



Journey
TO
Sainthood

LENT 2017

H.

An Introduction

"It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal."

-- St. John Paul the Great

Hello Ladies! This Lent we are hoping that you walk with us on a journey to sainthood. It is our hope and desire that through these next few weeks that you dive deeper into the call the Lord has for you in your life. I recently had a conversation with a friend who was convinced that the call to sainthood is too great unless we are a consecrated religious or a priest, but this is false. The Lord calls each and everyone of us to become saints. He calls us to be saints who are mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends. Yes, some of us will be saints as consecrated religious or priests, but we want everyone to understand the calling that the Lord has given them. Use these next few weeks to say 'Yes' every morning to what the Lord is asking of you.

The first two weeks of the study will be diving deeper into our interior call to be saints, the next two weeks are our calling for us in our families, and the last two weeks dive deeper into the call we have out in the workplace and society to be saints.

The Lord is calling us to live in His love and dwell as closely as possible to Him even while we are still on this journey through Earth.

To Jesus Through Mary,

Mary Katherine

H

We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!

If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.

Looking for a group? Please visit www.heartofmarywf.com/groups to find a meet up near you.

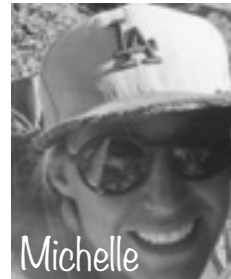
Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at heartofmarywf@aol.com

Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements are align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.

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Lent 2017 Writing Team



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Models for our Families

Matthew 5:17

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill."

Why the law? God made man and began to form covenants with him. Covenants are serious! They form a familial bond that should not be broken. However, the Israelites were constantly breaking these covenants. So God would form new covenants with them, but each time new laws came with it. God commanded the Israelites *"be holy; for I, the LORD, your God, am holy. Be careful, therefore, to observe what I, the LORD, who make you holy, have prescribed (Leviticus 20)."* The laws were meant to help Israel keep the covenants they had made with the Lord.

In the time of Jesus what the people knew about God came from the law. So what then can the law teach us about God? God is just! God desires to be worshipped. God wants us to love our neighbor. The very fact that God gives us law tells us that He desires our well being and that He wants to be involved in our lives. Essentially, the law teaches us that God loves us. Pope Francis recently said, *"The Torah (the law) manifests the paternal and visceral love of God, a love shown in words and concrete gestures, a love that becomes covenant."* (News.va-February 24.2017) Through the law and the Prophets, ancient Israel knew God and were close to Him. But it wasn't enough.

Jesus came to be the *"image of the invisible God (Col 1:15)."* He was the fulfillment of the promise which formed the basis for the covenants. Can you imagine a house with no parents, where the



Unity in Families

[Luke 11:17](#)

In 2014, I married the love of my life. The day after we got married, I hopped on a plane and moved to London (where my husband was already living), leaving my parents and siblings behind and going off to form my own household.

The transition from single to married isn't the easiest. Two people, raised by two different families, have to somehow form their own. Taking some traditions and ideas from one family, some from the other, and making some up on their own. Then, just as you've got it figured out (maybe?) kids enter the mix, and you've got a whole new set of challenges trying to decide how to parent.

No wonder so many marriages and families fall apart! It can be overwhelming and easy to say *"this is too hard"* and throw in the towel. It can be easy to think that your spouse doesn't understand. It can be easy to talk bad about them to family or friends. When conflict arises between your childhood family and the family you've made, who do you side with?

In this passage from Luke, Jesus explains how a household that is divided will fall, and while he is rebuking the pharisees for accusing him of working in the name of a demon, the point is still one I think all families should take personally.

The most important aspect of every person's life on this earth is their family. And each of us have a responsibility to work towards unity and peace in our families. For those of us who are



Love your Neighbor(Your Family)

Mark 12:28-34

"The first is... you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" -Mark 12:29-31

When I was in the first stages of my deeper conversion, I was on fire for the Lord. If you remember my earlier post in this study about perfectionism, however, I was also obsessive compulsive about following all of His rules and making sure everyone else did too. Which didn't allow me to love my neighbor very much.

Like most of you, I have a mixed family when it comes to religion. Most of my immediate family members are your average Catholics, going to Mass every Sunday but not necessarily living out a wild, passionate relationship with Christ. To them, I was overzealous in my faith and needed to take it down a few notches. Other family members, including most of my extended family, are non-practicing and to them I had simply gone off the deep end.

How do you love your neighbor, most of all your family members, when they don't appear to love God? To be honest, I failed miserably at it for a while. I judged those closest to me hardcore, criticizing them for not coming to Mass or not being "holy" enough. I labeled my sister without stopping to see the immense wounds in her heart that blocked her from a deeper relationship with Christ. And even though I didn't judge my extended family outwardly, I definitely did inwardly and knew they could tell by my demeanor that I didn't approve of their lifestyles. Family gatherings

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became awkward. I am not proud of this moment in my life, when I thought I was doing so much for God and His Kingdom but instead was only causing damage.

Over time, life and grace hit me and I realized the error of my ways. Life is messy and wounded and all shades of gray. When Christ said to love our neighbor, specifically our family members, he didn't mean to convert them by judging looks. In so many scenes in the Gospel, Christ loved and accepted someone for who they were in that moment, before He even started to call them on to holiness. Take the woman caught in adultery. His eyes of love and compassion are what moved her, before He even uttered the words "Go, sin no more." He saw what was good in her before she even saw it herself.

This is the key, sisters. If you have difficult family members or those who are away from the Church, always look upon them with this same look of love. This is what it means to love our neighbor, to see the good in them and call it forth by your presence. I no longer look on my family members with judgement. They still know where I stand, and what I believe. But this approach has borne so much more fruit. As Pope Francis constantly reminds us, we attract others to the faith with our own joy and peace, sometimes without even uttering a word.

If you're married and/or have children, loving them as your neighbor also takes on a much more active role. We are called to love them through our little (and big) sacrifices throughout the day, in our daily chores, and in bringing them up in the faith. We also love them by holding our tongue, compromising, and dying to ourselves. In this way we can love God through them, combining these two commandments in a wholesome way.

My husband and I love this particular Scripture verse, because it depicts our relationship so truthfully. As you can tell, I gravitate much more to the first part of the Commandment. I spend so much time trying to love the Lord with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, and all my strength that sometimes I don't have any room or energy left to love those around me. My husband, on the other hand, feels God the most when he's encountering and loving other people. We realized that together it forms a cross - vertical and horizontal. -Emily

Reflect: We need each other to call us out of our preferred ways of encountering God, to help us grow in the opposite direction too. You can't have one without the other, otherwise you are out of balance.

Act: Which direction do you need to grow more in this Lent?

Prayer for Holiness

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.



Inviting Jesus into our family

[John 4:43-54](#)

"The man believed what Jesus said to him and left."

My husband and I married when I was 22 years old. At the time, I was evaluating the life around me as a young adult, and part of that adventure was "rejecting" the religion of my parents, and essentially needing to find it through my own choices. My husband and I were not practicing Catholics, and hence moved forward with our civil wedding.

Flash forward 11 years to the shock of finding out we had been living in mortal sin! I took this news extremely hard and spent many days wishing I could fix this and be in communion with our Lord. My husband was not on the same page, but understood its value to me, trusted God's judgement on the matter, and followed open-heartedly. The solution to Alex's and my problem lay squarely on receiving a convalidation.

According to church documents "A convalidation is the ratification of a legal but canonically invalid marriage. A convalidation is the vow of a couple who were married in a civil ceremony to make a commitment before God and Church of their intention to live the sacramental life of their union together." Without this convalidation we were not married.

Each church is going to approach the blessing of the marriage differently, some may require a retreat, others may want some sessions with a married couple sponsor. Alex and I met with our

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parish priest a few times to discuss marriage and family in the scope of catholicism and sociology. I wanted to share a few items that we were asked to read, as I think they are important for anyone as guidance for inviting Jesus into their family.

- Humanae Vitae
- Arcanum Divinae
- Familiaris Consortio
- Genesis 1-3
- For Better and For Ever

My husband and I sat on our couch and read these documents back and forth to each other, making a real conscious effort to better our relationship. It was thrilling, beneficial, and intentional.

-Michelle

Reflect: Take some time over the next few weeks to read through this list of relationship guides. If possible, include your spouse in on the research. The positive messages of how to live the best possible life will not disappoint.

Act: I further encourage you to reach out to any friends or family that may have missed this step in building their family and show them Jesus' mercy is endless.

Prayer for Holiness

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Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.
Amen.

Saint Francis Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;



Cleansing Sin in our Families

[John 5:1-16](#)

The other night, after an early morning and an exhausting 6 mile hike, I was cleaning dishes after dinner. My husband, as he walked out of our tiny kitchen, flipped off the lights without thinking, leaving me in the dark. When I called my husband's name, he turned around, blinked confusedly, unable to realize at first what was wrong. It was a humorous scenario that had us laughing, but it also had me thinking about the man at the spring from John 5.

In this passage, Jesus firsts asks the man, struggling with illness for thirty-eight years, if he wants to be well. Grace and healing, of course, cannot be forced on someone. But how does the man respond to Jesus' question? Instead of saying "of course, I want healing! Bring it on," he says: "*Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me.*" Is the man just complaining or feeling sorry for himself? Is he simply making excuses for his not trying hard enough to get better? Or is there some weight in the man's words? Where was his family to lower him into the waters?

Because it is made up of human beings, each family has its own problems and challenges, be they physical, emotional, or financial struggles, or more serious problems, like addiction. Both the beauty and the cross of family life is the interconnectivity of the persons. The members of a family are so interconnected that what happens to one person affects, to some degree, the others. Do we think about our actions with our family in mind? Do we choose to love them even when it is difficult? Do



Seeking the will of God for Family

[John 5:17-30](#)

Recently, my 4-year- old son came barging into the bathroom while I was taking a shower. "What do you need baby?", I asked with hair soaped up, eyes squinted shut, secretly hoping he didn't need anything very important. "Mom, I was just checking on you." "Thanks, babe." "So, mommy, are you alright?" "Yeah, I'm good baby." "Ok, bye!"

That small interaction made my entire day. I felt so incredibly loved and taken care of. I can tell you where he learned that from, his father. My husband is always doing little things to check in with me, asking me if I'm okay or if I need anything. Our little boy has started to mimic that behavior and it has become a part of who he is. Now, I'm blessed with two men in my life that are empathetic and selfless.

In today's scripture reading, Jesus says that his actions are based upon what the Father has shown him. This is so incredibly true! We, as parents, are constantly trying to show our best selves to our children so when they go out into the world, they can show what they have learned.

Each one of you, sweet sisters, have different ideas of family. Some of you may be like me, married with children. Others, young and in college. For some of us, our friends make up our family. However family is defined for you, God the Father should be the

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center. Just as my son has learned empathy from his dad, so may we learn an abundance of Godly characteristics from the Father.

It can be difficult to put the Lord first in your family. Baseball practice, midnight feedings, early morning class, someone is fighting with another member of your family. Getting all caught up in the drama and responsibilities that comes along with being in a family can at times get in the way of our view of the Lord. However, if we take the time to listen to

Christian music on the way to practice, get up 5 minutes early before class to pray, pray for the people within our family that are fighting, we can center ourselves and our family again. The more time we spend with Christ, the more we are apt to emulate him. My family and I have experienced so much life together-good, bad, and the downright terrible.

Each time, we have tried to rely on Christ. We are currently going through a trial now, one that has really shaken me. We were recently told that expanding our family even more is no longer a possibility due to health concerns. I have cried out to the Lord multiple times "Why?" He has reassured me with early morning snuggles with my babies and encouraging, thoughtful messages from my husband throughout the day. I will never know "why," but I can be comforted by the people that the Lord Himself gave to me.

Each family will have trials and tribulations that will shake the core. It can destroy your faith if you'll let it. However, the Lord has got this. He really does. You have to listen closely to His whispers. They are sometimes hard to hear, but a family life that is centered in Christ will help you to hear those whispers more clearly. -Ashley

Prayer for Holiness

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Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.

Amen.

Saint Francis Prayer

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where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.



Praying With The Family

[Luke 11:27-28 Proverbs 22:6](#)

When you picture a family at prayer, you usually picture a family gathered around a table, praying over their meal. In reality, life can be so hectic that it's even a miracle for a family to spend time together doing anything. A quote attributed to St. Francis de Sales says: *"Every one of us needs half an hour of prayer a day, except when we are busy-then we need an hour."* In spite of the busyness that our lives can have, I challenge all of you to try and pray with your family beyond just praying at meals.

"How?" you may ask. Start with the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. As a cradle Catholic, I learned how to pray the Rosary from a very young age from both my parents and my Catholic school teachers. Depending on how old your kids are, start with just a decade a day and work your way up to a full Rosary. I pray the Rosary with my family every night and during long car trips. Most kids get off school around 2-3PM. If you pick up your kids from school, you can pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet on the way home. It's an easy, short prayer to do.

It also helps to teach your kids about the importance of prayer in general. Matthew 6:7 says *"In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words."* If your kids wonder how they should pray, tell them to offer their prayers up for something going on in their lives or for someone in their class or for one of their teachers. It's a great way to introduce the idea of intercessory prayer.



Knowing Where We Came From

There's more than one way of knowing where we came from. Some are lucky enough to trace their family line to the early 1900s or even earlier than that. What most of us can do, though, is find aspects of ourselves within our extended family.

I'm really lucky that I have such a huge extended family from both my father's and my mother's sides. My father was one of five kids and my mother was one of eight. I am fairly certain that my cousins and second cousins number to the hundreds, if not thousands.

People in extended family often compare me to one of my older cousins on my dad's side. Like many of my relatives from my dad's side of the family, I am shorter than average. My aunts and cousins are all extroverted and to an extent, I also like hanging out with my friends and I love celebrating holidays like they do. I also learned, from doing a family history project way back in high school, that my uncle was a Jesuit priest and that my grandmother on my father's side taught literature and aspired to translate English works to Tagalog, the main dialect in the Philippines.

However, there are also aspects of me that come from my mom's side of the family. While I'm shorter than the average woman, I'm literally taller than all my aunts on my dad's side. The height difference is due to the fact that my mom was descended from some very tall Filipinos. My grandfather on my mother's side was 6'0" and keep in mind that the average Filipino is usually 5'4" at most. I also learned that my great-uncle was an actor, my great-aunt was a nun, and that same very tall grandfather was a town leader who liked spicy food and wrote poetry.



Refraining from Judging

[John 8:1-11 | Corinthians 13:13](#)

I'm sure you've heard of that great Doctor of the Church, Catherine of Siena. It's well known that she was the 24th child to Giacomo and Lapa. That she was a joyous child and devoted herself to Christ at an early age. It's not news to you, either, that she made several visits to Pope Gregory XI and then to Pope Urban VI, urging them - among other things - to leave Avignon and return to Rome.

There is no shortage of stories about Catherine of Siena! She led a very devout and holy life!

But I want to talk about Palmerina, a fellow Mantellata of Catherine. Do you know this story? Palmerina was a cantankerous and outspoken old woman and she was convinced that Catherine was a fraud and so was especially rude to her.

Palmerina was also afflicted with breast cancer. At one point the cancer had so ravished her breast that the wound was stinking and oozing. The wound was so terrible, Palmerina so ornery, no one would have anything to do with her. She had been abandoned to her room, left alone with nothing but the smell her own stinking flesh, rotting.

No one, that is, except for Catherine of Siena. Catherine came to visit her. She even kissed Palmerina's open wound, willing it to be the blood and sweat of Christ on the Cross. At first, Palmerina refused to believe Catherine was genuine. Eventually, however, the aging Mantellata was won over and went on to die in peace, reconciled to Christ.

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Catherine of Siena kissed the reeking and rotting cancerous breast of a mean, old and dying woman!

How did she do this? Why did she do this?

The answer is that same simple answer that has rung and echoed throughout the ages.

She loved.

Catherine of Siena first loved Christ, and the perfect love of Christ returned to her, enabling her to love the ailing Palmerina. And Palmerina, much like the woman in today's Gospel reading, repented and found peace with Christ.

This is what today's Gospel reading is calling us to do: love! Love with the love of Christ!

Of course there is sin in this world. We will meet harlots and drug abusers and liars whose sin is so wretched that we threaten to run at its stench. People we meet - friends, neighbors, family - will have sin so vile it eats away at their flesh. And what should our reaction be? Will we be so reviled by it that we point and stare before turning to run away? Or we will stand from afar and assess the wound while others rush in to stop the bleeding? Or will we pause to envision our Lord and Savior as he hangs on the cross, and then run to the injured; kissing the wound and thereby admonishing it to be healed? -Christine

Reflect: Sin is ugly. Yes, it stinks and is impossible to ignore! We need only look at our own lives to see that this is so. The wounded need bandaging and love; and we, as Pope Francis has said, are a field hospital. We must love our friends, neighbors, and family, and withhold our own judgements about the rotten and stinking wound that oozes out of their pores.

Act: It is imperative that we rush in with love. Run to the wounded and give freely what has been given freely to you: the love of Christ.

Prayer for Holiness

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.

Amen.

Prayer for God's Blessing of One's Daily Work

O Lord, my God,

Creator and Ruler of the universe,

it is Your Will that human beings accept the duty of work.



In the World, Not of the World

[John 8:21-30](#)

I have an almost four year-old daughter who, for the lack of a better word, is obsessed with Jesus. Not a bad thing to be obsessed with, right? Her obsession started this fall, then with His birth at Christmas, turned full force. Now she's asking me Jesus questions, wants to know a lot about his family life, and draws pictures of Him with chalk, crayons and anything else she can get her hands on. It melts my heart, and also brings up a lot of great discussions.

She knows that Easter is approaching. She also knows that at Easter Jesus rose from the dead after being crucified on the cross, and although she's still trying to wrap her mind around the fact that Jesus died on the cross instead of just going away from the "bad men" her comments on the crucifixion never cease to amaze me. The pure innocence of a very terrible event. At the end of every Easter book, or right before she opens her white "Resurrection Egg" she always says "It's okay momma, Him comes back to Earth."

In John 8:23 Jesus says "You belong to what is below, I belong to what is above. You belong to this world, but I do not belong to this world." The truth is that Jesus never belonged to this world-but we do. He never sinned, but we do. How do we live in this world, a world that at times is so full of hate, destruction and lies, and be expected to enter into His world, a world of eternal life and happiness?

Well, He is the answer to that question.

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Our reward is not this world, it's His world, it's the Kingdom of Heaven. We are all working towards that goal. We are in this world now, but there is more for us as followers of Christ. The worry, the sadness, the despair, it will all fade away when we enter into His world.

Sometimes it's hard to not become discouraged. Life is hectic, overwhelming and can all feel like it's weighing down on you sometimes. I'm guilty of feeling like things are often spiraling out of control, but that's when I realize that I'm trying to take control, I'm trying to get everything in order by myself, when in reality we are never by ourselves, and subsequently never in full control.

Some days are hard, some days are full of sadness, of pain, but this world is a broken one. We are dealing with the outcome of original sin. I was explaining to my daughter the "why's" of Jesus dying on the cross. "Why would Him do that momma?" she will ask me. I always answer "for our sins." To which she stares at me like "are you crazy?" This is why the vocation of motherhood has brought me closer to Christ than anything else. I get to experience our faith all over again, every day, through the eyes of a child who is eager to learn, taking in every single hymn, scripture and verse.

God loved us so much that He had His own son die on the cross for us. For our sins. We all know this, but let that really, truly sink in. When I watch my daughter process that information it almost takes the breath out of me. How amazing is it to be followers of a God who is so loving, so caring, so merciful that dying for us, enduring this indescribable and unimaginable pain for us was something He was willing to do? It's so amazing. No other way to put it.

We are called to be followers of Christ, Disciples of Christ. We have His teachings to guide us and we know that our reward will be in the Kingdom of Heaven. We cannot let this world take that away from us. -Dana

Reflect: With Easter approaching, pray through the Stations of the Cross. Put yourself in the crowd as Jesus walked by holding his cross.

Act: We belong to Jesus, we do not belong to this world. Pray to Jesus to allow full guidance in your life. Especially with something that you have recently been struggling with. Offer that up to Him.



God sending us to do His work

[John 8:31-42](#)

I decided I wanted to be a social worker when I was 17. I knew I wanted to help people and had that urge all throughout my life. I think it came from my 7th grade religion class about how Jesus helped others because that's when I really started grasping the idea of what a merciful person Jesus is. I went through college and got my BSW and MSW but that thought was always in the back of my mind about being like Jesus and I thought I was to some extent. Last year I came across Heart of Mary and it changed my life. I quit social work because I was extremely unsatisfied and because God was calling me to do more than just "help people" but help people by proclaiming His word and help people through Him! Finally, at age 30, sisters, I got my calling :p

I also kept noticing how in social work, the clients I would meet with, typically did better when religion was involved and I wanted to speak more on it but because of my job at the time, I could not. I think underlying for a lot of people they find deep solace or at least curiosity in their religion (I worked with many) and finally now I am able to speak on it!

God comes to us and tells us in John 8:31-42 that we are descendants of Abraham and that we must do what God has called us to do. We must continue on with Jesus's ministry! Like Saint Mother Teresa says, Jesus has only our hearts and eyes and ears to proclaim and receive His good news!

There is power in doing God's will and a long struggle in doing our own. I fought for years against what God wanted for me, I did tidbits here and there of what He wanted and I knew deep



Glorifying God through our work

[John 8:51-59](#)

*"If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me,
of whom you say that he is your God. -John 8:54*

To truly know God is to be in a relationship with Him. To be in a relationship with Him is to understand your great dependence on Him for all things. To understand your dependence on Him is to understand humility and truly be humble. Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who was bigger than life during her time on earth despite her stature, was intimately attuned to her complete dependence on God. She knew the good she did was not of her own doing, but more so through her humble receptivity to God's will. Her perseverance in caring for some of India's most destitute, in every sense of the word, was more about grace and sacrifice than her abilities. Saint Teresa of Calcutta spent a great portion of her life suffering through the dark night of the soul, never feeling God's consoling love. But she heroically persevered, reaching out and obeying God's will. She had faith in God despite not fully understanding His plan or where her journey might lead.

When the Jews question Jesus about how it is possible that He knew Abraham and that He would never die; even suggesting that He was possessed, Jesus counters their disbelief, and ultimately their lack of faith, by humbling himself. Even in the face of retorts and slander, Jesus does not seek to glorify himself and put these flippant souls in their place. Instead He brings to light the foundation of the whole Christian life. All that we do should point to the one God; glorifying Him and Him only.



God Shining Through Us

[John 10:21-42](#)

*Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go.
Flood my soul with Your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,
That my life may only be a radiance of Yours.*

*Shine through me, and be so in me
That every soul I come in contact with
May feel Your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!*

*Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You shine,
So to shine as to be a light to others...*

(John Henry Cardinal Newman)

This was St. Teresa of Calcutta's favorite prayer, and she prayed it every single morning before going out to work in the slums. It's so fitting for her, since there are so many stories of people being overwhelmed with the love and peace of God while in her presence. She truly shined with God's light.

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How can I shine with this light in my daily life? At my job, in my parish, at the local coffee shop?

We must first ask for it. I encourage you to print this prayer out and pray it every morning. I have it taped to my desk at work, to serve as a constant reminder for me. We must then get out of the way, to allow ourselves to be a window of His presence. Even on days when we're not feeling particularly charitable or peaceful, we can still choose to rely on His light and not our own. We can "look to Him and be radiant." (Psalm 34:5)

In this way, we can shine without even saying a word. Our actions can actually speak louder than words. Christ tells the Jews in this Gospel passage how important actions are when he says, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." (John 10:37-38)

There are many in the world who do not believe the words we profess. They do not believe all of the teachings of the Church or even the words of Scripture. Yet they can't deny our works. Atheists even recognized Mother Teresa's goodness and holiness, based upon her radical love of the poor. This is why it's so harmful when our words are not backed up by our actions. Our actions should always make it obvious that we are Christians, that the Father lives in us. These actions have the ability to cross religious lines, gender lines, culture lines, and socioeconomic lines farther than any spoken word could. *-Emily*

Reflect: So ask Christ to shine through you, when you smile at a stranger in public or hold the door for someone. Ask Christ to shine through you when your co-worker is gossiping or complaining about something at work and you choose not to.

Act: Ask Christ to shine through you, because you never know who is watching and what effect it will have on them.

Prayer for Holiness

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.

Amen.

Prayer for God's Blessing of One's Daily Work

O Lord, my God,

Creator and Ruler of the universe,

it is Your Will that human beings accept the duty of work.

May the work I do bring growth in this life to me

and those I love and help to extend the Kingdom of Christ.



Martha and Mary

[John 12:1-11](#)

Today's scripture reading relates to two sisters and a story that is very near and dear to my heart. Now, I think we all know this story from the Bible. There are two sisters who invite Jesus into their home and one sister, Martha, spends the entire time cleaning and cooking for Jesus while her sister, Mary, is sitting at the feet of Jesus simply listening to Him talk. This does not go over well with Martha and she goes to Jesus asking Him to make her sister help her. Jesus ends up gently rebuking Martha telling her that Mary has chosen the better part.

Well, let me tell you, this story has always weighed heavily on my heart and I feel so much empathy for Martha! All she wants to do is serve Jesus and her way of serving Jesus is by doing instead of sitting at the feet of Jesus. Can you imagine my surprise when so many years after being confirmed I realized that is why I actually chose Martha as my confirmation saint? It was not because I had aspirations of opening up my own restaurant one day, but because I am too dang stubborn to simply sit at the feet of Jesus and stop trying to do so much for Him.

I know, I know, you are probably thinking "*but that isn't today's reading!*" Well, I had to get all of that out into open air before I get to my main point. In today's reading, Jesus is again invited into the home of Martha and Mary and again Martha is serving, but something has changed this time. Earlier in the Bible Martha had a point of conversion where she identified Jesus as the Lord and Savior and she knew in her heart that Jesus had the power to raise her brother from the dead. This

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is a very powerful moment for Martha because she understands the glory of Jesus and the fact that He is the Son of God. Her faith ends up putting her entire life into place to the point where now she can serve, but it is a service out of faith and not simply out of duty. This is the kind of faith we need to have in living out our daily lives. *-Marykatherine*

Reflect: Yes, there are points in our days where we are doing things that feel like they are out of duty, but through our faith we are able to do every single act and job out of love. Think about this, what if you offered every act of service as an act of love to our Lord in your daily lives?

Act: Think about the amount of love that we could send to the Lord simply by doing the mundane and routine things we have to do every day! That is my encouragement for today, offer every moment and every act of service as an act of love and faith to our Lord. He will reward you in ways that you cannot even imagine.

Prayer for Holiness

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.
Amen.*

Prayer for God's Blessing of One's Daily Work

*O Lord, my God, Creator and Ruler of the universe, it is Your Will that human beings accept the duty of work.
May the work I do bring growth in this life to me and those I love and help to extend the Kingdom of Christ.
Give all persons work that draws them to You and to each other in cheerful service.
I unite all my work with the Sacrifice of Jesus in the Mass that it may be pleasing to You and give You glory.
I beg Your Blessing upon all my efforts. With Saint Joseph as my example and guide,
help me to do the work You have asked and come to the reward You have prepared. Amen*



Laying Down One's Life for Jesus

[John 13:36-38 Matthew 25:40](#)

I love Mother Angelica! I learned about her recently but I just love her quotes, they are pure truth and easy to comprehend and she had a witty sense of humor! She said *"It doesn't make a difference how many people God loves, He loves you as if no else existed"*. Jesus died for YOU! Jesus died for me, Jesus died for our neighbor, our family members, people we struggle to make peace with, Jesus died for all humanity. In turn, He expects us to follow His ways and He will guide us on the right path. Knowing that Jesus died for YOU, would you be willing to lay down your life for Jesus? He wants a personal relationship with YOU.

If you struggle with the thought of laying down your life for Jesus, you're most certainly not alone. Even wonderful saints and apostles struggled, so we are in good company ;) In John 13:36-38, Simon Peter said to Him, *"Lord, where are You going?"* Jesus answered, *"Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later."* Peter said to Him, *"Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."* Jesus answered, *"Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times."* Even Peter thought he would die for Jesus, and yet we all know that initial story. That gospel in particular shows the fear we all possess of death and yet how sweet redemption can be. We have the blessing of being able to continue trying and striving to do right in God's eyes.

One of my favorite saints is Maximilian Kolbe. He had one of the biggest devotions to Our Blessed



Work in the Appointed Time

[Matthew 26:14-25](#)

"My appointed time draws near," is a phrase that has ALWAYS stuck with me. The Lord works in His time, not ours. I type this as an engaged soon-to-be-Bride about 6 months away from my Wedding, and I cannot help but smile a wry smile. When I volunteered for this study, my first thought was *"Oh MAN, working in and with the Lord's appointed time? That's something I can relate to struggling with,"* and I put my name next to the study. I'm sure some of you can relate.

I'm a very type-a, typically hyper-organized person, who has a hard time NOT knowing the who, what, when, where, why, and/or how of a situation. The Lord knew His appointed time was coming, and wanted to have the Apostles prepare for it, for their own sake as well as for His. The Lord knew what was coming for Him, but He didn't flee. He did what His father, our Father, had in store. He knew He was eating his last meal with not only His beloved apostles, but with His very own betrayer.

How many of us have such an open and willing heart to accept whatever it is that the Lord has planned for us? We don't even know what He possibly has in store for us, and for some of us that makes our hearts a little scared to give in. Some of us may find it easier to not know, but either way His divine plan for us is something we can only learn as it unfolds.

This unknowing was something I greatly struggled with in the years before my fiancé and I got engaged. As it stands, not knowing the how/when of our engagement would take place made it one of the most special moments of our lives. Getting engaged when we did meant we are in a



Washing the Feet of Others

[John 13:1-15](#)

"Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life.

Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration." -Mother Teresa

Hear we find ourselves at Holy Thursday bringing to close these Forty Days of our Lenten journey. Have we lived out our Lent to the point that we can say we have been transformed; truly transfigured? Have we died to ourselves so that we may be born anew come Easter morning? For me Lent is always a challenge within itself. I always desperately want to make it a "good Lent"; a Lent where I feel as though I proverbially walk in the ashes making hard physical sacrifices and then miraculously find myself changed at the end of the journey.

But maybe if I were to approach the Lenten season with less of a mindset to take on a penitential practice to do list and instead ask myself "How will I look more like the living Jesus at the end of these Forty days?", perhaps I would ultimately have a "good Lent".

Please don't misunderstand; I firmly believe penitential practices are essential and more so very needed in this world of excess in which we live. My point however is that at least for me I can get lost in the myriad lists of what to do during Lent instead of focusing on who I should become.

Gratefully yet again thanks to the Divine grace of our loving Father, Jesus provides another opportunity to amend our sins, our misgivings, our misguiding's through the Institution of the Holy

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Eucharist made manifest on that sacred Holy Thursday some two thousand plus years ago. Of the entire Easter Triduum Holy Thursday is by far the experience I hold so intimately dear to my heart and soul. I love Holy Thursday! It truly pours the heaviness of what Lent should feel like out over me. Clearly breaking open why we need to have penances in our lives. Holy Thursday marks the threshold of the Incarnation and Divine colliding before our eyes for our very salvation. He died for ME. He died for YOU. He gave ALL. He loved us to the end.

Unlike the Nativity, the events of that first Holy Thursday, marking the institution of the Eucharist, the first Holy Mass, and the institution of priests; was a very visible spectacle., much hung in the balance for the outcome of this evening. But most significantly through the events of the Last Supper peoples of all time were present in the mind and heart of Jesus as he created this sacred meal for us; his plan for our futures. The Institution of the Eucharist as Bishop Robert Barron states signifies *"...meal, sacrifice and the real presence of Jesus... Jesus asks us to wield the power that he did—the power of a love that burns with vulnerability."*

Vulnerability? Have I allowed myself to be vulnerable enough this Lent to allow Jesus to flood every part of who I am, my soul, thereby washing me clean?

Facing an impending death as Jesus did, I am not sure many of us would remove our finest clothes, kneel before our friends and serve them by washing their dirty feet. But that is exactly what he did... as it says in John 13 ...He loved them to the end. Maundy Thursday as it has been called for centuries, has its root in the Latin word for "commandment," *mandatum*. It was here that Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves. He didn't just say these words but he showed these words through his action of washing the feet of the Apostles; a job in Biblical times performed only by a servant, someone who was unworthy.

Jesus ACTIVELY loved his Apostles and he still ACTIVELY loves US. Jesus performed the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross anticipated by this meal; a meal and sacrifice that is repeated at each Mass.

As followers of Jesus do I deeply, completely comprehend the intimacy that Jesus longs to have with us? Do I truly internalize that *"...the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE"* is really Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist? At Mass it seems that because the physical appearance of the bread and wine have not become the physical living breathing body and blood of Jesus, that it is not truly Jesus. However we need to remember as Bishop Barron challenges, that the words of Jesus, the words of God literally change reality; they are reality.

Therefore the body and blood of Jesus do in fact change because the Word of God makes this to be the true reality. As we approach today's events of Holy Thursday, I challenge myself and you to absorb the ultimate treasure and storehouse of the Divine Life poured out. Jesus is with us literally through the Eucharist, feeding us. By uniting ourselves with Jesus through actively loving all our neighbors, yes even the ones that hurt and betray us, by praying fervently as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, that practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and the ultimate eating of the Eucharist, we too will have the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE within us so that we too



Conclusion

[John 18:1-19:42](#)

We made it! Daughters in Christ, we made it through this Lenten Season and I hope that you have all had the opportunity to dive deeper into your relationships with Christ and His call for all of you to become saints. I pray that you were able to see the call He has for you interiorly, in your family, and in your workplace/everyday lives. I used to think that become a saint was the hardest thing in the entire world. I thought that I would have to do these humongous acts of love, climb the highest mountain, and shout the Lord's name from every hilltop and window that I could find, but this is not the case. To be a saint means to love the Lord above all else and to do His will in every moment of our lives. The more I think about this, the more I become excited because it is something that is so attainable for us. Think about it, the Lord wants us to be saints, so He is going to give us the strength and opportunity to do just that!

Today as you read this I am sure your heart is heavy with reflection on the Lord's suffering and death. Every Good Friday I am overcome with sadness at the realization of how much the Lord suffered for our sins and this year I am not going to let that realization bring me down. This year I am going to pick up my cross and walk with the Lord as He walks with His. That cross may be an illness, a death in the family, the loss of a job, whatever it is I am calling you to pick it up and walk! Please do not let the Lord walk alone this Good Friday. Console the bleeding heart of Jesus and He will console you. Let Him know that you are willing to walk with Him today and every day. Beloved Daughters in Christ, now is your chance to walk with Jesus. Now is your chance and your call to become saints.

-Marykatherine

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God Bless you all and Have a blessed Easter. Join us on Monday for our new study

“Appearances of Jesus” after the Resurrection

