



# Finding God®

Our Response to God's Gifts

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Reflect as a family on Jesus' new commandment.

### PAGE 3: We Receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit invites families to serve Christ.

### PAGE 4: How can I talk to my children about faith?

You can teach the faith from everyday experiences.

## The Home as a Sacred Space

When Jesus appeared to the disciples after he rose from the dead, he offered them peace and breathed on them, saying, "Receive the holy Spirit." (John 20:22) Christ continues to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we reflect Christ's Spirit in our families.



Advent I place a Nativity set; during Lent and Easter, I place the empty tomb and a rice bowl. During Ordinary Time, I have a statue of Jesus washing the feet of Simon Peter to remind us that Jesus calls us to serve others. I also include sacramentals such as scapulars, a rosary, and holy water. Finally, I have a copy of a book with quotations about love, since that was Jesus' new commandment: "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." (John 13:34)

Sacred spaces help our families experience the Holy Spirit's presence in our homes. They can be a place where the family gathers to pray and share their lives. Sacred spaces teach the faith in meaningful ways and help us move from a learned faith to a lived faith. ✚

**John Gonzalez** is the director of parish and community relations for the Diocese of Brooklyn/Queens and an adjunct professor at St. John's University.

One way we can do this is to make a sacred space in our homes. I'm sure many of us can recall such spaces from childhood. Do you recall a Nativity scene displayed at home during Advent and Christmas? Do you remember seeing a statue or picture of a saint on a wall or shelf? Was there a special prayer that you remember your family praying together? Did a family member offer a blessing whenever you left home? These are all experiences of the Spirit's presence in your family.

The sacred space in my home includes a copy of the Serenity Prayer. I have cards of deceased family members under the prayer book (guarded by a sleeping Saint Joseph) so we know that our extended family is still with us. At



## 3-Minute Retreat

### Sabbath Time

**Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus get away, to be alone with his heavenly Father in prayer.** We know that God himself rested on the seventh day. Indeed, resting with God is a sacred task.

Retreat to your own deserted space. This space may be a prayer corner in your home; it may be the sanctuary in your local church; it may be a quiet place outside. When you are in that space, rest quietly with the Lord. Focus on the natural rhythm of your breathing and repeat the words "Here I am, Lord." Stay in the space for however long you want and come away feeling refreshed and revitalized in the Lord. ■



For a daily online 3-Minute Retreat, go to [www.3MinuteRetreat.com](http://www.3MinuteRetreat.com).



## EXPERIENCING GOD IN THE ORDINARY

### God's Main Promise

Perhaps the main promise God makes is to be with us no matter what the circumstances. God does not promise that we will avoid all pain, all struggle, all sickness, all sorrow. Surely, God does not promise that we will never die. God does, however, promise to be with us, and that promise, I believe, can be a great comfort when we experience any of the things we so desperately want to avoid. (At times I have felt compassion for God as I imagine him saying, with some poignancy, "Am I not enough for you?")

The presence of Jesus of Nazareth in our world is the final proof that God will never leave us, that God is with us forever. Now God is one of us, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. In Jesus, God suffered even death on a Roman cross, killed by human hands. Even that terrible act did not cause God to give up on us. . . . God is that much in love with us and with the whole of creation. God is that much with us. Immanuel indeed! ■

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



## Family Activity

### Litany of Love

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." (John 13:34) In this activity, your family will reflect on Jesus' commandment to love one another.

#### MATERIALS LIST

For this activity, you will need the following materials:

- Paper
- Pencils

**Directions:** Discuss Christ's message of love: We are loved by God and that love should overflow to all those we meet. Then have each family member create a Litany of Love that the family will pray together.

At the top of a sheet of paper, add the title "Litany of Love" and write a brief prayer to each Person of the Trinity. Then write



three prayers of love. Pass the paper to another family member, who then writes another three prayers of love. Continue in turn until each family member has added three prayers to the litany. An example follows:

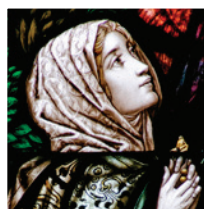
*Heavenly Father, hear us. Jesus, our brother, hear us. Holy Spirit, hear us.*

*By listening to one another, let us share your love with others.*

*By being kind to everyone we meet, let us share your love with others.*

*By telling our parents we love them, let us share your love with others.*

Pray the litany together, adding the response "Lord, hear our prayer" after each prayer. Post the prayer in a common area of the home and, if possible, make copies for each family member. ■



### Be with me, Lord!

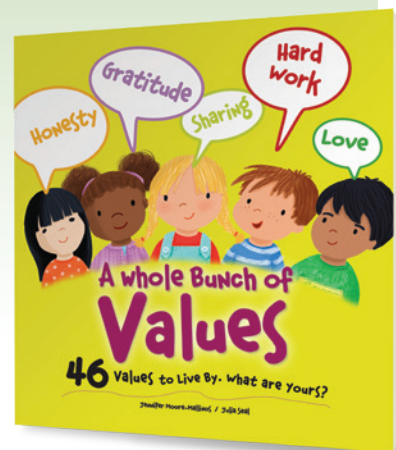
O my God, I do not ask you to keep me from suffering, but to be with me in affliction.

— SAINT BERNADETTE

### Values, Values, Values!

Everyone has values. Some values are more important for some people than they might be for others. *A Whole Bunch of Values* takes children on a joyful exploration of values they can live by and discover which ones are their own. This wonderfully illustrated book will help children realize that their values are their own and belong to them! ■

*A Whole Bunch of Values* by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos/Julia Seal (Loyola Press, 2022).





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## Jesus Gives Us His Spirit

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 in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

I invite you to contemplate Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit onto the disciples.

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit.”*

—John 20:19–22

**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 yourself in the locked room with the disciples and your family.

**Notice.** Watch and listen as the scene unfolds. Jesus appears in the room and breathes the gift of the Holy Spirit upon each of you. Watch as each family member receives the gift of the Spirit and is offered peace.



**Respond.** What stirs in you as you watch the Spirit fill each member of your family? How would you describe receiving the Spirit yourself? What prayers do you offer for your family as you receive the Spirit?

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

**Reflect.** What did you learn about Jesus, God, or yourself? How would you describe your family's desire for the Spirit? What is the Spirit inviting your family to do for Christ? ■

**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 are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

—Matthew 5:10

This is a hard beatitude to accept. Why would those who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness be blessed? Is Jesus telling us to be victims?



On the contrary, this beatitude recognizes a fundamental reality about discipleship, what it means, and where it leads. Disciples have embraced the way of Jesus, a path laid out in the Beatitudes. The disciple's greatest joy and happiness is Jesus.

So when they are rejected by those who do not understand poverty,

meekness, or purity of heart and mistreated by people who scorn mercy and peace, disciples rejoice because they know that they remain on the path toward God's kingdom. ■

### Faith & Justice



Scan the QR code to learn more about how [Blessed Stanley Rother](#) was persecuted for living a faith that does justice.



I find it difficult to talk about faith with my children. What can I do?

**a:** *For some of us, talking about our faith can feel awkward.* However,

our lives are full of experiences and occasions of joy and hope, stress and worry, accomplishments and challenges, the ordinary and the extraordinary. All of these can be teachable moments for children to learn about faith—opportunities



for spiritual questions and meaningful conversations that will enable our children to learn lifelong spiritual lessons. As parents, we need to be prepared to talk about God at moments such as these.

How do you begin? Talk about significant people in your life (because God speaks to us through other people); identify moments of joy whether big or small (because encounters with God are characterized by joy); identify peak moments of grace (because God's presence is often recognized in profound experiences); and talk about milestones in your life for which you are thankful (because all good things come from God). The more you talk about faith with your children, the more natural it will be, and you'll grow more comfortable and less awkward about "God-talk"! ■

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



## Five Things I Learned From . . .

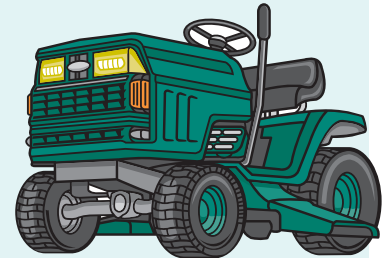
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### The Straight Story

In this film, an old man drives his lawn mower across Iowa to forgive his estranged, ailing brother—while he still can. Here are five lessons from *The Straight Story*:

**1. Notice God's beauty.**

The slow pace of the film reveals the simple beauty of a lightning storm, a stray dog, or the sparkle in an old man's eyes.



**2. Listen attentively.**

Listening to the stories of others reveals the image of God within them.

**4. Swallow your pride.**

God's grace can shine through us when we put away our pride.

**3. Be open to kindness.**

Sometimes it is easier to give kindness than to be on the receiving end. The entire film is a lesson on kindness.

**5. Forgive.** Extend the same forgiveness God has given us to those who have wronged you. ■

**Shemaiah Gonzalez** writes about glimpses of God's glory in everyday life.

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## The Little Way

### Breaking Eggs

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."

For Edesio Sánchez-Gómez, a bilingual editor with Loyola Press, the Little Way includes breaking some eggs. "When I'm making an omelet or

scrambled eggs, my daughter likes to crack the eggs and put them in a bowl. But if somehow I start doing it and she notices that I haven't asked her to come help me, she gets angry because I did something alone that we normally do together. That cracking of eggs and putting them in the bowl is an activity we do together, and that's an expression of love. It's not about the process of making



breakfast; it's more about spending time together."

That is the genius of the Little Way: it helps us see that the common

activities of daily life, even something as simple as breaking eggs, are more than what they seem. Our everyday activities bring us into communion with others. ■

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