



# SUMMONS

A Publication by *Be the Men*

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## **FROM THE EDITOR**

Happy Easter! This issue is our 12th which means it's been one year since we first started *Summons*. I just want to say thank you for being with us, and for joining in the mission through your prayers, support, and patronage. As always, this month we tackle some big topics for us as men, but specifically men in the Church. It's not easy - there are difficult issues, hard conversations, and tough decisions, Take it in and ponder it. Lastly, if you want to help us celebrate one year of *Summons*, share this issue with a fellow brother. Thanks and enjoy! + Mark

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## **1-MINUTE REFLECTIONS**

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## **JOIN THE MISSION**

*Our mission is to re-engage Catholic men today. There are 3 ways you can join us in that mission. One, pray for us. Prayers are powerful and we certainly need them. Two, write for *Summons*. We're always looking for new articles and new writers. If you've got an idea for an article or a draft, email us at [admin@bethemen.com](mailto:admin@bethemen.com). Third, financially support *Summons*. Each paper copy costs about \$3 to print and ship. Without our patrons, we couldn't do this work. Visit [Patreon.com/BeTheMen](https://Patreon.com/BeTheMen) to learn more. Join us!*

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# WE'RE NOT MEN

*Kyle McLemore, Staff Writer*

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There's a classic episode of Seinfeld (then again, which episode isn't a classic) where George and Jerry are sitting in a coffee shop talking about the best way to dump their girlfriends that they're not happy with. The conversation goes on toward absurd lengths they will take to do away with their women when Jerry finally has enough. He buries his face in his hands, gives a big sigh, and tells George, "What's wrong with us? We're not men!" The rest of the conversation is pretty funny and it basically boils down to the fact that they are so afraid of commitment that they'll do anything to avoid marriage. However, they see the problem inherent in avoiding marriage, or commitment in general; you can't be a man if you don't have commitments.

Now, commitment is just one of the two major issues facing masculinity these days. The other major issue I notice in our society is the issue of Temperance. These are two of the Cardinal Virtues and they are virtues that we men could do well to practice. Keep in mind, a virtue is a habit and a habit is something that you do; habitually. It is repeated over and over and not something that you necessarily just receive, or pay for, or are gifted. You have to earn it and it only appears to get easy after you have done it for a while.

Let's start with Temperance first. I do this because I think our lack of temperance leads us to a lack of commitment. Temperance is

the virtue of withholding bodily pleasure. This could be abstaining from alcohol for a while (it won't kill you) or refusing to look at porn. It could also be something as simple as saying no to chocolate for a day because you know you're only going to gain weight and derail your diet. Now, most people think that temperance is important only in large things; i.e. adultery, murder, etc... But, just the opposite is true. It is arguably more important to practice temperance in the little things because this teaches us self control. Someone who knows how to give up a cookie after dinner is probably going to be able to restrain himself from larger temptations. But, someone who can't help eating cookies every night would be much more prone to commit larger and more grievous sins because they just don't have the habit of self control.

The lack of temperance today is extremely apparent in men. I'll just list a few examples of some people I know. "I can't stop drinking coffee." This comes from a friend of mine who drinks coffee all day and has chest pains and can't sleep. He's 30 years old. That's ridiculous. My advice to him over and over again has been, "stop drinking coffee," and he always replies that he just can't. Most men that I know can't control their tongues. They curse up a storm and then wonder why they have short tempers and get angry quickly. (I, like many men, also struggle with anger.) Other colleagues of mine can't stop looking at pornography and a few men I know circulate a "Shot of the week" between buddies. Then, they wonder why they are having issues at home. It's simple. Little things you do count for a lot. If you're looking at porn, you won't put in

the time required to make a successful marriage. Say no to looking at porn and say yes to caring for your wife. Say no to eating an extra cookie after dinner and it's easier to say no to porn. Say no to an extra cup of coffee and maybe you'll be able to sleep!

Now I'm not imposing monasticism here on everyone and I know that you can't abstain from everything. But you must abstain from some things. Temperance is the opposite of self-indulgence and for Aristotle to "delight in such things is brutish." So, having all of the beer you want, watching porn and eating all of the food you want doesn't make you a man. **It makes you a brute.**

Which brings us to fortitude, which is courage or bravery. This virtue is the ability to charge ahead and stick to a commitment even when you don't want to or when it scares you. I would argue that you absolutely could not practice temperance if you don't already have fortitude. The reason for that is that we've become so used to self indulgence that any time we think about stopping something it actually scares us. We don't like being uncomfortable and it's amazing to see the tricks our minds play on us.

This brings us back to Seinfeld. When Jerry says, "We are not men!" what he is saying is that he has no courage. He is so comfortable with being a bachelor, so comfortable with being untethered from a committed life, that the thought of commitment after all of these years has actually scared him and lead him to push away women that he could have made a meaningful life with. But, he knows that a man

is someone who does commit. Someone who does hold true to their word and sticks things out for the long haul. A man is someone who looks at his wife on his wedding day and means it when he says he'll love her in good times and bad, in sickness and health until death should part them. But Seinfeld, like men of our generation is one that is inundated with the results of the sexual revolution and no fault divorce. If you don't like something, then change it; no matter what commitments you have made. If we can't honor something as basically human as marriage then how will we persevere and uphold any of our other commitments when times get tough?

So, forge ahead. Become the man you're called to be. As Saint Pope John Paul II reminds us, "Do not be afraid. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity." This, from a man who risked his life to become a priest in Nazi occupied Poland. This, from a man who was shot out of hatred and courageously forgave his attacker. This, from a man who practiced temperance by only eating an apple for dinner every night no matter what feast his guests were enjoying. Giving up the pleasures of life that we're used to can be hard. But you know what will be really hard? Watching your life fall apart because you don't have the courage to do what's right. Examine your life and find where your faults are. Write them down and then figure out what you need to do to change. And, here's the key; **just do it.** Don't give yourself excuses. Don't think about how hard it will be. Just make the change and you'll be a better man for it.

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## KEEP HOLY

*Mark Quaranta, Staff Writer*

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Now that Lent is over and Easter is here, I have a new challenge for you. And, by challenge, I mean a commandment that God gave to us. And that is to keep Holy the Sabbath (and we're not *just* talking about getting to Mass).

This is a topic that has continued to pop up in my own life, and one that I am sad to admit, I struggle with. Let's be honest, we're busy. During the week, most of our time is eaten up by work. Whatever is left over goes to our families. Even taking care of ourselves mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually gets pushed to the margins. By the time the weekend rolls around, we've got a lengthy to-do list consisting of running to Home Depot, doing yard work, getting to soccer practice, shopping for groceries, catching up on overdue work projects, going out to dinner, and of course finding time to relax with the family. It's no surprise that our Sundays become an extension of Saturday or Pre-Monday. In other words, it's just another day of the week.

But, Sunday is not just another day. And this isn't some personal health rant about how you need to relax more and take care of yourself. That's important. But for Catholics, nothing is more important than following the will of God. Sometimes, that's very difficult, namely because we don't always know the will of God. We must discern how he is calling us.

However, this is not one of those cases. It could not be more clear.

*"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." Ex 20*

The book of Exodus gives us a high level, big picture view of the Sabbath and what God asks of us and why. But, to bring it back to 2019, this is how the Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it: *"The Sabbath is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money."* CCC 2172

The servitude of work and the worship of money. Those words might be a shot to the gut for many of us. Even if you don't see it at first, look at your actions, especially on Sunday. What do they have to say about our relationship with work and money? Sundays should be times for Mass, prayer, rest and relaxing with the family. If they're not, it's time to take a hard look at why that is.



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# KERYGMA: WHY IT MATTERS

*Rev. Daniel Kravatz, Staff Writer*

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*“For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Jesus died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried; that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” 1 Cor. 15:3-4*

Passing on the faith can be one of the most frustrating things that we do. We know the beauty of the faith. We have experienced how the truths of the faith lead us to true, lasting happiness. We may even have studied theology and how to best spread that faith to others. Yet, people, including those closest to us, can so easily dismiss us when we start talking about the faith. We know that so many Catholics stay away from the Mass on the weekend. How could they not listen to our well thought out and convincing arguments! It can feel like we are banging our heads against the wall. One mistake we often make, in talking about the faith with others, is assuming that they have the same foundation as we do. This is why the kerygma is so important. In many ways, the kerygma is the mystery of Easter. Jesus came to suffer the terrible death of the Cross and rise to new life so that He might destroy sin and death forever and open up to us the possibility of eternal life. Without this kerygma, this “preaching,” nothing else matters.

St. Paul knew this well. Before he encountered Our Lord on the Road to Damascus, he went about persecuting the Church at any chance he got. He even listened to the beautiful sermon of St. Stephen as he was being stoned to death, but it meant nothing to him. It wasn't until Saul encountered Jesus that everything changed. He began to see what Jesus had done for him, and it was only then that Paul transformed his entire life and became the greatest evangelist the Church has ever known. He realized that the foundation of everything he was called to do has its basis in the kerygma. It is why he passed it on to the Corinthians “as of first importance.” It's the most important thing because it doesn't depend on us, but only Jesus!

For our catechesis to matter, the kerygma must be firmly in place. The kerygma makes what we say matter. Otherwise, the truths of the faith become like any subject we may study in school. It may be interesting, but, in the end, is it any more important than math or history? However, if we believe that Jesus came to save us from our sins and make us into the adopted sons of the Father, then the faith begins to become the most important thing in our lives.

Easter, at least for my family, is a time where we all get together. And if your family is anything like mine, there are many who have strayed from the faith. While it may be tempting to tell them about the new argument we just heard proving God's existence, perhaps a different approach may work. Talk to them about the mystery of Easter and how that means eternal life for us. Jesus came to

die for us so that we might live, and He asks of us the only thing we can give Him: our entire lives! In giving Jesus our entire lives, we receive everything.

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## WHAT IS NATURAL LAW?

*Steve Rohe, Staff Writer*

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*Natural law* is a term used to describe the universal moral law of God, accessible to all people by the light of human reason. This law is universal because everyone, including people who have never received divine revelation, can know it. St. Paul, for instance, proclaimed that even people who have never encountered something as basic as the Ten Commandments can still apprehend God's important moral truths because "*what the law requires is written on their hearts*" (Rom. 2: 15). St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that the natural law "*is nothing other than the light of understanding infused in us by God, whereby we understand what must be done and must be avoided.*" Indeed, it is because of the natural law that Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and even atheists and agnostics can hear their consciences tell them what they *may* do, what they *must* do, and what they *must never* do.

Natural law explains people's deep-seated understanding that crimes such as murder and theft are wrong, whereas charitable acts such as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked are right. Moreover, it helps us instinctively

relate such actions to the way human beings have been made. When we ask, "What is human life *for*?" or "What is the *nature* of a human being?" we want to know our ultimate goal in life and how to reach that goal. Natural law shows us both, or as professor Charles Rice has written, it's "*a set of manufacturer's directions written into our nature so that we can discover through reason how we ought to act.*" Just as we would not harm our car's mechanical nature by putting molasses into the tank, which is made for gasoline, we should not harm our human nature by acting in ways which contradict its design. That is, by acting immorally.

Natural law differs from other moral philosophies because it is not subjective, arbitrary, inconsistent or illogical. The *Catechism* says, "*God's almighty power is in no way arbitrary: 'In God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are all identical. Nothing therefore can be in God's power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect.'*" God loves us, so not only His positive commandments but also the moral laws we discover through reason will always correspond to what is good for us as human beings. They will never just be a set of incoherent, disconnected, nonsensical rules. If anything, it is our culture's moral relativism that is arbitrary because it reduces morality to mere popular opinion or the will of the powerful (i.e. "might makes right").

Some Catholics today argue against the use of natural law to instruct, calling it outdated or ineffective and suggesting pedagogical techniques that are more in line with modern

sensibilities. But children who are raised in our culture of moral relativism often become confused, disoriented and lost. If we provide them with a moral foundation through the natural law, if we can help them see that the way they should act corresponds to the way they are made, they will feel safe and secure in the truth, even as the rest of the world stumbles in darkness.

It should be noted that there are several common misunderstandings with regard to natural law. First, natural law is *not* the same as the “laws of nature.” Scientific laws explain how matter and energy behave in the physical world. These laws cannot be disobeyed because they describe what happens rather than would *ought* to happen. For example, the law of gravity describes how a falling bomb accelerates toward the earth. Natural law tells us whether it is right or wrong to drop the bomb on a given target.

Second, natural law is *not* what happens with other animals in nature. For example, when Christians say that certain human behaviors are unnatural, disordered, unhealthy, abnormal, perverse, perverted, wrong, or go against our nature, they mean that those acts contradict how human beings *ought* to act, not merely what happens in the natural world. Humans are animals, but we are rational animals. Therefore, we should not make the behavior of lower animals our standard of morality. Lots of behaviors are “natural” for other animals, like stealing, forced sex, or infanticide, but that does not make those behaviors natural for a rational human being with a will and an intellect.

Finally, natural law is *not* what feels natural to me. A person may have a strong inclination to cheat on his or her spouse, but the consequences of those decisions show that we shouldn’t always follow our “natural feelings.” This doesn’t mean we should *never* follow our instincts and feelings. Rather, it means we should use our minds to tell us which feelings and inclinations we should follow.

C.S. Lewis used the analogy of a piano to explain the relationship between our animal instincts that tempt us to do evil and our rational minds that know the moral law. He said that instincts are like the keys on the piano, and morality (i.e. the natural law) is like the sheet music that tells when to play the keys at the right time. For example, the fight instinct is good for a young boy if a stranger is trying to pull his sister into a car and abduct her. However, it’s bad if he is frustrated with his sister during play and uses fists to settle the matter. Likewise, the flight instinct is good when running away from a tsunami. However, it’s cowardly when running away from an infant drowning in a swimming pool.

In his classic definition, the great philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas said that natural law is man’s participation in God’s eternal law, an intersection between human reason and divine wisdom. Unlike the lower animals, we humans are created with an intellect and a will, which means that we are the only ones with the ability to reason morally and choose between right and wrong. You could even say, it’s in our nature.

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# GATHER THE FRAGMENTS

Kyle McLemore, Staff Writer

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*“And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost.”” John 6:12*

I recently attended a Mass where a priest gave a great homily regarding the Eucharist and how we should conduct ourselves during the Mass. I cannot remember his exact words as a few days have passed but I want to share the portion of his homily that I remember.

*“In this parish, there is a very particular reason why we ask each parishioner to receive on the tongue. It goes further than that as well. If you’ll notice, from the time of the consecration, throughout the distribution of the Eucharist and until the priest washes his hands, his thumb and forefinger do not separate. All of this is done because if this is truly the body of our Lord, if this is truly the flesh of the savior, then we must follow his instructions and not let any part of his body be lost. I can assure you, if you receive Communion on your hand, a particle will be lost.”*

There was no pomp or circumstance to his homily. There was no public berating or “holier than thou” message. Instead, a humble priest reminded the faithful of Christ’s own teaching. That when he performed his miracle of the multiplication of loaves, which is a

prefiguration of the Eucharist to come, he commanded the apostles to gather up the fragments of this precious bread. Not because they were to take it to the food bank later, but because it was holy. It was something that touched the divine and was made so special that it could not just be discarded or treated like any other piece of bread. How much more then, should we revere the Eucharist which is Christ physically present to us? How much more care should be put into the distribution and reception of the Eucharist? Are we behaving in the proper manner if this is truly the body and blood of our Lord and Savior? These are all questions we should be asking ourselves, especially in light of the scandals and loss of faith over the last few decades.

Until June 1977, almost every single person in the U.S. received the Eucharist on the tongue while kneeling. Think about that. For almost 2000 years we all received Our Lord in the same manner so as to honor him as best we can and *not lose a fragment* of His body. Then, in the late 70s, we allowed Communion in the hand and we allowed laypeople to distribute the Eucharist. The subsequent fallout is that now 60% of Catholics do not actually believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist<sup>1</sup> in spite of the fact that the indult allowing Communion in the hand stated this, “must not turn out to be the occasion for regarding it as ordinary bread.”<sup>2</sup> Despite that command most Catholics now believe it’s just a symbol. But Christ himself firmly declares that He is truly present in the Eucharist (John 6) even to the point that he let some of his

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.catholic.org/news/national/story.php?id=54055>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/communion\\_in\\_hand.htm](https://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/communion_in_hand.htm)

disciples walk away over the teaching. Cardinal Sarah, head of the Congregation for Divine Worship, called Communion in the hand, while standing, “*The most insidious diabolical attack... in trying to extinguish faith in the Eucharist,*”<sup>3</sup> because of its ability to physically show less respect and reverence for Our Lord. He knows that our actions, just as much as our interior disposition, matter when it comes to receiving our Lord. It all becomes a case of “do what I say, not what I do,” and any parent knows that our actions matter more to our children than any words we share with them. So it is with the Eucharist.

If Christ commanded us to “gather up the fragments” then I think we’re in for a hard wakeup call in how we personally conduct ourselves when we receive Communion. Each and every one of us can truly examine ourselves and see if the way we are receiving our Lord, A) lines up with the continuity of how our forefathers participated in the Eucharist, B) honors our Lord by reverencing Him appropriately and C) helps others to see just how incredible we believe this sacrament is. If we’re not meeting these requirements then we may need to go back and further study the church's teaching on the Real Presence. We may need to speak with our Pastor or a spiritual director for help in understanding. We should study how the Angel at Fatima instructed the Children to receive Communion while kneeling and on the tongue in reparation for offenses against Our Lord. Or, we may need to spend much time in prayer

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<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/cardinal-sarah-we-need-to-rethink-the-way-communion-is-distributed>

asking the Lord to show us the way. After all, He is, “the way, the truth, and the life.”

*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi* (loosely, how we pray is what we believe) certainly applies to the Eucharist because Catholicism is an enfleshed religion. Our Lord became man and at the end of time our bodies will be resurrected and glorified. So, what we do physically matters very much to Christ. Just as much as our interior disposition. Fortunately, each of us can start to make a difference here. We can each begin to take more care in how we’re living our lives and preparing for Communion. We can take more care in making sure our souls are cleansed by confession before reception. We can make sure that our reception is holy and reverent and also communicates to others that we truly believe the King of the Universe is in our presence. We can restore the practice of silence in the presence of the Eucharist before and after Mass. We can encourage our priests to say the Mass more reverently and let them know we are so thankful for their ministry. There is so much we can do but nothing as simple as receiving on the tongue at your next Communion. You can make sure that none of these precious fragments are lost and by doing so, you encourage others to do the same and bring great glory to Our Lord.

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## ON DISCIPLESHIP

*Thomas Hodgskin, ACatholicDad.com*

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Growing up, Catholicism was always a large part of my life: church every Sunday and on

days of holy obligation, rosary every Sunday night, and prayers before bed. I never minded any of that; it simply was the life I knew. As I got older I actually enjoyed it. I found that my faith gave me some comfort during adolescence. I also saw the comfort it gave my parents as they struggled through the trials and tribulations that raising six boys would bring anyone. I never had any large “crises of faith” so to speak, though the role of God in my life did grow smaller as I entered adulthood. Throughout my twenties I engaged in what could charitably be described as less than savory behavior, of which I remain forever ashamed. After hitting my own personal rock bottom, which saw me come a hair’s breath away from losing the love of my life, I decided that something needed to change. I needed help. My future wife and I began attending mass together regularly. We began to discuss our faith with each other and what God’s role in our lives had been and what we wanted his role to be moving forward. After several false starts over the previous near-decade, we gave our relationship up to Him. Within a year we were engaged, within two years we were married, and now five years into marriage we have two little girls and a truly blessed life. And it was all because we decided to say yes to God.

Sometimes living my Christian faith is not easy. Well, often times it’s not easy. At best it can be awkward and uncomfortable; at worse it can be outright hostile and dangerous even in a “free” society such as ours. Referring to today’s cultural landscape, the famed protestant theologian and philosopher William Lane Craig said, *“American society and*

*culture is so poisonous to Christian faith that if you feel comfortable in American culture there is something wrong with your discipleship. The Christian who is committed to following Christ seriously ought to feel very uncomfortable in this culture.”* The call to discipleship is a clear and strong message of the Gospel. In no uncertain terms are we, once having accepted the truth of salvation as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, to share that truth with all people of all nations. Easier said than done. How are we to be Disciples of Christ in a world that tells us to keep our faith at home, quiet and unseen? As with anything worth committing to, we must begin with self-examination.

Are we true believers? Have we accepted the truth of our faith? My life was forever changed when several years ago I became aware of the fact that the evidence of our faith is overwhelming. The historical, archaeological, and anthropological evidence for the validity of the Gospels is compelling and convincing. Furthermore, the scientific evidence in favor of a true beginning to our universe, which supports the logical arguments for the existence of a divine creator, is beyond persuasive. The more I study these subjects – as much of a novice as I admittedly am – I have become more and more convinced that not only does God exist, not only has He made himself known to us through divine revelation, not only was He incarnate and became man, not only He was crucified and died for all of mankind, and not only was He resurrected in the fulfillment of prophetic scripture but beyond all that, what I became convinced of more than anything was that this

timeless, spaceless, immaterial, all powerful, all knowing, and personal creator of the universe and all things seen and unseen not only created me but, in fact, loves me.

I am convinced of that truth. Yet, paradoxically, I struggle to believe it. By that I mean that I struggle to live my life accordingly. I constantly feel that if I truly did believe it then I would be doing more. The realities of my life seem to get in the way of me proclaiming the gospel. I need to work so I can provide shelter and food to my children. I need to spend time with my family and take care of the house. I have obligations that seem to take up the entirety of my day leaving no time to go out and proclaim the gospel. So, am I a true believer? Am I a disciple?

I was sharing this concern with a fellow brother some months ago. I expressed my frustration with my desire to want to do more and my seeming inability to do so. He reminded me of where I was: in a church basement, at a faith meeting, sharing my faith with other men. That is God's work. It was a powerful reminder that following Christ does not always mean going to the farthest, darkest reaches of human civilization with Bible in hand preaching chapter and verse. That is good, certainly, but for many it is just not feasible. Instead, we are called to live our lives, daily, for Christ letting everything we do no matter how ordinary or seemingly mundane speak to his love for His and be a reflection of our commitment to Him.

Faith is not a solitary virtue. We cannot keep it to ourselves. It must be shared, and

discussed, and argued over and struggled with. I will always struggle with doubt and feelings of inadequacy. I will trip and stumble. At times I will find my efforts to share my faith insufficient, I will be humbled, maybe embarrassed, probably uncomfortable, and I will feel like giving up. Most of all, there will be fear; fear of being ignored, fear of being mocked, and fear of being offensive. But I will remember that that fear is nothing more than the Devil trying to silence me. Truth is often ignored. It is often mocked. And the truth can very often be offensive. But that cannot be a deterrent to speaking it. And so in those times of doubt, and anxiety, and fear, I will remember this: I am good enough. I am worthy. I have been chosen by God to do whatever I can to love Him and love others by telling them about Him. And as with most things that fear tries to prevent me from doing, once I do it I will be glad I did. I always am.

Recall the words of St. John Vianney: *“There is no doubt about it; who seeks comfort, who flies from anything that might spell suffering, who is over-anxious, who complains, and who becomes impatient at the least little thing which does not go his way – a person like that is a Christian only in name; he is only a dishonor to his religion, for Jesus Christ said so: ‘Anyone who wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross every day of his life, and follow Me.’”*

And gentlemen, if you're wondering where to begin then recall also the words of St. Teresa of Calcutta: *“If you want to change the world, go home and love your family”*.

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**SUMMONS**