



Finding God

Our Response to God's Gifts

WHAT'S INSIDE

PAGE 2: Being Present in the Present

A warm recipe for winter

PAGE 3: Called to Be Like the Son

"Consubstantial with the Father"

PAGE 4: Does teaching discipline

make me the "bad guy"?

Give Your Child the Gift of Self-Discipline

Children need lots of discipline—self-discipline on the part of us parents, that is. Typically when we think about discipline, we focus on our children's behaviors, but we might want to take a look at our own. After all, children learn what they see. And they benefit greatly when we parents model good habits like honesty, reliability, patience, kindness, and inner strength.

When we exercise self-discipline, our children learn they can count on us to live up to our responsibility to care for them and to set limits and expectations for them as we do for ourselves. Here's a checklist of behaviors to think about. We don't have to be perfect, but we can always improve. Review this list and choose one virtuous habit you want to work on during the coming weeks and months.

- Show up when you say you will.
- Be honorable.
- Don't cheat.
- Don't lie or gossip.
- Exercise your authority fairly and consistently.
- Don't throw tantrums. (It's not just kids who do this!)
- Get to know yourself.
- Do things for others with no ulterior motive.
- Admit your mistakes; say you're sorry.
- Tend to your spiritual growth.



We want our children to grow in wisdom, age, and grace, and yet our own growing is not over and done. Give your children the gift of living out your commitment to lifelong growth in faith and holiness. †

By Tom McGrath, editor of Together: Preparing at Home for First Eucharist. Adapted from [Raising Faith-Filled Kids](#) (Loyola Press).



3-Minute Retreat

Embracing God's Gifts

With the holidays upon us, our thoughts might be on gifts, the ones we will give and the ones we will receive. Take some time, now, to ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize other gifts you already have in your life, God's gifts.

Remove any distractions around you. Sit comfortably and take several slow, deep breaths. Let the Spirit show you the gifts you have been given and the ones you have shared. Be thankful for each gift you recognize. Have you used them to the fullest? Have you shared them with those in need?

In the quiet of your heart, ask God for the grace to be attentive to his gifts and share them in service to others. ■

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

Thrift Store Saints

A Transformed Outlook

Gradually, over the first few months that I work at the thrift store, it starts to become uneasily clear to me that we are not trying to change the world. We aren't trying to change poor people either.

The only thing it seems we are trying to change is ourselves.

This does not sit well with me. It is not enough. I am programmed to change the world. Changing myself seems pathetic in comparison.



What's more: I am beginning to suspect that this is not something that can be done with bumper stickers. One morning, during our prayer time at the store, we are reading the teachings of St. Vincent, and the saint's instructions are clear:

"The poor are our masters; they are our kings; we must obey them. It is no exaggeration to call them this, since our Lord is in the poor."

After a brief silence while we ponder these words, Bernie lifts her head and complains to the rest of us, "That sure seems backwards to me."

I nod in sympathy with her. Helping the poor makes sense to me, obeying them does not.

My masters have much to teach me. ■

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).



Being Present in the Present

If the unofficial motto of summer is "Time flies when you're having fun," then autumn's motto would be "The days are long, but the years are short." When the leaves migrate from treetop to ground piles I tend to think of the ant and the grasshopper from the familiar fable by Aesop. The ant is virtuous and hard-working, devoted to preparing for the winter ahead. He stockpiles food for himself without stopping to rest. The grasshopper, on the other hand, is unhurried and unworried about the winter. He revels in the moment and spends his time appreciating the beauty of the nature around him. When winter inevitably comes, the ant is warm, secure, and prepared, while the grasshopper starves in the cold. The moral of the story is supposed to be not to fritter away the time when there is work to be done. However, I tend to side with the grasshopper.

Autumn is a short season. With the prospect of the holidays already on the horizon, it is easy to hunker down like the ant and work, work, work. But how often do we stop to notice the changing leaves? By enjoying the everyday delights that make us smile or bring us peace, we can be truly present, like the grasshopper. It is a perfect time to refresh and renew ourselves with God and those around us and to take inventory of our blessings.

I remind myself to make autumn count by extending my time with a friend or a loved one instead of running one more errand, or spending a few moments in quiet meditation instead of rushing to the next item on my to-do list. As we prepare for Advent and

Christmas, let's stop for a moment to be present in the present and to thank God for the beautiful and changing world around us. That habit will keep you warm straight through winter to the first day of spring. ■

Jennon Bell Hoffmann is an editor at Loyola Press and prefers autumn to any other season.

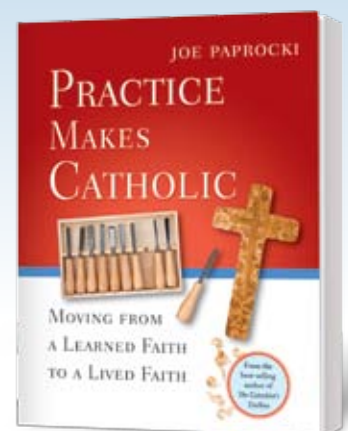
Did You Know . . .

the original Aesop was thought to be a slave living in Greece in the fifth century B.C. The first written record of fables featuring talking animals can be traced to the fourth century B.C. Since then, the tales have been reinterpreted and retold many ways, including children's literature, dramatic plays, and even Disney cartoons. ■

Why?

Children ask their parents "why" nearly every day—especially about the rites and rituals of their faith. Find the answers to why we engage in the many practices of our Catholic faith in *Practice Makes Catholic* by Joe Paprocki. Informative and inviting, *Practice Makes Catholic* is perfect for all Catholics who want to get to the heart of what their faith is really about. ■

[Practice Makes Catholic](#) (Loyola Press, 2011)



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“Consubstantial with the Father”

Called to be like the Son

“She doesn’t look like her father, but one can sure tell she is his daughter.” “I went to this presentation. The graphics were amazing, but the whole thing lacked substance.” There is something in us that helps us recognize that often what matters, what really matters, is something that goes beyond what we can see, hear or touch, but that we just recognize and know. In other words, we recognize its *substance*.

When we profess our faith, using the words of the new translation of the Nicene Creed, we refer to Jesus Christ as “consubstantial with the Father”; that is, being fully divine, he has the same one substance as the Father. We believe this. We might not be able to explain it or put it into words, but we know it to be true. Such is faith; it knows through the heart.

But this statement from the Creed also reminds us that Jesus was fully human, being of one substance with our humanity. Because of this, when we say we are invited to be more like Jesus, that means we are being called to



be, in our humanity more like his Father. We can do so by being merciful, just, loving, and forgiving in our daily life, giving example to our children and helping them discover the goodness of God in themselves, in others, in the colorful autumn leaves and even in the rainy and gray days of winter. ■

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

A Daily Encounter

John 20: 26–28

A week later [Jesus'] disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

It might be strange to read a Resurrection story just as we are about to begin Advent. Yet nothing would make sense to us without the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, not even Christmas. The kingdom of peace and love that the birth of Jesus brought into the world was

perfected through his rising from the dead, and we await its plenitude in the world to come. This wait, during which we are called to work actively to hasten the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, is part of the Advent season. We await not only the birth of Jesus, but also his Second Coming; both events are but two chapters in the eternal love story of God for us, anchored around the Resurrection of his only Son.

When we set up the crèche at home this Christmas, we can look at Jesus’ minute body, his tiny hands and feet, and be reminded of what we believe, not because we have seen Jesus in the flesh, but because we have encountered the risen Christ in our lives, in the love of our families and

friends, in the good others have done for us, in the face of those who suffer, and in the hope of those who await justice. When we live our lives in faith, we see the world in a new way, and present in its midst, we meet Christ, to whom we welcome as Thomas did, saying, “My Lord and my God!” What a wonderful encounter toward which to lead our families and friends, no matter what liturgical season we celebrate. ■





Doesn't teaching discipline to my kids make me out to be the "bad guy"?

A: Precisely why grandparents have the most fun! They get to play with their grandkids, get them all riled up, let them do as they please, and then send them back home to their parents. Seriously, though, it is a tough job to be a parent because we want our children to like us. At the same time, it is our job to teach them discipline. We need to know that discipline is not a dirty word. The word *discipline* shares the same root as *disciple*, which means "follower" or "learner." We are all striving to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and we want the same for our children. To follow Jesus takes discipline. Jesus himself said that "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34) To "deny" yourself means to be disciplined. Teaching discipline to our children does not always make us the most popular person to them at the moment, but it is a gift that they will appreciate as they mature and begin to realize on their own how important discipline is to anything that is worth pursuing. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that "now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11) ■



We need to know that discipline is not a dirty word.



Five Things I Learned From ...

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

Charlottes' Web

I recently gave the book *Charlotte's Web* to a grown-up I greatly admire because, to me, it shares messages that reflect how this person chooses to live—as a follower of Christ. So what Christian messages do I find in this classic? Here is just a start.

1. Cherish and preserve life. (That's what Fern and Charlotte did for Wilbur.)
2. Use the gifts God gave you to build the kingdom (even if it's spinning a web).
3. Give voice to those who have none. (That was one "RADIANT" pig.)
4. Love your neighbor as yourself. (Charlotte risked it all to make it to the fairgrounds.)
5. Know that there is life after death. (Even Wilbur knew this as he carefully carried Charlotte's eggs back to the farm.) ■



Joellyn Cicciarelli is the director of curricula development at Loyola Press. She is a former teacher who read this book each year to her class.

Family as a Spiritual Path

Breaking a bad habit is hard. I was recently faced with one of my own, biting my nails. Like many bad habits, I noticed it first in someone else. My daughter seemed always to have her fingers in her mouth. Without hesitation, I began lecturing her on reasons why she should stop. After all, I explained, self-discipline is very important. I felt proud to be building such character in her. Apparently, she learned the lesson quite well. Awaiting the start of Mass recently, I was startled by a nudge. I turned and was confronted by my

daughter's glare. Pointing to the finger I mindlessly nibbled, she firmly shook her head no. My first reaction was not of gratitude. But inside, I knew she was right. My lesson stared me in the face. To teach self-discipline, I needed to practice it myself. How often my children become mirrors to reflect back my behavior. Luckily, they also provide much-



needed incentive to practice what I preach. Self-discipline can be hard work, but it is also a priceless gift. I am reminded of how important it is both to expect and to model it. ■

Denise Skomer is a writer and editor and co-founder of Bound By Grace Press (BoundByGracePress.com)