

# Growing in FAITH™

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

May 2020

**Gathered in Christ's Love**

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## One Minute Meditations

### St. Rita of Cascia

Born in 1381 near Spoleto, Italy, St.

Rita was known for her holiness and charity from a young age. She wanted to be a nun but was forced into marrying when she was twelve. Unfortunately, her husband was cruel and violent. After eighteen years, she was widowed. Following the deaths of her sons, she finally entered the convent, where she became known for her piety, kindness, and humility. She is the patron saint of impossible causes.



### Honor Mary

Jesus performed his first public miracle because his Mother asked. He said "no" at first, but his mother asked for help. The Bible is clear—Jesus listens to his Mother.

*"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*  
(Philippians 4:6)



## Why does God let us suffer?

When we watch a loved one suffer – or suffer ourselves – hearing "it's God's will," can feel unsatisfying. The implication is that God directs us like chess pieces, and bad things result. In fact, germs, atmospheric conditions, human error, or just plain chance account for what is often outside of our control. It helps to remember that God is always present, he wills our good, and evil is not of his doing.

**God is always present.**

Our Father loves us deeply, cares about our concerns right down to the hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30). He urges us to respond well to a world we can't control. If we let him, God will enable us to learn and grow

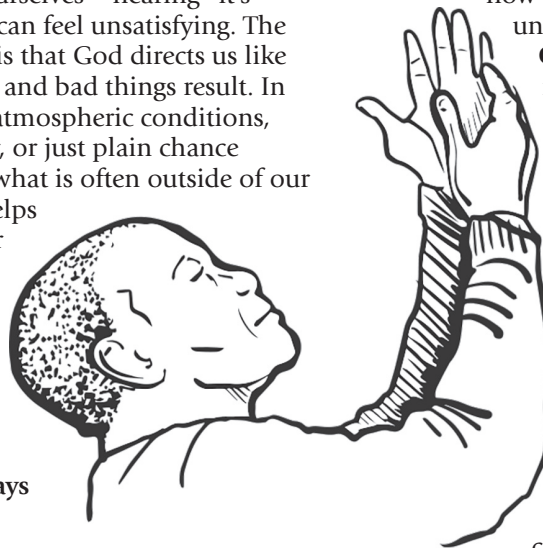
through our experiences, no matter how overwhelming or unpleasant.

**God wills our good.** It is not God's will that we suffer. The ways of the world aren't always in harmony with his will.

However, his plan for us will bring us the ultimate good. He loves us with true love and wants us prepped and ready for Heaven.

**God doesn't make evil.** What we see as evil in the world, God can use for good. When

we cooperate with him, suffering becomes meaningful, struggle worthwhile, victory affirming, and even the acceptance of what we cannot overcome life-giving, as they were for Jesus.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

## Why do Catholics call Pentecost the "birthday of the Church?"

On the feast of Pentecost, the Apostles were in the Upper Room where they held the Passover with Jesus. All of a sudden, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles in the form of wind and fire. "And they were all filled with the Holy

*Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"*  
(Acts 2:4).

Then the Apostles were emboldened and rushed out to preach the Gospel and baptized 3,000 people. We call this the "birthday" of the Church because this is the day when the Holy Spirit made the Church visible to the world.



# Jesus understands

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). It is astounding to think that in his human nature, Jesus experienced fear and suffering, just like we do. Even better, he wants to help.

**Fear.** Early in his life, soldiers hunted him down to kill him. His neighbors threatened him with harm when they didn't like his teaching. He endured a horrific Passion. Jesus coped by relying on prayer, grace, and



confidence in his Father's will. He showed us how so we can endure, as well.

**Suffering.** During his crucifixion, Jesus became sick, dehydrated, and exhausted as his body began to shut down. Once on the Cross, it became harder and harder for him to breathe. In fact, throughout his life, Jesus experienced how it feels for a body to fail. He knows how it feels to die. When we are sick and suffering, we can turn to him for a cure, or the grace and strength to accept his will. All we have to do is ask.

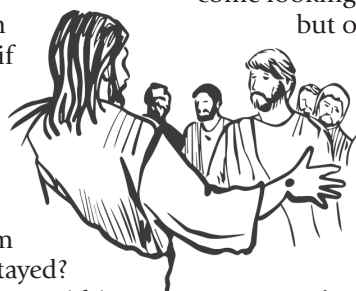
## from Scripture

### John 20:19-23, Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit

This Gospel shows us a glimpse of how most of the disciples spent their first Easter Sunday – hiding in fear. They were terrified the Romans would find them and execute them. What if the Resurrection really happened as Mary Magdalene said? What if Jesus came looking for them? Would he punish them for abandoning him when they should have stayed?

Yet, Jesus appeared to them within the locked room and spoke words of peace. He wasn't a ghost; his glorified body wasn't limited by the physical world. He showed them his wounds as

"the living proof" of the Resurrection. Imagine the Apostles' great relief at having their Friend back. Jesus did come looking for them, not in anger, but offering his forgiveness.



Instead of punishing them, Jesus gave them a mission and the Holy Spirit to help them. He said, *"Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained"* (John

20:23), establishing the Sacrament of Penance. Having authority to forgive sins, the Apostles and their successors could continue Jesus' work after he returned to Heaven.

## Q & A

### Why is Mary pictured with a blue mantle?

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was covered in blue (or "violet") fabric for traveling (Numbers 4:5-6). God's Presence would "rest" on the Ark as a king sits on his throne (Exodus 25:22).

When Mary agreed to be the Mother of Jesus (i.e. God), she became his living "resting place." In art, Mary's blue mantle signals she is the new Ark of the Covenant.

Blue also indicates Mary's royal status. Jesus is the King of Heaven making Mary the Queen Mother. In Biblical times, the mother (not the wife) of the king was the queen. She wasn't as powerful as the king, but her intercession with him had significant influence.

Mary is not God, but her intercessory prayers for us are powerful because she is Jesus' mother. When we consider that Mary is also our mother by grace, her blue mantle invites us to entrust our concerns to her. Rather than an obstacle to Jesus, Mary leads us directly to him by a sure, safe path.



## Feasts & Celebrations

**May 12 – Sts. Nereus and Achilleus** (1st century). Not much is known about them, but it is certain they were Roman soldiers under the Emperor Trajan. They converted to Christianity, were exiled from Rome, and eventually martyred.

**May 14 – St. Matthias the Apostle** (1st century). Chosen by lot to replace Judas Iscariot, St. Matthias is only mentioned once in Scripture, but had accompanied Jesus and the Twelve from the beginning. He spent his life preaching the Good News until his martyrdom.

**May 18 - Pope St. John I** (526). Born in Tuscany, Italy, John was elected pope in 523 while a deacon. His visit to Constantinople restored peace with the Eastern Church yet raised political suspicions. Arrested by King Theodoric, he died in prison.

**May 21 – Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord** (1st century). This solemnity marks the completion of Jesus' mission of salvation and his triumphant entry into Heaven. Note: In many dioceses, observance of Ascension has been moved to the following Sunday.



### Our Mission

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