



Finding God

Our Response to God's Gifts

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Give God Your Best (and Let Him Do the Rest!)

As I entered into the third year of my youth ministry career at my home parish, St. Peter Claver in New Orleans, my life was forever changed: I became a "parent" to a teenage daughter.

The mother of a teenage girl active in youth ministry had passed away due to health complications. Her grandmother told me how much she appreciated the work we were doing. She then asked me, "Would you become my granddaughter's guardian?"



I paused for a second and said, "Of course!" I was filled with joy, which was immediately followed by fear. What the heck did I just do? I was only 24 years old at the time. How was I going to raise a teenage daughter when I was still going through young adulthood myself?

All I could do was trust God and give him my best effort. Here's how I managed my new role:

- **I remembered that I was not alone. (Isaiah 41:13)** God is always with us, and he provided a village of friends, extended family, and the parish to help us. *Where can you see God providing resources to assist you?*
- **I knew God would take care of us. (Matthew 6:26)** God was working through me to raise her, and I know that God takes care of his children. This is what got us through Hurricane Katrina, when we were moving from state to state until we could get home. *Where do you struggle to trust God in what is going on?*

Now, 16 years later, my "daughter" is engaged and living happily in Atlanta. We still talk and argue, but she knows that I always have her best interests in mind. †

Dr. Ansel Augustine has been in ministry for over 20 years. A member of the Loyola Press Speaker Corps, he has spoken at conferences around the country and has written various pieces related to ministry.

- **I prayed constantly. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)** Whenever we had a discussion or argument, or if we had to make a decision together, I prayed to discern God's will. *Where can you pray more in your own life as a parent?*



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MINUTE RETREAT

In God We Trust

The words "In God We Trust" first appeared on the two-cent coin during the Civil War. In 1938 they were stamped on all coins. President Eisenhower signed a law making "In God We Trust" the national motto in 1956, and in 1957 these words were printed on U.S. paper currency.

We can trust in God's providence to guide us through times of crisis. When you feel overwhelmed or threatened by life's many challenges, pause for a moment and repeat these words from Psalm 91: "My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust." Let these words flow naturally and effortlessly with each breath. Share your concerns and worries with the Lord, knowing that God cares for your well-being. ■



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



RANDOM MOMENTS

Nothing Is Perfect

Parenthood is stark proof that the fulfilling and the frustrating dwell very close to each other, often inhabiting the same space.

At times, being a mom has made my soul soar; at other times, it has brought me to my knees. It has made me think that I am blessed and privileged to do the glorious job of raising another person, and it has made me feel that some evil fairy has cursed me to a life in which I cannot spend one minute answering an email without having to break up a heated dispute over



a toy train. And sometimes these feelings follow so closely on the heels of each other that I feel slightly disoriented or crazy, as if I'm a woman who doesn't even know her own mind anymore.

If anything, this acceptance that life will hold both the good and the bad, sometimes all at once, is a worldview that we must grow into if we want to have more than a kindergartner's-eye view of the universe. Nothing out there, aside from God, is perfect all the time. ■

Excerpt from *Random MOMents of Grace: Experiencing God in the Adventures of Motherhood* by **Ginny Kubitz Moyer** (Loyola Press, 2013).

LIVING OUR FAITH | Leading a Heroic Life

Everyone wants to feel that their lives have meaning. We want to know that somehow, in some way, we are making a positive contribution to the world. We want to know that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. In short, we want to be heroes.

Jesus Christ shows us what a hero is. Time and again, he set aside his own needs to care for the needs of others. And his ultimate act of selfless love was, of course, dying on the Cross so that our sins may be forgiven. The Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—help us put aside our own needs so we can make a positive difference in the lives of others. In Baptism, we receive sanctifying grace that makes us like Christ. In Confirmation, we are appointed to carry out Christ's mission. In the Eucharist, we are sustained in this mission by Christ's Body and Blood.



The call to follow Christ is nothing less than heroic. We have been given a mission from Christ himself to be his disciples. Parents and guardians have the occasion every day to live a heroic life by helping their children grow



in faith.

Family Activity. Share a special meal together during the next week. Before eating, remember to pray a prayer of thanks to God.

Faith on the Go. Ask one another: *How does receiving the Eucharist help you live as Jesus' disciple?*

Family Prayer. *Thank you, God, for the gift of the Eucharist. May it strengthen us to live as your disciples.* ■

For more on living the faith with your family, visit www.findinggod.com/family.



Trust in God

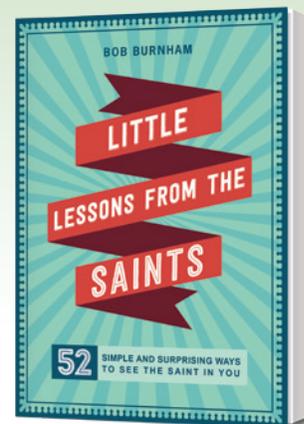
“He who trusts in himself is lost. He who trusts in God can do all things.”

—SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI (1696–1787)

Called to Be Saints

In *Little Lessons from the Saints*, Bob Burnham skips the typical biographies of saints and offers instead brief but powerful spiritual lessons from 52 different saints, each followed by a short meditation. Burnham succeeds in offering simple ways to apply each saint's particular charism to our own lives. Inspiring and practical, *Little Lessons from the Saints* helps us realize that we, too, are called to be saints. ■

Little Lessons from the Saints by Bob Burnham (Loyola Press, 2017)



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Contributors: Bob Burnham, OFS; Dr. Ansel Augustine; Ginny Kubitz Moyer; Joe Paprocki; Amara Barnes; Tom McGrath

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

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For activities, quick tips, and other resources to encourage faith-filled family living, visit <http://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/family>.

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CONSERVATION YIELDS GREATER HARVESTS

Suzy Razafindrafara (pronounced *Rahzah-feen-drah-far-ah*) is a farmer in Madagascar, an island off the coast of Africa.

A few years ago, Suzy learned a new way to plant rice that used less water and fewer seeds. The idea sounded crazy at first: how could you possibly grow more rice using less water and seeds? Her neighbors laughed at her for trying it. But when her fields produced 1.5 times more rice than theirs did, no one laughed anymore. Instead, people in the village asked her to teach them the new method too. This new way of



planting requires more work. Suzy and other farmers used to flood their fields to get rid of the weeds, but they learned that this damages the roots of the rice plants. It also wastes water. So now they weed by hand, a task that takes four people two whole days to complete. But the extra work is worth it. Before Suzy learned this new way of planting rice, her family was only able to grow enough rice to provide meals for about 10 months. Now the rice crop lasts the whole year.

The family often has extra rice to sell, which helps Suzy pay for her children's education. Now every farmer in Suzy's village is using this new planting method, and they are conserving precious resources like water and seeds while producing greater harvests.



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Family Activity

As a family, discuss some or all of the following questions:

- **How did Suzy and her family care for creation?** We believe that God created the world and all living things.



God invites us to care for all of his creation, no matter how big or small.

- **How does caring for the earth and caring for the community work together in this story?** People who depend directly on creation for their food are vulnerable to natural disasters such as climate change.
- **How can your family be good stewards of creation like Suzy?** A "steward" of creation is someone who is a caretaker of the environment and all created things.



Family Prayer

Loving God,

You have given us a beautiful home and have asked us to care for it.

Help us remember that we are the earth's caretakers and be respectful and loving to all elements of your creation.

We ask this in your name.

Amen.

Activity and prayer are adapted from "Care for God's Creation Lesson Plan: Madagascar" by [Catholic Relief Services](http://www.crs.org). For more information on how you can help families who live in poverty around the world thrive, please visit www.crs.org.



“Fear of the Lord” is a Gift of the Holy Spirit. Why should I be afraid of God?

a: *In The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy and her companions tremble as they*

approach the great and powerful Oz because of his frightening and intimidating appearance. That is **not** what the Church has in mind when it speaks of “fear of the Lord” as a Gift of the Holy Spirit. Because we tend to fear things that are bad and may cause us harm, it seems counterintuitive to fear God. The fear of God that Scripture speaks of, however, is not a terrifying or paralyzing fear but is rather a profound reverence for God who is Divine Mystery. What we fear is speaking and acting in a way that is displeasing to God because God is so good.



Fear of God can be understood as fear of facing the consequences of disobeying God’s law of love and the possibility of being separated from God through sin. Fear of God is not based on the threat of punishment but on the possibility of losing the greatest gift imaginable: intimacy with God. We practice “fear of the Lord,” not by groveling before God, but by approaching him with profound reverence. ■

Joe Paprocki is national consultant for faith formation for Loyola Press.

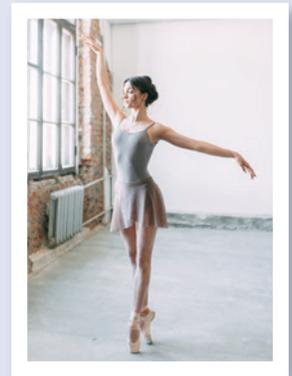


Five Things I Learned From . . .

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

Dancing

Throughout my years as a dancer, my art has brought me closer to God.



1. Dance praises God.

Dancing allows me to pray when words are insufficient.

2. Dance is for everyone.

God doesn’t care about how good my performance is; God cares about the passion with which I dance.

3. Dance bonds family and friends.

I found God in the people who helped me develop my talents: friends, teachers, and fellow dancers.



4. Dance requires discipline.

I had to work hard over many years. That discipline helped me grow in appreciation of the gifts God gave me.

5. Dance opens the human heart.

I am able to show the world who I truly am and who God intended me to be. ■

Amara Barnes is a dancer, clinical counselor, and 9th-grade catechist.

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SCRIPTURE IN THE FAMILY

You Can Be Braver Than You Think!

Do not fear: I am with you;
do not be anxious: I am your God.

I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

—ISAIAH 41:10

Many years ago I was a camp counselor in charge of a cabin full of boys. One night after lights out, I heard

Tony quietly sobbing into his pillow. “What’s wrong?” I asked. “I’m afraid,” he replied. In a desire to be reassuring, I plopped down on the floor next to his cot and said, rather unhelpfully, “Don’t be afraid.” Tony looked at me quizzically and asked, “Well, what should I do instead?”

And that’s a very good question. Fear is natural. And for most of us, especially as parents, fear is a regular, if not frequent, intruder in our lives—usually as we try to drift off to sleep. But the Holy Spirit offers an alternative to fear: fortitude, one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Fortitude predisposes us

to be brave, stand firm, and be steadfast in the face of adversity, danger, or pain. Fortitude helps us take the next right step—which may include having the grace to accept the things you cannot change. Just remember God’s promise, “I will strengthen you, I will help you.” ■



Tom McGrath is the director of mission and identity for Loyola Press and author of *Raising Faith-Filled Kids* (Loyola Press, 2000).