



Finding God

Our Response to God's Gifts

WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 2: **When bad news isn't**
Growth, transformation, and life

Page 3: **Thank God for Mercy**
"I Have Greatly Sinned"

Page 4: **Does "fear of the Lord"**
mean to "be afraid" of God?

Don't Let Fear Stop Your Child

It was 9 p.m., and my ninth grader asked if I would read her personal narrative. I tried to hide my excitement. Editor-mom's red pen was ready. I began reading and then stopped cold. She had, in great detail, described the terror she had experienced standing in front of her classmates, giving her "Star of the Week" presentation way back in second grade. She told honestly of her fear and fumbling, shyness and shame.



over fear. Scripture consistently details the lives of people who "saw it through" as God protected and provided.

Model asking for advice. I want my daughter to see that I can ask for help to move past obstacles. I ask my daughter for advice about my own problems, and I've started to openly pray for intercession, not just when someone is sitting on my last nerve.

Listen with love. I try to give tools, not a "way out." Part of this is listening. Jesus was a great listener. He listened to inconvenient people at inconvenient times. I am reminded of the story of the centurion who came to ask Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus heard the man, marveled, responded with care, and healed.

I know my "star of the week" will shine through the darkness. Her mom, and her faith, will see to that. †

Joellyn Ciccirelli is director of curricula development at Loyola Press. A former teacher, she is the proud mother of a now 15-year-old daughter and a 10-year-old son.

It was hard for me to take in. She had written her pain, and this was not a time for proofreader's marks. The narrative ended triumphantly, but the idea left me haunted.

How can I help this talented girl see that nothing is so dire that it can't be overcome? How do I instill faith and hope? Here are some ideas that I've been trying.

See your child through. I try to be sure that my daughter follows through to the end. Then we talk about whether or not the experience warranted the "fear energy" she put in. We come back on these often-positive "self-checks" as new situations arise. The Mass also gives us occasion to discuss examples of triumph



3-Minute Retreat

A peaceful presence

We face many fears in our lives, not the least of which is the fear of facing up to all the bills that have come due as a result of our holiday shopping! The truth is, everyday fears like this can prevent us from discovering and experiencing God's peaceful presence in our midst. Although the holidays are behind us, the message of the Incarnation remains with us each day. We are not alone; God is with us.

Set aside some time today to place yourself in God's presence. Breathe deeply and slowly, asking God to calm your fears with each breath. Share your fears with the Lord and ask him to give you the grace and fortitude you need to overcome them. Hear him say to you, "Have no fear." ■

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

Thrift Store Saints

Mighty Faith

The large, drunken man pounds a fist on the counter and rages at the diminutive, eighty-two-year-old clerk named Dorothy. "Tell the manager I want to see him! I'm not putting up with this no more . . . you people call yourselves Christians and don't give me shoes!"



I tug on the little lady's sleeve and whisper, "Should I call 911?"

She shakes her head at me and says calmly to the man, "Sir, I'm sorry you're upset. I only wish we could help, but shoes are in such short supply."

"I want a manager!"

She tries to reason with him, but drunken people lack those sorts of skills. Finally, she says, "How about if you come back tomorrow. I'm sure a manager will have time to see you then."

He breathes fumes into her face and shouts, "What's your name?"

"Oh." She waves her hand gently. "You'll never remember my name, sir. I'm nobody important anyway. You just come back tomorrow. I'm sure everything will work out."

To my utter astonishment, he gives up. Her unshakable kindness is too much for him. He grumbles and swears and waves his arms some more but in the end, he turns and shuffles his way out of the store. ■

Jane Knuth has volunteered at the St. Vincent de Paul thrift store in Kalamazoo, Michigan, for 15 years and is the author of [Thrift Store Saints](#) (Loyola Press, 2010).

When bad news isn't

People used to make their own sourdough bread by keeping back a little clump of the dough and using it as a starter for the next batch. A remnant of sourdough thus became the beginning of a whole new batch of bread.

When we are in transition, depending on how serious the breakdown is, we may feel as though almost every aspect of life has been disrupted. The old certainties, the old habits and comfort zones, have been dive-bombed. The old home, the old job, the old "me," may be almost gone. It may be time to ask, "What is the essential core of who I am that remains through all this upheaval?" This is an important question, because it is this remnant that will be the starter for the new stage of our growth.

The thing about this remnant, this core of being, is that we often don't discover it until the force of change has stripped away the outer layers of past certainties and securities.



And it isn't just about survival; it is about growth and transformation. The new you that comes through the blast of change will not be just a shadow of your former self, but truly a *new* you, with deeper layers of your personal potential exposed and invited to grow and flourish. For example, through apparent disaster you may discover skills you never knew you had. You may discover qualities that had never previously been called upon, such as resilience, patience, ingenuity, empathy with others going through similar upheavals, and even a sense of humor to laugh through the tears and glimpse the rainbow through the rain.

Can bad news ever be good news?

Yes it can! ■

Did You Know . . .

. . . the seeds of the eucalyptus tree in Australia can't germinate until they are exposed to the intense heat of a forest fire? So, too, there may be deep parts of ourselves that are activated only when the shallower layers are stripped away. ■

From Margaret Silf's latest book [The Other Side of Chaos](#). Margaret is a retreat director and author of numerous books, including [Compass Points](#) and [Inner Compass](#).

Adaptive Learning Kit

"All baptized persons with disabilities have a right to adequate catechesis and serve the means to develop a relationship with God."

—National Directory for Catechesis,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Adaptive First Eucharist Kit from Loyola Press helps children with autism and other special needs to participate fully in their faith. ■



Learn more at www.loyolapress.com/special-needs

Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts

A newsletter for parents and families by
Loyola Press

Contributors:

Joellyn Ciciarelli, Santiago Cortés-Sjöberg,
Vinita Hampton Wright, Jane Knuth,
Joe Paprocki, Denise Skomer

Art Credits:

iStockphoto.com, pages 1, 2, and 4
Thinkstock.com, pages 2, 3, and 4

To contact any of our writers, please
e-mail us at newsletter@loyolapress.com.

Scripture quotations are from the New
Revised Standard Version © 1989 Division of
Christian Education of the National Council of
Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and are used
by permission. All rights reserved.

The newsletter is published seven times a
year (including issues for Advent and Lent)
by Loyola Press.

LOYOLA PRESS.

A JESUIT MINISTRY

3441 North Ashland Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60657

www.loyolapress.com

For activities, quick tips, and other resources
to encourage faith-filled family living, visit
www.loyolapress.com/family-fun.

Web Number: W0096

Copyright © Loyola Press, 2012

All rights reserved. Materials may not be
reproduced in any form without permission
of the publisher.

"I Have Greatly Sinned"

Thank God for Mercy

Parents sometimes worry when things get a little too quiet. It usually means that the kids are probably up to no good, or they've already done something wrong and are now hiding in fear.



Children aren't the only ones who experience fear when they commit a wrong. We fear the consequences of our actions, including the possibility that we might face some kind of punishment or retribution.

In the same way, we might even fear offending God. However, the Mass quickly invites us to own up to our short-

comings without fear. Why? Because our admission of sins—in the Penitential Act during Mass—is done with the knowledge that God's love and mercy awaits us. In the new translation of the *Confiteor*, the familiar "I confess," we admit that we "have greatly sinned." We own up to our shortcomings, admitting that we have sinned "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." We admit guilt but are not shamed. Instead, we are redeemed by God's generous outpouring of mercy. It is this divine forgiveness and compassion that we are called to share with others, starting at home. ■

Master catechist Joe Paprocki is the author of the new *Your Role at Mass*, a companion booklet to the *Come and See DVD*.

For more information on the Roman Missal, Third Edition, visit www.loyolapress.com/romanmissal.

Nothing to Stop Us

Peter said to [Jesus] in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how (strong) the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him.

The evening news often features a story on some ordinary person who performed an extraordinary action. Although called "heroes" by friends and strangers alike, these people often don't see themselves as such. When asked why they did what we consider a heroic action, it is not uncommon to hear them say, "I really didn't think about it; It was the right thing to do." In other words, there was something that compelled them to act, to make a

split-second decision, and transform the situation for the good of others.

Parents know full well what often impels them to act: their love for their children. No matter the decision, big or small, or the time frame to make it, it is love that always comes first. So compelling is this love that, while perhaps not making uncertainty and fear disappear, it does overshadow them. Love calls us to act, unlike fear that makes us stand still (and maybe even sink). If such is the power of our



human love, how much more compelling is the love of Christ.

Assured of Jesus' constant companionship and ready hand, we can let his love be the guide in our lives at home, at work, in our communities, and in our world. We will still face the strong winds of fear, doubt, rejection, and even evil. Yet despite these and many other obstacles, we will act and transform our world, not because of an unconscious, split-second decision, but because we have been compelled by something very familiar to all parents: love. ■



Does “fear of the Lord” mean that we are to be afraid of God?

A: We are taught to have no fear and to be not afraid and then are told that “fear of the Lord” is a gift of the Holy Spirit. On the surface, this sounds like a contradiction. Let me explain. It is true that in the Bible we are told to have no fear and to be not afraid. Variations of those phrases appear literally dozens of times. The truth is, we have many things to fear in this world and in this day and age. The greatest human fear is, of course, death. Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, however, this fear is overcome because death has been overcome. Faith in the risen Christ tells us that, if God can overcome anything. Thus, with faith, we have nothing to fear.



“fear of the Lord” is a Gift of the Holy Spirit

When we speak of “fear of the Lord,” however, we are not talking so much about being afraid of God as we are warning against approaching God casually. Fear of the Lord, for those who live in Christ, means that we are to approach God with an awareness of his greatness and majesty. In other words, this fear of the Lord is an attitude of wonder and awe, and our approach to the Lord is one of reverence. While we are called to an intimate relationship with God, we are also reminded of God’s great “otherness” of which we are in awe. ■



Five Things I Learned From . . .

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

The Sandlot

To me, *The Sandlot* (rated PG) aligns with the sacraments—ways through which God enters our lives by the work of the Holy Spirit. Here are some ways this film shows how real life can mirror the sacraments:



1. *Baptism:* Benny inviting Smalls to play baseball with his ragtag yet winning baseball team
2. *Penance and Reconciliation:* The stepfather, who reaches out to forgive, talk, listen, and move forward with his son
3. *Eucharist:* Gathering together to feed and be fed—in this case, at the sandlot
4. *Confirmation:* The “fast-forward” end that shares how the boys take what they learn in childhood and use it to live good adult lives
5. *Anointing of the Sick:* The automatic response of the boys to help a friend in need as Scotty tries to retrieve the cherished “Babe Ruth” ball ■

Joellyn Cicciarelli is director of curricula development at [Loyola Press](http://LoyolaPress.com). As the mother of an avid 10-year-old baseball player, she has watched countless practices and games.

Family as a Spiritual Path

As a freshman in high school, my daughter is an active, highly dedicated student. She typically manages a hectic schedule with ease. That is until about a week before her first set of final exams. Peeking into her room, I found her sitting amid a jumble of papers. She looked up in tears and sniffed, “Now what do I do?” Without hesitation, I answered, “Now, you pray.” Together we prayed the Hail Mary for strength and asked the Holy Spirit for wisdom. Then amazingly, right in the middle of all that chaos,

we felt peace. My daughter’s nerves calmed and together we tackled some organizing and scheduling. Sure we could have accomplished the same jobs without the prayers, but in no way would we have felt the same sense of assurance and tranquility.

I have come to believe that teaching my children how to manage the business of life is important, but nothing beats teaching them how their faith should guide the work. Like the apostles being tossed on stormy seas, we all face ups and downs. But know-

ing Christ is next to us, with hand outstretched, makes everything bearable. ■

Denise Skomer is a writer and editor and cofounder of [Bound By Grace Press](http://BoundByGracePress.com). (BoundByGracePress.com)

