

**“Our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active.”**

***1 Jn 3:18***

Over the last couple of Sundays we have begun to consider that our Catholic Faith has only one purpose, namely the sanctification and salvation of our souls, and we have seen that our sanctification – our growing in holiness – involves growing spiritually in such a way that we may see God, bit by bit, ever more clearly as the months and years pass so that we may become more and more like to Him. In today’s Second Reading, St John unpacks this a little further by explaining that our Faith demands something of us: our growth in holiness does not somehow and magically just happen so long as we go to Mass every Sunday and to Confession every month. Our Faith cannot be ‘just words or mere talk.’ Rather, we have to *seek* the face of God, and engage with Him in a very real encounter. But how do we do this?

Last week, we began to explore exactly this by suggesting the need to cut out of our lives the things that deafen us to the voice of God and blind us to His beauty. Today, we pick up those ideas again and make a few practical suggestions.

First, always bear in mind that the main task of any Catholic, each and every day, is to work and pray for his own sanctification. To that end, every day should start with a Morning Offering by which we consecrate the day to Almighty God: everything we think, and do, and say. There are many such Morning Offerings in many different Catholic prayer books. Find one, print it out, and put it by your bedside so that you can say it first thing in the morning.

Second, pray during the course of the day. Traditionally, the Angelus is said three times each day, at 6am, at 12 noon, and again at 6pm. (During Eastertide the Angelus is replaced by the Regina Cæli and the little Collect or concluding prayer that goes with it.)

Both are easy to learn off by heart, especially if you say it three times every day! Dig out the words, or download an App onto your phone that will remind you to say it at the right times. Do not be afraid to interrupt whatever tasks you are doing. The whole point of the traditional practice was to demonstrate that nothing was more important than turning to God several times throughout the day.

Third, each evening offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the many graces you have received during the course of the day, and accompany this with a brief examination of conscience and a short Act of Contrition for any acts of infidelity to His grace.

And fourth, go and dig out some spiritual reading. The Bible is the obvious starting point. In particular, read the Gospels and the Psalms. (Little pocket-sized editions which include just the New Testament and the Psalms are easy to get hold of.) There are also details on the website of a Catholic edition of a bible-in-a-year. But do not limit yourself to the Scriptures. There are other lists of suggested spiritual reading on the home page of the parish website as well. Go and have a look, get hold of one of the books, and start reading, if not every day then at least two or three times a week. Or find a book of Catholic day-by-day prayers and devotions. There are many such books on the market.

Once you have made your choice, keep the chosen book close to hand and pick it up often, even if you do not have time to settle down comfortably and read vast swathes of it at one sitting.

If your days are so busy that you never have time to stop and pray or read, then try, as St Philip Neri suggested, to shoot up to heaven little darts or arrows of love many times throughout the day. By this he meant what used to be called ‘pious aspirations,’ namely one-line prayers such as the opening line of the Our Father, or the Hail Mary, or any other line from those prayers. Or a line from the Gloria at Mass, or from the Creed. Or a two-line Act of Faith, or Hope, or Charity, or Contrition. Or one of the Divine Praises used at

Benediction: 'Blessed be God,' 'Blessed be His holy name,' 'Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man,' and so on and so on.

All of these tasks are so simple that there is no real excuse for not adopting them, so we must be careful not to be met on the day of judgement with the same response as was given to the slothful servant in the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30).

Our Catholic Faith – our love of God and of our neighbour – is not to be just words or mere talk. We must be active in seeking the face of God, and our desire to become like to Him must be real if we want to join Him one day in heaven. And don't be misled by thinking that your day of judgement is a long way off and that you have plenty of time to think about your sanctification tomorrow, for none of us knows the day nor the hour!