake. But he didn't stand up for the truth and dismiss the false charges, either. So he shared in the guilt of Jesus' enemies.

As Catholics we are committed to the truth. Unlike Pilate, we know that we have to stand up for it, defend it, and preserve it.

That is what makes us different in the world. That's how Jesus will know us as his own.

Feasts & Celebrations

November 1 - All Saints Day. In the early Church, there was a great desire to celebrate the saints and martyrs by assigning each a feast day. However, the persecution of the Christians had been so horrible that there weren't enough days in the calendar for individual commemorations. Eventually Pope Gregory IV designated November 1 as All Saints Day.

November 2 - All Souls Day. This is a day when we pray for the dead, especially our loved ones and souls in Purgatory. Our prayers and sacrifices can help them get to Heaven faster.

November 30 - First Sunday of Advent. During this four-week season, we anticipate the birth of the Messiah in remembrance of the time in history when he was awaited. Advent also helps us to look forward to Christ's reign and his majestic coming on the last day. One way to commemorate Advent is the prayerful lighting of a candle in an Advent wreath each night of the season to signal the coming of the true light of Christ.



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