

Growing in FAITH™

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

January 2025

St Mark Church - St James Church

Emporium - Driftwood Pennsylvania

One Minute Meditations

St. André Bessette

Born in Montreal, Canada, St. Alfred Bessette was orphaned at the age of twelve. He was mentored by Fr. André Provençal, who inspired him to join religious life. He joined the Congregation of the

Holy Cross at twenty-five, becoming "Brother André," and was the doorkeeper for their school. During an epidemic, everyone in his care was miraculously healed with oil from a lamp lit before St. Joseph. With help and donations, he built an oratory to St. Joseph.

Holy simplicity

Holy simplicity, or "spiritual childhood," starts with being who you are and not trying to be who you're not — even in prayer. When we're open-hearted with God, His grace can change our hearts. We grow in humility, trust, and love — the roots of "tough" virtues like courage, perseverance, and faithfulness.

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven"
(Matthew 5:44-45).

7 resolutions to transform your New Year

The New Year is a chance to come closer to becoming the person you are meant to be. As you embrace the new beginning, consider these seven resolutions to allow God's love to transform your life.

1. **Trust Him:** Trust in God is the foundation of a peaceful soul. Start each day praying, "O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I surrender myself to You; Take care of everything," and He will.

2. **Embrace authentic humility:** A humble heart chooses others first. Ask, "How can I best love this person?" and let your actions reflect that answer.

3. **Partner with your guardian angel:** Your guardian angel is always with you, offering guidance and protection (Matthew 18:10). Call

upon your angel daily for heavenly help.

4. **Practice self-discipline:** Small sacrifices can lead to profound transformation. Skip cream in your coffee, offer someone full attention, cut back on screen time.

5. **Seek out silence:** God often speaks in silence. Find silence in your day to rest in God's presence, and let Him renew your spirit.

6. **Deepen your knowledge of our Faith:** Faith blossoms with understanding. Look through the Catechism until something interests you, and dive deeper.

7. **Offer God your free time:** If you have an hour to yourself, spend five minutes in prayer. No time spent with Love, Himself, is ever wasted.

Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics have two versions of the Creed?

The Apostles' Creed is the summary of the beliefs of the early Church. The Nicene Creed is an expanded form of the Apostles' Creed and comes from two great Church councils (Nicaea, 325 and Constantinople, 381). Intended to combat Arianism, the Nicene

Creed emphasizes Jesus' divinity and divine Sonship (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #465). As a communal profession of faith, the Nicene Creed affirms the core beliefs of the Church and unites the congregation in a shared declaration of truth.

A proven way to grow in friendship with God

Do you long to feel God’s love more deeply but find something holding you back? St. Ignatius of Loyola shared this struggle, inspiring him to create a transformative daily practice. This practice can help you live with greater joy in your journey with Christ:

1. **Give thanks:** Reflect on the blessings of your day. Pause to savor them and offer heartfelt gratitude.
2. **Seek clarity:** Ask God for the grace to recognize your sins and remove them from your heart.
3. **Examine your day:** Review your actions from

waking until now. Reflect on how sin crept in, the virtues you may need to cultivate, and areas of your life that need God’s healing touch.

4. **Ask for mercy:** Come to God in repentance. His mercy welcomes you back, and Scripture assures us that Heaven rejoices over every contrite heart (Luke 15:7).
5. **Resolve to grow:** Commit to loving God and others more fully tomorrow. Plan how to resist temptation, make an effort to amend relationships, or prepare for Confession if needed.

from **S**cripture

Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21; Not the Messiah they expected ...

In this passage, Jesus returned home to Nazareth to teach in the synagogue. He read the prophecy of Isaiah about the coming of the Messiah, who would “bring glad tidings to the poor.” Then He said, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” He confirmed that He was the long-awaited Messiah.

His hearers must have been shocked: they expected the Messiah to be a worldly king from an important city, not a carpenter-turned-preacher from a small town like Nazareth. They expected this Messiah-king to defeat the

oppressive Romans and make Israel a powerful nation. Instead, Jesus conquered the even greater enemies of sin and death by His Death and Resurrection.

Throughout the Bible, God chose unlikely heroes to carry out His plans: think of Abraham, Moses, David, St. Peter, St. Paul, and many others. Jesus, the Son of God, came to Earth as a newborn infant and lived in humility, poverty, and service. The Good News is that God’s love is stronger than sin and death. If He rose to glory, those who follow Him faithfully will, too.

Q Does fervent prayer & change God’s mind? **A**

Prayer doesn’t change God’s mind, as if He had to be persuaded to love us. God is a good Father, and He is our Father who knows how to give good gifts (Matthew 7:9-11). Yet, prayer is still powerful and worthwhile for other reasons:

Prayer changes us: God rewards persistent, faith-filled prayer: “Lord, I entrust this to you. Thy Will be done.” When we persevere in prayer, grace goes to work in our souls: our desires are purified, ordered, and sometimes even deepened. Our hearts are gradually brought into line with God’s, and we begin to see, choose, and love like He does.

Prayer is relationship: A read through Scripture shows God seems to enjoy involving many “co-conspirators” in His plans, even today. He doesn’t need us yet desires our (active) involvement in His plans. He has the final say, but wants to hear our thoughts, questions, and concerns. God didn’t make us to be robots but His children and heirs (Galatians 4:6-7). Prayer isn’t magic. It’s way more powerful.

Feasts & Celebrations

January 3 – The Holy Name of Jesus. In January we celebrate the Holy Name of Jesus. “... *At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth*” (Philippians 2:10).

January 7 – St. Raymond of Peñafort (1275). St. Raymond studied canon (Church) law before joining the Dominican Order. He worked for Pope Gregory IX, then was appointed archbishop of Tarragona, Spain. Afterwards, he was elected head of the Dominicans. He retired two years

later.

January 23 – St. Vincent of Saragossa (304). Born in Saragossa, Spain, St. Vincent trained as a deacon under Bishop Valerius. During the Diocletian persecutions, St. Vincent and the bishop were captured. St. Vincent was tortured but refused to deny Christ.

a – Saints Timothy and Titus (1st century). St. Timothy was converted by St. Paul and became his trusted friend, joining him in apostolic work, especially at Corinth. St. Titus served the early Church as a peacemaker and as administrator to a community on Crete.

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 Publishers of *Growing in Faith™* and *Partners in Faith™*
 (540)662-7844 (540)662-7847 fax
<http://www.infaithpublishing.com>
 (Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible - Revised)