

Catholic Passage

SPRING 2024



THE 5 D'S OF CATHOLIC PASSAGE

The 5 Ds of Discipleship

PLANTING SEEDS OF FAITH

CONTENTS

PLANTING SEEDS OF FAITH

03 PLANTING SEEDS OF FAITH

Imagine what God thinks each time he sees you plant a seed of faith in someone else, taking the time to water it and help it grow.

04 HOW TO BUILD A MARY GARDEN

A guide on planting a garden to honor our Holy Mother, Mary.



REFLECTION ON
SAINT FRANCIS



PLANTING SEEDS OF
FAITH IN CCD

08 THE 5 DS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Graphic found on Page 12

09 HAIL MARY WORD SEARCH

10-11 THE 5 DS OF CATHOLIC PASSAGE

12 THE 5 DS OF DISCIPLESHIP GRAPHIC



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Planting Seeds of Faith

Jen Redenius- Catholic Passage Board Member

“The farmer sows the word.”

Mark 4:14

From the very beginning of the Church, the disciples and missionaries have been sent to plant seeds of faith throughout the world. They plant those seeds praying and hoping that they will take root and come to full growth and fruition some day.

The same can be said about planting seeds of faith in our own life. Each day, we have the opportunity to plant seeds of faith in our own children, spouses, colleagues, students, and everyone else we encounter. Not only that, we have the opportunity to water and care for seeds that may have been planted there by someone else.

Sometimes it is hard to see the seeds we plant grow into fruition. We get lost in the everyday mundane work we do. For example, my husband and I say a prayer with our four very young kiddos before each meal. I rarely see this prayer as a big event in our day; an “ordinary” thing we do together a few times each day. I get lost in the preparation of the meal; the cleaning up of the food my one year old throws like a grenade off the high chair; the wiping down of the sticky floors afterwards. I forget that this small act of giving thanks, this small seed I am planting, is growing roots of faith in my four babies. It will take years before I see what these seeds grow into, but it is important to reflect and remember that even those ordinary, mundane moments, oftentimes produce the most beautiful end result.

The same can be true for getting lost in the minutiae of our careers or personal relationships. We may get lost in the act of grading papers as a teacher or doing desk work at the office. However, if we keep an awareness that every day we have the opportunity to plant seeds of faith in those around us, we then have the opportunity to make mundane, ordinary work grow into something amazing. I have been a teacher long enough now to see some of my previous students grow into amazing adults. I pray that some of the seeds I planted in them as young adolescents helped shape who they are today.

Spring is, personally, my favorite season. There is nothing I love more than putting tiny seeds in our garden, spending so much time outside with my kids weeding and watering them, and then seeing them grow into beautiful flowers, fruits, and vegetables. Imagine what God thinks each time he sees you plant a seed of faith in someone else, taking the time to water it and help it grow.

As Pope Francis once said, “It is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others.”

How to build a Mary Garden

Jen Redenius- Catholic Passage Board Member

Every garden, in a way, contains some sense of the original beauty of the first garden, Eden. Each garden has the potential to remind us of the paradise we come from and our hope of eternal happiness after we die. Gardening, in and of itself, is an act of faith. The gardener places a tiny seed in the ground, and beyond giving it the proper water and care, does not have much control over the masterpiece it can become. Think of how many people can be fed from a single seed planted in the ground. Each spring, we plant vegetable gardens, flower gardens, butterfly gardens– the list can go on and on. One type of garden to consider planting this year is a Mary Garden. Planting a Mary Garden is a special way to honor our Blessed Mother and reflect on her virtues.

Having a home Mary Garden is also a way to get your children involved in honoring Mary. Think of it as an opportunity to be a witness to your neighborhood or people passing by. Creating a Mary Garden is easy and does not have to be complicated to put together.

The two main components of a Mary Garden are flowers chosen for their association to Mary or their spiritual significance and a statue or image of Mary. Many flowers may already be familiar to you like Marigolds, which are also known as Mary's Gold because pilgrims would use them in place of coins. You will want to choose flowers that can thrive in your growing zone.

Directions:

1. **Choose the perfect place for your Mary garden.** Mary Gardens can be located anywhere. They can also be any size. You may want to consider if the area is shaded or sunny as it may influence the kinds of plants you will have.
2. **Prepare the soil.**
3. **Find a statue of the Blessed Mother or another image you can center the garden around.**
4. **Choose plants for your Mary Garden. Here are some ideas:**
 - **Roses** – the “queen of flowers” have long been associated with Mary.
 - **Rosemary** – it’s in the name!
 - **Marigold** – marigold means “Mary’s gold.” Early Christians offered Mary these instead of coins.
 - **Sweet Alyssum** – these have a wonderful fragrance. They are cross-shaped flowers that remind us of our Lord’s cross.
 - **Lily of the Valley** – these are also known as “Our Lady’s Tears.” This flower has a nice fragrance and tolerates shade.
 - **Impatiens** – these are also called “Mother’s Love” because of their constant blooms. These flowers do well in the shade.
 - **Bleeding Hearts** – for Mary’s heart which was pierced. These flowers also tolerate shade.
 - **Hyacinth** – for its color and fragrance. These are also shaped like a star!
5. **Plant your garden.** Take time to arrange the flowers you choose in a way that best displays your statue or image of Mary.
6. **Maintain your garden** by giving your plants the appropriate amount of water throughout the growing season.
7. **Enjoy your garden** and take time to reflect and honor Mary each time you see it.



REFLECTION ON ST. FRANCIS

John M. Sandy | District Court Judge
Iowa Judicial Branch
Catholic Passage Board Member

"So come out of your cave walking on your hands and see the world hanging upside down You can understand dependence when you know the maker's hand."

It may surprise you that this excerpt, from the popular song *The Cave*, by Mumford and Sons, is about St. Francis of Assisi. It references G.K. Chesterton's biography of

the famous saint, in which he writes, "The man who went into the cave was not the man who came out again. He looked at the world as differently from other men as if he had come out of that dark hole walking on his hands."

Let's explore another side of St. Francis, apart from the familiar association with animals and nature.

St. Francis was born in 1182 to a wealthy silk merchant. He had great aspirations of becoming a knight, but became disillusioned after he was captured in battle. God was calling him to "serve the Master, rather than man." In 1209, he had a miraculous encounter with a leper, in which he impulsively ran up to him, embraced him and kissed him, whereupon the leper disappeared. Soon after, while at Mass, he heard the Gospel, where Jesus commissions the apostles, and to take "no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals." (Matthew 10:7-19)

God's Word went straight to Francis' heart; he renounced all his possessions and inheritance and fled to the mountain caves around Assisi. It was there he experienced a powerful conversion. The man who came out of the cave was not the same man who went in.

Those who have had life-changing experiences often describe how their outlook on life has totally changed, "I look at everything different now." For St. Francis, his soul was so profoundly transformed that it was like looking at the world upside down. The analogy here is two-fold, because hanging things depend on something holding them up. Thus, Francis saw how all of creation was completely dependent on God, the Creator.

Other men began to follow Francis, eventually forming a community. In 1210 Francis traveled to Rome to get Papal approval for the order of Friars Minor (Little Brothers, now commonly known as Franciscans). Within 16 years, there were over 5,000 friars. They became a force of reform in the Church, traveling the countryside, preaching repentance and conversion to the Word of God through their witness of poverty and simplicity of life.

In 1223, Francis set up the first nativity with live people and animals, before whom he preached the Christmas Mass. The association of St. Francis with nature is often misunderstood. To say that Francis loved nature is not quite right. Rather, he was in love with God, who created all of nature out of love. The saint of Assisi saw everything in creation—every bird, every flower, every plant, every blade of grass, every animal, every worm—as a marvelous, particular object of wonder, a vestige of the Creator, a brother or a sister that has been loved into existence by God.

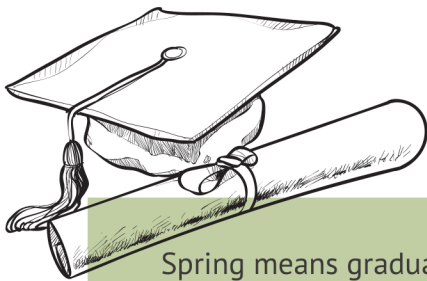
This is an incarnational imagination, and it is the key to understanding St. Francis. He believed that the coming of the Son of God, "The Word was made flesh," was something that continues through time and in all Creation. His well-known prayer, the *Cantic of the Sun*, wonderfully shows this imagination. He saw Christ's incarnation in the poor and the lepers, in his devotion to the Nativity, and especially in his adoration of the Eucharist.

REFLECTION ON ST. FRANCIS

On the feast of the Holy Cross in 1224, Francis received the stigmata (wounds of our Lord's passion). These wounds, along with his ascetic practice of constant fasting and penance, deteriorated his body. He was 44 years old when he died on Oct. 4 1226, surrounded by his brothers, listening to Jesus' passion from the Gospel of John. He died with nothing, having given away the very clothes he was wearing.

Through his incarnational imagination, St. Francis tapped into divine love, a love that is self-sacrificing. His was an imagination burning with charity, openhearted and generous. So strong was this love, that he bore Christ's sacrifice, his wounds of love.

We don't need a cave to find God in our lives. But we should emulate St. Francis in developing an incarnational imagination – finding God in everything and everyone. Go to the adoration chapel and spend time with the God of all Creation, who has humbled himself in the Eucharist. And coming out of the chapel, we understand St. Francis better, for we are changed, seeing the world in a whole new way.



Spring means graduation! Graduating from high school or with a higher degree can be an overwhelming time for students and families. It is SO important to mentor our young Catholics as they “leave the nest” to pursue their future goals. Remember to encourage graduates around you that in their pursuit of their future goals, remember that the church will ALWAYS be home for them and a place they can come back to. Let us keep these students in our prayers this spring as they graduate and move onto the next chapter.

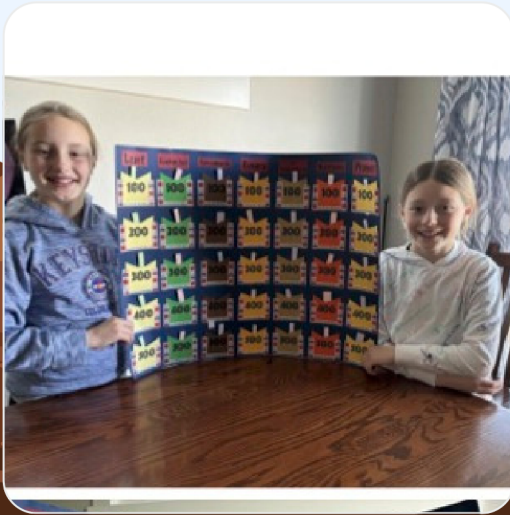
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS PRAYER FOR STUDENTS

Come, Holy Spirit, Divine Creator, true source of light and fountain of wisdom! Pour forth your brilliance upon my dense intellect, dissipate the darkness which covers me, that of sin and of ignorance. Grant me a penetrating mind to understand, a retentive memory, method and ease in learning, the lucidity to comprehend, and abundant grace in expressing myself. Guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to successful completion. This I ask through Jesus Christ, true God and true man, living and reigning with You and the Father, forever and ever.

Amen.

Planting Seeds of Faith in CCD

Angie—5th Grade CCD Teacher



It never ceases to amaze me how fast a year can go! We just finished our last religious education class of the year. This past September I started a journey with seven 5th grade students at our parish. I accepted the challenge of planting new seeds for them and also cultivating those seeds that had already been planted. Reviewing things learned in the past is always good for long term memory! When creating lesson plans, I try to keep in mind they just spent their entire day in the classroom; therefore, I like to incorporate as many fun activities as possible. To end the year, we had a fun way of reviewing all we had covered with a game of Jeopardy. Not many of them had seen the game on TV. Of course, we kept track of points, but also awarded a Starburst for each correct answer. They caught on quickly and had a great time recalling (most) of the answers. As the chapter of another year ended, we prayed together one last time for the seeds that were planted this year continue to grow within each of them.

When I was asked to write a little something about how my husband and I have tried “Planting the Seed of Faith” in our children, the first thing that came to mind was a little bit at a time. Just like trying to nurture a seedling, if you water it once and walk away or flood it at odd times during its growth, you will either stunt the plant or kill it. Faith is the same. Kids need to have faith be a part of their everyday lives. Lead by example and bring Faith in through multiple avenues.

Start them young... say mealtime prayers with your family and get into a good habit of bedtime prayers. If the routine is instilled in them, it's an easy habit that they feel comfortable with and will hopefully keep with them as they go out on their own. Meal prayers are second nature to our kids and something they do whether in public or private. Bedtime prayers have definitely evolved through the years. As the kids were little, they were pretty basic with an Our Father, Hail Mary and a Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep. Give them time to add anything they wish to pray for. You would be amazed what goes on in those minds. As the kids started learning other prayers or working towards their first Holy Communion our list of prayers increased and as those teenage years came upon us, the Act of Contrition was thrown in daily for good measures. My favorite was always when the kids would have friends over, and all the extras kneeling in the living room. It makes a mom's heart full.

Planting Seeds of Faith in CCD continued...

Use that confessional. If your children see you using the Sacrament of Reconciliation and talking openly about confession, they will pick up the habit much easier than if their only push was from the CCD teacher or priest a few times a year. Help them keep a clean heart and a faithful mind.

Talk about faith. Ask your children questions after CCD class or talk at the supper table about a topic that pops up. A bit of basic trivia now and then is always interesting. Talk and discuss, DO NOT Lecture.

Let them ask the questions, take the time to explain or if you don't know the answer, be honest and you can research and find the answers together.

Say the Rosary. My mother-in-law used to always ask us, "Did you teach your kids to say the rosary? Because no one else is going to do it." Teach them to say it, talk about the mysteries and have them comfortable leading. The Holy Rosary is something they will take and use for the rest of their lives.

Some things must start at home. Please don't expect CCD or weekend mass to instill those lifelong habits. Nourish them throughout the years to have a strong foundation to stand on. Life is tough and the world is a scary place at times. Help your children navigate through those times with the right tools in their pocket.

Good Luck and God Bless,

Brian and Angie McAlister

The Five Ds of Discipleship

Abby Glass - Catholic Passage Contributor

Whether a parent or grandparent; family member or friend; teacher or coach, adult interactions and relationships will influence a child's formational story. What a beautiful honor but also an intimidating challenge! However, we are not alone or without guidance while navigating this responsibility. Jesus tells us, I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) inviting all to become disciples – learning and growing in his love.

The Five Ds of Discipleship graphic found on **Page 12** can be placed anywhere – on your phone, refrigerator, office, classroom, or tucked into your coach's clipboard – to serve as a reminder that passing on the Catholic faith starts not with the child but rather in the heart and head of the caregiver.

In Catholic Passage's winter newsletter, Father Brian Feller shared the origin of the Catholic Passage logo. So not by happenstance, the raindrop – an important symbol to the mission of Catholic Passage – appears at the center of the graphic. The Five Ds are ordered with the first Dependence of God at the base and Differences Made at the tip. With the drop representing one's life, the Five Ds of Discipleship help conform lives to Christ – making an impact that will ripple ever so beautifully among all whom we encounter, especially the young.

A true missionary who never ceases to be a disciple, knows – Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus ALIVE with him...

Pope Francis - *Evangelii Gaudium*, 266

We are most definitely not in this alone.

Hail Mary Word Search

J	B	L	E	S	S	E	D	M	G	F
M	Z	L	Z	Y	T	L	K	O	K	X
N	X	X	N	D	D	I	C	T	L	P
W	J	E	S	U	S	A	L	H	D	N
S	O	X	Y	Q	M	H	E	E	O	F
R	H	M	M	A	R	Y	E	R	G	R
E	H	O	E	A	G	B	H	J	V	U
N	T	B	L	N	M	R	T	D	K	I
N	A	M	O	Y	N	E	A	N	R	T
I	E	O	R	N	K	J	N	C	K	H
S	D	W	D	R	P	R	A	Y	E	D



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Directions: Find all 17 of the words that are in bold print below in the Hail Mary prayer in the word search above.

Hail Mary,
Full of **Grace,**
The **Lord** is with **thee.**
Blessed art thou among **women,**
and blessed is the **fruit**
of thy **womb, Jesus.**

Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us **sinner**s now,
and at the hour of **death.**
Amen.

THE 5 DS OF CATHOLIC PASSAGE

Father Brian Feller

All growth happens through, with, and in Jesus and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Without Jesus, we can do nothing (John 15:5). He is the vine, and we are the branches. For Catholic Passage to highlight the witness of lay men and women, they must first be witnesses of the life of Christ who lives in them. In other words, they need to be disciples before they go and make disciples of their children and students. Herein lies part of the contextual basis for the 5 Ds of Catholic Passage. Let me share with you a brief synopsis of five qualities or elements of how we pursue our mission.

How We Engage Discipleship:

In Romans 12:2, St. Paul writes, “Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” The following Five Ds are meant to help us conform our lives to Christ, and in so doing, become passageways of the Father’s blessing to those around us, especially the young. These steps help us better unite our lives to Jesus through the “Big D” of Christian Discipleship.

1. Dependence on God

God is the center of everything and the origin of every gift. God gave us the gifts of natural reason and supernatural faith. In every effort, we seek communion with Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit through Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Catholic Church. Depending on God’s grace, we prayerfully walk with Christ in his mission to make disciples.

2. Dialogue in Community

We dialogue in community because Jesus is present when we gather in his name. Dialogue is more than a conversation; it is a pursuit of the truth. In dialogue, each person has something to offer and receive. Dialogue opens us to receive and reflect upon the truths of life. We ask the Holy Spirit to guide our dialogues so that we can come to encounter truth in any given topic of conversation. Since truth is not merely a concept, but a Person (John 14:6), encountering the Truth demands our response.

3. Determination of Will

When we encounter the truth, we must determine whether to reject or accept it. We can determine, with our own free wills, to let the truth bear influence in our lives by shaping our understanding and attitudes. Determination is where the discovered truth becomes conviction. It paves the path towards real-life application. When we accept the truth, we say “yes” to the Lord’s work of transformation in and through us.

THE 5 DS OF CATHOLIC PASSAGE CONTINUED...

4. Decisions Lived

Real-life application happens in the decisions of daily life. We reform our decision-making in the light of our newfound convictions. Whether it is in our own interior lives, daily schedules, or interactions with young people, we are challenged to put our conviction into action. Jesus likens hearing his words and acting on them to building our houses upon rock instead of sand (Matthew 7:24). The Holy Spirit is our strength and wisdom.

5. Differences Made

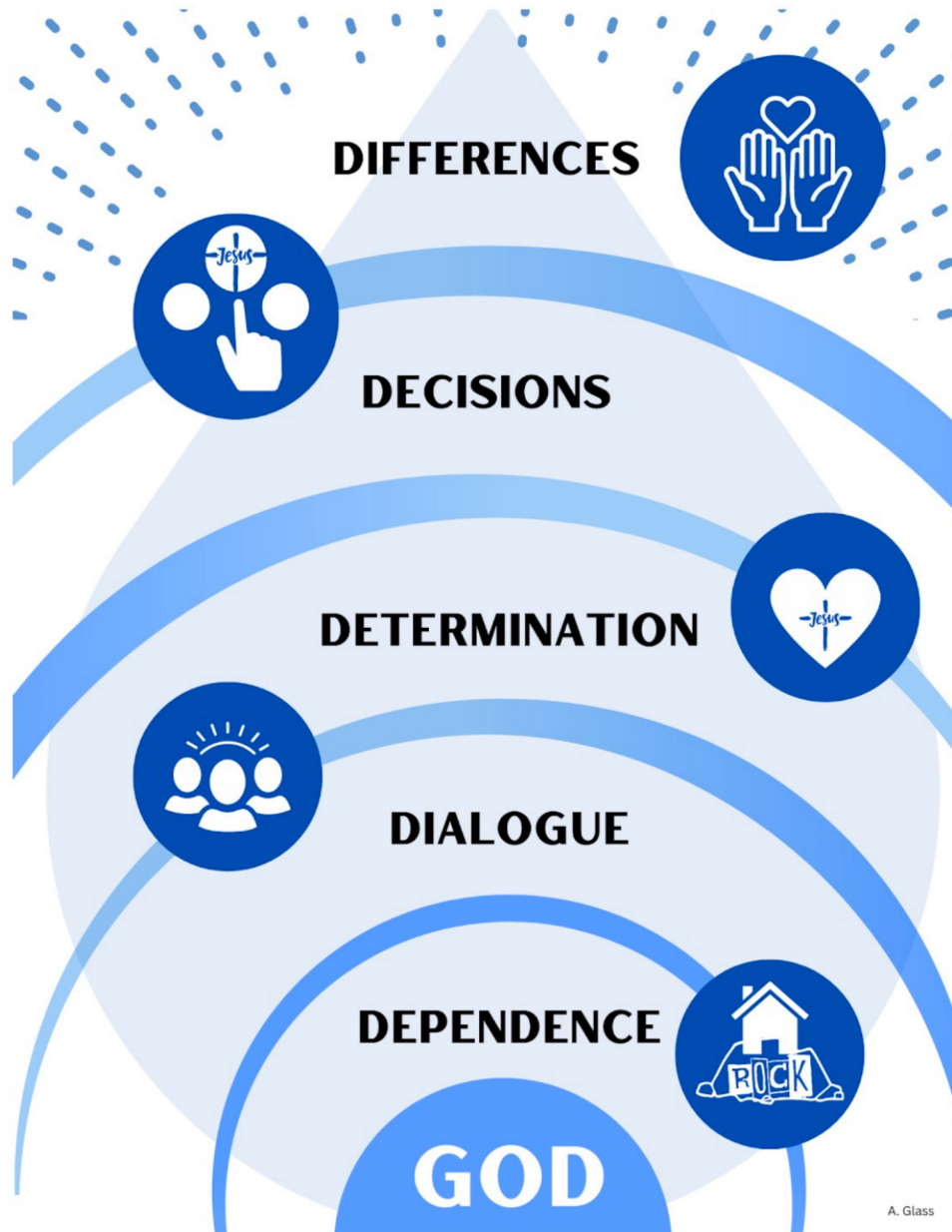
Differences are made when decisions are lived lovingly and consistently. Decisions are like raindrops on a lake; the ripple always surpasses the point of impact. As with everything, we entrust the fruitfulness of our decisions to the goodness of God. We need only depend on Him and try. Every adult woman and man have the power to build up a child in faith and life, now and for eternity. With differences made, we lift to the Lord our hearts of praise and thanksgiving each time we participate in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

In conclusion, let's look at an example of these five aspects at play. Catholic Passage assists parishioners in hosting the Praying From Within retreat at their parish. Dependence on God permeates every aspect of the retreat from intercessory and petitionary prayers for grace, Eucharistic Adoration, beginning with Lectio Divina (prayerfully reading the Bible), learning from the teachings of the Scriptures and the saints, etc. In the large and small groups, participants share in dialogue and learn from each other's questions and experiences. The short presentations throughout the retreat are opportunities for the leaders to generously offer their gifts of study, prayer, and experience to the dialogues with God happening in the hearts of the participants.

When there are "Ah Ha" moments of clarity or insight, the retreatants are encouraged to accept the truth with a determination of their wills. This is akin to accepting a gift from God by saying, "Yes, I do believe this and yes I want it to have a determination upon my life." One truth that is commonly touched upon is that God is imminently close and through Holy Baptism dwells within the soul. The person would live out of this truth through his or her daily decisions as opportunities arise. For example, in a moment of difficulty, the person remembers this truth and turns to God in confidence that the Holy Spirit is present to help. Or, the person may counsel a child with the truth that God chooses him or her as important to Him and His beloved.

Lastly, when we receive, accept, and live out what God gives us, differences are made for children and culture. Not only can his blessing flow through us with ever less obstruction, but we become more like Christ. By depending on God and the rest, we are ever more conformed to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. As "other Christs" we glorify our Father.

But, the glory of the resurrection is not without the hardship and death. "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies..." (John 12:24) it leaves us with nothing. One thing that is difficult for priests, parents, and teachers alike is to die to our desire to be in the driver's seat and give God permission. How many times do we think, "I do not have time for another Mass or silent prayer." But if that seed dies (like Jesus died) it will rise and bear fruit. Giving God permission simply begins with a pause.



Thank You

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