



Finding God[®]

Our Response to God's Gifts

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3 MINUTE RETREAT

Discernment

Discernment is a gift from the Holy Spirit that allows us to follow God and turn from whatever leads us away from God.

Discernment is more than simple common sense and requires more than intelligence and reason. Discernment, Pope Francis says, is a “spiritual endowment” that must be cultivated through prayer.

Sit in a relaxed, prayerful position. Saint Ignatius of Loyola tells us that our one sole purpose is to love, serve, and praise God. Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can do this. Ask for the grace to do what is shown to you. How might you live to serve God and others? Close by praying Amen. ■



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

Left Foot, Right Foot

Left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot, my father and I swayed back and forth to the music at the reception for my marriage to my husband, Michael. My eyes could see the depth of his blue eyes and how they sparkled in the joy only a parent might feel. On the edges of my sight, I saw my brothers spotting and reinforcing his body, which was by this time badly beaten and worn by cancer. He smiled. He told jokes to bring forth some last moments of laughter on my face. He cherished. I savored. Standing face-to-face, I felt the love of my father. Dad encouraged and fought for not only the present but also for a family and a community that lived longer than his physical life.

A family grounded in prayer that smiles into the future, watching the new generations grow and be nurtured, gives bloom to hope. My dad always went out of his way not only to see how his neighbors, especially those different than us, lived, but also to immerse our family in a pleasant discomfort that brought a new way of seeing and even delight. We shared stories as a sign of reverence and respect. In true Louisiana fashion, sometimes my dad would even pick up his guitar to sing a song. My husband and I encourage our daughters to be open to listening to stories and all the difference in our rich culture.

“Courageous, Considerate, and Compassionate”—these words written on his gravestone embody not only his passion to live for service to God, his



family, and his community, but also to the world of his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot, we can all walk into a world big enough and full of joy even in the midst of suffering, disease, and death because we believe in Christ who lives. †

Stephanie Clouatre Davis, mother to Emma and Abby and wife to Michael, lives in Covington, Louisiana.



MICROSHIFTS

MicroShifts

Anyone who has children will tell you that a year is not a very long time. Children are born, and then they grow up. Fast. One day you look across the holiday table and that baby you cuddled in your arms, that son who at the age of three sat by a window watching snow fall, is all grown up and has a family of his own. . . .

But no matter where you are in the cycle of life, you can make small changes to help you appreciate the time you have left. Small individual changes can keep anxiety at bay, improve your sleep, help you think smarter and love better. And when combined with the small shifts of others, your seemingly minor adjustments can ultimately calm and change our harried world for the better. As the author Howard Zinn wrote, "We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world." ■

Excerpt from *MicroShifts: Transforming Your Life One Step at a Time* by Gary Jansen (Loyola Press, 2019).



Spiritual Exercises for the Family

Saint Ignatius of Loyola taught a way of praying with Scripture called imaginative contemplation, in which you place yourself in the Gospel scene as if you were a participant in the event. The goal is to develop a deeper friendship with Jesus.

In this issue, I invite you to contemplate the mystery of God becoming human.

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

—Luke 2:15–19

Read. Read the Scripture passage several times so that you know the story well enough to share it with another person.

Imagine. Picture yourself in the scene. Where are you and what are you doing? Can you see Joseph and Mary with Je-

sus? Do you see the shepherds? Are you standing by Joseph or Mary? By one of the shepherds? Are you holding Jesus?

Notice. Watch and listen as the scene unfolds. Watch as the shepherds gather around trying to get a peek at the infant. Watch as Mary hears the words of the shepherds and ponders them in her heart.



Respond. What does it mean to you that God became human? Have you ever had a moment where you pondered things in your heart as you watched your children?

Rest. Let God speak to you about what you saw, heard, and felt.

Reflect. What did you learn about Jesus, God, or yourself? What did God teach you about your children? How is God inviting you to understand your own call to holiness through Jesus and his human family? ■

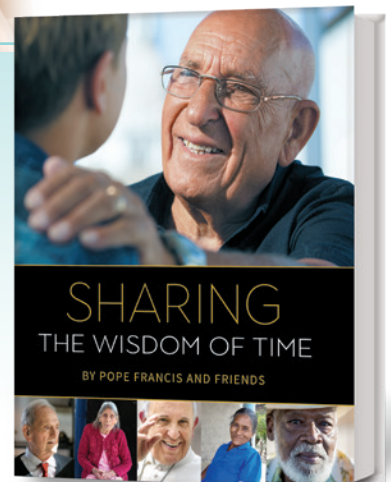
Becky Eldredge is a wife, mother, and spiritual director and the author of the book *Busy Lives & Restless Souls* (Loyola Press 2017).



Share the Wisdom

Sharing the Wisdom of Time is a collection of stories about elders from around the world. From over 30 countries, elders share their wisdom carved from lifetimes of experience. Every story is a testament to the power of faith, perseverance, human resilience, and love. ■

Sharing the Wisdom of Time by Pope Francis and Friends. (Loyola Press, 2019). Visit www.SharingWisdomofTime.com to learn more about the book.



Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts

A newsletter for parents and families by Loyola Press

Contributors: Bob Burnham, OFS; Stephanie Clouatre-Davis; Gary Jansen; Becky Eldredge; Amanda Cook; Joe Paprocki; Margaret Felice; James Holzhauser-Chuckas, ObsB

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A PERSON FOR OTHERS

The Meaning of Faith

I've always had a hands-on experience with my faith. My mom was the youth minister of the parish where I grew up, and I was involved with the youth group. I participated in different service events and volunteered for many different charities. Every summer I looked forward to my parish's mission trip to Greenwood, Mississippi. After I went to the 2017 World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland, I knew I wanted to expand my service and travel. I've always been interested in other cultures and how they practice their faith. This past summer, I was able to accompany my cousin on a mission trip to Zambia. This trip taught me more about my relationship with God than all my years in faith formation classes.

I served at a camp for vulnerable children in Lusaka, the capital and largest city in Zambia. These kids lived in extreme poverty; each had lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS, which had hit Zambia hard. (Zambia continues to have one of the lowest life expectancy rates in the world.) I was responsible for a group of 10 girls between the ages of 8 and 12. I made sure they were fed two meals a day, that their education was paid for by sponsors in the U.S., and that they visited doctors.

Faith was a matter of survival for these girls. They prayed with their whole heart, eyes squeezed shut, hands clenched together for dear life. I was inspired to see how strong their relationship with God was despite their circumstances. Each girl was filled with joy and happiness; they couldn't wait to see each other every day and their friendship seemed unbreakable. These girls taught me

what faith is really about: building and nurturing our relationship with God, who is our hope.

When I returned home, I discovered that my own faith was strengthened and refreshed. ■

Amanda Cook is a freshman at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.



A Family for Others

The Dignity of Work

Joyce Namate Malunda and her two daughters live in Mongu, Zambia. She had a small farm but couldn't grow enough food to feed her family. Joyce joined a Catholic Relief Services-supported community savings group in her village. Joyce borrowed money to open a small grocery shop in the local market. She earned enough money to buy good food and pay for her daughters' education.

Materials: Coloring supplies

Directions: Distribute coloring supplies and invite children to draw a picture of themselves that displays one of their talents or shows them doing the job they would like to do when they grow up.

Family Discussion: Why is it important that Joyce has meaningful work? What work do parents find most meaningful and why? ■

Activity adapted from "The Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers Lesson Plan: Zambia" by Catholic Relief Services.



Does meekness mean I let myself be bullied?

a: *We don't use the word meek too often nowadays and, unfortunately, when we do, it carries the connotation*

of weakness. In Scripture, however, meekness is not seen as weakness and has no affinity for cowards. Rather, it is a quiet strength acquired through self-discipline. Jesus was certainly no wimp. As a carpenter, he would be the equivalent of a modern-day construction worker, hard hat and all. And when he calls himself the “good shepherd”

(John 10:11), we need to recall that in those days a shepherd was the equivalent of a cowboy.



Smart hockey players will tell you that the best way to give payback for a cheap hit is to score a goal and win the game rather than responding with a cheap shot of your own and ending up in the penalty box. In fact, there is a saying that goes, “If you think meek

is weak, try being meek for a week.” To teach your children to be meek is to teach them to harness their strength and power and to be disciplined in order to strive for the greater good rather than settling for an impulsive response that they’ll regret. ■

Joe Paprocki is national consultant for faith formation for Loyola Press and author of *Living the Sacraments* (Loyola Press, 2018).

5 THINGS

Five Things I Learned From . . .

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

Teaching the Recorder

I have found more holiness in teaching the recorder—that little plastic tube that has enlivened households for generations—than you might think.

- 1. Immediacy.** Students can start making music in their first lesson. Similarly, you don't have to wait to be holy.
- 2. Accessibility.** You don't need wealth to learn about music with this instrument. We don't need money or “stuff” to live a holy life, either.
- 3. Growth.** Risk-taking helps students grow, just as holiness sometimes takes us out of our comfort zone.
- 4. Acceptance.** If you wait until you're perfect, you'll never play. Accepting where we are in our progress helps us dive right into holiness too.
- 5. Humility.** To improve, you have to be honest about your musical mistakes. We grow more holy when we do the same in life. ■



Margaret Felice is a singer, writer, and educator in Boston. She wrote *2019: A Book of Grace-Filled Days* for Loyola Press.

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A Young Church

A Teen Who Shaped Youth Ministry

Oliver Pacheco grew up in his parish. He was involved with the Mexican Folkloric Dance Group and attended religious education classes, but when it came time for Oliver to be confirmed, the parish had lost its youth minister and the program had been discontinued. Before a new youth minister was named, Oliver was among a couple of teenagers who stayed around and committed to helping the youth minister return to parish life. “Youth minis-

try is an important part of the parish because it gives us a place to go and be ourselves and grow in faith.” Oliver regularly attended youth group, even



when he was the only one who showed up. Oliver kept with it.

Over the years, Oliver invited other teens to youth group, welcomed them, and helped the

youth minister by offering ideas and being a constant presence. Oliver is

now a junior in high school and has watched the youth ministry turn into a vibrant parish ministry that has dozens of participants and programs. Oliver serves as the president of the youth council, an advisory body of teens who, like Oliver, followed his example and want to be part of the process of keeping youth ministry an important part of parish life. ■

James Holzhauser-Chuckas, ObSB, is the regional director for youth ministry in the Evanston and Skokie region of the Archdiocese of Chicago and is an Oblate of the Benedictine Order.