



Finding God®

Our Response to God's Gifts

© LOYOLA PRESS. All rights reserved.

WHAT'S INSIDE

PAGE 2: Give a Hand.

Help your child develop empathy.

PAGE 3: Jesus Invites Us!

An encounter with Jesus is an invitation to witness God's love.

PAGE 4: What is the "common priesthood of the faithful"?

We have direct access to God through Jesus Christ.



3-Minute Retreat

Peace of Christ

Sometimes we are faced with circumstances beyond our control that make us feel like we are all alone. Our faith, however, tells us that the peace of Christ is always near us.

Settle into the presence of God. Slow your breathing and pay attention to each inhale and each exhale. Relax any tightness

or tension you may feel. Imagine Jesus sitting next to you. He says, "And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) Repeat these words to yourself and let his peace well up within you. Say a silent prayer of thanksgiving as you take his peace with you into the rest of your day. ■

For a daily online 3-Minute Retreat, go to www.3MinuteRetreat.com.



Opportunities of Faith

Flexibility is a word that keeps coming up this past year. I've had to be flexible and look for opportunities to practice our faith. Honestly, it has been exciting! From starting the day with morning prayers to taking a walk together and pointing out every single beautiful thing we notice.

This past year, with so many restrictions on school, work, and church, more than ever before we looked at our little house as a mini church. Like so many families, we streamed services into our living room, sometimes watching in our pajamas or with a few stuffed animals joining us on the couch. As much as I would rather worship in person with my church family, the familiarity of our living room invited more questions from our children—questions they might not have had space to ask in Mass.

Sometimes the questions are simple and easy to answer, but sometimes they are remarkably rich, questions I would have never thought to ask. I begin to wonder, who's teaching whom?

In a world where we need faith and hope, there is no better place to learn than in our happy little home. And I've

learned to let the children be the teacher sometimes. While I can answer their questions most of the time, every now and then they ask me a question that prompts me to think deeply, to discover more about my relationship with God and others. By giving my children the space to ask their questions, we welcome God into our daily life.

We've been talking about how to share this faith outside our home too. Sometimes charity looks like service, money, or time, but sometimes it means cultivating a charitable attitude toward others: learning to be kind, even when someone does not believe as we do.

When we invite God into our day, we notice him more. We find more moments to find hope and peace in him. ✝

Shemaiah Gonzalez thrives on moments where storytelling, art, and faith collide.





EXPERIENCING GOD IN THE ORDINARY

A Jesuit Shows Compassion for Me

Years ago, when I was a young Jesuit studying theology before ordination, I was in a deep funk because of a betrayal by someone I thought of as a friend. Another Jesuit, Harold Bumpus, knocked at my door to talk with me about what had happened. Harry was someone who had rubbed me the wrong way for many years. I did not like him, and I presumed that he felt the same way about me. I was quite wrong about Harry. He had witnessed what happened and wanted to help me get over the hurt. In other words, Harry was moved with compassion and took the chance to talk with me. Harry and I became friends from that day until he died. At the time, I did not think of him as God's emissary, but in later years that's how I interpreted it. He was my Good Samaritan who was moved by compassion and took a chance to knock on my door and offer me his friendship. ■

Excerpt from *Experiencing God in the Ordinary* by William A. Barry, SJ (Loyola Press, 2020).



Family Activity

Give a Friend a Hand

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), Jesus teaches us that being a neighbor means that we attend to the needs of others. This activity will help your children be sensitive to other people's feelings so they can help those who are troubled.

MATERIALS LIST

For this family activity, you will need the following:

- Construction paper
- Crayons
- Scissors

Directions: Tell your children that they are going to do an activity that will help them think of how they might help people in their lives who may be troubled.

Have your children trace an outline of one of their hands on construction paper and cut it out.

Ask them to think of friends or family members who may need help or are feeling sad. Tell them to write a name on each paper finger.



Encourage your children to spend a few moments thinking quietly about something they might do to show each of these people they care. Remind them that just as God encourages others when they are facing hard times, we can encourage others. Help your children understand that they should not gossip about another person's problems; they should just help the person involved.

Remind your children to be sensitive to their friends' words and actions so they will know the best way to help. Have your children put the hands someplace where they will remind them to be caring friends.

Conclude with the following prayer:
Jesus, help me see when people need my help. May I always give them a hand. Amen. ■



Need for Empathy

It is obvious that today's world is in need of mercy and compassion, or rather of the capacity for empathy.

—POPE FRANCIS

The Harwood Mysteries

Travel to medieval England for the Harwood Mysteries, exciting middle-grade adventures featuring young Xan and his friends. ■

Shadow in the Dark (Loyola Press, 2021), *The Haunted Cathedral* (Loyola Press, 2021), and *The Fire of Eden* (Loyola Press, 2021) by Antony Barone Kolenc.



Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts

A newsletter for parents and families by Loyola Press

Finding God Newsletter is an expression of the work of Loyola Press, a ministry of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits.

Contributors: Bob Burnham, OFS; Shemaiah Gonzalez; William A. Barry, SJ; Becky Eldredge; Joe Paprocki; Jill Arena; Nicola Doherty

Art Credits: Page 1: Photaw/iStockphoto/Getty Images, tawan75/Shutterstock.com, Geber86/E+/Getty Images, Page 2: Lilanakan/iStock/Getty Images, duncan1890/Digital Vision/Getty, shironosov/iStock/Getty Images, Giulio Napolitano/Shutterstock, Page 3: Nicku/Shutterstock.com, Blueastro/iStock/Getty Images Page 4: Marina Seone, Trevor Adelline/Caiaimage/Getty Images, Valentina Angelova/Shutterstock

To contact any of our writers, please e-mail us at newsletter@loyolapress.com.

Excerpts from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All rights reserved.

The newsletter is published seven times a year (including issues for Advent and Lent) by Loyola Press.

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

(800) 621-1008
www.loyolapress.com

For activities, quick tips, and other resources to encourage faith-filled family living, visit www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/family.

Web Number: W2571

Copyright © Loyola Press, 2021

All rights reserved. Materials may not be reproduced in any form without permission of the publisher.

Witness God's Love

Saint Ignatius of Loyola taught a way of praying with Scripture by using our imagination. Praying this way helps us “love Him more and follow Him more closely” (*Spiritual Exercises*, #104). As we pray with the Gospels this way, we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

I invite you to contemplate a moment on the road to Emmaus where Jesus encouraged the disciples to be witnesses of God's love in their lives.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

—Luke 24:45–48



© LOYOLA PRESS. All rights reserved.

Read. Read the Scripture passage a few times so that you know the story well enough to share it with another person.

Imagine. Picture yourself in the scene. Imagine walking with Jesus and the other disciples on the road to Emmaus. What is happening as you walk together? Imagine the disciples inviting Jesus to stay with them. How does he respond to their invitation?

Notice. Watch and listen as the scene unfolds. Listen as Jesus explains the Scriptures to you. Listen to his invitation to be a witness of God's unfolding love.

Respond. What insights do you have as Jesus explains the Scriptures to you?

What feelings arise as you hear the invitation to be a witness of God's love?

Rest. Let God speak to you about what you saw, heard, and felt.

Reflect. What did you learn about Jesus, God, or yourself? When have you offered hospitality to others, as the disciples offered hospitality to Jesus? How often have you denied or offered hospitality and either missed or welcomed Jesus? What actions do you feel called to take to accept the invitation to be a witness of God's love? ■

Becky Eldredge is a wife, mother, spiritual director, and the author of the book *The Inner Chapel* (Loyola Press, 2020).

Living the Beatitudes

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

—Matthew 5:3

Those who are “poor in spirit” recognize their complete dependence on God. Their happiness is found in God, not in material possessions. Thus, the poor in spirit can live a simple lifestyle—for

them, possessions are meant to meet specific needs, not to satisfy wants.

We can embrace a simple lifestyle by practicing gratitude and generosity. Through gratitude, we learn to appreciate and be satisfied with what we already have. Through generosity, we act on these words of



Saint John Chrysostom: “Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.” ■

Faith & Justice

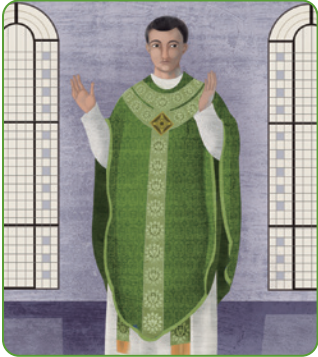


Use the QR code to learn more about how to pay attention to the [needs of those who are poor](#).



I've heard about the "common priesthood of the faithful." What does that mean?

a: *You're probably familiar with the term gatekeeper—someone who gets to decide who is "in" and who is "out."* In some ancient religions, priests were seen as gatekeepers. The only way to gain access to the deity was through the words and actions of the priest.



In ancient Israel, the high priest of the Temple in Jerusalem was the one through whom people gained direct access to God and atoned for their sins. The early Christians, however, saw Jesus Christ as our "great high priest" (Hebrews 4:14), the one through whom we have direct access to God. Through our

Baptism, we become members of the Body of Christ and part of the "common priesthood of the faithful." Thus, we can help others see that they also have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. Our ordained priests are not gatekeepers; rather they serve God's people and direct the efforts of all the baptized to practice the common priesthood of the faithful and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. ■

Joe Paprocki is national consultant for faith formation for Loyola Press and author of *Preparing Hearts and Minds* (Loyola Press, 2020).

5
THINGS

Five Things I Learned From . . .

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

Street Murals

It's easy to see God in works like the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, but when I create street murals, or look at some created by other artists, I find myself reflecting on how they reveal God's work in our lives.



- 1. Beauty.** Not only did God create a beautiful world, but we have the ability to appreciate that beauty by using our gifts and talents.
- 2. Devotion.** The labor an artist puts into painting the mural is a prayer in paint.
- 3. Community.** Friendships are formed when people come together to paint and beautify neglected spaces.
- 4. Sanctuary.** Some murals provide comfort and sanctuary for those who are lost and lonely.
- 5. Hope.** A mural makes space—physical and mental—where we can imagine a future where goodness prevails.

Jill Arena is the managing designer at Loyola Press.

© LOYOLA PRESS. All rights reserved.

The Little Way

Growing Up

The Little Way of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux allows us to find God in the ordinary events of our daily lives. By doing ordinary, mundane things with great love, we come to know God, who is love. "We love God," Saint Thérèse once said, "to the extent that we practice it."

Nicola Doherty, an editor at Loyola Press, described her practice of the Little Way after watching her five-year-old son, Elliott, use a step



stool to reach a cabinet and grab a breakfast bar, which he then ate while watching *Sesame Street*.

"As a mom, making meals is part of my job," Nicola said. "It's a parental chore. In that moment, I could see him solve a problem: he was hungry, I was busy, and he solved it. I watched him literally take a step in becoming self-sufficient. And it warmed my heart and broke it at the same time. It's difficult to accept that my baby is growing up."

In that simple moment, Nicola was witness to a mystery—the mystery of watching her son grow up. Perhaps this is what warms God's heart: watching us grow in our faith. ■

Contact Us!



We'd love to hear from you! You can send us your questions, comments, and requests by using the QR code above or by emailing us at newsletter@loyolapress.com.