

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED

December 3, 2017 – First Sunday of Advent



Spirituality Ponderings Spiritual Randomness

For the month of December, I decided to not have just one topic for my Spiritual Ponderings. Instead, I will be sharing with you many random things that I have pondered over the last year. I hope and pray that each of these topics is exactly what you or a love needs to hear.

A New Way to Look at the Beatitudes.

Earlier this year, I read a short story about Rabbi Joseph Schneerson. He was a leader of a Hasidic Jewish community in the early days of Russian Communism. He would suffer greatly for his faith spending a good portion of his life in prison. One morning in 1927, as he prayed in a Leningrad synagogue, secret police rushed in and arrested him. They took him to a police station and worked him over, demanding that he give up his religious activities. He refused. The interrogator brandished a gun in his face and said, "This little toy has made many a man change his mind."

Rabbi Schneerson answered, "This little toy can intimidate only

that kind of man who has many gods and but one world. Because I have only one God and two worlds, I am not impressed by this little toy."

Through his defiance of the communist authority Rabbi Schneerson affirmed his belief in God. At this moment of my life, God has not asked me to affirm my belief in Him in the same way. I can affirm my belief in Him though in a different way – by living out the Eight Beatitudes.

I recently learned that living out the 8 Beatitudes is a way in which I can show other people who I think God is (affirm His being) and who I think God is not (reject false idols).

For example the following four Beatitudes affirm God's being.

1. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Affirms that our God is a God of Mercy.
2. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Affirms that our God is a God who respects us.
3. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Affirms that our God is a God who desires the best for us.
4. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Affirms

that our God is a God of peace.

Living out the remaining four Beatitudes show that I am rejecting the false gods of this world.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejects false god of wealth
2. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. Rejects false god of pleasure.
3. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. Rejects false god of power.
4. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejects false god of honor/fame



Breaking Open the Word

December 3, 2017 First Sunday of Advent Lectionary: 2 Gospel **MK 13:33-37**

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: "Watch!"

Spiritual Reflection:

"The moment you experience self-satisfaction in your ministry is the most dangerous moment. This is when the devil will concentrate all his forces to take you by surprise." – Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan. St. Ignatius of Loyola in his rules of Spiritual Discernment compares the devil to a warlord or general who constantly seeks our weakest point to attack.

Spiritual Questions:

1. How "alert" are you?
2. What are some moments in your life when you are most vulnerable to spiritual attack?
3. What do you do to build up your defenses against temptation?
4. What are some prayer practices that you can do to strengthen yourself?
5. How can you help others fight against the devil?

Prayers for the Week

Advent Wreath Blessing

Introduction: The Advent wreath is made of four candles and a circle of branches. Before the first candle is lighted, the household gathers for this blessing.

All make the sign of the cross.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: In the short days and long nights of Advent, we realize how we are always waiting for deliverance, always needing salvation by our God. Around this wreath, we shall remember God's promise.

Reader: Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing. (Isaiah 9:1-2) *(The family's Bible may be used for an alternate reading, such as Isaiah 63:16-17 or Isaiah 64:2-7.)* The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

After a time of silence, all join in prayers of intercession and the in the Lord's Prayer.

Leader: Let us now pray for God's blessings upon us and upon this wreath.

After a short silence, the leader prays:

Leader: Lord our God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, he is the Savior of every nation. Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The first candle is then lighted.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

(The blessing concludes with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel")

All: O come, desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of humankind; Bid ev'ry sad divisions cease And by thyself our Prince of peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.



Catholic Trivia



Last Week's Answers

Match the Cross with its appropriate title.

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|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. St. Martin of Tours | 2. St. Martin de Porres |
| 3. St. Christopher | 4. St. Miguel Pro |

- A. (2) Saint was called "servant of slaves"
 B. (1) Saint shared his cloak with a beggar who turned out to be Christ in disguised.
 C. (3) Saint carried a child, who was Christ in disguised over a water hazard.
 D. (F) Saint was executed for being a priest.



This Week's Questions

Translate the Following

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| 1. Deus | A. Peace |
| 2. Sanctus | B. Lord |
| 3. Kyrie | C. God |
| 4. Pax | D. Holy |

Quotes of the Week

"Without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace. The gift of grace increases as the struggle increases." *St. Rose of Lima*

"A humble soul does not trust itself, but places all its confidence in God." *St. Faustina*

"Faith is to believe what you do not see. The reward of faith is to see what you believe." *St. Augustine*

"I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt." *Pope Francis*

"Know that the greatest service that man can offer to God is to help convert souls." *St. Rose of Lima*

"The secret of happiness is to live moment by moment and to thank God for all that He, in His goodness, sends to us day after day." *St. Gianna Molla*

Pro-Life Corner

Pro-Life Quote: Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love but to use violence to get what they want. —Mother Teresa

Pro-Life Prayer for December: Prayer for the Unborn

Father, we are filled with the new light by the coming of your Word among us. May the light of faith shine in our words and actions. May we do everything in our power to protect life in all its stages. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Saint Monica Society Prayer For November

Christmas Prayer for Fallen Away Catholics

Almighty God and Father of light, a child is born for us and a son is given to us. Your eternal Word leaped down from heaven in the silent watches of the night, and now your Church is filled with wonder at the nearness of her God. Open the hearts of our brothers and sisters who do not believe to receive his life and increase theirs and our vision with the rising of dawn, that our lives may be filled with his glory and his peace, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

St. Monica Society

Please join us in praying a special prayer each month for Catholics who have fallen away from their faith.

Catholic Humor

The last time we changed from daylight saving time, a preacher friend posted, "For those who habitually show up 15 minutes late to church, allow me to remind you that tonight is the night you set your clock back 45 minutes."

Blessed Are The Red-Necked

"What's wrong, Bubba?" asked the pastor.

"I need you to pray for my hearing," said Bubba.

The pastor put his hands on Bubba's ears and prayed. When he was done, he asked, "So how's your hearing?"

"I don't know," said Bubba. "It isn't until next Tuesday."

Zen Koans for the Internet Age

- If an anonymous comment goes unread, is it still irritating?
- What is the sound of no hands texting?
- If nobody likes your selfie, what is the value of the self?
- To see a man's true face, look to the photos he hasn't posted.