



Finding God®

Our Response to God's Gifts

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One Story at a Time

When I received my First Holy Communion, someone gave me a tiny book as a present. Like many kids, I never read it. Not until my teen years—led more by my curiosity than my appetite to learn more—did I open it and start reading its first pages. Suddenly, I found myself immersed into a different world. I read stories that I felt were meant especially for me. I encountered questions that became personal and challenging. I was attracted by the powerful stories about a man named Jesus. His words and gestures reflected his deep humanity that changed the way I perceived the world forever. Without knowing it, I was in front of what became the most important book of my life: The Gospels.

My dad used to say that education is the most valuable inheritance someone could receive from his or her parents. Such an education isn't only found in the opportunity to go to school; it includes the wisdom offered by others. This kind of education—the wisdom of others—is often freely given in the form of loving advice and experience. This is the kind of education that has made my life meaningful and joyful.

Stories are a powerful way to teach and pass on this loving wisdom, and these stories can remain in our minds for a

lifetime. Maybe that is the reason why Jesus taught his disciples with simple stories called parables.

I have come to realize that I do not need to be a biblical scholar or a theologian to pass on meaningful values to my children. All I need to do is to share the stories and lessons found in the Bible, one at a time, with my kids. By doing this, I will be contributing, day by day, to the greater inheritance I can leave to my kids, which no one will take away from them, just as my dad told me and as Jesus reminds us. ✝

Adrian Badillo is coordinator for adult ministry for the Archdiocese of Chicago. He lives with his wife and three kids in Chicago.

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Share God's kingdom by sharing God's gifts with others.

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We are sisters and brothers to Jesus when we act on his Word.

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When you help your children know the Bible, you help them know Christ.



3-Minute Retreat

A Moment with the Word

Scripture is not a book to be read; rather, Scripture is an encounter with the living Word of God. Spend a moment with God's Word.

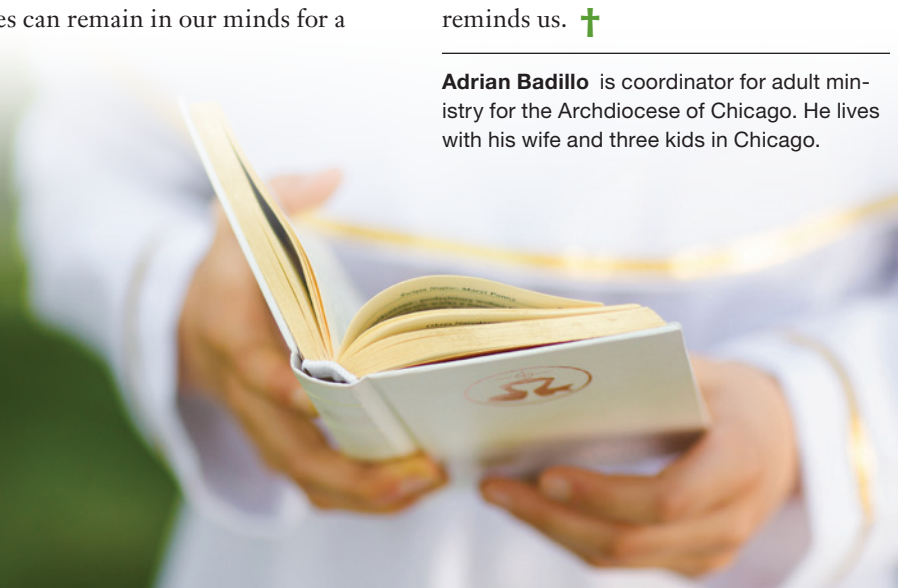
Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to open your heart and your mind to God's Word. Read a verse in the Bible—it can be a verse you

heard at a recent Mass, a verse someone shared with you, or one that has special meaning to you.

What does that verse mean to you? How might you live out what

you just read? Rest quietly for a few minutes; listen closely to what God may be saying to you. Give thanks to God for the gift of his Word. ■

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





EXPERIENCING GOD IN THE ORDINARY

The Contagion of Goodness

I am convinced that the presence of God is something like an infectious disease that is passed from person to person, only here it is a contagion of goodness.

Notice how many people were affected by Jesus himself and then by his early followers. . . .



Instances of the contagion of goodness, by the way, seem to have been given to us humans and, indeed, to all creatures with our biological natures.

In *Mama's Last Hug: Animal Emotions and What They Tell Us about Ourselves*, Frans de Waal demonstrates that what looks like empathy and compassion can be found in monkeys, apes, and even elephants. He speaks of the contagion of such positive emotions in animals as well as in humans. He notes that these findings run counter to the prevailing scientific opinion that the animal and human worlds are governed by a dog-eat-dog mentality. I take it that God has endowed us with biological equipment that moves us toward cooperation with and empathy toward others, something necessary for the survival of all animal species. ■

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

Family Activity *God's Kingdom Among Us*

Jesus begins his earthly ministry by preaching "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15) We can learn to recognize God's kingdom by sharing our gifts with others.

MATERIALS LIST

For this activity, you will need the following materials:

- Small box
- Ribbon
- Art supplies

Directions: Explain that you will do an activity in which you will think of ways to share with others the gifts God has given you.

Decorate a small box with ribbon and art supplies to make a gift box. Label the box "God's Gifts to Me." When you have completed the box, suggest that the box is a symbol of all the special gifts that God has given you, the many special qualities and things you know how to do and can share with others.

Brainstorm ideas of gifts and talents. (Examples: patience with sick people, sense of humor to cheer people up, ability to knit, skill at fixing things, skill at playing the violin)

Take the box and express thanks for one of your own gifts. After sharing your gift, say, "I will use my gift to carry out Jesus' mission." Pass the gift box to each member of the family, who will do the same and then pass it on. Continue until everyone in the family has had a chance to share.

Remind your children that they can tell others about the gifts they have to offer in a way that is not boastful. God wants us to use our gifts to help others as Jesus did.

Conclude by praying the Lord's Prayer together. ■



Love Is . . .

Love consists in the mutual sharing of goods.

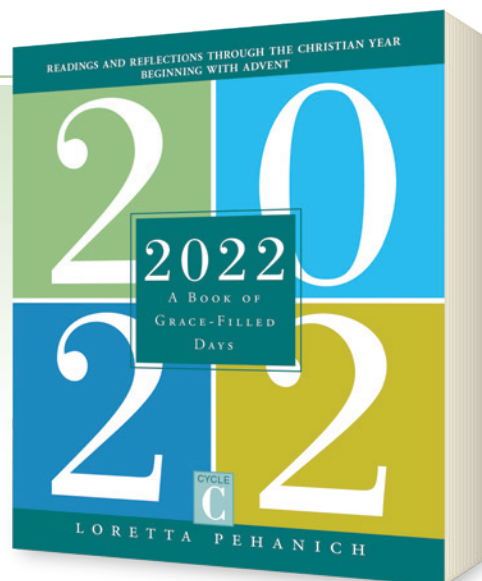
—SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA



Days of Grace

A vibrant prayer life unfolds when we regularly open ourselves to inspiration and God's grace. *2022: A Book of Grace-Filled Days* provides a daily prayer experience to help us build and nurture our faith. This daily devotional notes major feast days, saint commemorations, and holidays. ■

2022: A Book of Grace-Filled Days (Loyola Press, 2022).



Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts

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Contributors: Bob Burnham, OFS; Adrian Badillo; William A. Barry, SJ; Becky Eldredge; Joe Paprocki; Angela LoMonaco; Carlos Matallana

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Jesus' Family

Saint Ignatius of Loyola taught a way of praying with Scripture by using our imaginations. 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 closer in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

I invite you to contemplate your familial relationship with Jesus.

Then his mother and his brothers came to him but were unable to join him because of the crowd. He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you." He said to them in reply, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

—Luke 8:19–21

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. Picture yourself standing by Jesus in the crowd. Notice all the people around you and him.

Notice. Watch and listen as the scene unfolds. Someone approaches Jesus to let him know his mother and brothers are outside. Listen to his response: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

Respond. How do you feel as you hear Jesus include in his family everyone who hears the Word of God? How do you feel now that you heard Jesus say that



you, too, are a member of his family? How does this change how you think of God's Word?

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

Reflect. What did you learn about Jesus, God, or yourself? What role can Scripture play in your life and in your family's life? ■

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 they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

—Matthew 5:4

This beatitude can be summarized by a single word: compassion. Through compassion, we seek to enter hearts that are broken; we seek to share in the suffering of others to understand how to



best relieve it. A simple way of offering compassion is to help people grieve, to help them express their sorrow.

"Grief," Pope Francis explains, "can serve to open our eyes to life and the sacred

and irreplaceable value of each person." We can respond to that grief by offering mercy, which is the best expression of the Christian life. Through the works of mercy, we can be channels of God's love and compassion. ■

Faith & Justice



Use the QR code to learn more about how you [extend God's love and mercy to those in need](#).



How can I help my children know the Bible?

a: *Saint Jerome famously said, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."* That is why parents

who help their children know the Bible help them know Jesus Christ. When children are very young, you can read Bible stories to them, which will help them become familiar with the characters of Scripture and the saving actions of God. Before long, you can even provide your child with his or her own storybook Bible! As they learn how to read, help them locate the Bible stories you have shared with them.



As children grow older, be sure to gift them with their own Bible and help them locate stories they are familiar with from their younger years. Read from the Bible as a family on a regular basis, such as on Sundays and special occasions such as Christmas and Easter. Don't hesitate to find good video depictions of Bible stories—animations are especially attractive to young children. Continue to help your children locate these stories in the Bible so that they gain familiarity with it. The more your children are familiar with the Bible, the more they will continue to deepen their relationship with Jesus, the Word made flesh. ■

Joe Paprocki is the national consultant for faith formation for Loyola Press and author of *Preparing Hearts and Minds* (Loyola Press, 2021).

5
THINGS

Five Things I Learned From . . .

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

Walking the Dog

I have become a stalwart dog walker with my dog, Sir Henry. Our walks have become my prayer.



- 1. God is beauty and splendor.** I feel God's presence in the magnificence and beauty of nature.
- 2. The Holy Spirit moves through me.** I hear God's voice whispering hope and reassurance in the sounds that are carried by the wind.
- 3. Rest is sacred.** When I see a white egret land gracefully, I remember that sometimes I need time to rest, to be still with God.
- 4. Every moment is an opportunity for mercy.** I encounter an elderly couple grieving over the death of their adult son, so I grieve with them.
- 5. Grace abounds!** Seeing berries persist in a harsh winter reminds me that I can share God's healing grace in response to the ferocity of nature. ■

Angela LoMonaco is the director of youth faith formation at Resurrection Catholic Church in Wayne, Illinois.

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The Little Way

Listening

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."

Our perception of someone as "difficult" or "frustrating" can be a big obstacle to practicing love. The Little Way of Saint Thérèse is a faithful

response to such obstacles. Carlos Matallana explains how he practices the Little Way when any of his three children are being difficult. "I find myself asking more questions to understand the context and their concern. Most of the time I don't have the precise answer, but I encourage them to step back and look ahead. The idea is to evaluate if whatever is bothering them at this very moment is worth their time and energy."

Like Carlos, we can practice the Little Way by inviting

others to share what they are feeling and what they experience. In doing so, we no longer see them as being difficult; rather, we see people who are deserving of our love and compassion. ■



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