



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2020

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SPIRITUAL LESSONS I LEARNED WHILE DIETING

Fr. Edward Looney

January 1st came and went, and hopefully some are still resolutely following their New Year's Resolution. Each year we probably make the same resolutions: eat better, drop weight, and exercise, to name only a few. One family I know shared with me their new diet regimen. I can tell you that losing weight is not one of my New Year's resolutions, but if I continue to drop pounds, I won't complain.

Back in May, I stepped on the scale and saw the highest number I had ever seen. I knew that a change was needed and I heard the success some people had with an app called My Fitness Pal, a calorie counter combined with computations of calories expended through exercise. At the end of May I started to diligently watch what I ate and did, consequently I saw the number on the scale decline. Throughout the experience, what I found while dieting were pertinent lessons corresponding to the spiritual life. Here's what I learned.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The first few days of counting calories brought me to a point of self-knowledge. It became easy to discover why I gained so much weight in two years and it helped to illuminate what changes needed to be made. The same is true in the spiritual life. If we want to root out sin, we need to become self-aware. Is there a certain time when I fall prey to sin? Or with a certain group of people? What sin is it that I need to address? Self-knowledge sheds light into the areas which need to change and can be beneficial not only to dieting but also in the spiritual life as well.

SELF-CONTROL

Counting calories as I dieted forced me to keep my appetite in check and exercise moderation. I love hors d'oeuvres and could eat a ton of Spinach and Artichoke dip in one sitting. With self-knowledge, I knew I couldn't eat whatever I wanted. Instead I needed to be vigilant and deny myself certain foods. On the very first day of my diet, I went to a graduation party and was faced with a plethora of food options. With the help of the My Fitness Pal app, I was able to identify what I could eat and stay within my limits. Dieting allowed me to grow both in virtue and the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

ROOT OUT VICE

One of the vices that my self-knowledge showed me was slothfulness. If I had a very sedentary day, I did not burn a lot of calories, meaning I would have to eat within the set calorie limit. I was motivated to move from inactivity to activity in order to open up calories for dinner or a snack. Another vice dieting rooted out was gluttony because one's goal cannot be met by overeating. Dieting proved itself to be a way to grow in virtue.

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FEASTS FOR JANUARY

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of January are:

- 1 Mary, Mother of God, Solemnity
- 2 Basil the Great; Gregory Nazianzen, Memorial
- 3 Most Holy Name of Jesus, Opt. Mem.
- 4 Elizabeth Ann Seton (USA and CAN), Memorial
- 5 Epiphany of the Lord, Solemnity
- 6 Andre Bessette, Opt. Mem.
- 7 Raymond of Peñafort, Opt. Mem.
- 12 Baptism of the Lord, Feast
- 13 Hilary; Kentigern (Scotland), Opt. Mem.
- 17 Anthony, Memorial
- 19 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 20 Fabian; Sebastian, Opt. Mem.
- 21 Agnes, Memorial
- 22 Day of Prayer for Unborn, Opt. Mem.

- 23 Vincent of Saragossa, Opt. Mem.
- 24 Francis de Sales; Our Lady of Peace, Memorial
- 25 Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle, Feast
- 26 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 27 Angela Merici, Opt. Mem.
- 28 Thomas Aquinas, Memorial
- 31 John Bosco, Memorial

The feasts of St. John Neumann (January 5) and Sts. Timothy and Titus (January 26), are superseded by the Sunday liturgy. □

THANK YOU

... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!

Psalm 106:2

Las Vegas, Nevada

800 Our Father Devotion

January 11, 2020

The Muego Family

Los Angeles, California

2000 Hail Mary Devotion

February 15, 2020

[Please call/e-mail Victor if you wish to be
one of the Six (6) Sponsors]

OUR CENACLE CORNER

*Seeking a deeper relationship with God
through meditation of passages from Holy Scriptures*

OBEDIENCE | HUMILITY | HEALING

GOD TOUCHED ME

MARIAN PILGRIMAGE 2019

By Evelyn Pua, a devotee

Many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us go up to the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, That he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Isaiah 2:3

Once again, The Spiritual Army of God the Father embarked on a Marian Pilgrimage on December 8 – 17, 2019. This time, we went to Ireland (Our Lady of Knock), Belgium (Our Lady of Banneux and Our Lady of Beauraing), Munich, Germany (Our Lady of Altötting) and Vienna, Austria (Our Lady of Mariazell).

I will not delve deep into each of the shrines since you can read about these in the internet, but I will write on the spiritual effect these shrines had on me.

Leaving Las Vegas armed with my **FAITH** in God and my faith in Mother Mary's intentions of sending us to visit the above-mentioned shrines, I did not have any expectations on what will occur and what I will encounter.



Upon reaching the **SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF KNOCK**, we were taken to a video room and watched the video which explained about the apparition of Mother Mary with St. Joseph on her right, St. John the Evangelist on her left and then an altar with the Lamb of God standing on it surrounded by angels. This alone struck me in awe since it occurred on a rainy night and lasted for 2 hours as the 15 people who witnessed it, prayed continuously. My heart was screaming **HOPE, HOPE, HOPE!** And the Shrine's guide told us during our Q&A that the silent message of HOPE was the cause of the apparition. And note that we were at this Shrine also on a rainy evening.

In Brussels, Belgium, the **SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF BANNEUX**

or **OUR LADY OF THE POOR**, gave me the feeling of **LOVE**. Mother Mary appeared to a little girl. Our Lady looked similar to the appearance of our Lady of Lourdes to St. Bernadette. She told Mariette Beco, "I am the Virgin of the Poor...Believe in Me, I will believe in you!"

In the succeeding apparitions, the following messages were given:

"Put your hands in the water. This fountain is reserved for Me. Goodnight. Goodbye."

"I am the Virgin of the Poor"

"This fountain is reserved for all nations to bring comfort to the sick. I will pray for you. Goodbye."

"I would like a small chapel."

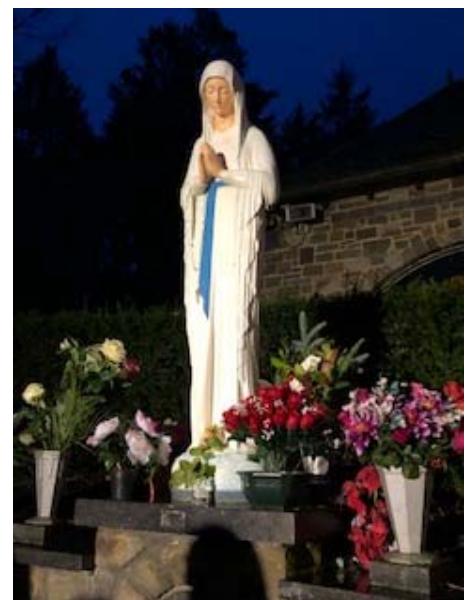
"I come to alleviate sufferings."

"Believe in me and I will believe in you. Pray very much. Goodbye."

"My dear child, pray, pray very much."

"I am the Mother of the Savior, the Mother of God. Pray very much."

In this apparition, Mother Mary brings her love to the poor who were suffering. She was a messenger of Peace.





The next shrine we went to was also in Belgium. It was the **SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF BEAURAING or OUR LADY OF THE GOLDEN HEART**. This apparition occurred before the apparition of Our Lady of Banneux within a six week period. The following messages were given:

"I am the Immaculate Virgin." Our Lady appeared to five children with her heart golden and resplendent.

Then, to Andree Degeimbre, one of the children, she said:

"I am the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven. Pray always, Goodbye!"

Finally, she told Fernande:

"Do you love my Son?"

"Yes!" the girl exclaimed.

"Do you love me?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then sacrifice yourself for me."

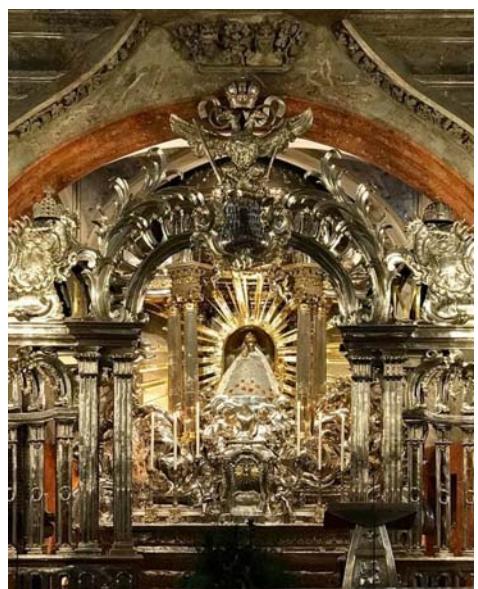
This shrine struck my heart with the message of **SACRIFICE** and the solution given by Mother Mary to PRAY, PRAY VERY MUCH AND PRAY ALWAYS. In front of Our Lady's image, a group of us prayed the rosary while battling the freezing temperature. The rain showers stopped as soon as we started praying.

At the **SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF ALTOTTING (THE CHAPEL OF GRACE)**, the miraculous image of The Black Madonna with the Child Jesus is enthroned. This shrine is also known as Germany's Our Lady of Lourdes because millions of people have flocked here in the hope that The Black Madonna will hear their pleas and prayers. Healing miracles were granted by Our Lady to those who came to this shrine. During the mass at the Shrine, we were all standing and because of this, I had an attack of sciatic pain on the top side of my right thigh. I massaged it and asked Our Lady of Altötting to relieve the pain so I can finish the liturgical celebration and she did grant it to me. After the mass, I was able to walk around and even went inside the museum without feeling the pain. Here, I have felt the **MIRACLE OF GRACE** of our Lord God through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother.



Nestled up high in the Austrian Alps is the city of Zell where a miraculous image of Our Lady is housed in The Church of the Miracles and is commonly known as **BASILICA OF OUR LADY OF MARIAZELL**. The legend of the town's founding

states that in 1157, the St. Lambrecht Monk Magnus was sent to the area of the current town as a minister. When his way was blocked by a rock, he set down the Marian figurine he had brought with him, whereby the rock broke apart and left Magnus' way clear. On a nearby bank, he settled down, placed the figurine on a tree trunk, and built a cell out of wood, which served as both his chapel and his living quarters.



Behind the altar of the Basilica is the Holy Spring Chapel. According to the legend the water at this Holy Spring miraculously heals eye problems. About 1330, a Zelfahrt ("Zell journey") was introduced as a form of **ATONEMENT** for criminals. This brought more pilgrims to the site.

To summarize, Mother Mary, in this pilgrimage, has taught me FAITH, HOPE, LOVE, SACRIFICE, MIRACLE OF GRACE AND ATONEMENT as the steps to improve our spirituality and to be closer to God. All these are bound by our PRAYERS which the Blessed Virgin Mary has asked us to do. PRAY, PRAY WITH ALL OUR HEARTS, PRAY ALWAYS. I have always prayed for an increase in my spirituality, in my relationship with God and He has answered my prayers thus. With joy in my heart, I thank God for this enlightenment. □

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

SEEKING INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS THROUGH THE BIBLE

STRIVING TO HAVE FAITH

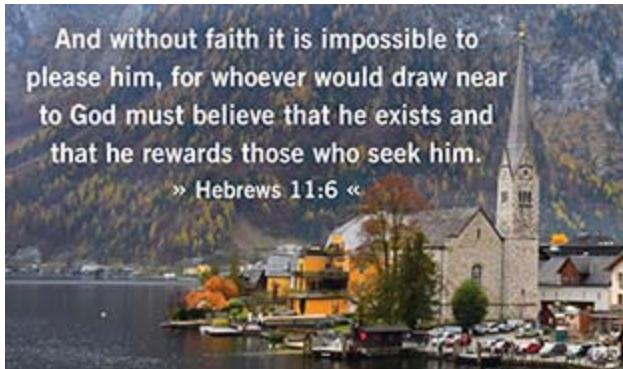
by Victor H. Araneta

Father, help me to believe that even if I am vulnerable and alone, I am not lost to you and that faith lingers in my heart. I know it is not about trusting in

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

» Hebrews 11:6 «

Faith itself, but trusting in You. Help me to have faith enough to carry on with my life no matter how deep my struggles are and how long and dark my tribulations come by as long as, the path leads to your glory. □



You are welcome in my apparition site the very center of God's precious gift. Healing in this place of Knock had taken place in multiples.

Your Lady of Knock
12092019

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

FEAST OF THE HOLY INFANT JESUS



SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 2020

IN LOS ANGELES:
CONVENT OF THE SISTER DISCIPLES
OF THE DIVINE MASTER
MASS @ 8:30 AM
FOLLOWED BY INFANT JESUS
DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS, SINULOG
AND BRUNCH

IN LAS VEGAS:
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
ST. FRANCIS DE SALES
CATHOLIC CHURCH
1111 MICHAEL WAY, LAS VEGAS
RECEPTION TO FOLLOW AT THE
MSGR. LAVOY HALL

**PLEASE WEAR RED!
BRING YOUR
THANKSGIVING PRAYERS,
PETITIONS AND YOUR
INFANT JESUS IMAGE(S)
FOR BLESSING AND THE SINULOG!**

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SPIRITUAL LESSONS I LEARNED WHILE DIETING

SOLIDARITY

I sometimes went to bed with a slight hunger during the first few weeks of my diet. It was the days that I ate a bulk of calories in the morning or for lunch that forced me to eat a smaller dinner, maybe even just a yogurt. Going to bed with a little hunger can become a spiritual act by remembering that so many people are going to bed hungry, not only in third world countries, but also on our streets. Even if I wasn't completely satiated, I realized that I had experienced many blessings throughout the day and could offer such a small sacrifice as penance.

PLANNING AHEAD

With the help of tracking calories on the app, I knew how many calories I could eat in a given day. If I projected that I would be having a bigger meal in the evening, it would require me to eat smaller meals or be more active so as to open up calories. I had to plan ahead. This is true for the spiritual life. If we want to have a good spiritual life and dedicate some time to prayer each day, we need to plan ahead. If I normally pray in the morning but have a 5 am flight, when will I pray during that day? Or if I have a late evening commitment and that is my time for prayer, when could I pray earlier? The saints called this remote preparation. It was needed for dieting and it is something we need in our spiritual lives if we want a healthy relationship with God.

HONESTY WITH SELF

The goal of dieting, especially when tracking through an app, is to not use up all your calories for a given day. The goal would be to have a deficit every day. Sometimes that didn't happen. There was a temptation for me not to enter all my food intake so that I could have the satisfaction of coming in under the count when I knew I exceeded it. I had to be honest with myself and admit what I ate and adjust going forward. This is true for the spiritual life as well. Sometimes we need to be honest with our selves about the changes we need to make. If we desire holiness, and we know that one path will lead to it and the other won't, we need to be honest, and journey down the right path. It's true for the confessional. Some people might find they are embarrassed by their sins and want to omit it from their confession. We need to be honest and admit our sins, not only for the validity of the Confession, but also for ourselves as we strive to reject sin and live virtuously.

HABITS OF LIFE

From the time I began counting calories back in May to the present day, I've dropped nearly 30 pounds and am very content with my progress. I had a little extra help

in the process by having orthodontics installed on my teeth which also serves as a preventative measure against harder, high calorie food. After just three months of calories, I really haven't logged into the app to enter my food intake or measure my activity level. I acquired the habit and now know what I need to do and how much I can eat. It took a little training but now it has become a way of life for me. Again, the same is true for the spiritual life. When we give God time each day, when we attend Mass weekly or even daily, it becomes a habit, and we couldn't imagine our life without it.

At the present moment, I continue not to count calories and I consistently am seeing the declining number on the scale, getting me closer to the goal I set when I first began. If I should see the number on the scale creep up, I know what I need to do: become self-aware of what I'm eating, exercise self-control, and begin planning ahead once again. As you carry out your New Year's resolution after about several weeks into the New Year, may you discover good health, not only physically, but also recognizing the spiritual value of what you have undertaken. □

Fr. Edward Looney was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Green Bay in June 2015, and is an internationally recognized Marian theologian, writer, speaker, and radio personality. Author of the best-selling books, *A Heart Like Mary's* and *A Rosary Litany*, he has also written a prayer book for the only American-approved Marian apparition received by Adele Brise in 1859 in Champion, Wisconsin. He currently serves as Administrator of two rural Wisconsin parishes. You can follow him on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram at the handle @FrEdwardLooney.