

# Saints of a New Age



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**Many decide to accept a cross, few decide to carry it.**

**This is a story that catches a glimpse of grace in the lives of those hidden men and women who are still carrying their particular cross. Though they may have stumbled or collapsed, they have decided to continue their journey down the straight and narrow path.**

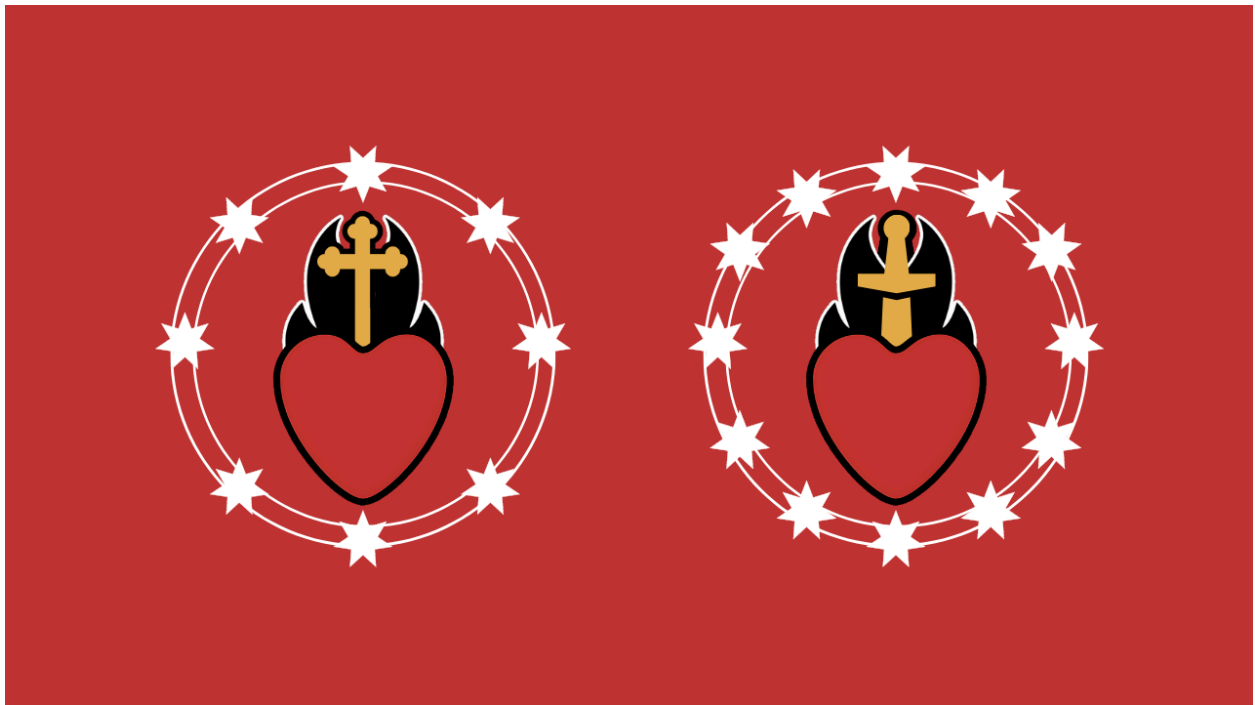
**What is inspiring these few faithful to remain steadfast when the waves appear to have conquered the ark?**

Why do they continue to call upon the name of Christ,  
amidst the storms?

This is a story about picking up those scattered pieces  
of faith. May these letters help many discover a  
newfound joy in their souls.

May God bless you.

This book is published by Sacred Heart Christian



**“Now the law entered in, that sin might abound. And where sin abounded, grace did more abound.” – Romans 5:20**

## **What is the impact of your family on your spiritual life?**

*Antoinette*

The biggest event in flight training is when a student flies solo for the first time. It's only him or her in the airplane, the buck stops with them. As a student, it's exhilarating and empowering. As an instructor sending them off, it's a terrifying act of faith. When they fly alone in an airplane, they are responsible for their life. No one else can do it for them.

Looking now at my children, I realize that it's the same thing. I have to teach them the absolute best I can about everything I can, because one day they're going to be flying solo. Either they'll know what they need to know, or they won't. I won't be able to catch them through their mistakes anymore. I'll have to trust them to remember what I taught, and let them fly.

In the end, the absolute most important thing I need to teach my children is a real faith in God, and how to have a real relationship with Him.

# How can someone grow in the love of God?

*Amelia*

Imagine writing a letter to your children. The letter contains how much they are loved, what sacrifices you have made for them to have a healthy and joyful life, and what they need to do to have a life full of purpose and peace. Now, imagine how you would feel if your children placed that letter in a bookshelf and left it unopened and unread. God has sent us a letter. Sadly, it is often placed on a bookshelf or in a drawer and never opened.

The greatest way to know someone is to spend time communicating with them. Time is the only thing we give that we cannot get back. We choose to spend time with those we love and, as a result, we love them more with each moment we give to them. If we are to grow in the love of God, then we must read His Word. We must pick up the letter He has sent us and read it. It is essential that we spend time praying, listening, and reading.

The more we learn about a person, the more we tend to love that person. We spend time in his or her home, enjoy meals together, attend events, and talk. If we are seeking to love God deeper then we must spend time with Him in His house, listen more than we talk, and dine at His table. It is difficult to fall deeply in love with someone we only talk to or spend time with once a week or twice a year. God is never too busy to spend time with you. It is us who are too busy for Him. The more time we spend with Him through reading the Bible, attending Mass, and in prayer, the more we learn about Him. The more we learn about Him the more we love Him.

## Did you have a conversion moment?

*Martin*

I found out my wife was having an affair.

I was very much intending to get vengeance, using the affair discovery as leverage.

Out of nowhere the thought entered my head: “Is this really what you want for your wife?” It wasn’t guilt inducing. It made me stop and think of her as my wife, not as my opponent.

I knew in that moment that I had to create a way for us to move forward with new commitment. My marriage has not really changed but I have. I have been able to forgive the affair, despite not witnessing remorse or a willingness to discuss or work on our marriage. I feel free. I understand I have free will and choice in a deeper way now.

# Have you ever suffered on behalf of God, the Church, or another person?

*Marco*

Yes. Indeed it has become a regular practice for me to undergo suffering because it is a reality of our Catholic Faith, for we are all called to imitate Christ, which also includes His sufferings. First of all, my main inspiration in pursuing the life observant of Christian suffering was learning about the saints, the Blessed Mother, and the many miracles attributed to them because of self-mortification and everyday sufferings.

Through this, my mind had drilled into it the importance of suffering in the life of a Catholic, which has further strengthened my faith whenever I am presented with such. In fact, during this Lenten Season, I practice self-mortification by kneeling for a prolonged duration whenever I'm praying and offer it as a humble and contrite sacrifice to our Lord. This personal practice of mine is further intensified during Friday and most especially during this coming Holy Week.

Interestingly, there was a time during the Holy Week of 2023 where I greatly suffered. Back then I had an intense in-grown nail in my right big toe, coupled with the fact that I was an altar server who was required to attend processions wearing tight black leather shoes. Such was my pain that my toes would bleed greatly due to the pressure my foot underwent. When that was done, I went home to sleep.

I was awoken in the middle of the night by an intense sharp pain in my toe. It went on for about 20 minutes and I prayed intensely for God to stop such suffering. It stopped and then I slept peacefully.

However, as I woke up in the morning, I saw a text from my friend asking for forgiveness. I was confused and opened my phone and read the whole message and they were apologizing because they were about to commit suicide last night, which is coincidentally the same time I was experiencing such pains. After careful reflection, I came to believe that my pain during the middle of the night may have been the reason this person didn't go all the way through. Because of that, I comforted and gave counsel to them. After time passed, we had another conversation and right now they are stronger than ever.

With that experience, my admiration for suffering was further inflamed in my heart and became a necessary practice in my Catholic life. For I believe that God with His Divine Wisdom and Power can turn the darkest and most painful experiences into the greatest of graces that can be offered for humanity.



# Have you ever felt God's presence?

*Jean-Francois*

I was driving in Panama from my house to a little town. It was night. There were no houses, no habitations on the twenty-mile stretch. My car got a flat tire just as I was entering town.

Stopping in front of a bodega with people loitering inside, I tried to ask people where I could find a mechanic at this late hour. They asked me whether my car had a stick shift. It did not. But I told them it was not a battery problem. It was a flat tire problem. Immediately, without asking me anything, four or five of these locals went to my car and helped me change the tire. Would I have had that flat tire even five minutes before I would have spent the rest of the night in the dark with an immobilized car and with no help until the next day, in the middle of the jungle. I surely felt the hand of God in this story.

# Have you had a moment when you decided to remain faithful when times were hard?

*Tan*

Before discerning religious life, I felt called to visit Milwaukee several times for a monthly all-night prayer vigil including prayers led by Fr. Redemptus Short. On one occasion, I made a confession, and then guidance came through Fr. Short: "Orient to Jesus." I've been pondering it ever since.

When I was turned down after discernment, lost a job, lost a dating prospect, was hospitalized, and more, I kept Jesus and His friends in mind. Some said I was unreasonably happy, but I was sad that I was unable to attend Mass or receive the Eucharist during my first hospital stay. The thought of getting back on track and finding my vocation to serve Jesus kept me afloat!

# What do you think when you are in the presence of the Eucharist?

*Anonymous*

When before Jesus in the Eucharist, I am not sure that I am thinking but I am more just pulled in. I feel my heart and body swell with warmth and love. If I think anything it is about Christ's passion and how He is truly present with us.

# Have you ever suffered for God?

*Richard*

In the summer of 2019, I had a case of diverticulitis. After my third trip to the ER due to the pain and the antibiotics not working, I was admitted to the hospital.

The next day, the doctor who admitted me came in and stated that he didn't believe I had diverticulitis, but a colonoscopy was the only way to be sure. He scheduled it for the following day.

The next morning, when the anesthesiologist came in prior to the procedure, I was no longer responsive, so he called off the procedure. The surgeon called my wife at 11:45pm that night and began yelling at her that I was just a pain pill junkie and only wanted attention. She was floored. He asked her if she wanted me transferred to another hospital and another doctor. She said yes.

The next day, I was transported to another hospital and a surgeon there stepped in. He found that my colon had ruptures and it was sepsis. I ended up spending a month in the hospital with five abdominal drains, and one in my left lung. I lost six pounds of muscle mass and had to use a cane to walk. One and a half months after being released, we lost our oldest son to drug overdose, he was twenty-two.

The following summer, I was driving home from work on the highway. This particular highway has cross streets. I was traveling at seventy-miles per

hour when a lady pulled out right in front of me. I hit her car, flipped over it, and rolled five times. It had ripped both front wheels of my Ford Explorer, and completely crushed everything except where I was sitting. I received a bruised elbow and walked away.

These tragedies led to a severe neurological disorder. I began having excruciating pain in my lower left abdomen. I began having seizures. I went to every kind of doctor you can imagine.

I was lucky enough to go to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. My pain doctor placed a neuro-spinal stimulator in my back to block the pain. Unfortunately, it was faulty and caused even more pain. It took three months to get the company to replace the implant.

Afterwards, I was pain free for a short time. Then, once more, I began having more seizures and the pain spread through my body.

During my trials, my parish priest stated that my illness was having a huge impact on the church. He stated that more people were coming back, and when asked, they would say they have watched me and my family go through all this, and our faith appears to them to have gotten stronger rather than me becoming bitter and angry at God. If this is my cross to bear, and I'm bringing more souls to heaven, then it's worth it.

# What does “Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect” mean? (Matthew 5:48)

*Michael*

Our Creator is a God of perfection. When He made man, he made him good. In His own image and likeness he made us.

Our Father, in the abundance of his mercy and love, spared nothing to return our hearts to him. Even though we were born sinful in the darkness of our mother’s womb, we are reborn in the life of the spirit.

We are children of a Father of much goodness and though we shall often fail in our efforts, we are beckoned to be perfect in patience. In mercy and forgiving others, we are to be gentle as Our Father was patient with us.

Love that is perfect is love that reaches out despite all else. Always His mighty hand reaches down for our souls. In our faith and hope, we are to be patient for one day Our Father will bring all of his children home. May that day come soon, when love shall wipe away every tear.

# What is a trial you overcame only after turning to God?

*Jenny*

At one point in my childhood, I developed a deep fear of losing Jesus, so I began a nightly prayer vigil. "Please Jesus, please, don't let me ever lose you. Please, Blessed Mother, please, don't ever let me ever lose your Son," I begged. I had no idea why I was feeling such intense fear. I couldn't imagine ever losing Jesus, but still I knew one thing: I had to pray.

And so I did, faithfully and steadfastly, until the fear eventually dissipated. Fast-forward nearly twenty years.

How did it happen? How could it happen? I'd lost Jesus. But He never lost me. I left the Church and became "spiritual, but not religious." As if that's a thing! There I was in my deluded pride, sinking deeper and deeper into the mire and away from God. Yet my heart yearned for Him always, even though I had a warped idea of the Holy Trinity (to even type those words now is painful).

I won't go into detail about those dark days, because the details don't matter. The main point is that throughout all those years when I was a wandering soul, I never lost my deep desire to truly know God, to experience God, to unite with God.

I just had a faulty idea of who God was.

My trial was delusion and spiritual pride. I didn't believe Jesus is God. A great prophet and wonderful man? Sure. But God? That seemed silly, embraced as I was in my evil delusion.

Finally, not able to stand the separation any longer, I begged the Divine One: Fill me with the ultimate spiritual truth. Give me the wisdom of Solomon. Enlighten me.

God is prompt when someone reaches out in authenticity. I made this prayer my daily morning meditation, and less than a week later, I was rattled and shaken at the response. I received it deep within my innermost self, inside my "Cell of Self-Knowledge," as St. Caterina of Siena put it.

Suddenly, I knew. I was enlightened. I was filled with Sophia—the wisdom of God. That wisdom, that truth, was so clear and obvious, yet so difficult to comprehend (1 Cor. 1:23). The ultimate spiritual truth, the wisdom of Solomon, can be summed up in one amazing and crazy sentence:

Yes! Yes, Jesus is the Son of God.

That wisdom wasn't at all what I'd been expecting. Up until that point, I'd been in total denial about Jesus' divinity. Antagonistic, even. But I could no longer deny the truth. I knew! Jesus and his Mother had answered my childhood prayer of so long ago, and had led me back home to the truth. Jesus is the Son of God!

My time away from the Church had led to mortal sin and dangerous spiritual wanderings, and I realized I was in need of serious cleansing. My



soul required renewal and rejuvenation. Just as sure as I knew Jesus to be the Son of God, I knew something else: the Catholic Church was where I had to be. I returned to the Church and haven't turned back since. Now I pray daily to never wander again.

It's been nearly twelve years since God brought me back home, but I had to ask for that grace first.

Yes, He truly does answer our prayers, even when we're in delusion. If asked with an honest heart, He answers all.

**YES, JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.**

# What makes you sure of God's existence?

*Luke*

To be honest this may be one of the questions that get me the most. My mind can't comprehend God's existence and I rely on faith and the grandeur of the universe. Everything is so technical and full of purpose that there must have been a Creator behind all things.

## **Why do you care about the Eucharist?**

*Anonymous*

As a person who was abused, I feel very safe and secure in the presence of the Eucharistic Jesus.

## What saint has inspired you the most?

*Orville*

St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. I am inspired by the 'Little Way' of this Saint. Saint Therese wanted to know what she could do to become a Saint because she was just so overwhelmed by the achievements of all the great Saints. She asked her sister this question and the reply she got was to do many little things. This method became known as the "Little Way of St. Therese." I have been inspired by this because I too can easily do it. I have never done it because it has never been on my mind but henceforth, by God's grace, I wish to commit myself to follow it and also hopefully become a Saint.

# **What is the most emotional moment that you have ever had at Mass?**

*Clare*

Every year, my parish has a service for remembering the deceased family and loved ones of the parishioners. It is always scheduled in January of the next year (so for deaths in 2022, the service would be in January of 2023).

My nana (grandmother on my mom's side) passed away on February 5th, 2022, my Godfather passed away on August 21st, 2022, and my aunt passed away on October 21st, 2022. It was a rough year for me.

The time for the service arrived in January of 2023, and I was asked to read the first reading. It was Wisdom 3:1-6, 9.

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,  
and no torment will ever touch them.

In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,  
and their departure was thought to be an affliction,

and their going from us to be their destruction;  
but they are at peace.

For though in the sight of men they were punished,  
their hope is full of immortality.

Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,  
because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;

like gold in the furnace he tried them,  
and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. (...)

Those who trust in him will understand truth,  
and the faithful will abide with him in love,  
because grace and mercy are upon his elect,  
and he watches over his holy ones.

**My voice had been shaking a little as I started to read, but the line that got me was: "But they are at peace." I broke down in front of the whole congregation. I knew I had to take deep breaths and finish the reading, but I was also considering asking the priest to finish reading for me. Somehow, I was able to get through it, and I returned to my seat, still crying.**

**I know that the three people I lost are now with God in heaven, but I miss them all so much.**

# Why is the Eucharist necessary?

*EL-Natan*

Jesus Christ tells His disciples, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). The people of God gather round His altar at Mass each Sunday to receive Christ truly and wholly present in the Eucharist.

Christ, loving His Church so tenderly and fully, comes to meet with us substantially in the Holy Eucharist to give life to our souls. It is the most profound expression of His love for us, in which He gives Himself, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity to us, his hungry people. He loves us so deeply that He has not withheld His own Body from us. What better way to respond to that love than to meet it, to meet Him, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where He is made most fully, substantially, and intimately present? Why starve our soul of its deepest desire for the highest good, God Himself.

## How often do you recall your past sins and how do you regard them when you do?

*Andrew*

There are one or two sins that come to me on and off, primarily because they are relevant to my current life. Occasionally other ones do because I have in some way fallen into them again. My most common response (albeit this has been learnt over time) is to treat them as a learning point. It's not good that it happened, but I can learn from the fact that it did happen.

I do occasionally beat myself up about them when it comes to the latter reason—having fallen into them again—but I find that this feeling passes the quicker I get to Confession. Confession provides me with the certainty of my sins being forgiven and the reality we can start again in God's love. It is one of the most beautiful parts of my faith, and a key part of the only virtue I have shown consistently: persistence!



## What saint has inspired you the most?

*Kyle*

I went through a period before high school of some doubt or lack of knowledge of my belief in God. I've never fallen away from the Church, but it was not my own nor convicting. When I went to my Jesuit high school, I was in a theology class my first semester. My teacher there is one of the best teachers I've ever had. He went over as part of the class St. Thomas Aquinas' Five Proofs for God's Existence. These proofs radically changed my life and introduced me to Aquinas.

Now I am discerning a call to join the Dominicans, and St. Thomas is a big reason for that. I ask for his intercession to reveal to me if I'm called to "love the Lord as he did" through the Dominican Order.

# **Why do you care about the Eucharist?**

*Ken*

**Receiving the Eucharist during Holy Communion is Jesus filling my entire body and soul and mind with Himself.**

## What saint has inspired you the most?

*Eva*

Saint Charbel has inspired me the most since he is from my homeland Lebanon with similar living conditions with which our population can relate today. His great example is that we all have a vocation to become saints through our daily actions and lifestyle. He has shown that being humble and bonding with God's love is the greatest achievement. He has also been very generous with all faithful people from all countries and religions who have asked for his intercession and showered them with miracles. He was even named "طبيب السما"

# Why do you love Mary?

## *Will*

Mary is united with her Son. In fact, Mary's role flows from her union with Christ and cannot be separated from it. She brought the Word made flesh into the world through her free cooperation. She provided Jesus with His human body. She was there as He grew. She was present at His first public miracle. She was there at the Passion and at the foot of the Cross, alongside the Redeemer. She was there when they laid Him in the tomb. She was there at His Resurrection, His Ascension, and was in the Upper Room with the Apostles at Pentecost.

She was the first and greatest disciple of Jesus Christ. She participated in the Redemption in the world. As a result, united so singularly with her Son, at the end of the course of her earthly life she was taken up, assumed, body and soul into Heaven.

By the grace of God, the Virgin Mary is our model of faith and charity. Jesus, by His saving work, restored to mankind supernatural life in souls. By Mary's participation in this saving action, she became the new Eve, the new mother of all the living. In the order of grace, she is the mother of each and every person. She is our Advocate and Helper, pointing us always to her holy Son.

We can never love her as much as Jesus does, but we must never tire in drawing near to her as she leads us to her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ!

# Why Catholic and not Protestant?

*Brayden*

The reason why you should join the Catholic Church as opposed to any Protestant sect is because the Catholic Church is, demonstrably, the One True Church established by Jesus Christ. The origin of every Protestant ecclesial communion is traceable to a time after the Apostolic era and to a founder who is not Christ. One of the easiest ways the Church Fathers demonstrated the invalidity of other post-apostolic movements is by pointing out their founder. The reason why this approach is so easy is because oftentimes, the manmade groups that have arisen take their name from their founder: Arian (Arius), Valentinian (Valentius), Marcionite (Marion), Lutheran (Luther), Calvinist (Calvin), Zwinglian (Zwingli), Anglican (English Schism), Wesleyan (John Wesley), etc.

# Is Catholicism attractive to young people today?

*Connor*

I think it is best summarize this question with what a non-denominational pastor said to his flock on one Sunday while I was in attendance: "The time for miracles is over by the end of Acts, we are no longer living in a world where God walks amongst us, we're waiting for His second coming, and until then we remember and we wait in silence." This is no way to live in faith, because miracles aren't over. Every Sunday when we see the Body of Christ be made present in front of a congregation of the faithful that is truly a miracle unique to the Catholic Church, and one that is certainly attractive to the youth.

# What do you think the greatest misunderstanding about the spiritual life is?

*Rose*

The greatest misunderstanding about the spiritual life is the assumption that “I’m not enough.”

- I’m not holy enough for God to listen to me.
- I’m not spiritual enough for my prayer to be accepted.
- I’m not educated enough to pray the right way.

One reason people make false assumptions is that they compare themselves to some saint or to another Catholic who seems to have it all together. It’s good to be inspired by the saints, but if contact with holy people gives us more discouragement than hope, that’s not from God.

What the saints really show us is that the spiritual life is not one-size-fits-all. Saints’ lives, wounds, and gifts vary wildly: think St. Therese of Lisieux, who loved Jesus from toddlerhood, and Blessed Bartolo Longo, who returned to God after being “ordained” a Satanist “priest.” God made us unique not only in our DNA, but in the DNA of our spiritual journey.

Our experiences, defects, and talents are for the glory of God. He has allowed us to become who we are precisely so that we can shine his light in the world to people who can’t hear him in any way but through us.

Imagine how Peter felt when Jesus looked at him after Peter's three denials. He felt so bad he cried bitter tears. But his crushing mistake didn't make him feel unworthy of Jesus' love—instead, he finally realized he needed to rely on God, not just his own strength.

In the end, Peter learned through failure and tears that “not enough” is more than enough for God to make a saint out of.



## How do you defend against pride?

*Patti*

Don't think less of yourself, think of yourself less often and more about others. Putting ourselves down is not humility—after all that is still self-focused. I love Mother Teresa's example that by knowing who she was—a child of God—praise or insults did not touch her. We are to love others as we love ourselves so we *need* to love ourselves before we can love others. But rather than pride in ourselves, we give praise and thanksgiving to God for the gifts he has given us to serve him.

# What do you think the greatest misunderstanding about the spiritual life is?

*Nyakallo*

I think there is a lot of transformation and transition in individuals around the world such that people are questioning everything. That impacts faith and causes confusion. I am based in Africa and the current trend is that people are having the perception that there is African spirituality which is opposite to the Gospel we are being taught at church.

There's a misunderstanding that African spirituality has been demonized and this assumption is not substantiated. Spiritual life is considered being a healer which is wrong because not everyone can be a healer. I always make an example that even from the Old Testament God used to communicate with people in their sleep in the form of dreams e.g. Joseph and Daniel. Today, when we have vivid dreams they are being aligned to an ancestral gift and that makes people lose focus.

# Have you ever experienced miraculous healing?

*Nyakallo*

The time I discovered that I am able to pray St. Francis of Assisi's prayer to the end without crying while in the past I could not finish it due to crying because of pain.

# Why should a modern person believe in God?

*Michael*

A better question might be why a discerning modern person would *not* believe in God? The overwhelming consensus, whether via science and/or faith, is that we were made by and for greater things.

Faith and Science go hand-in-hand in the belief in God. And it's the simple graces of life which, when discerned, reinvigorate our ongoing faith in a Heavenly Father. All is faith, and it is in faith that we are set free.

# What do you see when you look up at the Cross?

*Parker*

When I look up at the cross, I see Love made known through suffering. I see a God who loved us so much He decided to become one of us, walk with us, eat with us, live with us, and ultimately die for us. I am reminded particularly of the "Franciscan Thesis" of the Primacy of Christ, in which Blessed John Duns Scotus posits that God would have become man whether we had sinned or not—because He simply wanted to become one with us. This desire of God was so strong that despite the fall of man He still desired to be one with us, even when it meant that the only way to do so was through death on that Cross.

# **What is the impact of your family on your spiritual life?**

*Evan*

The responsibility of being the spiritual leader of my household weighs heavy on my heart. I have to remind myself that it's not just my own prayer life I am responsible for. I am trying to instill the habits and disciplines of prayer in my children so that they will not abandon them as they grow older.

# Why not just reject God?

*Amelia*

If we reject God, then we reject everything God desires to give us. We may find snippets of those things within the world, but it will never be enough. God offers us unconditional love, unmatched forgiveness, and eternal grace and mercy. He offers us a life that never ends. His love is deeper than any love we find anywhere else in life. If we reject God, then we reject the greatest love we could ever find. If we reject God, then we reject eternity with Him. It is often asked why a good and loving God would send people to hell. It is extremely important that we understand God does not send anyone to hell. He only allows them to receive what they have chosen. By rejecting God and rejecting His commands, we choose hell.

# Are you optimistic?

*Lavinia*

I do find myself optimistic about the church. The future of the Church is always hopeful, and hope is the root of optimism. Jesus will never forsake the church, for He said he would be with us to the end of the age. That alone is enough for me to trust in the Church He established.

My generation, and generations younger, are desperate for the traditions of the church and a deeper relationship with Christ. Much like Christ on the Cross, we thirst for truth in this secular world.

The Church is the Ark of Salvation persisting through a horrible storm, do we jump out into the ocean because of a leak in the hull? Whatever challenges the Church faces, we will always come out triumphant on the other side, and we have two thousand years of history to back up that statement.



# Why do you young people become Catholic today?

*James*

There is a quote from the famous Catholic author G. K. Chesterton that goes something like, “I could write 10,000 sentences that start with I am a Catholic because.”

The Church offers young people in the modern world the things they need to fully express themselves as people: answers to life’s deepest questions, community, and most importantly a connection to the divine. Man has always needed these things. In that same sense, the reason the Church is so attractive to young people today is that many of us know what it is like to go without the Church, without religion, and without virtue. Many of us have chosen to return to the truth rather than continue suffering in the bitter brokenness of error.

# Why do you care about the Eucharist?

*Nicholas*

The Most Holy Eucharist is important to me, not as a Christian, but as a human being simply because He is Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity made manifest for the nourishment of our souls. It is He who burns brighter than all the stars of the universe combined, enveloped in the Host held between the fingers of the priest, for us in Holy Communion.

He's important because each Kiss of Love, each visit, brings us closer to Him. In Him we burn our wounds and pains away in the Divine Crucible of His Heart and Love. Holy Communion is simply the most intimate moment between Creator and creation, between God and man, between Our First Love, Our Friend, Our Last Hope, Our Only Desire. In all, the Eucharist is a Fatherly Kiss of ineffable warmth and an embrace of blissful joy between Christ and His Child.

Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the lamb.

Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi. Beati qui ad cenam Agni vocati sunt.

# Why do you go to Mass every Sunday?

*John*

I go to Mass at every chance out of a deep desire to be there. Something within my soul that craves being inside the church.

Sometimes, though, my system is in an uproar and my desire to leave the house is limited. My mind is in a state of high anxiety and spinning in endless paths. Sometimes it is due to ongoing issues that haven't been resolved or other things on my heart. Every fear that can come to mind comes, tearing into me like a beast with razor sharp claws. Even then I still make every effort to go. Because those are the days when I need to be at Mass the most.

At some point in our lives, attending Mass may no longer be an option. So we should make every effort to attend now while we are still able.

# How do you defend against pride?

*Paul*

Whenever I feel wrongful pride, I just reflect on Jesus in the nearby tabernacle or Adoration Chapel. His silent, still, small presence is the antidote to what the world expects for us.

He through whom the Universe and everything in it was created (John 1: 1-5), and He who suffered and died to atone for our sins, remains with us in a piece of bread. And He is vulnerable, whereas the world prides itself on strength. He is little, whereas the world prefers bigness.

Reflecting on the humility of Christ, how can we puff ourselves up in pride, exalt ourselves, or point to our accomplishments?

# How has your faith made an impact on others?

*Marylynn*

Upon my return from a leave of absence, I stood at the front of my class which was inordinately quiet. A student raised her hand and asked, "Why did you leave us?" I was perplexed by her question and asked whether or not the substitute had explained my absence. She replied that she had. I confirmed that I had a family emergency that involved a decision I never saw myself having or wanting to make and that it was the hardest thing that I've ever had to do. She then pressed on and asked, "How can you have any faith?" I looked at her squarely with soft, teary eyes and replied, "How can I not? Right now, all I have is Jesus and I'm holding on tight to him to guide me through." No more questions were asked and the class proceeded.

I didn't think much more about it until I arrived the next morning and found a note waiting for me on my classroom desk chair. Opening it curiously, I read it and burst into tears. It was a note from another student who confessed that until she heard my story, she really didn't believe in Jesus, but that now she did. I raced down to the Head of School's office to share the contents of the note and to thank her—once again—for granting me the leave. The student's note touched her to the point of tears as well. I then said, "If my pain and struggle has brought just this one young person to believe in Jesus, then it is all worth it." I've kept that note with my important papers and periodically review it to remind me that Jesus shall, indeed give "beauty for ashes" if I take up my cross and follow him.

# How does someone become a saint?

*David*

What I have learned is that our sense of the ways in which we should grow, the things we presume we must become better in, other than in obvious vices that our conscience tells us are sinful, are often not particularly sound. For me, I expected to become, as I moved closer to God, more solemn, more responsible, more apparently dignified. But what I have found instead is that I am here to laugh with and laugh at, to be laughed with and laughed at, and that my seeming disorder speaks of an invisible hierarchy of construction of my being that is not simple to see, and quite easy to misinterpret.

I suspect that as we all move towards God, our distinctly personal charism as saints, the sort of thing that marks the character of one saint distinctly, as opposed to the virtues which all saints must possess, is precisely the thing about yourself that you have the most reservations about that God most cherishes about you, and He will see to it that it will be brought out of you, if you can only surrender the image of what your sanctity should look like.

You are not Theresa of Avila, you are not Augustine of Hippo, you are not Maximillian Kolbe and you're not Catherine of Siena. You are who you are, and God will draw the distinct story of sanctity that He intends for you based on who you are. You are loved and longed for by the perfect and totally self-sufficient eternal creator of all for reasons as varied as your internal uniqueness of soul to the way your toes are shaped, and He will bring more

of yourself out of you than you thought possible. So be impatient with asking Him to sanctify you, and prepare for life to cease being quiet for quite some time.

# What is the key to prayer?

*David*

Go, seek Him where you think you can find Him, and see if you find Him. And you may find Him, and be satisfied, and then think there are further steps to be taken. All I can guarantee is that if you give yourself totally to Him without conditions, He will make you uncomfortable, but He will always treat you with compassion and grace, and prove that your trust in Him is well-founded. So pray, and seek. Worry more about specific prayers or devotions after you have set aside time to pray, and set minimums, but know that life can interfere and that forgetfulness is not intentional neglect. Seek in the first place that comes to mind to go to look for Him. Then figure out the rest as you go. If you can pray "Jesus, I trust in you, I give myself totally to you, send further instructions as they become relevant" and mean it, then you will be fine. You will probably have to at some point give up things you, consciously or not, hold back from Him by name over time, but for now, it is enough to give yourself as a whole to Him, trust Him and let Him direct you where to go.



# When is a time that you felt a saint was seeking your attention?

*Ellen*

I teach at a local Catholic school in Allentown, Pennsylvania. When I drive to the school in the morning, I often pray at least a decade of the rosary in the car. I don't remember the exact reason I had asked St. Kateri Tekakwitha for her intercession, perhaps for a medical test, but I often do when I need extra courage. She is a good saint if you are facing some trial or tribulation.

During the morning at school I would often greet the students at the front door as they entered the school. We have a very diverse student population. That particular morning at least five of the girls that I greeted, wore their hair in two long braids framing their face just as the Lily of the Mohawks. Tears welled up in my eyes as I smiled at the children entering the school. I know she was helping me that day, and I felt as though I could face anything.

# Does the hope of Heaven inspire you?

*Jon*

I had grown up in non-denominational churches my entire life and never truly faced the daunting question, "Why do I believe what I believe?" I became annoyed and distraught with the amount of ignorance by the professing Christians I knew and the disregard for anyone willing to answer my questions. I was hurt. What I grew up loving seemingly didn't want me around, or at least didn't like that I had questions. Not to say I was always perfect about it or an innocent figure by any means. I am just as much a sinner as the next. Seeing what Atheism had to offer with its nihilism and secularism, I couldn't logically denounce my faith, yet I couldn't stand confidently in my faith either.

I cried out to God that I just want Him. I didn't care where it took me, I just couldn't stand not knowing where He was. It was then I began exploring denominations of the Faith and found that there was one that claimed a very real presence of God. Call it blissful ignorance, but I never knew that there was another way to read John 6. Granted, it is not something talked about a lot in the churches I grew up in. I asked God to take me to Him, next I found myself at home.

# What about Catholicism is attractive to young people today?

*Kyle*

People of all ages, but especially today are suffering the effects of Sin, Rationalism, "Enlightenment", Humanism, the Sexual Revolution, Scientism, and the relaxing of traditional morality.

People think, "I can do whatever I want, or whatever makes me 'happy,'" and that nothing bad will come from our actions. However, that logic is proven false by the decline in mental health, fracturing of society into polarizing groups, a lack of forgiveness, and overall a general increased stress and sense of feeling lost. I have heard so many people in my college say that they are simultaneously always being around people, but yet alone.

However, there is a cure: the Church. In the Church, we know that new is not always better, and we need to look back to study times and people before, because they have so much to teach us. The Church knows that having no guardrails on what you can and should do leads to a sense of freedom initially, that actually is or at least leads to slavery to sinful, harmful actions that won't make you "happy," but utterly empty and barren. The true, unadulterated joy that leading a good life leads is attractive to people.

Lastly, I feel the Church gives a level of grace for our fallen nature that the world disagrees with because the world preaches we are good or can help

ourselves, but the Church knows that we are nothing without Him who gives us life and lives in us through His Spirit.

# What makes you sure of God's existence?

*Amelia*

It is harder to ignore the existence of God than to acknowledge it. The Bible says the reality of God is all around us. "For what can be known about God is evidence to them because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse." (Romans 1:19-20) The presence of God is seen from the dawning of a new day to the setting of the sun. Each new day brings the guarantee that God is present, and He is real. The rising of the sun reminds us that this planet we live on is moving. It is spinning. Yet, it remains on its path in the middle of a vast void of space. It has no string, no chains, and nothing to hold it in place. However, it remains steady. It is not too far from the sun where we would freeze, but not too close that would cause us to burn up. It hangs in perfect harmony with what we need as human beings to flourish and live.

I have been blessed to travel across this great and beautiful country, along with several other countries in the world. I have seen the heights of some of the greatest mountains, walked along some of the most breathtaking beaches, stood among gorgeous canyons, and witnessed the fiery eruption of volcanoes. There is no solid explanation for all of it except God.

More importantly, I know God exists because I have seen Him. I have felt Him. I have heard Him, and I have experienced Him. I have seen Him in the beauty of creation and the eyes of a child. I have felt Him in the worst

and most fearful times of my life and during my highest triumphs. I have heard Him through the words of Sacred Scripture, the voice of a friend, the whisper in the wind, or the song of a bird. I have experienced Him every day.

# When is a time that you felt a saint was seeking your attention?

*Rose*

On November 15, 1988, I was a married woman with a budding relationship with God. At an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting a few weeks earlier, I had met a woman named Lori who said I should read St. Therese's autobiography, *Story of a Soul*. I knew Lori was a devout Catholic; I was raised sort-of Presbyterian but had never understood Christ. I ordered the book, mainly to be able to tell Lori I didn't need this Catholic nonsense.

But St. Therese had other plans. The day the book arrived, my husband brought home a dozen roses. I remembered Lori had said, "If you ask her for roses, she'll bring them." It turned out that Lori had asked.

That weekend I read the book through, almost without putting it down. Night brought intense religious dreams. When I finished, I knew my life had to change. Of course, I wouldn't become Catholic, I thought—that would be ridiculous. But I knew God was leading me somewhere new.

Soon after, driving up Interstate 270 toward Damascus, Maryland, I pondered how many people like Therese it would take to save the whole human race. Maybe 4 or 5, I thought.

And then it hit me: "It would only take one."

It was as if I had clutched Therese's hand, who took my hand and gently put it in the hands of Christ. As if she had said, "It's not me, sweetheart, it's Jesus."



# Why should a modern person believe in God?

*Anonymous*

A modern person must keep believing in God because His great love for us never fails in spite of our sinfulness. God in His goodness keeps manifesting His acts of mercy and compassion. God's attention to us is constant, so modern man must never stop responding to His call. Modern man must keep the faith and always discern the ever loving presence of God. The goodness of God in our modern situation is overflowing and what modern man can do is to demonstrate this in faith.

# Why do you care about the Eucharist?

*Paul*

The term “Eucharist” originates from the Greek word eucharistia, meaning thanksgiving. Every time I receive the Holy Eucharist I am reminded of God’s endless blessings. I give thanks that I, a sinner who is unworthy to receive my Risen Lord and Savior; by God’s grace and mercy He allows me to receive the Bread of Angels, The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. Now, that is something to humbly be thankful for.

If we truly understand the power, strength and grace of the Holy Eucharist we would literally crawl to receive our Savior. If we truly understand the power, strength and grace every Catholic church would be so full not everyone would be able to fit into it. If we truly understand the power, strength and grace we receive we would go forth to transform our broken and sinful world. We would truly be the hands and feet of our Savior, Jesus Christ. How sad it is that many Catholics do not believe that the holy Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

**These scriptures tell us the power and importance of the Holy Eucharist:**

“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:53-56)

“And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on

until the kingdom of God comes.” And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” (Luke 22:17-19)

We hope, through our stories, you sense the vast graces helping ordinary Christians persevere in their lives of crosses. Now, it is time to live your story.

May God bless you forever!

