

IMPRINT

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rest

Your life is more than what you do.



Why rest?

“Make yourself a capacity, and I will make Myself a torrent.”

- Jesus to Blessed Angela of Foligno

God wants to fill us with Himself. Our need for rest is ultimately not a sign of weakness, but of His love. Leaning into rest helps open us to receive Him, and receiving Him gives us true rest. Those who have held a baby in their arms know that there is something both tender and sacred in watching a newborn yield to the power of sleep. In the act of rest, there is a silent openness of soul, a peaceful acknowledgment of one’s limits. No human being can survive without rest; if we try to push through, eventually our body will force us to sleep, whether we like it or not. And this is intentional. God gives us only enough energy for one day at a time. In the Our Father we ask God for our “daily bread” which harkens back to the Israelites in the desert who collected just enough manna for one day at a time (see *Mt 6:9-13; Ex 16*). God has designed our human lives with natural boundaries and limits, and this is not to hinder us, but it can be a way we remain in a right, dependent relationship to God our loving Father.

It’s not always an easy thing to be dependent. Sometimes, we can feel a desperate need to take control. St. John Paul II, in his encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, speaks about what he calls the “contemplative outlook.” “It is the outlook of those who do not presume to take possession of reality but instead accept it as a gift, discovering in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person His living image” (§ 83). If the contemplative outlook is the way of seeing God’s presence in all things, leisure is the disposition that allows us to receive the gift He’s giving right now, in this moment.

In order to diffuse the fears and anxieties pregnant women face, we often invite them to engage in a time of rest and leisure. This allows them the space to be in touch with the deepest desires of their hearts, granting a new openness to the gift of life and a renewed capacity to be themselves.

We do not just *need* rest; it’s what we’re made for. Let us claim our call to live as free children of the Father and friends of the Son. May Mary, Our Mother, the daughter of the Father, help us to rest secure in His love, receptive to every good gift from His hands. Know of our gratitude and prayers for you and your family this Christmas.

In Christ, Our Life, and Mary, Our Mother,

Mother Mary Concepta, SV

Mother Mary Concepta, SV



Jesus

INVITES US TO REST



By Sr. Joseph Mary Nazareth, SV

As a child rests in his mother’s arms, so my soul rests in you (cf. Ps 131:2).

Made for rest

We all long for a place of rest, a sense of belonging, an experience of deep peace and security, a true and lasting “home.” Although this desire finds its ultimate fulfillment in heaven — where we are called to live forever within the communion of love which is God Himself — we do not have to wait until heaven to begin experiencing this life-giving relationship of love. As St. Augustine famously wrote in his *Confessions*, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” So often, we look for fulfillment in things exterior to ourselves: our achievements, relationships, or material possessions. And yet, as St. Augustine had discovered, the answer lies in our interior life: “You were within me...” Through the gift of Baptism, the Holy Trinity dwells in our souls. God Himself desires to rest in each of us, and He continually invites us to encounter Him there: “Make your home in Me, as I make Mine in you” (cf. *Jn 15: 1-8*).

Free in who I truly am

How can we live from this place of rest? How can we respond to this invitation more deeply? Jesus shows us the way. He shares with us the secret of His own inner peace and rest: His identity as the beloved Son of the Father. As fully God and fully man, the eternal Son, Jesus, lives continually within the loving gaze



of the Father, resting in the Father's delight, knowing His Father is always about His good, receiving everything from the Father, and returning it in an act of thanksgiving and praise. Through Baptism, Jesus shares His identity with us, so that we can enter into His relationship with the Father, and be rooted in the reality of who we are: *I am good; I am loved; I am irreplaceable; I am His*. Jesus invites us to live secure and free in the truth of our identity as children of God, and to hear the Father speak over us, at every moment, "This is My beloved son, My beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased" (*cf. Mt 3:17*).

Childlikeness: the secret to happiness

In fact, Jesus consistently points us towards childlikeness as the characteristic necessary for life: "Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (*Mt 18:3*). What does it mean to become "childlike"? Children have a tremendous capacity for play, leisure, and enjoyment; they receive reality with wonder and awe. They live in the present moment, are completely dependent on others for all their needs, and trust — in all simplicity — that these needs will be met. Our culture does not particularly prize these characteristics, and yet within them lies the whole key to happiness. Just as Jesus never "grows up" — in the sense of never growing away from His Father — we are called to never stop asking God for everything. Trusting in God's providential care — that

Jesus invites us
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He sees me now, that He is with me now, that He is listening to me now, that He is providing for me now — is the ultimate secret to childlike rest.

Resting in the storm

Trust allows me to rest in an inner posture of dependence, gratitude, and hope in the goodness of God, and in the truth that my existence is a pure gift of love. And so, because I know that I am held, my fears and anxieties can fall away, and I can exercise my freedom in full maturity. Even in moments of suffering and darkness, I can pray intentionally with Jesus, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (*Lk 23:46*). Jesus invites us to a rest that comes when we don't live in fear or worry. He Who rested in the storm teaches us that He wants to give us His rest in all circumstances. Seeking to live with the spiritual maturity of a childlike spirit, we can begin to experience our heavenly home in all the ups, downs, storms, and victories of life, since Jesus has promised us that "to such belongs the kingdom of God" (*Lk 18:16*).

Recommended Reading:

- *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*, by Charles Peguy
- *Trustful Surrender to Divine Providence*, by Fr. Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure, SJ and St. Claude de la Colombière, SJ

*Saved by
Grace*
Rest unlocks doors.



An interview with Lina, by Sr. Isabel Fiat Karolina, SV

Lina was tired, but she could not rest. Like nearly 70 million other Americans, she struggled to sleep and sleep well. After learning that she was pregnant, Lina's life began to change. She learned that rest is not only the result of a peaceful environment, but a peaceful presence — the presence of God.

Can you describe what life was like before you came to live with the Sisters?

I was raised Catholic, but I thought I didn't need God. I worked, and I partied, and I could not be by myself. I was very anxious. My relationships were bad, because I did not know what love looked like. It was a problem of identity. I did not know who I was, so I would hide behind all these things. One night — I think it was the worst night of my life — I was sitting in my friend's apartment and there was music playing which reminded me of the father of my baby. I could not stop crying, and I texted the Sisters, "I can't do this anymore." I kept telling my friend I was tired, but I could not sleep. The Sisters asked if I wanted to spend a night at the convent [where other pregnant women live]. I came, but I didn't want to stay. I told the Sisters, "This is just for the night!"

But something happened, and you decided you wanted to live at the convent during your pregnancy. How did you know you wanted to stay?

When I got there, dinner was at 6:00 pm, and I decided to try to take a nap beforehand. I was in my room and feeling nervous, but I slept for two hours! And that night I slept eight hours! I slept through the night for the first time in six months. That was what made me stay.

Why do you think you were able to rest?

God. I know it was God. When I think about it now, there was, in a sense, nothing different about where I was — I was in a house, and I had my room. But at the convent there was peace — peace in the middle of a busy, loud city. The Sisters were there, but really, I know it was the presence of God and Mother Mary.

Once you discovered that you, too, could rest, how did your life change?

I decided I needed to focus on myself and rest more. I felt something going on in my heart, but I did not want to accept it. My best friend said, "Why don't you give God a chance? Make a good confession. I'll come with you." I started to go to confession and Mass, but still I would cry and cry in the chapel and ask God why my life was this way. *Why did all those bad things happen to me? Why did the father of my baby leave me when I said I was going to have our baby?*

Why have I suffered so much in my life?

One day, I was in adoration, and in my prayer Jesus told me, “I am the man of your life.” What does a man do in a woman’s life? He provides everything for her. He did not answer all my questions, but I knew He had been with me my whole life. Jesus was with me through all the hard things that had happened. After seeing that, I knew He would provide for me and my baby. Finally, I surrendered to God. I told Him, “You have been so good to me. Wherever You go, I will go.” Now I love God! My baby Grace and I are totally for Him.

We can think that once we find peace in God, everything in our life will be perfect — but Jesus also rests in the middle of the storms. What is your experience of resting with God even while life is hard and complicated?

I remember this one night, before I was pregnant, I was out partying, and I was in a situation where I could have died. This strength rose up inside of me, and I got up and walked away. I walked and walked. That was God in me. If He did not leave me for death, I know He will never leave me. Now, life is still hard! I don’t have the father of my baby to help me. But God is with me! Even at the convent, I knew God’s love was not this diaper or that pack of bottles. Lots of people support me, but it was all just a sign of His love. He is present, and He always has been present. I just know He is going to take care of us. I don’t know how, but I just know! God will be the Father of my baby.

You’ve had a lot of experience living out of this grace of rest, both in the convent, and now in your own place with your daughter Grace. What would you say to those who are seeking rest in their lives?

One of the Sisters was talking about how it is important to rest from work. Something she said really caught my attention: “God doesn’t trust a man who doesn’t sleep” (cf. Charles Peguy). That simple sentence has so much depth. I came to the conclusion that when you rest in God, you trust that He is with you, but also that He is preparing the best for you. It means that you give God control of your life, and, because of that, you can make better decisions. He is so good. When you love someone you want to tell everyone about it. God is so good. I want everyone to meet Him. I know who I am now: I am a daughter of God, and I am a mother. Rest is not just about the place. It is surrender to God. He is always with me.

When you rest in God, you trust that He is with you, but also that He is preparing the best for you.



Rest is God’s idea first

“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt 11:28-29).

“And He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while’” (Mk 6:31).

“In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength” (Is 30:15).

“So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that He had done in creation” (Gen 2:3).

“Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy... [T]he seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work” (Ex 20:8, 10).

“There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God... Let us therefore strive to enter that rest...” (Heb 4:9-11b).

“A great storm of wind arose and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion” (Mk 4:37-38).

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul...” (Ps 23: 1-3)

“And He said, ‘My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest’” (Ex 33:14).

“[T]he Lord has chosen Zion; ‘This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it’” (Ps 132: 13-14).

THE SECRET WEAPON

Leisure

What's the difference between leisure and entertainment?

Leisure demands that we engage our whole person; entertainment does not. Activities where we shut off our brain are not true leisure. In fact, some things we might do in our “free time” actually don't lead to freedom, peace, or happiness at all, but instead to a sense of emptiness, darkness, agitation, or loneliness. Of course, there's nothing wrong with watching a good movie or TV show! But if that replaces true leisure in our lives, we'll find ourselves frustrated and wanting more.

Examples of true leisure:

- Art
- Making or listening to good music
- Reading good books
- Creative writing
- Going for a walk in nature
- Good, uplifting conversations
- Recreational sports
- Hikes

Examples of entertainment that are not true leisure:

- Binging on Netflix/other shows
- Excessive sleep
- Video games
- Social media
- “Doomscrolling”
- Gossip
- Gambling

by Sr. Zélie Maria Louis, SV

Leisure is the key to a culture of life. Writing in the aftermath of World War II in Germany, philosopher Josef Pieper insisted that the rebuilding of the country and its intellectual and moral heritage must be founded not on work, but on a defense of leisure. His quotes below are taken from his acclaimed work, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*.

What is true leisure? Far from being a mere vacation or break from physical work, leisure is a condition of the soul, a contemplative beholding of life that allows us to take in the world as a whole. In leisure, we step back from practical work and simply do something for its own sake — not to measure ourselves or perform, and not even to rest or be refreshed. This could be anything from drawing a sketch, to playing the piano, to wondering at the beauty of nature, to writing a poem. Leisure, Pieper writes, is “not the attitude of the one who intervenes but of the one who opens himself; not of someone who seizes but of one who lets go.” The whole point of leisure is that it cannot be sought as a means to an end. Rather, in leisure, we are seeking and receiving Truth, Goodness, and Beauty for themselves, and the search and finding leaves us rejuvenated and more whole.

The opposite of leisure is acedia (idleness or sloth) or boredom, which Danish philosopher Søren Kirkegaard defined as “the despairing refusal to be oneself.” Pieper, similarly, speaks of acedia as a “restlessness of work,” springing from the inability to be at peace, to be still. Just as frenetic activity is a sign of self-reliance, the restlessness of work points to disagreement with ourselves, even a dissent to our own existence. He locates acedia as a sin against keeping the Lord's Day holy, whereby we are meant to rest in God.

Leisure takes courage. Let's be honest: it's not as if we don't have enough work to do. Leisure is not for those who have time for it; it's for every human person. It is essentially an act of faith: to trust God's command and rest in

OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

His sovereignty over all life. Leisure emphasizes being over doing. Pieper writes that leisure is born of a “cheerful affirmation by man of his own existence, of the world as a whole, and of God.” In other words, we can enjoy the life God gives us. In the books of *Genesis* and *Wisdom*, we see God in a state of leisure, having a sense of play in creating the world out of the abundance of His goodness, “rejoicing in His inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men” (*Prov 8:28-31*). This is the wonderful truth: God delights in His creation; God delights in you. Leisure is about stepping into this constant reality.

Leisure is not a luxury. As human persons, no matter where we are in life, we need leisure. In our work-exalting culture, leisure might sound like a non-essential indulgence better delayed until times are improved. However, in tough times, the need for leisure is all the more urgent, for only a right understanding of leisure will provide a right understanding of work.

Leisure brings meaning to our work. We don't leisure for the sake of work; we work for the sake of leisure. Now, work is certainly a good thing — an essentially human, dignified activity — as it is an invitation to participate with God in His labor of creation. Yet, work is not the culmination or point of our existence — leisure is. Leisure is not a checking out of reality, but a checking into reality, at the deepest level.

Leisure restores our innocence. To enter into leisure is to have the wonder of children again, to whom the world is new, a continuing gift, and which is best received in a spirit of play and trust. In leisure, we can experience what Pieper called “the surge of new life that flows out to us when we give ourselves to the contemplation of a blossoming rose, a sleeping child, or of a divine mystery.” Such experiences connect us with the undercurrent of life: that God continually creates and sustains us. The English author G.K. Chesterton in his book *Orthodoxy* reflects on the difference between grown-ups and children in receiving this reality:

Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, “Do it again;” and the grown-up

person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, “Do it again” to the sun; and every evening, “Do it again” to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we.

Leisure is about allowing God to love us. At the core of leisure is the foundational Christian truth that existence itself is a gift, freely given, not something we have deserved or achieved. The right response to such a tremendous gift is to joyfully receive it. However, this is easier said than done. Pieper notes that our Western culture distrusts everything that is without effort; at the root of this is the belief that “in good conscience, [man] can own only what he himself has reached through painful effort; that he refuses to let himself be given anything.” In our world, even “paid time-off” is something earned, accrued. But the truth is, God is choosing to hold us in existence at every moment. He desires us to let go of our tendencies to dominate or control, and to freely receive His salvation, which He offers to us at the cost of His Son's death and Resurrection. We don't have to earn our worth. We have been bought at a price (*see 1 Cor 6:20*); we are invited to join the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Celebration is true leisure. Pieper names festival or celebration as true leisure, “an affirmation of the basic meaning of the world” and of “considering things in a celebrating spirit.” When we engage in true leisure, we pause to take in and rejoice in life just as it is. Similarly, when we worship, we pause to take in and rejoice in God just as He is. The worship of God, then, is leisure's deepest source and highest form, for “the celebration of God's praises cannot be realized unless it takes place for its own sake.” Engaging in such worship — not just on Sundays, but as a stable disposition and response to life — keeps us connected to this unique power of the human soul on our journey home to God. In it, we experience God's harmony and His affirmation of our existence. We are made for celebration. We are made for God. We are made for life.

Let us not be afraid to engage in more leisure. Let us allow ourselves to rest. Let us allow ourselves to be transformed.

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MEET OUR NEW POSTULANTS



(Back L-R): Helen, Camryn, Molly, Louisa, Marissa; (Front L-R): Adeline, Laura, Ella, Kami, Abby

Laura

Hometown: Lake Charles, Louisiana

Studies: Canon Law

Favorite forms of leisure: Playing music, especially praise; afternoon cups of coffee with good conversations and good friends; long walks

Camryn

Hometown: Arlington, Texas

Studies: Creative Media Productions

Favorite forms of leisure: By sharing in the wonder, joy, and beauty of God's creation through nature, art, literature, dance, friendship, and prayer

Kami

Hometown: Pembroke Pines, Florida

Studies: Developmental Psychology

Favorite forms of leisure: By soaking in symphonies of all varieties! Currently, through rooftop sunsets and any Michael O'Brien novel

Marissa

Hometown: Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Studies: Speech Language Pathology

Favorite forms of leisure: Hiking, biking, naps, baking, and engaging in good conversations

Molly

Hometown: Sauk City, Wisconsin

Studies: Psychology

Favorite forms of leisure: Reading, writing, walking outside, chatting, and exercising (when I'm motivated!)

Helen

Hometown: Fulshear, Texas

Studies: Theology and Catechetics

Favorite forms of leisure: Singing and playing the guitar, reading good fiction, pondering and savoring the mysteries of God with others

Abby

Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio

Studies: Economics and Political Science

Favorite forms of leisure: I love to read, play the piano, golf, and enjoy anything that involves a cup (or two) of coffee

Adeline

Hometown: Columbus, Ohio

Studies: Nursing and Spanish

Favorite forms of leisure: I love creating, crafting, taking in beauty and God's creation, and spending endless hours with dear friends and family

Louisa

Hometown: Mendota Heights, Minnesota

Studies: Psychology and Counseling

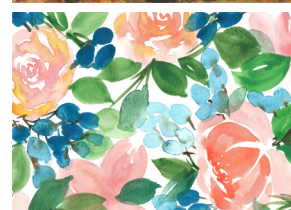
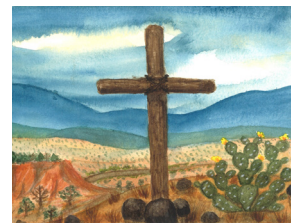
Favorite forms of leisure: Receiving His Beauty, Truth and Goodness through sunsets, kayaking, Adoration, art, poetry, conversations, reading, coffee, and cranberry orange scones

Ella

Hometown: Greencastle, Pennsylvania

Studies: Biochemistry

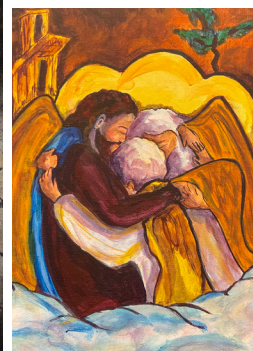
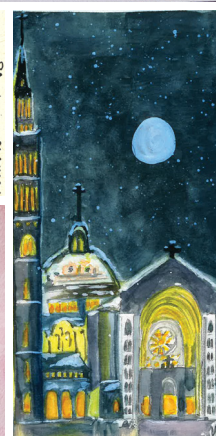
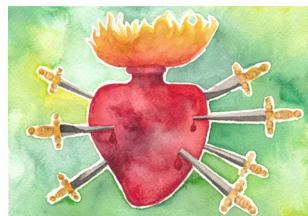
Favorite forms of leisure: Hiking, running, making prayerful art, praise and worship sessions with friends, and deep conversations over coffee or tea



Co-Creating in the Convent

“Art is a distinctly human form of expression” (CCC 2051). Made in the image of God, we as human persons — distinct from all other creatures — are invited to live a kind of “co-creation” with Him in our prayer, love, rest, and artistic works. By expressing His Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, we enunciate “the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God” (CCC 2500). True art, in all its forms, reveals a particular facet of the glory of God and draws us to Him.

As Sisters, we love to create art — paintings, drawings, poetry, stories, music, sculpture, wood-carvings, etc. As we share below a taste of the overflow of our prayer and rest, we invite you to think and pray about how the Lord is inviting you to “co-create” with Him.



ALL MY TIME IS FREE

By Sr. Maria Frassati, SV

Pope St. John Paul II once recounted to a journalist what his typical day was like. The journalist asked, “What do you do in your free time?” The Pope smiled and said, “All my time is free.”

How can a man whose life was filled with meetings and travel — often so busy that, en route to events, he dictated notes to his secretary while simultaneously writing about something else — claim that his time was “free”?

For him, to be free — fully human, fully alive — meant surrendering to the gift of the present moment; this surrender is ultimately an act of faith in the Father.

Pope St. John Paul II knew that real holiness means integration. The saints demonstrate that it’s possible to work hard, pray hard, and play hard. Their days, packed with works of mercy, teaching, constant giving — not to mention undergirded by an intense prayer life — were not without the delicate balance of creativity and rest.

Besides poetry and theater, **St. John Paul II** also loved the outdoors and was an avid sportsman. He was known to sneak away to the mountains for hiking and skiing. As a Cardinal, he was told, “It’s unbecoming for a Cardinal to ski.” Without missing a beat, he responded, “It’s unbecoming for a Cardinal to ski *badly*.”



St. Elizabeth of the Trinity loved playing piano and was even enrolled in a music conservatory. Yet, she sought deeper rest elsewhere: she maintained an interior awareness of the Triune God, dwelling in her soul through Baptism, and encouraged others to do likewise.



St. Thérèse of Lisieux’s love for God overflowed into her creative writing. She often wrote plays for her Sisters, roping in her novices to help perform them. In fact, one of her better-known photographs features Thérèse dressed as her heroine, St. Joan of Arc.



Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati balanced a life given to the service of the poor with his love for mountain climbing, skiing, opera, and poetry. On feast days, he was known to climb trees, perch on a limb, and proclaim whole stanzas from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* by heart.



St. Gianna Molla juggled a busy life as a wife, mother, and doctor, but she didn’t surrender her love of beauty and culture. She enjoyed painting, the outdoors, and going to the opera. Known for her refined taste in high-quality fashion, her most famous relic is an Italian leather glove.





St. Elizabeth Ann Seton recounts a powerful experience she had of leisure one day: “I set off into the woods and soon found an outlet in a meadow; and a chestnut tree with rich moss underneath and a warm sun overhead. Here, then, was a sweet bed. The air still, a clear blue vault above — the numberless sounds of spring melody and joy filled the air — and my heart was made to be as innocent as a human heart could be, filled with an enthusiastic love for God and admiration of His works... God was my Father, my all. I prayed, sang hymns, cried, laughed, and talked to myself about how far He could place me about my sorrow. Then I laid still to enjoy the heavenly peace that came over my soul; and I am sure, in the two hours I so enjoyed, grew ten years in the spiritual life...”

FREEDOM from Perfectionism



By Sr. Rose Patrick O'Connor, SV

The perfect shot – that was my dream. I was helping at a retreat, and we joined a group of young adults for their afternoon archery expedition. As we gathered at the edge of a field and the instructor demonstrated the technique, I had a fleeting image in my mind of being a mighty warrior princess who saves villages from dragons. But the bubble burst the moment I fired the first arrow. It twanged against the edge of the target, teetered for a moment, and then slowly dropped to the ground. I turned to the instructor. “How do I aim?” I asked. He smiled and shrugged. “Actually — you don’t.” “You don’t?!” I was shocked. How was I supposed to get the perfect shot? “No; you just focus on the target, and eventually the arrows will follow.”

How often do we find ourselves looking for a perfect recipe for success, the right MasterClass, the right vacation, the right work-life balance? Why is perfection so elusive?

Perfectionism is a demanding desire for absolute flawlessness. It can manifest in many forms. Some are more obvious, like an obsession with perfect grades, late nights at work, and rushing the kids to endless activities on the weekend. But it can also creep in more subtly: *Am I always rushed? Do I replay mistakes over and over in my head? Do I tell others of God’s unconditional love, but secretly think He’s given me so much that I can’t afford to fail? Do I continually compare myself to others and beat myself up over every error?*

The truth is, a perfectly-controlled life — if there could be such a thing — is not going to bring us peace. Peace comes when we realize that everything is gift. We can’t earn God’s love. Our dignity doesn’t depend on what we can do or achieve, how much money we make, or who our friends are. Our identity, our worth, and even our capacity to choose good things is given to us by the loving God who holds us in being. While excellence is good and to be sought out, absolute perfectionism can make us lose sight of reality. We can start to think, “If I don’t mess up, if I don’t make a mistake, if I work harder, if I get everything under control, then I’ll be loveable.” Perfectionism robs us of joy and rest. Perfectionism holds a false promise.

True perfection is union with God; it’s interior, not exterior. It’s not about fear of failure but a surrender to the Prince of Peace. It comes from living our gifts and gaps with Jesus. Jesus tells the rich young man, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor... and come, follow Me” (*Mt 19:21*). He invites us to let go of everything and to receive His eternal, infinite, personal love. Perfect love means giving a total gift of ourselves, and allowing ourselves to be loved in places of weakness — seeing weakness not as an obstacle, but as an invitation to communion. It means rejecting the lie that the whole world is on my shoulders and humbly allowing the Lord to transform even my sins and failures into wellsprings of grace. Letting go of perfectionism doesn’t mean lowering standards or being comfortable with sin. It means letting God be God, “Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier” (*CCC 2052*). Because our hearts were not made for control, but for Christ.

So how do we live a perfect life? Perhaps we can learn something from our archery instructor: “Focus on the target, and eventually the arrows will follow.” Let’s keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, surrender our reality to Him, and allow Him to draw us to perfect union in the Trinity.



Servant of God Al Schwartz founded several international communities for orphans, introducing them to the sacramental life. Yet, he was not without his daily jog. Having a few marathons under his belt, he also found rest reading on his shanty porch.



St. Hildegard von Bingen, German mystic and doctor of the Church, might be the only brilliant scholar we know who dabbled in such a wide a range of theology, music, medicine, and cooking — even inventing her own “Happiness Cookie” recipe, containing a blend of spelt and warm spices. On the side, she wrote ethereal Gregorian chant.



THE WAY OF *beauty*

THE WAY OF *God*

An interview with Francesca*

by Sr. Lumen Gloriam, SV and Sr. Catherine Joy Marie, SV

Can you share your story with us?

I was raised in an Italian culturally-Catholic family. By the time I reached my teens, I had stopped practicing my faith. While I was studying art at university, I met someone, and we got married in the Church. We were married for quite a number of years, but I eventually ended up getting a civil divorce.

After separating from him, I received a grant to go on a big backpacking trip and do research for my artwork. I was by myself most of the time in totally remote places, and I was enamored by the beauty of creation all around me. I've always been sensitive to that beauty: it's really what my work is about as an artist. The Lord put a fire into my heart: I felt so alive!

At the end of the trip, I met my current husband. We were married a year later, and we moved to New York. We weren't practicing the faith, and we were totally of the world. So when I got pregnant, I thought, "I can't do this right now. This is not convenient for me." So I ended up having an abortion. After the procedure, the doctor told me that I had been pregnant with twins. I didn't really think about it too much after that. In my own mind, I was a professional, a feminist. I needed to advance my career. I couldn't be burdened with children, and my husband didn't want to have children either.

In 2014, we went to Italy for seven months. We visited many churches, which was a kind of entrance into beauty. After returning to New York, we eventually found our way back to the Catholic Church.

How did your return to the Church affect your healing journey?

When we returned, I wanted to confess my abortion to the priest — for the first time in 20 years. In confession, I started talking about my previous marriage. The priest questioned if I had ever received an annulment for my previous marriage and explained that it would be necessary for me to live a full sacramental life.

Because I didn't understand what the priest was talking about, I started studying. I read the Scriptures, listened to wonderful preachers and theologians, and really looked into what an annulment was. Almost everybody had told me, "You don't need an annulment because you're sorry and the Lord forgives you." But something was telling me that this was not correct. I decided that I was going to go through the annulment process. In my hunger for the Eucharist, I talked with my husband, and we decided that we were going to live as brother and sister as we saw this annulment process through. Growing in my faith really helped me to begin my healing journey, and, in God's mercy, I eventually received the annulment.

*named changed for anonymity

How did you learn about healing after abortion?

I was looking for something online and found the Sisters of Life. I ended up reaching out, and Sister invited me to the upcoming Day of Prayer and Healing. I agreed to go, though I still hadn't confronted what the abortion actually meant. I didn't go in with a somber attitude, or even so much with sorrow or guilt or anything like that. I entered into the day in a very matter-of-fact way; I was a little defensive, and I felt removed from everything.

What changed?

During the Mass that day, you can bring a rose to the Divine Mercy image. When I did, I sat back down and Jesus just unlocked my heart. I honestly felt my heart crack, and I just started crying. I'd never ever cried about the abortion before then, and I'd never mourned.

How did you engage in your journey of healing from that point?

I started regularly working with the Sisters of Life, and getting counseling. For so many years, I hadn't allowed myself to receive God's mercy. I thought God was judgmental, and I was fearful of Him. Through the witness of all the women that I encountered through the Sisters, my heart opened to understand that a whole new way of being was possible for me. I became open to receiving this mercy. I fell so in love with Him. I wanted to receive Him for all those years I thought I'd lost. I know that He wants to give us as much grace as we can receive, and I asked for a capacity to receive everything He wanted to give me. It has been so profound, and such an incredible way for me to heal from the abortion, and from the sins of my past, and all the hurt that has affected me. He's always so good. It's such a beautiful, overwhelming sense to know that you're held and cared for.

How has beauty been part of your healing journey?

If we glance at a flower or close our eyes and feel the sun radiating on us, that is connecting with God in such a profound way. St. Teresa of Avila says, "There's been more tears shed for answered prayers than unanswered prayers." That's so right. Because the mercy of God is so good; I'm just brought to tears thinking about my life, and how good God is, and how amazing and merciful He's been — despite all of my infidelities.

I now have beautiful relationships where I can share the beauty of God, in a generative way that gives me back so much. He has allowed me to heal through living my vocation. It's been a beautiful, cyclical healing process. For me, it means receiving from Him, being able to give the gift to others, and then receiving more of the gift myself in a kind of "loop of grace."

For more information about Hope & Healing After Abortion: sistersoflife.org/healing-after-abortion

My heart opened to understand that a whole new way of being was possible for me.

“O JESUS,
I SURRENDER MYSELF TO YOU;
TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING!”

This powerful prayer holds a key to the experience of true spiritual rest. It is part of the popular Surrender Novena, written by Servant of God Father Dolindo Ruotolo (1882-1970) with words received by him in prayer from Jesus. Fr. Dolindo was an Italian Franciscan priest who dedicated his life to prayer and spiritual counsel and to whom St. Padre Pio once said, the “whole of paradise is in your soul.”

The novena leads us to set aside fears, anxieties, distress and agitation and draws us back to trust, faith, inner peace, and true childlike dependence on God in everything: “...trust only in Me, rest in Me, surrender to Me in everything” (Day 6). We are reminded of God's tender love: “I will carry you in My arms; I will let you find yourself like children who have fallen asleep in their mother's arms...” (Day 5). We are invited: “Close your eyes and let yourself be carried away on the flowing current of My grace. Repose in Me, believing in My goodness, and I promise you by My love that if you say, ‘You take care of it,’ I will take care of it all...” (Day 8).



God's rest is for you.

the power of SUNDAY



By Sr. Fidelity Grace, SV

Enter into God's rest

God's rest is for you. When God revealed His name to Moses, it was not "I go where I go" or "I do what I do" but "I AM WHO I AM" (*Ex 3:14*). While everything else grows and fades, God simply "is" — the Uncreated Creator, the Constant and Unchanging One, Being Itself. God's rest on the seventh day (see *Gen 1*) is not a celestial siesta or cosmic "vegging out," but more like a proud dad gazing upon his newborn child for the first time. Our Heavenly Father, in His perfection, beheld all of creation and "cast upon it a gaze full of joyous delight" (*Dies Domini, 11*). He didn't need to re-energize from the ardor of creating the world; He wanted to savor what He had made.

God looks at you and sees that you are "very good" (*Gen 1:31*), and He wants you to experience His delight, which is a participation in His rest, His being. He created you to rest in Him. For God, to be is to be with. As a communion of Persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — our God is a relationship. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity — Jesus, Emmanuel — entered the human scene as "God-with-us," precisely to invite our broken, restless hearts into the rest that He is.

When we rest on Sunday, when we pause activity in order just to be — and especially to be with God and others — we both imitate and receive God more fully. We touch eternity when we cease our labor to look again at the world around us — to delight in nature, to savor beauty, to marvel at the people with us. Sunday becomes a chance not to escape reality or recover from it, but to enter into its fullness, where we engage in our deepest purpose: knowing and resting in His love.

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What do I worship?

The Jewish Sabbath not only recalls God's rest after creation, but also makes present again the exodus from Egypt's slavery to the Promised Land's freedom. Moses' cry to Pharaoh, "Let my people go!" was not a plea for extra sleep, but for freedom to worship (see *Ex 7:16*).

"Worship" stems from the words "see" and "worth" — to acknowledge what is most important. *What do I worship? What if I really lived my Sunday as a day of rest? Would I wake up differently? Is worship a priority on Sunday or a tick on the to-do list? Do I realize that when I worship at Mass, I'm participating in the most meaningful act of my week?*

The value of work

Work is not a bad thing — in fact, it's a good thing! Of all creatures, God entrusted only human beings with the incredible capacity to build up the world through creativity, intelligence, language, and invention. But work cannot be the goal of our whole existence, nor the extent or value of it. Timecard punching, laundry, chores, stressful deadlines, to-do lists, buying, and selling are earthly phenomena that will only last as long as this world. Rest is eternal. And He's calling us to begin experiencing it now.

Some jobs (such as health care and public safety) require Sunday hours. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us, "Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of Sunday rest" (*CCC 2185*). But we can choose to forgo other tasks like strenuous housework, unneeded shopping, constant responding to emails, extended sports tourna-

ments, and excessive school work to give more space for God and the command for the rest He knew we'd need. We lay aside the need to accomplish, earn, or achieve, and make room for the things that breathe new life into our souls. Sunday becomes a physical, emotional, and spiritual reboot and standard for the week ahead.

The power of the 8th Day

After Christ's Passion, He kept His Sabbath rest in the tomb. Then the Resurrection changed everything. The seed of the Sabbath blossomed into the exquisite rose of the Lord's Day. A new existence awakened, transcending time "as we know it" — thus earning Sunday the nickname, "The Eighth Day." Since the Resurrection, Christians have gathered each week for a "mini Easter." The day of the Roman sun god became the day of the Son of God — the Sun that never sets.

You are worth dying for

The Sunday Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has no substitute. Gathering clandestinely in homes and in the catacombs during Roman persecution, and often giving up their lives rather than miss Mass, third century martyrs boldly proclaimed: "It is the Sunday Eucharist which makes the Christian...one cannot subsist without the other."

Before it is an obligation, Mass is a gift. Every time the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated, Jesus offers Himself in love — because you are worth dying for. And every Mass we attend, we can join our offering to His. We unite ourselves with Christ's sacrifice when we give God all the intentions of our heart, our joys and sorrows, our whole selves, and unite them with His death and Resurrection. And Jesus receives the gift that we are with joy!

Made for eternal happiness

If Sunday is lived well, we will feel refreshed, but also a bitter-sweet pinch — not merely because Monday looms, but a kind of nostalgic longing for our final destiny. Our earthly life is ultimately a pilgrimage to everlasting life. There is a heavenly banquet with a vast extended family awaiting us, a place of peace, delight, and total fulfillment: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9). We are made for glory. Let's start living it now. Let's reclaim Sunday.

Practical ways to reclaim Sunday:

Give God your best: Sunday is a day that reminds us of our dignity as children of God. So give your Sunday a special flair — like dressing up for Mass, eating special treats, or using nicer dishes.

Extra God-time: Let your heart and mind rest in God. For example: Pray a rosary or *Lectio Divina* or make a Holy Hour at church. Our hearts thirst to be with God, and He gives us a peace that nothing and no one else can.

Community Time: Step away from the screen and social media for quality face-to-face conversation. Cook up a new recipe and share a no-phones meal together! Take a picnic, watercolor, or play board games. Invite those in need of community to join you.

SUNDAY SNAPSHOTS:

Then & Now, Here & There

Sunday is rich in its sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. It reminds us of and helps us participate in the superabundant love of God!

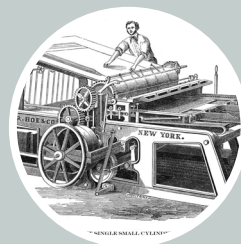


◀ **In the convent**, Sunday means a later rise time (6 am!), more singing at Holy Mass, dessert with meals, and extra time for leisure (eg. playing music, writing letters to family, taking a hike together, etc.).

In my Minnesota childhood, Sunday meant attending Mass with a legendary monsignor at St. Peter's parish, bike rides or ice skating, visits with grandparents, and the tantalizing aroma of a roast and a pie wafting from the kitchen where Mom whipped up one of her renowned Jello salads.



◀ **100 years ago, for those employed by NYC's largest newspapers** (along with policemen, firefighters, and railway workers), Sunday meant attending a 2:30 am "Printer's Mass" in lower Manhattan after meeting their deadline. Later, a 4:00 am Mass at St. Malachy's, the "Actor's Chapel," helped those in the entertainment industry fulfill their Sunday obligation.



For Eric Liddell, the Scottish athlete and devout Christian featured in the film *Chariots of Fire*, Sunday meant no work... which to him meant surrendering his scheduled 100-meter heat in the 1924 Olympics because it fell on the Lord's Day. (He later won gold in the 400-meter for which he hadn't trained.)



◀ **In Zambia**, Sunday means walking up to 1.5 days to get to church — even if no priest is present to celebrate Mass (in which case they receive formation from a catechist). If they are blessed to have a priest, Mass is several hours long and the faithful bring their gifts to the altar (often fruits of their farm labor) in a spirited procession, with drums and festive music. Everyone is dressed in colorful clothing as they give their "Sunday best" to God. Joy is key!



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A LEGACY OF GRACE

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MAY 3, 2025

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