

KINGDOM REVELATOR

|||| CATHOLIC MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ■ ISSUE 44

*All Is
Grace*

POSTCARD
FROM A CONVERT



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Mother Mary, Pray for our Readers.

OUR HEAVENLY PATRONESS

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.

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The Editorial Board wish to give all
the Glory to God. Without his divine
help the production of this magazine
would not have been possible.

FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES:

Kingrevusa@gmail.com

**FOR SUBSCRIPTION OR BILLING
INFO:**

Krsubscrusa@gmail.com

KINGDOM REVELATOR USA

766 Clover Ridge Lane
Itasca, IL. 60143

PLEASE VISIT US AT:

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As we begin a new chapter in our lives, Kingdom Revelator would like to wish all our readers a happy and blessed 2018. It is that time again when, in anticipation of the new year ahead, we make resolutions in the hope of bringing about positive and lasting changes. I must admit, the resolutions I make in January are often forgotten within a few weeks, but don't worry there's some good news.

In this month's issue, we look at some important themes that help us to follow Jesus; namely, grace, saying yes to God, being in His presence, the Eucharist and more. So just a thought. As one global family, let us resolve today to follow in the footsteps of Christ this year, so that we will see those positive and lasting changes in our lives that we all hope for.

STEP 1. Begin each morning with a small prayer, asking for the grace to carry out our resolution to follow Christ more closely in the coming day. Remember that feeling of disappointment at the end of January when we have failed to achieve our goal? Rely completely on God and let us say with St Paul, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

STEP 2. Pick one area to focus on each month. This might be for example personal prayer, attendance at Mass, Bible reading, social action or the parish community.

STEP 3. Keep a record of each time you do something to improve in this particular area. For example, in the month of February, you may decide to become more involved with your parish. Write down each time that you help organise or serve at an event, make an extra donation, attend a Bible study or prayer group and so on.

STEP 4. Offer to God at the end of each month all that you have accomplished and be thankful.

May the Holy Spirit strengthen each one of us this year in our resolution to walk more closely with Christ. Amen.

All Is Grace



Alex Heath, the Adviser for Adult Faith Formation, Catechetics and Chaplaincy in the Northampton Diocese in the UK, invites us to consider how gracious we are to others.

St Therese of Lisieux, the great saint, said that “all is grace.” Grace is all around us. If we have eyes to see and ears to hear we can recognise God’s grace at work. Recently the Lord has been drawing my attention to grace in a new way. A few weeks ago I visited Olney, a lovely village only a few miles from my house located in Buckinghamshire (England). It is home to the well known hymn ‘Amazing Grace’. A few days later, on two occasions, I turned on the radio and happened to hear a hit song by Stormzy called ‘Blinded by your grace (part 2)’. Just after this, I had a conversation with a friend who has just taken part in our parish Alpha course, she

said she had discovered that God’s grace is at the heart of our faith.

A Problem With Grace?

Over the years I have had many conversations with people who struggle with grace. These good people somehow seemed to feel that God had been unfair to them. Though they had been faithful, said their prayers and tried to be good their lives and their situation wasn’t what they thought it should be, and this caused a deep frustration.

One of the masterful stories that Jesus tells is the Parable of the Vineyard Workers. In this story the workers that are hired at the



end of the day, and work only a short time, receive the same as those who work all day. Like the workers who are hired first we can sometimes complain that life is not fair, or that God is unfair. As Jesus points out God is not fair, He is MORE than fair. In fact, He is generous! He asks those workers why they are envious just because He is generous. "My friend, I am not being unjust to you.... Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" (Matthew 20: 13-15).

Another well known parable is that of the Merciful Father. There have been many times when I have heard people say that

they feel sorry for the elder son because they feel he is being treated unfairly. I myself have felt like this at times. A few years ago I spent a long time reflecting on the relationship between the father and the elder Son. This brought much healing and conversion in my life as I realised my own resistance to God's generous nature and merciful character: "My son,

read these two scripture passages slowly and prayerfully. I invite you to do this today, to allow the Holy Spirit to speak the truth of God's grace and generous character afresh to your heart. God's word is alive and active and reveals the condition of our heart much better than any chemical test (Hebrews 4:12-13). The passages are: Matthew 20:1-16 and Luke 15:11-32.

God is not fair, He is MORE than fair. In fact, He is GENEROUS!

you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15: 31-32).

Take A Grace Test

A long time ago, as a student in my chemistry lessons, I used indicators to test chemicals. Litmus paper, for example, would help us to see whether a chemical was an acid, alkali or neutral. The two scripture passages that I mentioned can give us a heart test, if we let them. Our response to them can reveal our attitude to grace.

I would like to invite you to

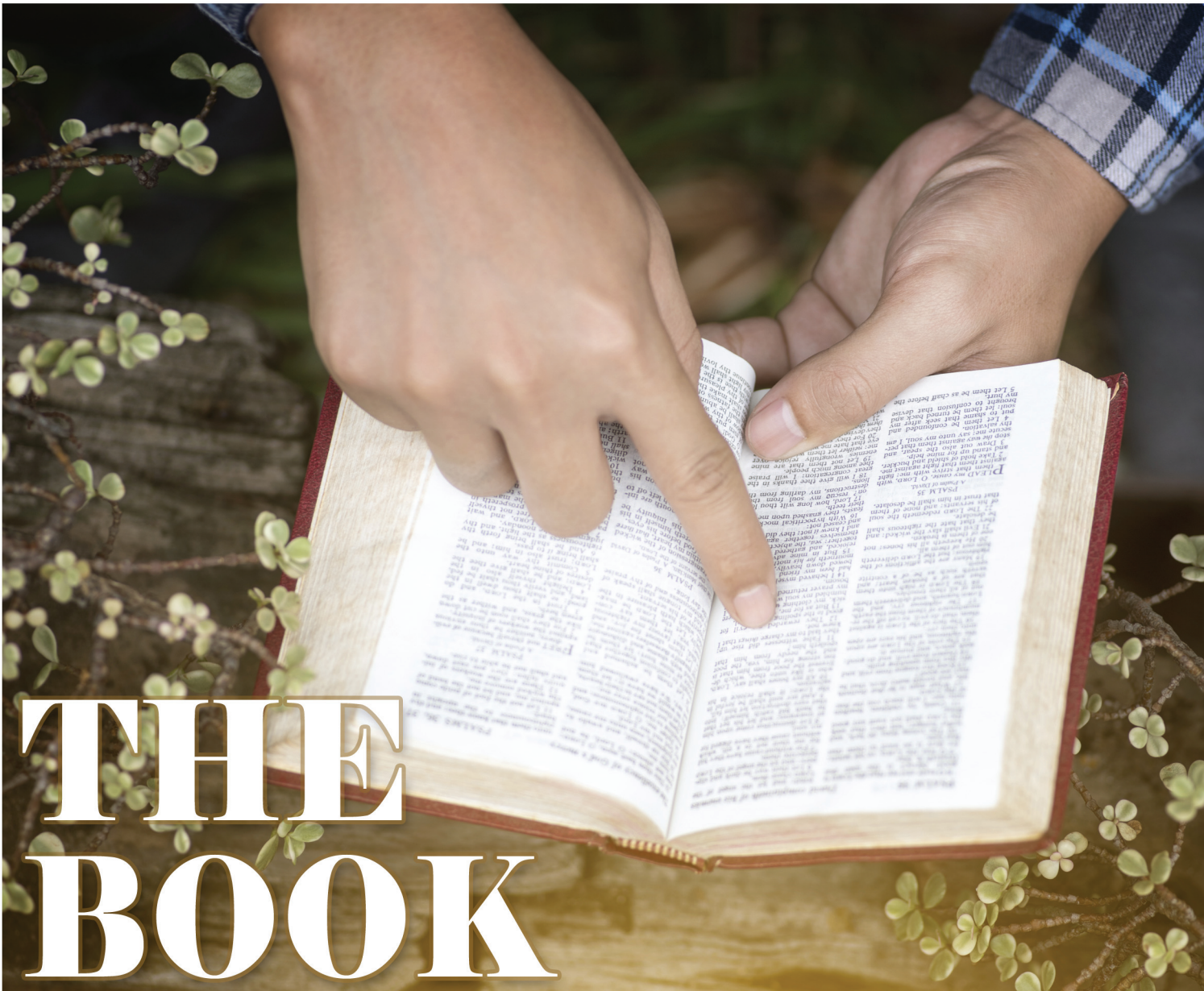
God's Character And Ours

As I have been reflecting on these things I have become more aware of when my own conduct is not gracious. Whether it's when I'm driving my car or how I speak to others or in the midst of everyday family life, I have realised that I fall short in many, many ways.

God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. To what extent can we use this beautiful character description for ourselves? I am realising that if I am to live a life of graciousness I must first welcome and rejoice in the grace that God my Father continually offers to me.

Prayer: Lord, help me to welcome and rejoice in your grace each day. I thank you for your great generosity to me. Help me to discover afresh the riches of the grace that you have shown me in Jesus Christ. Change my heart, so that in all I do and say, my life may more faithfully reflect your generosity and graciousness. To your glory and praise. Amen.





THE BOOK OF JOB

Ann-Marie Chinnery
from Salford, England
takes a closer look at the
book of Job.

The book of Job is one of the Wisdom books in the Old Testament and it is a magnificent piece of literature. It was written to try to explore the issues of why God allows suffering and if, as they believed, that suffering is a punishment for sins. At the time the Jews were going through great tribulation and were trying to find some consolation in their hardships.

Who Is Job?

Initially, Job is depicted as being a very good and God-loving person, whose life was going extremely well. He was prosperous and had everything that most people would want in life. In the discussion between God and Satan at the beginning of the book, God says of Job, "There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil" (Job 1:8). We then see how God allows his family and possessions to be taken away to show Satan that Job loves Him because He is God, not

because of everything he has been given. Job, of course, was devastated to lose his family, his herds and all his possessions but he did not reproach God. However, when God allowed his body to be covered with festering sores his faith was severely tested to the point he wished he had never been born. His four friends then took it in turns to tell Job why he might be suffering. They each said that he must have done something to displease God and that was why he was being punished.

Divine Retribution?

At the time that it was written, the Jews believed that it was sinners who endured suffering; those who were without sin were rewarded with a good and prosperous life. It is understandable why people at that time believed in divine retribution because as humans we naturally look for an explanation for everything that happens. God wants us to love Him, but He doesn't want us to love Him for the wrong reasons. Therefore, to believe that God only allows people who sin to suffer doesn't make sense, because that would mean that people would only love God and keep His commandments to live a happy and prosperous life. And let's not forget, we are all sinners!

Divine Inspiration

Job describes his journey of faith through this period of suffering and he tells us how he was inspired by the Ruah (the Holy Spirit) with divine wisdom. At that time, it was believed that when you died you went to Sheol (a place where everyone went and stayed forever); there was no belief in heaven, hell or purgatory. In verses 14:13-17 Job starts to wonder whether those who die come back to life. This develops in verses 19:25-26 when he talks

about having a living Redeemer, who will stand upon earth. He then reveals that in his flesh he will see God. In these verses Job is suggesting that there could be a day of judgement before God for everyone, this is a prophetic word from God.

Persevere In Faith

Throughout the many chapters of lamenting, Job did not stop conversing with and questioning God as to why he was allowed to suffer. Job teaches us how important it is to stay in dialogue with God and persevere in our faith. In chapter 38, God finally answers Job and appears in a whirlwind. Job had a personal encounter with God, who spoke to him and this developed his relationship with Him: "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear but now my eye sees you." (Job 42:5). God did not reveal to Job the mystery of suffering nor did He explain why He allowed Job to suffer in the way that he did. Perhaps the fact that Job saw that God was there, present with him was enough to ease his suffering. He no longer felt alone and abandoned. Through his suffering he was taken to a higher level of union with God. The book of Job shows that everyone suffers, even good and righteous people. The important thing to remember is that God is with us in our suffering.

New Meaning

The mystery of why some people suffer and others don't is still with us but Jesus has given new meaning to our pain. He took all our sufferings upon Himself when He died on the Cross to save us, and when we unite our problems, pains and suffering to His death on the Cross we are able to participate in the saving work of Jesus. Our suffering can help to sanctify the world.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE STORY OF JOB

The Old Testament focuses heavily on the people of Israel because they were seen as God's chosen people. They believed that God should be worshiped in the Temple in Jerusalem. Around 930 BC Israel, where the Temple was built, was split into two parts. The north, Israel, consisted of 10 tribes and the south, called Judah, was made up of 2 tribes. The people of Judah believed that they were favoured by God because the Temple which contained the Ark of the Covenant was in their kingdom. In 721 BC Assyria attacked and destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel. This convinced the people of Judah even more, that God loved them and had protected them. However, when the Babylonians invaded Judah in 586 BC, they ransacked Judah and completely destroyed the Temple. Those living in Judah were sent into exile, to live in a foreign land. They were devastated as they could no longer worship God in His Temple. In the midst of great suffering they felt that they were being punished, but the story of Job encouraged them that God had not abandoned them.



THE BREAD OF LIFE



*Rajni Manoj
from Derby,
in the UK
explains the
importance of
the Blessed
Sacrament.*



Until a few years ago I only went to Mass because that is what my family did every Sunday. My father insisted on going to the morning Mass and we always had to arrive early. As a teenager I didn't appreciate having to give up the luxury of a lazy and relaxed morning in bed. Now that I have a better understanding of the value of the Eucharist, I am so grateful

that my father made me to go to Mass with them.

A Promise

Jesus said, "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). That is a wonderful promise. He will be with us always, in the good times and the bad, in sickness and in

health, from our conception until to the end of our lives. So how is this possible? One way is through the gift of the Holy Eucharist.

Living Bread

Jesus told His disciples, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world, is my flesh" (John 6:51). This confused many of His followers but we can see it fulfilled in the Eucharist. St Maximilian Kolbe said, "God

dwells in our midst, in the

weak, holds our hands when we are lonely, He even sits and cries with us when we are sad.

Eucharistic Adoration

Pope John XXIII said, "To keep me from sin and straying from Him, God has used devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. It is to the Heart of Jesus that I dare go for the solution of all my problems". St John Paul II expanded on this when he said, "The church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet Him in Adoration, in

"We can take all our problems and worries to the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament."

Blessed Sacrament of the altar. If angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason: Holy Communion." The Lord of the universe, whom the angels worship, gives Himself to us,

mere mortals. Out of His great love for us, He offers us His body, blood soul and divinity in the Eucharist. This is such a blessing! We can take all our problems and worries to the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus is a willing listener, a great companion, a supreme comforter. He strengthens us when we are

contemplation full of faith and open to making amends for the serious offences and crimes of the world. Let our Adoration never cease."

Preparation For Mass

It is important that we prepare carefully for each Mass. It is a great and holy moment when we receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and so we observe a Eucharistic fast before Mass and we ask for forgiveness of our sins during the Penitential rite at the start of the Liturgy. The Church teaches that anyone who is conscious of a grave sin must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving Holy Communion.

The Fruit Of Holy Communion

Why does Jesus offer Himself to us in the Eucharist? He comes to forgive our sins and to strengthen

us so that we can lead a holy life. In Holy Communion we are also drawn closer to God and united to the Church, Christ's Body on earth and the Saints who are in heaven. The Eucharist is the bread of life that offers us spiritual nourishment and brings us new life in Christ. When we receive Holy Communion with faith and trust, it will transform our lives and we will become the people that God wants us to be.

Go Out To The World

Recently Pope Francis was giving some teaching on the Eucharist at his weekly audiences. He said, "Each Sunday, we enter into Christ's victory over sin and death and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are given a share in His very life. By making present the Lord's paschal mystery, the Eucharist strengthens us to bear witness, like the martyrs of old, to his triumph over death and to love others as He does, freely giving of ourselves for their good." Jesus gives Himself to us in the Eucharist so that we can take His love out into the world and share it with those who are in need both spiritually and physically. It is not just a gift for us personally, but for the sanctification of the whole world, that is why the final words at Mass are a dismissal to 'go out' to those who don't know Jesus.

The First Step

As Christians we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). St Augustine explained that, "Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward for this faith is to see what we believe". The first step is a step of faith. When we receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, we should say, "Thank you Lord, I truly believe that you have come to me," and gradually our lives will be transformed.



BE STILL

One of our young readers explains why it is important to spend some quality time in silence before the Lord.

Time Out

There was a time when candles, music and a hot bath were all that defined my spirituality. This seemed like the best way to take some time out, with the fifteen minutes I had to spare after aimlessly scrolling through my phone for hours. I used to think about situations that were never actually going to happen or basically, anything that distracted me from reality and for me at the time, this was what I thought of as 'being spiritual'.

Difficulties

Even now I find that there are many times when I am caught up in the affairs of daily life, when speaking to God and spending time in prayer can seem like an impossible task. In between running errands, keeping up with assignments and handling five different opinions on what to have for dinner, trying to connect with God can seem impossible. Yet, we are reminded in the Scriptures, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Being still or pressing the pause button is a concept that many of us struggle with. Amid what sometimes feels like chaos, solitude and enjoying the presence of God can appear to be a far-fetched idea.

Seeking The Divine

God and the presence of the Divine cannot be defined in words. It's like trying to explain what sweetness is to a person who has never tasted sugar. However you described it, their understanding of sweetness would always be limited until they had tasted it themselves. The same principle applies when discovering God. I can describe external ways of trying to connect with Him, for example prayer, Bible reading and so on. But the internal, the personal encounter between us and God, is the most important part of our spiritual lives. And the best way to encounter God is in quiet and solitude because it is there that we become more fully aware of the presence of something greater than ourselves. Focusing our thoughts on God and making a commitment to seek Him continually (1 Chronicles 16:11) can be a challenge at first; but it becomes easier with practice.

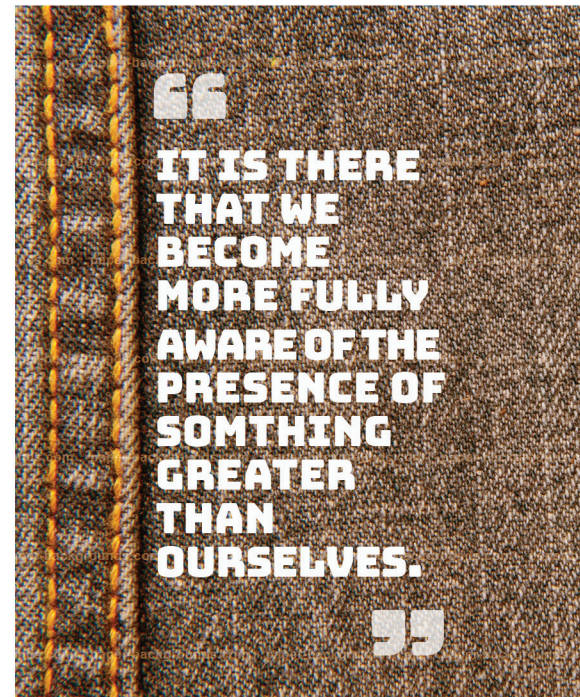
Prayer

Placing ourselves before God, perhaps during Eucharistic Adoration or simply in the privacy of our room, can be daunting. We might think,

“What do I say? Do I close my eyes? How do I speak to God from my heart?” There are no definitive answers to these questions, not because they require great theological understanding, but simply because God’s relationship with each one of us is different. Even though we may think that we are too busy, finding some time to just be still before God is the first step to improve our spiritual lives; the second involves making a conscious effort to sacrifice the small things that prevent us from spending time in fruitful prayer.

Different Ways

The other thing about expressing and nurturing our faith is that different things work for different people. I may find rest in God through meditating on the Scriptures and my friend, through music and listening to praise songs. Others might lift their hearts to God through painting, reading the Bible or through silent reflection. Some people are suited to contemplation; others prefer more active lives. All of these, when coming from the heart and sincerely seeking God, will draw us



closer to Him. We are free to express our spirituality in whatever way it suits us, (2 Corinthians 3:17). St Paul said, “Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s spirit”. But “Those who are spiritual discern all things” (1 Corinthians 2:14-15).

The Holy Spirit

Going back to where I began - candles, music and a hot bath - I now realise that my spirituality does not depend on the external props. I have the Holy Spirit living within me to help me to encounter God. He will tell me how to speak to my Father in heaven, how to pray and whether to close my eyes. All I have to do is be still before God.

Come Holy Spirit and help me to draw closer to Almighty God. Give me the desire to seek Him with my whole heart and the opportunity to encounter Him in silence and solitude.



GOD'S LAW WILL SET YOU FREE

A look at the Ten Commandments by one of the Sehion Youth Ministry Team.

The Commandments

The Ten Commandments were given to Moses as part of the covenant that God made with the Israelites, when He promised that they would be His people and He would protect them, if they followed His Commandments. St Ireneaus said that through the Commandments, "God prepared man to become His friend and to live in harmony with his neighbour." They are an expression of the natural law, that has been implanted in our hearts by God. We intuitively know that they are good for us and for society.

God's Will

When Jesus was asked which commandment was the most important, He summed them up with two statements, "You shall love the Lord your

God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". The Commandments are God's way of showing us how He wants us to live. "They belong to God's revelation of Himself and His glory. The gift of the Commandments is the gift of God Himself and His Holy will. In making His will known, God reveals Himself to His people" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2059).

Misunderstanding

If we don't understand the Commandments in the right way then it can feel like they are restrictive and impede our freedom, that we have lots of rules and regulations to follow. We might see our friends who are not following God's commandments and they seem happier than us; while we are struggling to follow them and resist temptation.

A Lesson

I decided one day that I would hide myself away in my room for a day to pray. I thought that it was going to be quite easy as I entered into my chosen isolation. But it was far from it. I remember thinking to myself, "Why did I ever commit to this when I could easily be enjoying the sunshine outside." Sometimes, we feel like this when it comes to living the good virtuous life that Jesus wants from us. One of the lessons that I learnt from that day is that it is not the Commandments themselves that are the problem but rather whether we are prepared to accept them joyfully and with thanksgiving.

A Challenge

As young people, we don't like rules, especially rules that challenge us. Not only do the Commandments challenge us, but they also question and judge us and none of us like to be judged. God's law was never meant to be restrictive, it is meant to be life giving. When we are in sin we can gain a false sense of freedom, and

we easily become a slave to sin. We may feel like we gain nothing by following the Commandments, but in reality we gain virtue, endurance and freedom.

A Helper

Jesus knew that we would not be able to follow the commandments on our own, that is why He promised us the Holy Spirit to be our guide and help. He said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever" (John 14: 15-16). So when we are feeling tempted or envious of others who are not leading a good life then we can ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in our weakness.

Bearing Fruit

Jesus said: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). When we believe in Jesus Christ, receive the Sacraments and keep His commandments, Jesus Himself

comes to love, in us and through us. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Road Signs

I've just started learning to drive, and I find myself constantly looking for road signs to tell me what is coming up. Without warning signs and directions there would be chaos on the roads. I choose to obey the law of the road because I want to drive safely and following the highway code gives me the ability to drive more freely. The Commandments are like the road signs that lead us to heaven.

Live To The Full

God's law is designed to liberate us and allow us to live our lives more freely and lovingly. When we buy a new gadget, we get an instruction manual with it. This helps us to use the product effectively and not break it. Similarly the Commandments help us to lead our lives, which are designed and given to us by God, more effectively and allow us to live our lives to the full.



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Let's remind ourselves what the Ten Commandments are

1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange Gods before me.
2. Do not take the Lord's name in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honour your father and your mother.
5. Do not murder.
6. Do not commit adultery.
7. Do not steal.
8. Do not bear false witness against your neighbour.
9. Do not covet your neighbour's wife.
10. Do not covet your neighbour's goods.

POSTCARD FROM A CONVERT

Come on in, the water's lovely!



Simon Leigh, from Manchester in the UK describes his journey of faith.

Elvis Presley was top of the charts singing, 'The Wonder of You', as I came into the world in August 1970. Mum and Dad had met at the RAF club dance night and started going out. They approached Mum's local Catholic church to get married but as they were not prepared to promise that their children would be brought up in the faith, they were sent away. Mum had been brought up a Catholic and Dad as a Jehovah's Witness but, along with most of their generation, both had drifted away from their faith. So they were married in a registry office.

My brothers and I growing up only saw the inside of a church for weddings and funerals. At school, Religious Education was presented more as historical whimsy rather than as relevant truth. We had very loving relationships with our grandparents. Grandma on Mum's side rarely missed Mass but she never talked about the faith. Nana on Dad's side was a very zealous Jehovah's Witness who would read us Bible stories in defiance of our parents' wishes. She was a lone but passionate voice telling me that there was a God who loves us and has promised us everlasting life. This always made instinctive sense to me. I always felt a sense of 'otherness' within me, a presence to comfort me especially during times of trouble or illness, which was often as I was a sickly asthmatic child. I often felt God's presence with me in the solitude and silence of my sickbed and I instinctively prayed to get better.

As I grew older and started work, sport took a back seat to pubs, clubs and the mainly unsuccessful pursuit of the opposite sex. I went to Maine Road to watch football and played as a hung over centre half on a Sunday morning which was just a semi athletic interlude between Saturday night's jaunt on the dance floor and Sunday afternoon's post mortem in the pub. So that was my life aged 25 – I was a fairly normal, successful, healthy and happy product of the rock n roll era.

Following an unsuccessful relationship with a girl who I thought was the one for me I was devastated. Why was life

so unfair? Why did people always let me down? I felt physically ill and my heart ached. Fortunately I had a loving family, friends and work colleagues around me. My Dad gave me a book 'The Road Less Travelled' by Scott Peck, the American psychiatrist. Previously I would have scoffed but now I devoured it. I also read 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' by Stephen Covey. I noted with interest that both authors were Christian.

I was becoming more open and positive about life in general and met Cheryl in May 2000. A year later I felt like the luckiest man in the world when she accepted the engagement ring I nervously held out on a gondola in Venice. Cheryl's Dad had passed away suddenly 2 months earlier. He was only 64 and like me was on a spiritual journey of discovery, reading books and going on courses, trying to make sense of life. My plan before his death was to press on with my career and

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then to address the God question probably later on in retirement. But now I felt a new urgency.

Studying the Bible with a group of Jehovah's Witnesses gave me more questions than answers. Eventually I knocked on the presbytery door at St Vincent's in Altrincham, to be welcomed by Father Tony, who had recently returned from a Venezuelan mission. I really felt that I had arrived home. If anyone had told me as a 25 year old that I would have joined the Catholic Church with all its pomp and men in fancy gowns, I would have been horrified. I had read my way into the Church but also felt a strong emotional pull. I started going to Sunday

Mass and have not missed one since. I did the RCIA course and was baptised, confirmed and received my first Holy Communion in 2004.

I was very excited and anticipated speaking in tongues as part of a dramatic spiritual awakening. But nothing happened. I carried on with the same lifestyle as before, the only real difference being attending Sunday Mass and reading about the Church and its Saints. I was further convinced about the existence of a loving Creator by the birth of my son, Jacob in August 2004. I had never really wished, planned or dared to hope to have a child of my own but when he arrived I knew it was all I had ever wanted, a joy and blessing beyond my dreams.

While attending a retreat I went to Confession with Father Pius, a young American Benedictine with shining eyes. He told me, "You need to take your Catholic faith seriously. It is about eternity Simon". This served as a timely wake up call and gradually my spiritual growth has accelerated through forming new Catholic friendships and learning by example. As iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another. I am now capable of socialising without alcohol, with people drunk only on the Spirit of God. People fully alive with sparkling eyes, not drinking and smoking to dull the pain or relieve the boredom. They have given me the confidence to smile at strangers again, to talk with

them and give them quality time rather than rushing off to my ever so important next meeting.

I feel like I have tiptoed very slowly and gingerly into an ocean of love. To paddle where the waves of God caress the parched human beach is initially cooling and refreshing but ultimately lukewarm and unfulfilling. When paddling, the sea looks and feels too cold, too shocking to take the plunge and fully immerse my shivering body. But when I finally let myself go under, paradoxically my temperature quickly adjusts and I am

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**“HAVE THE COURAGE
TO GO AGAINST THE
TIDE OF CURRENT
VALUES.....”**

”



POPE FRANCIS

surprised to find myself warmer as well as wonderfully buoyed up by a sea that has a life of its own. The warmth of the sea is not the only surprise. As I waded into the sea the waves are hitting against me, pushing me back towards the beach. But once I fully immerse I find not only warmth but also an undercurrent which moves against the tide. The undercurrent is stronger than the surface waves and so pulls me further out into the deep.

Pope Francis exhorts us to 'have the courage to go against the tide of current values - that do not conform to the path of Jesus'. The people I meet in the deep waters are so lost in God, letting Him dictate the flow of their lives that they seem to have become part of the sea. I can swim in them. They buoy me up and

take me deeper still. To take the plunge in the first place is the most difficult part of the journey. I need to pray for faith rather than waiting for the faith to pray. I have to push aside my feelings and be concerned only about making an act of humility and faith in the dark and cold. It is quickly answered. All the prodigal son had to do was to get up and go towards his Father. His Father then ran out to meet him, when he was still a long way from home. The implication is that he would never have made it to the Father on his own, I know I wouldn't have.

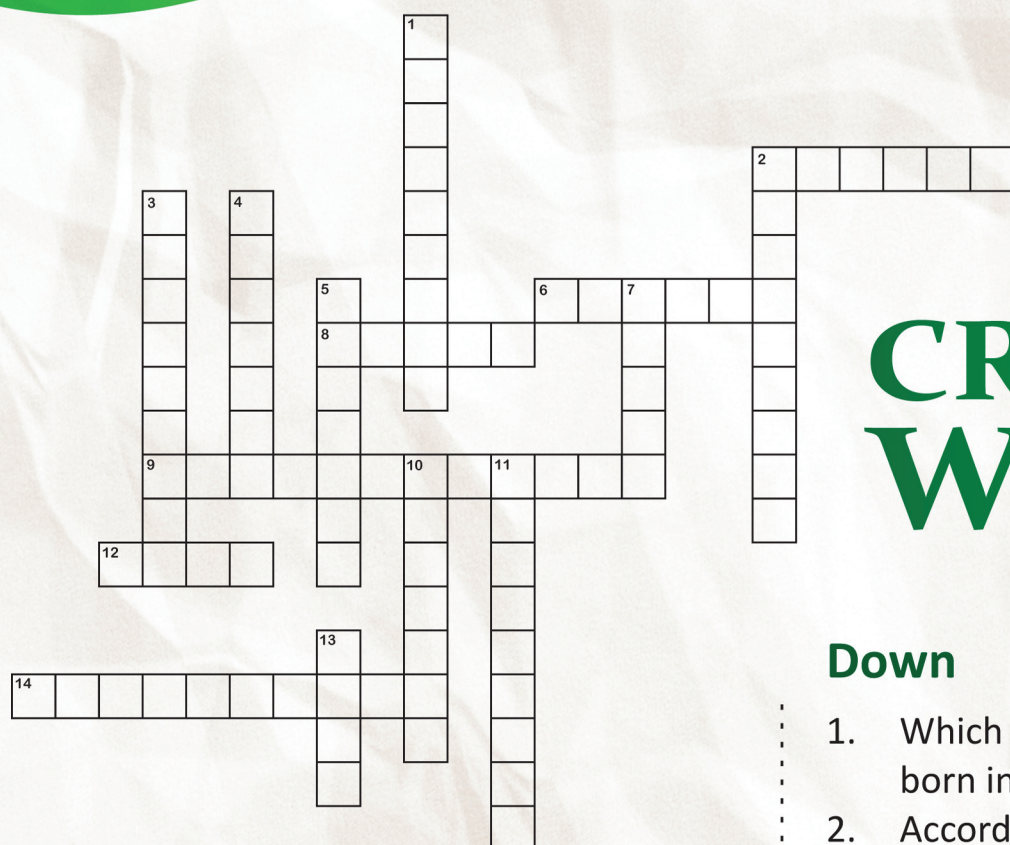
Don't get me wrong, I'm not a particularly graceful swimmer in this beautiful and vast ocean. I still get out of bed as the same grumpy, miserable person that I was before. I can still feel sad and inadequate, especially when I've had a bad day, upset friends or family, made a mistake at home or work or scraped my car again. But I know that God loves me anyway. I go to Him everyday in Mass and prayer and He loves me. He wraps His arms around me if I move towards Him and I feel His love and I want to pass it on.

God made us for Himself. He wants us to dive into His ocean of love or even to wade in step by step for those of us who have become cold and cynical. If I had to summarise my journey and send a postcard to my former self, I would say : Come on in, the water's lovely or as it says in Revelation 22 , "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come' and let everyone who hears say, 'Come'. And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift."



Compiled by
Merin Thankachan

CROSS WORD



Across

2. Which prophet was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire?
6. Who was Jacob's favourite son in the Bible?
8. What was St Teresa of Calcutta's original Christian name?
9. The words "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" is spoken during which Sacrament?
12. In Exodus 4, the hand of Moses became leprous like ____ as a sign from God.
14. What are the first five books of the Bible called?

Down

1. Which country was Pope Francis born in?
2. According to the CCC, the ____ is the source and summit of the Christian life.
3. Which religious order did St Catherine of Siena belong to?
4. Which king of Israel had the first Temple built in Jerusalem?
5. Which archangel appeared to the Blessed Virgin Mary?
7. How many baskets were leftover when Jesus fed 4000 people?
10. What is the last book in the Old Testament?
11. What was St Paul's occupation?
13. Which Gospel writer is thought to have been a doctor?

MY MIRACLE BABY

Euphrasia Ngum Ndi, shares the incredible story of how Jesus did the impossible in her life.

Like many young couples, my husband and I looked forward to having a family so we were devastated when I was diagnosed with premature ovarian failure. This meant that I was unable to conceive. The doctors told me that if, by some miraculous means, I did become pregnant, it would end up in a miscarriage anyway. They said that the

only way for my husband and I to have a child was to adopt one or look into the possibility of using donor eggs, which is very difficult for people of my race.

We had many consultations with different doctors but they all said the same thing. It was very depressing and discouraging. When I saw pregnant women or young children the tears would flow down my cheeks and I used

“We had prayed for years and years but still nothing happened.”

to cry myself to sleep at night. Gradually we started thinking that God was not going to help us. We had prayed for years and years but still nothing happened.

Then in February 2014, I attended a Second Saturday Convention led by Sehion Ministries in the UK. I felt at home with all my brothers and sisters in Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit was very evident in the gathering. I was deeply moved and found myself praying silently, "Dear Lord I will praise you more and more, even if you choose not to bless me with children. After all children can only come from you, so do with me what your will." Later that day, during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, I felt a really intense pain in my stomach.

For over two years we attended the Conventions and each time during Adoration I experienced the same kind of stomach pains. I believed that God was slowly healing me and preparing me for a miracle. During Adoration at the Convention in October 2016, the priest leading the healing service said that God was blessing 7 couples with children. My husband and I looked at each other and smiled as we claimed the prophesy for ourselves.

During a routine consultation with my gynecologist in December, I explained to the doctor that I had been experiencing severe breast pain for over 2 months so they did a complete hormonal profile on me. The results showed once again that I had gone into early menopause. I mentioned my pain to a friend at work and she advised

me to do a pregnancy test. I refused at first because I knew how disappointed I would be if it came back negative. But one morning during prayer, I said to God, "What is happening to me?" I heard a small voice whisper back to me telling me to do a pregnancy test as I had nothing to lose.

I did a pregnancy test and to my



"I heard a small voice whisper back to me...."

great surprise it was positive. I couldn't believe it so I repeated the test four times before I was confident that it was true. It was truly amazing! I wanted to scream, cry, pray, laugh and dance all at once. But I was in shock and for a while I couldn't speak, then I shouted with joy thanking the Lord.

I told my husband the great news and then rang the GP surgery to tell them that I was pregnant. Again I was told that there was no way that this was possible as they had the results of a recent blood test. I told them about the pregnancy tests and so I was booked in for an emergency scan to see what was going on inside me. The scan showed that I was nearly 3 months pregnant! My doctor said that in all of his years as a medic he had never seen anything like it before. Even with this miraculous intervention the doctors again told me that I would not be able to carry the pregnancy to term, given my history.

God is indeed faithful and worthy of praise and to Him I give all the glory and honour. My miracle baby, Joshua Emmanuel was born on 10th August 2017. I have tasted the goodness of the Lord. After having no periods for two and a half years, I conceived and had a healthy baby boy. Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? "Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). What is impossible for man, is possible for God. He has been faithful and merciful to us and His glory is shining in our lives.



CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS:

2. Elijah 6. Joseph 8. Agnes 9. Confirmation 12. Snow 14. Pentateuch

DOWN:

1. Argentina 2. Eucharist 3. Dominican 4. Solomon 5. Gabriel 7. Seven 10. Malachi 11. Tentmaker 13. Luke



St Catherine Of Siena



June Palmer tells the story of this 14th century Saint and Doctor of the Church.

Her Childhood

Catherine Benincasa was born in Siena, Italy in 1347. She was the 24th child of Jacopo, a prosperous wool-dyer and his wife Lapa. Catherine's twin sister died shortly after their birth. Catherine was a good, happy child and grew up in a good Christian home. She was also deeply religious and at the age of six she had her first vision of Jesus. For the rest of her life she was a mystic, experiencing many visions and revelations from God.

When she was seven, Catherine secretly promised her life to Jesus. Her religious fervour was often ridiculed by her family, who did not understand her desire to be alone to pray. Although her mother wanted her to marry, Catherine was adamant that she had given her life to Jesus and could not give it to anyone else. She even cut off her beautiful hair to make herself look less attractive. Eventually her father allowed her to use

a small room in their large house for prayer and devotions.

Teenage Years

This became Catherine's cell where she spent all her time praying, fasting and doing penance. She ate little and hardly slept. She was allowed to become a Dominican Tertiary, which meant that she could wear the Dominican habit while still living in her own home. She spent three years in her tiny room, only leaving it to visit the neighbouring Church of St Dominic. She had little contact with her family and the outside world as she prepared for the mission that God was to entrust to her.

In 1366, on the day before Ash Wednesday Catherine had a vision where Jesus appeared with His beloved mother. Our Lady took Catherine's hand and held it out to Jesus, who placed a ring on it, telling her to be strong and have courage. For Catherine this mystical wedding was the sign that she should leave her isolation to go out and serve the world. She always maintained that from that time she wore the ring and she could see it plainly, but it was invisible to others. At the age of 19 Catherine began working as a nurse in homes and hospitals caring for the sick and poor.

Nursing The Sick

For the next five years Catherine cared for those who needed her. Her humility, holiness and gentle disposition were attractive and gradually a group of friends and disciples were gathered around her. They called her 'Mother' and regarded her as their spiritual leader. As she struggled to read and write, she began to dictate letters to some of these followers

who wrote down her spiritual wisdom and insight. Today more than 380 letters dictated by Catherine still survive. These inspired documents were written to encourage them in their faith but then she started speaking about public affairs. Many people ridiculed and abused her for interfering in these issues as she was still a young woman with little experience of the world. But at the time the Church was in turmoil and Catherine was prompted by the Holy Spirit to speak out to try to bring unity and peace.

“Do not be satisfied with little things, because God wants great things!”

St Catherine Of Siena

While in a state of ecstasy, during a vision, she dictated her greatest work 'Dialogue' where she spoke about discernment, prayer, providence and obedience. This was a document that was way ahead of its time as it came straight from the heart of God. In 1375 while visiting Pisa, Catherine fell into a state of ecstasy and she received the stigmata (the wounds of Christ) on her hands and feet. Only Catherine could see these during her lifetime but they became visible after her death, showing up clearly on her incorrupt body.

Religious Turmoil

Gradually Catherine became more involved in the political and religious problems of the day and was a friend and advisor to Pope Gregory IX, who sent her to Florence to negotiate a peace deal on his behalf. After Pope Gregory's death, Urban VI was chosen to succeed him but there was a rebellion by the French Cardinals and a rival Pope was declared in Avignon in France. The Church in Europe was split behind the two rival Popes. Catherine worked tirelessly to try to bring peace and reconciliation between the two factions. She wanted Urban to be recognised as the rightful Pontiff and she advised him to make changes in order to be more acceptable to both sides. Pope Urban invited Catherine to live in Rome so that she could help and counsel him. This was an incredible honour as it was unthinkable at the time to elevate a woman to such a high position.

Her Death

Catherine spent two years in Rome, praying and pleading for the Church for peace, unity and renewal. She offered herself as a victim for the Church in prayer and penance. Gradually Catherine became weaker and weaker. In February 1380, she was confined to bed and was unable to drag herself to St Peter's, where she had been spending each day in prayer. In April she suffered a stroke and a week later on 29th April, she died at the age of thirty three.

St Catherine was canonised in 1461, her feast day is on 29th April. She was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970 and is one of the Patron Saints of Italy and a copatron of Europe.



MY FATHER WILL TAKE CARE OF ME



Rosemary Joy, aged 18 from the UK, reminds us that we can be confident in the love of our Heavenly Father.

I Have Hope For The Future

What does the future hold for me? None of us know. Our future is in God's hands. This is such a comforting truth because God sent His only Son into the world to die the most painful death so that we may have eternal life with Him in heaven. As St Paul says in Romans 8:32, "He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?" God gave us the gift of free will, the freedom to make our own decisions. If we let God into our lives, our most loving Father will provide for us in ways that we cannot even begin to imagine. No matter how miserable and painful our lives may seem at the moment, we have the greatest hope because the God of the universe is our Father and He cherishes us. We are the apple of His eye: "Whoever touches you touches the apple of my eye" (Zechariah 2:8).

We may feel like we are going through the most violent storm in our life, but we should remember that God is holding us close to His chest. Even if we cannot feel His presence, He is with us. He will never leave us to face the storm alone. We will always have our Father to lean on: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

I Will Always Praise God

It's easy for us to thank God when everything is going well. But are we able to praise Him when are down hearted? Are we able to thank God even when we feel completely lost and weary? Job blessed God even when he lost everything he loved. Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Even in the midst of the greatest suffering, I should praise God who gave His life for me. This is the faith of the martyrs. St Justin, who chose to die rather than deny Jesus said, "You can kill us but you cannot do us any real harm." Like St Justin, if we truly turn our gaze towards heaven, all our problems today will appear as nothing compared to the eternal joy that's coming (Romans 8:18).

I Surrender

Jesus, I do not know where my life is going, but all I need to know is that You are in complete control. Jesus, when You are in control, I have nothing to fear. For You will never allow anything to happen to me. "We are well aware that God works with those who love Him, those who have been called in accordance with His purpose, and turns everything to their good" (Romans 8:28). Abba Father, I know that you will take care of me.



POPE'S *Voice*

"Truth, according to the Christian faith, is God's love for us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, truth is a relationship."

Pope Francis

GLOBAL CATHOLIC NEWS

Compiled by Smitha George

FORMER REFUGEE BECOMES BISHOP OF CALIFORNIA



California: In December, a man who entered the country as a young refugee from Vietnam in 1973, was installed as the new auxiliary bishop of Orange Diocese, California. Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen, 64, is the second priest born in Vietnam to become a bishop in the United States. As a young man, while he was a seminarian in formation for the priesthood, he was forced to flee his native country, spending 18 days at sea with little food and water, trying to escape the violence of war.

MAN BUILDS REPLICA OF ST PETER'S BASILICA WITH 36,000 TOOTHPICKS



Colombia: A Colombian teacher, Alberto Antonio Cruz Serna who has been building models with toothpicks since he was 12 completes his latest work: St. Peter's Basilica. He has built more than 200 artistic creations with his own unique style. His models include the Eiffel Tower, the Colosseum, the Statue of Liberty and the Taj Mahal, all made to scale out of toothpicks. He has won several awards for his work.

ITALIAN NUN DRESSES BRIDES

Italy: Sr Maria Laura at the Augustinian monastery of St Rita in Cascia, has been helping Italian brides find their dream wedding dresses at an unusual spot deep in the Umbrian hills. Since the 1950s, brides have been making pilgrimages to St Rita's to ask for her special intercession and blessing on their marriage. Many left their wedding dresses at the monastery in thanksgiving. Over the years, the monastery has collected hundreds of dresses. Sr Maria, who used to be a seamstress and dress designer, uses her dressmaking skills to alter the dresses to fit each bride individually and asks in return a donation to the monastery.



VATICAN APPROVES OFFICIAL PILGRIMAGES TO MEDJUGORJE

Medjugorje: Official pilgrimages to Medjugorje are now permitted. Previously, official church groups were not allowed to organize pilgrimages to the shrine, although individual Catholics could visit privately or through independent organizations. However, the Pope still has to make the final decision as to the authenticity of the apparitions. On June 24, 1981, six children in the town of Medjugorje in Yugoslavia reported experiencing apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These continued and had a message of peace for the world, as well as a call to conversion, prayer and fasting.



POPE FRANCIS SUGGESTS A REWORDING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Vatican: Pope Francis has called for a rewriting of one line in the Lord's Prayer. Used by Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians, the prayer is common ground for churches, which have historically fought over theology, and it can be recited by heart by millions around the world. "It's not a good translation, because it implies God actively pushes people into temptation. It's Satan who leads us into temptation - that's his department" the Pope said.



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“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.” (Romans 8:14-15)

If we do not allow the Spirit to lead us, we fall back into the slavery of sin. How can the Holy Spirit be our life if our heart is far from Him?

(Catechism of the Catholic Church : 2744)

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