



Finding God

Our Response to God's Gifts

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3-MINUTE RETREAT

Growing Our Faith

Whether or not you have a green thumb, we all know that plants need tending. Just like humans,

plants need water and sunlight for health and growth. Some plants do better in a particular window, while others don't seem to care. Nurturing plants is a joy for some and a discipline for others. Nurturing our faith can be like that too.



Try this. Imagine yourself in a park. Observe the ways the various plants and shrubs are tended—water, mulch, pruning. Now think about your faith. What do you need at this time to nurture it? Ask Jesus for help. Thank him for the gift of faith and the grace to nurture it in yourself and others. ■

For a daily online 3-Minute Retreat, go to www.3MinuteRetreat.com

Helping Children Develop Their Gifts

A toddler becomes fascinated with musical sounds. A four-year-old spends hours absorbed in art projects. A kindergartner starts to write her own stories. A second grader shows some athletic talent and a taste for competition.



Watching our children develop their gifts and talents is one of our great joys as parents. As we raise our children, we delight in what they find as they awaken to the riches and possibilities of life. But we also face questions and challenges in this area. How can we recognize these emerging gifts? When does an interest become a sign of a special talent? How can we support the development of our children's gifts?

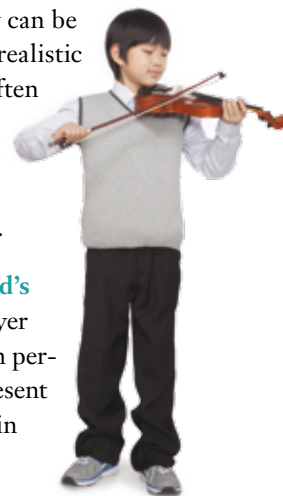
Here are some suggestions:

Expose children to a range of stimuli and experiences. Most of us do this as a matter of course. We read books to them, play music, give them art supplies, and surround them with toys that combine fun with a certain degree of challenge. As they get older, we take them to new places where they can learn new things.

Be alert for special interests. Most children will eventually show an interest in one or two areas. Child-development experts say that the notion of the “globally gifted” child is largely a myth. Some children (not all) will develop an intense interest in music, art, numbers, writing, or other creative fields. This can indicate a special talent.

Challenge—but be realistic. Children develop their skills when adults set high standards, but they can be demoralized by unrealistic expectations. It's often hard for parents to strike a balance. Pray for wisdom and understanding.

Pray for your child's development. Prayer helps keep things in perspective. God is present in your family and in your child's life. †



Jim Manney lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He is the author of *A Simple, Life-Changing Prayer* (Loyola Press, 2011).

Like a Little Child

“Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

—Matthew 18:3

When I was young, Christ’s instruction to “become like little children” seemed like one of the strangest of his teachings. The last thing I wanted to do was to behave like a little child. I ached to fit in with my older siblings. I was restless to grow up and enter that tantalizing place called “the real world.”

But, increasingly, his words make sense to me.

One morning, when my oldest child was five, he and I were in his bedroom—making the bed, chatting about kindergarten, planning the day.

“Mom,” he said, his voice suddenly grave. “Sometimes my heart feels white and lovely like Christmas. Sometimes it feels heavy and dark. What can I do about the dark feelings?”



I told him Christ forgives us, making our hearts beautiful again. I asked him if he wanted to ask for forgiveness and peace. He did.

“I feel different,” he said afterward. “All better.”

That kind of faith—that we are fully loved and can be reconciled with God—is indeed the realm of those who are trusting, open, unencumbered, childlike.

What could “becoming like a little child” mean for you? ■

Jennifer Grant is the author of *Wholehearted Living: Five-Minute Retreats for Modern Moms* (Loyola Press, 2014). She is the mother of four.

FOLLOW YOUR NOSE

Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in his hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers, and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.

—1 SAMUEL 16:13

Catholics use holy oils to anoint or bless people. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, for example, Chrism is used to seal a person with the Holy Spirit—to mark him or her as a servant of God, belonging totally to God.

Our Hebrew ancestors used oil to anoint kings and to show that a person was favored. But why did they use oil, and not, say, water or clay?

In ancient Israel, life could be harsh. The sense of smell was important for survival. People with a good nose were highly regarded. They could detect the stench of decay and disease—and go somewhere else. Conversely, they could detect places with pleasant natural aromas that said, “Life thrives here!” It made sense, then, that fragrant, fresh-pressed oils were used to “mark” such people as leaders. The scent reminded them to guide their people to places that nurtured life.

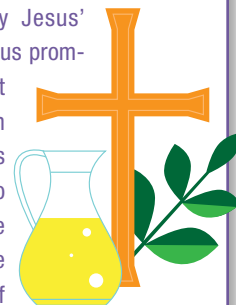


So, the next time you encounter good-smelling oil—either in church or around a table with friends—inhale deeply. Let its spirit rush upon you. Remember your calling to nurture God’s people, to lead them away from death, toward life. ■

Claire Miller Colombo lives, writes, and teaches in Austin, Texas. She is the editor of *Seasons of Family and Faith* magazine.

The Aroma of CHRIST

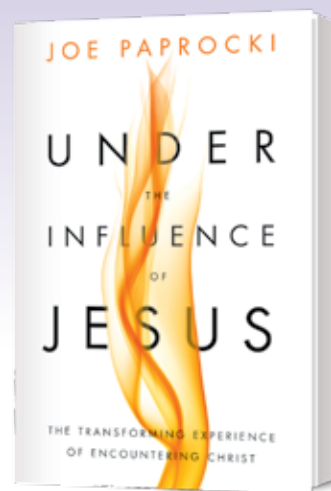
THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDED UPON JESUS AT HIS BAPTISM BY JOHN IN THE JORDAN. But the fullness of the Spirit was not something that would remain uniquely Jesus’ own. Rather, Jesus promised that the Spirit would flow within whoever believes in him. Those who believe and were baptized receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. With the anointing of perfumed oil—the sweet fragrance of chrism—Christians are consecrated so that their lives give off the aroma of Christ. ■



An Encounter with Christ

In *Under the Influence of Jesus*, best-selling author Joe Paprocki explains complex spiritual concepts with engaging discussion so that “everyday” Catholics can integrate and articulate their faith and live the Gospel in a way that is simple, compelling, contemporary, liberating, and life-changing. ■

Under the Influence of Jesus (Loyola Press, 2014)



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Saint
**CATHERINE
OF BOLOGNA**
(1413–1463)



Art work by
Saint Catherine
of Bologna,
*Maria und das
Jesuskind mit
Frucht.*

In exhorting her sisters to trust
in God, Catherine told them
“to believe that alone we will
never be able to do something
truly good.”

In *Saints and Feast Days* (Loyola
Press, 2004), **the Sisters of Notre
Dame** provide an enjoyable way to
learn about the saints for children
of all ages.

Let the Children Come to Me

Anna received a troubling call from her pastor. “I just don’t think it will be possible, Anna.” Father began with hesitation. “With Charlie’s Down syndrome, I don’t think he is able to understand the meaning of receiving the Eucharist.” Deeply saddened, Anna struggled with the significance of his words.

She arranged a meeting with Father. On the way, Anna stopped by the store to get treats to keep Charlie occupied. After settling Charlie down with his sack of treats, Anna spoke to Father about Charlie’s desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. She glanced nervously in Charlie’s direction as she heard the unmistakable sound of torn paper.

Charlie had smoothed out his brown paper sack and carefully poured his candy and chips onto it. With a loud snap, the pop can opened. Charlie rose to his feet and bounced over to Father and his mom.

“All persons with disabilities have the capacity to proclaim the Gospel and to be living witnesses to its truth within the community of faith and offer valuable gifts.”

*National Directory
for Catechesis #49*

He spread open his hands, extending an invi-

tation. “The party is ready for you!” Over chips and soda, Father asked Charlie about the Eucharist. Charlie’s eyes lit up, “Jesus in my heart. Jesus in my heart.” Father was convinced of Charlie’s readiness.

Charlie received the Eucharist and went on to become an altar server. He was loved by all at Mass for his trademark “Good job, Father” and pat on the back following the homily.

On the day of his Confirmation—strong in faith, experienced in service, and recognized for his contribution to the parish—Charlie carried the procession cross, leading to the altar all who were to be confirmed.

Charlie’s story always reminds me that the Eucharist is for all of us, regardless of ability. ■

Dorothy Coughlin is the Director of the Office for People with Disabilities for the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon. To learn more, please visit the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (www.ncpd.org).



Praying with Paintbrushes

Bob Gilroy has led arts-based Ignatian retreats around the country. He joined the Jesuits in 1966 after studying art as an undergrad and training in art therapy.

“It was a natural bridge between [St.] Ignatius’s emphasis on the use of imagination and taking a step further and actually making what I saw in my imagination.”

The nonverbal medium of art, Gilroy says, is a powerful tool to help others draw deeper into their relationship with God.

“It gives people a language or tool to grow closer to God,” Gilroy says. “When you take the risk to go beyond what you know and

to trust that God’s going to give you the color, the texture, the lines, the words that will help an image grow, it will reveal even more of who God is.”

Many people are surprised that they can use art to pray, Gilroy says.

“That’s one of the greatest things I experienced was the surprise they discover when this actually helps them experience God in a simple but extraordinary way,” he said.

Gilroy believes that art allows people to be in a place where they savor each moment, as St. Ignatius advised, in a sort of suspended childhood play. And part of the challenge is to take a risk, put pen to paper, and begin. ■

This excerpt is from **Arts and Faith**, a series from Loyola Press that celebrates your creative expressions of faith.





Why is it so important for those receiving Confirmation to know the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit?



Five Things I Learned From ...

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

The Tonight Show

It's hard to miss Jimmy Fallon's sense of glee and delight on *The Tonight Show*. The 39-year-old funny man not only cracks me up, but he also makes me think about faith.

1. Joy. Whether he's "mom dancing" or playing charades, Fallon's joy comes off in spades.

2. Hard work. After Fallon left *Saturday Night Live*, he faltered on the movie scene. But he kept at it. Perseverance is always worth it.

3. Humility. At *The Tonight Show*'s premiere, Fallon asked the audience for help. Pope Francis made the same request. I'm eager to ask for help when I need it.



4. Fun. More than anything, Fallon has fun. I bring this playfulness and good-natured humor to those around me.

5. Presence. Fallon gives his guests his full presence, helping them shine. I'm at my best when I help others. ■

Rosemary Lane manages social media at Loyola Press. You can follow her on the [Loyola Press Facebook](#) page.

a: Most of us, adults and children alike, are familiar with playing *Where's Waldo?*—searching through an illustration to locate Waldo and his red-and-white striped shirt, glasses, and hat in the midst of a huge crowd of people. It sure would help if we were given some clues to help us recognize Waldo's presence. In a similar way, it can be very difficult for us to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. That's because the Holy Spirit is invisible, and it's not easy to believe in something you cannot see. The Holy Spirit, however, can be recognized by the effects he has on the lives of people.

The Holy Spirit is truly present in our daily lives

In Confirmation, we receive the grace needed to recognize the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit in ourselves and in others and to live a life transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit are the "residue" of the presence of God in our lives. The

more we practice wisdom, understanding, counsel (right judgment), knowledge, courage, piety (reverence), and Fear of the Lord (wonder and awe)—the Gifts of the Holy Spirit—along with charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity—the Fruits of the Holy Spirit—the better able we are to conclude that the Holy Spirit is truly present in our daily lives. ■

Joe Paprocki is the best-selling author of [Under the Influence of Jesus](#) (Loyola Press, 2014).



the CHURCH of MERCY

Let us try asking ourselves: Am I open to the action of the Holy Spirit? Do I pray to him to give me illumination, to make me more sensitive to God's things? This is a prayer we must pray every day: "Holy Spirit, make my heart open to the word of God, make my heart open to goodness, make my heart open to the beauty of God every day." ■

GENERAL AUDIENCE OF POPE FRANCIS, MAY 15, 2013

You can read more of Pope Francis's vision of the Church in [The Church of Mercy](#) (Loyola Press, 2014).