

Growing in FAITH™

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

April 2019

St. Raphael Catholic Church

Rev. John M. Connell, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Isidore of Seville

Born in Seville, Spain, St. Isidore succeeded his older brother, St. Leander as Bishop of Seville, at a time of social and religious division. By founding seminaries and schools throughout Spain, St. Isidore effectively converted the invading Visigoths and turned Seville into a center of culture and learning in the ancient world. He presided over two important Church councils, wrote a thorough encyclopedia that became widely used for nine centuries, and donated generously to the poor.



Just adore

Do you ever run out of conversation during your prayer time? Worse, do you tire of praying the same things over again? Try sitting in silent adoration of the one who loves you most. What words can be better than that?

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love"

(1 John 4:18).



Meet God at "Little Easter"

One amazing fact of which Easter reminds us is that God lives and lives with us. Yet, as the joy of the celebration fades, we may feel distant from our loving, living God. In fact, we can renew our Easter joy every week at Mass on Sunday, our "little Easter." It's a great place to find God.

The Priest.

During Mass, the priest is not acting on his own but in the person of Christ ("In Persona Christi"). Bishops and priests act in persona Christi when they offer Mass, forgive sins, preach on behalf of the Church, and perform other acts of shepherding and teaching. So, we find God in the priest.

The Word. Much of what goes on at Mass is directly from Scripture – the prayers we say together, the hymns we sing, the readings, etc. Since Scripture is the inspired word of God, we can find God in his Word.

The Eucharist. What starts as bread and wine becomes the body and blood of Christ. So we meet God in the consecrated Eucharist.

The People. When we unite to praise God, we are his

Church. *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). So God is there when we worship with others at Mass.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics veil statues in church during Lent?

Many churches veil statues in red or purple cloth during the last two weeks in Lent. This period of time is traditionally known as Passiontide, when we focus more intentionally on the coming events of Holy Week. Covering over the

images and crucifixes in our churches is a kind of "visual fast" and a reminder of this solemn liturgical season. The joy of the Easter celebration is visually communicated when the statues are un-veiled and the church is beautifully decorated.



The perfect love waits for you

It is said that in order to attract the perfect love, we have to become the perfect lover. God is the perfect love. All we need to do to claim his love is to become better lovers ourselves.

Be alone together. "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8). Two people in love need to be alone together so love can grow. Make time to be alone with God every day.

Meet for frequent dates. A loving relationship can't flourish on just one date per



week. Would you be able to get enough of your beloved by just getting together on Sundays? Try to make Mass more than once a week.

Reread his love letter. "I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name" (Isaiah 49:15-16). Re-reading love letters rekindles feelings of warmth between lovers. The Bible is the longest, most passionate love letter there is. Read it to find out how God really feels about you.

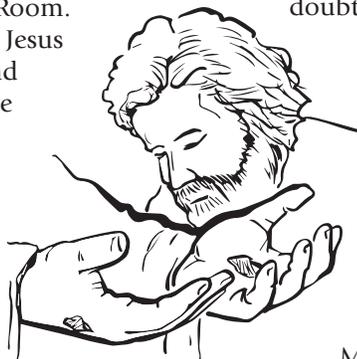
from Scripture

John 20:19-31, Two Visits of Mercy

This Gospel passage is about the two resurrection appearances of Jesus to his Apostles in the Upper Room.

In the first appearance, Jesus forgave the Apostles and gave them his peace. He also gave them the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins in his name.

The second visit was for St. "Doubting" Thomas. He refused to believe that Jesus was really risen, despite the evidence of ten eyewitnesses. While it is better to "see"



by faith and still believe, Jesus had mercy on St. Thomas's very human doubts and appeared to him. St. Thomas was open to accepting the Truth when it found him.

From this Gospel passage, we know we can bring our doubts, fears, and need for forgiveness to God, especially on this second Sunday of Easter—Divine Mercy Sunday. We can trust

God, who in this passage, proves that his deepest nature is merciful love.

Q & A

What does the Mass do for us?

The qualities of the Mass make participating in it essential for our spiritual health.

Thanksgiving: The Mass centers around the Eucharist – the "sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), #1359*). In thanking God for his



blessings, we recall demonstrations of his goodness, power, and love. This reminds us that there is a God who loves us beyond imagining. He doesn't need our praise, but we need to experience thanksgiving.

Sacrifice: When the priest offers the Body and Blood of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine, Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary is renewed in an unbloody manner and made present for us again. At Mass, we can unite our own sacrifices to Christ's and offer them to the Father (*CCC, #1367, 1368*).

Communion: Under the appearances of bread and wine, Jesus is really and physically present (*CCC, #1376*). When we receive Communion, Christ comes to dwell in our hearts, to strengthen, heal, and love us. Communion unifies the whole Church in Heaven and on Earth (*CCC, #1370*).

Feasts & Celebrations

April 14 – Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion (1st Century): On Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, we recall Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when he was greeted by crowds waving palms and cheering. This Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week.

April 17 – St. Stephen Harding (1134): St. Stephen and two companions founded a new religious order in Citeaux. As abbot, he guided the community through many hardships. Finally, St. Bernard of Clairvaux and several companions

joined St. Stephen and he revived the order. St. Stephen founded twelve more religious communities throughout France. He is credited with writing the constitutions of the Cistercian Order.

April 20 – St. Agnes of Montepulciano (1317): Born in Tuscany, Italy, St. Agnes was a Franciscan nun who founded a Dominican order. At a young age, she begged her parents to let her enter the Franciscans. When she was thirteen, the pope asked her to found a monastery at Procena. Inspired by a vision, she founded a Dominican order at Montepulciano.



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To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)