

The Confirmed Catholic's Companion

A Guide to Abundant Living

Updated Edition

Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND

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PUBLICATIONS

The Confirmed Catholic's Companion
A Guide to Abundant Living
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*Dedicated with love to those for whom I have enjoyed
the privilege of being a Confirmation sponsor—
Lisa Marie Julia Stobierski, Julia Marie Felicity Stobierski,
and Edward Frank Richard Kovacic.*

Introduction: Read Me First!



Congratulations! You completed your initiation into the Catholic Church through the sacrament of Confirmation, publicly confirming your decision to be Catholic and being officially welcomed into the Church. At the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit whooshed down upon the first disciples and filled them with faith and courage; at your Confirmation, that same Holy Spirit empowered *you* with gifts and graces to live as a Catholic—without the “wind and flames!”

As a confirmed Catholic, you have been fully inducted into a two-thousand-year-old organization that has more than a billion members around the globe—and billions more on the other side of the grave. Nearly one out of every four Americans is Catholic (seventy-eight million identify themselves as Catholics). Through the sacrament of Confirmation, you more fully joined the Communion of Saints, inheriting the privileges and responsibilities of being a Catholic follower of Jesus Christ.

So now what?

Jesus proclaimed: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). This book is a kind of “how to” manual to abundant living as you strive to follow the spiritual path you chose and keep the commitment you made to Jesus and the Church. Catholics are joined together in the Communion of Saints—the unity of all believers past and present, helping each other grow closer to God. This guide to abundant living brings together the prayers, practices and spiritual disciplines that many Catholics have developed and cherished over the centuries—tools for building a vibrant, personal relationship with God. You’ll learn more about the Catholic faith (and *how* to learn more about it), discover an atlas for personal prayer, and realize practical tips for living out your Catholic faith 24/7.

Some practices or prayers may connect with your spirituality, others you

may simply appreciate as one piece of the Catholic spiritual tradition. The Catholic faith is a rich tapestry of diverse ways of pursuing the purpose of your life: loving and being loved by the God who created and saved you. Perhaps the greatest key to abundant living is to live authentically in your personal relationship with Jesus and the Church—to look for God’s fingerprints and seek them out in ways that resonate with the person God created you to be.

Occasionally, someone embarks on a quest for the secret to eternal life—you announced your discovery of that secret in the renewal of your baptismal vows during your Confirmation. Now, you can discover the secrets of living out those vows—and living them abundantly.

1. Religion: Catholic



What does it mean to be identified as “Catholic”? The Catholic faith is an intricate patchwork quilt of dogmas, doctrines, disciplines, traditions and spiritual wisdom—all centered around growing closer to a three-personed God who loves us relentlessly. However, to be Catholic is to be part of the Body of Christ—a family of believers who share a common mission of going “in peace to love and serve the Lord,” who share a rich religious and spiritual tradition begun by Christ and continued by generations of sinners saved by grace. Part of that Catholic identity involves infusing our faith into our daily work, prayer and actions; our relationships and interactions with other people; and our commitment to serving the poor and promoting life, love and a just world.

We have big shoes (or sandals) to fill—those of Jesus. However, we also have the saints who have walked this path before us to help us along the way and teach us what they have learned—a task we also share in helping other members along. You may not have realized it, but the Catholic spiritual tradition originated even before Mary conceived Jesus, God-made-flesh, in her womb. Stories of people such as David, Moses and Esther struggling to trust God and trying to do God’s will pervade the Old Testament. Through Jesus we were grafted into the Jewish tradition—a tradition that dates back to the first creation described in the Old Testament. Many of our traditions, prayers and Scripture are shared with the Jewish faith.

The daily prayer of the Jewish people is called the *Shema*: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words I am commanding you today in your heart” (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). To this Jesus added a new commandment: “Just as I have loved you, you also

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**THE U. S.
CATHOLIC
CHURCH 2012**

- ❖ 66.3 million Catholics (22% of the population)
- ❖ 38,964 priests
- ❖ 26,661 religious priests
- ❖ 17,289 permanent deacons
- ❖ 54,018 sisters
4,477 brothers
- ❖ 30,000 lay ministers
- ❖ 17,644 parishes
- ❖ 5,636 elementary schools
1,205 high schools
230 colleges and universities
- ❖ 554 hospitals

should love one another” (John 13:35). Jesus established Catholic Christianity on that foundation. Numerous stories throughout the Gospels tell of Jesus teaching his disciples—how to live this new commandment—most prominently by his example.

After Jesus gave his life by dying on a cross, he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven—leaving behind a small but dynamic core of believers in first-century Palestine. Jesus left Peter at the helm, having consecrated him as the first pope. The apostles and Jesus’ disciples passed down the lessons and tradition Jesus instilled in them, generation after generation. The Catholic Church grew until in 313 A.D. it was recognized as a religion in the Roman Empire. Later, in the face of barbarian onslaughts in Europe, Catholicism shaped and preserved western civilization, impacting culture, music, art, drama, literature and life. It continues to do so today.

God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—called you into being and loves you madly. God is not just an impersonal, distant, disinterested force that leaves us to fend for ourselves; God is with us constantly. Although the Catholic Church may seem to have an abundance of rules and spiritual regulations, they are actually guidelines for abundant living. They help you align the actions you choose with the beliefs you acknowledged in your Confirmation so that you may live life in Christ.

Catholics have several distinct beliefs that form the established Catholic faith and set us apart from the rest. Some of those beliefs include:

- ❖ The first man and woman opposed God and consequently lost many gifts for the human race—most important, eternal life. Ignorance, moral weakness, suffering, and death became a part of our world because of this original sin.

- ❖ God sent his Son to become human, live among people and lead them closer to God, and then suffer and die—all to atone for original sin and all the times men and women turn their backs on God by sinning.
- ❖ Jesus was born, quite miraculously, of a virgin named Mary.
- ❖ Jesus died on a cross for our salvation, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven—making up for all sin.
- ❖ Jesus gave us the Eucharist so he could be with us throughout time.
- ❖ Jesus empowered his Church to carry on his work under the leadership of the pope (bishop of Rome) and all bishops in communion with him.
- ❖ Jesus acts through seven sacraments to grace us at key moments of life.
- ❖ At the end of the world, Jesus will return to earth to judge all people.
- ❖ Our intended destiny is an eternal afterlife of perfect happiness with God.

Being Catholic is not easy. In the early days of the Church, Christians were tortured and killed for their beliefs. Throughout history—and even in some parts of the world today—some Catholics have been persecuted and forced to hide their faith. This happened in England when King Henry VIII declared himself leader of the Church. It has been a reality for Catholics in China for the past fifty years. Jesus, however, reminds us: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20), encouraging generations of Christians who share in his suffering because of their faith.

When the mostly Protestant founders first formed the United States, many of them held disdain for the Catholic Church from which they had broken away. As a result of the animosity toward

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The Church has four distinct marks or characteristics. Since 381 A.D. it has been described as one, holy, catholic (universal or open to all), and apostolic (having continuity with the apostles).

big book search...

Do you wonder how Jesus established the Catholic Church? You can find the story in Matthew 16:13-20. In John 10:11-18 Jesus declared, “I am the good shepherd.” You can find the story of Jesus’ asking Peter to feed his sheep in John 21:15-17.

a cool
website...

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) produces documents on a variety of topics. Find more about this organization and access its documents at www.usccb.org. At this site you can also find movie reviews, Church facts, and the daily readings.

Rome, early American Catholics were treated with scorn and suspicion. They were excluded from the first English settlements—except for Maryland and Pennsylvania. Although the first amendment to the Constitution guaranteed religious freedom in 1789, many states upheld discriminatory laws against Catholics well into the nineteenth century. Both the Know-Nothings and the Ku Klux Klan led violence against Catholics, murdering them and burning their buildings. Not until 1963 did a Catholic—John F. Kennedy—serve as President of the United States.

Standing up for justice and life are part of our mission as Catholics. Jesus said: “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Accepting this mission can cause us to feel at odds with our contemporary culture. It does not mean just opposing abortion or capital punishment, but demanding a more abundant life for the poor and persecuted. We are challenged to promote lifelong fidelity at a time when divorce is rampant, and we reserve sex as an expression of total commitment and love in marriage instead of using it as meaningless recreation. Living an abundant Catholic faith means choosing peace instead of war, justice over self-interest, outreach to the poor instead of materialism, and love over hate.

Sometimes these convictions make the Catholic faith unpopular among contemporary American ideologies. The Church has also faced negative publicity due to the actions of clergy and laity alike—the failures of each of us to live as perfectly as Jesus did and to “practice what we preach” in our daily lives. However, author Brennan Manning notes that the Church is not a museum of saints—or else we would all be locked out! Rather, the Church is a hospital for sinners—a community that encourages us to experience more fully the abundant life Jesus

craves for us. Many of us Catholics are proud of our faith and values—and willingly acknowledge that we don't always get it right. But we trust that Jesus is still with his Church and strive to live faithful to his teachings. We try to grow in understanding our faith ... and pray for help in living it.

Who's in Charge?

Jesus is the head of the Church—referred to as the *Body of Christ* in Paul's epistles. Bishops are the leaders of that *body* and are referred to as the shepherds of the Church because they carry out Jesus' request of Peter to "feed my sheep." The pope is the visible head of the Church, holding the position of bishop of Rome. Bishops teach, govern, and lead people to holiness. They are each given a part of the flock to tend—usually a geographical area of Catholics called a see or a diocese (meaning "city of God"). The bishop is the pastor of his diocese's principal church, the cathedral (meaning "seat") and is also the CEO of the diocesan offices known as the chancery. In the United States alone, there are 195 dioceses.

The United States bishops minister to the whole country through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Twice a year all the U.S. bishops assemble to discuss issues and make decisions regarding the national Church. An ecumenical council, a meeting of all the bishops in the world, has supreme authority in the Church. There have been twenty-one ecumenical councils. The first council was the Council of Jerusalem. At this council, the apostles decided that Gentile converts would not have to follow Jewish practices.

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The last ecumenical council was the Second Vatican Council (1962 to 1965), called by Pope John XXIII to "open a window and let in fresh air." (Some say he let in a gale!) The 2,860 bishops who attended produced sixteen documents to renew the Church so that it better serves the contemporary Body of Christ.

big book
search...

Read Acts of the Apostles chapter 15 to learn about the Council of Jerusalem.

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In 2001, the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center opened in Washington, D.C., a museum that uses modern media to help visitors explore their faith. The center features changing art exhibits and is also a place of scholarly research. Visit www.jp2cc.org for more information.

quick quote...

Where Peter is, there is the Church. Where the Church is, there is Jesus Christ. Where Jesus Christ is, there is eternal salvation.

—St. Ambrose

Who is your bishop? _____

What is your diocese? _____

Who is your pastor? _____

What is your parish? _____

The pope shepherds and governs the universal Church from his home and office in Vatican City within the city of Rome. The pope's cathedral is the Basilica of St. John Lateran, though most papal ceremonies are held in the Basilica of St. Peter—the second largest church in Christendom. (The largest church is the Basilica of Our Lady Queen of Peace in Côte d'Ivoire.) From Peter to Pope Benedict XVI, there have been 265 popes since Jesus first established the Church.

Have you ever wondered what the pope does all day? He acts as the spiritual leader of the Church, preaches, celebrates Masses, and blesses pilgrims who fill Vatican Square or meets privately with groups and individuals—referred to as a papal “audience,” and issues encyclicals and other documents to instruct Catholics on the teachings of the Church. In order to shepherd the Church, the pope also tends to his own spiritual life: praying, celebrating Eucharist, and receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation. In addition, the pope serves the Church in an administrative capacity, making leadership and organizational decisions related to the Church (e.g., appointing new bishops), drafting policy documents (e.g., issuing statements on liturgical practices), and meeting with bishops who must visit him every five years. Finally, the pope is a highly respected world leader, often filling a

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website...

diplomatic role: addressing the United Nations and other world leaders as a fellow statesman. The Holy See has full diplomatic relations with 179 countries.

The *Roman Curia* is the Church's administrative agencies that are based at the Vatican and consist of the secretary of state and nine congregations, each dealing with a different aspect of the Church. The pope and *curia* are referred to as *the Holy See*.

The cardinals are another group "in charge" of the Church. Considered the *princes* of the Church and known collectively as the College of Cardinals, they are bishops appointed by the pope to advise him. Cardinals serve in departments of the *Roman Curia* and, until they turn eighty, have the power to vote in the election of a new pope. Today there are 214 cardinals, 125 of whom are eligible to vote for the next pope.

Much like governments have a legal code, the Church has ecclesial laws called the Code of Canon Law. Legislated by ecclesial authority, canon law gives practical directives, guiding the leaders and followers of the Church alike. The Code of Canon Law was most recently revised in 1983. One familiar use of canon law is in the annulment process—the process of declaring that a relationship lacked necessary foundations for valid marriage from the beginning. Just as judicial systems interpret laws governing the divorce process and entitlements, the Church interprets canon law in annulment proceedings.

Prayer for the Pope

Let us pray for our Most Holy Father, (insert name of current pope).

May the Lord preserve him and give him life, make him blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies.

Amen.

Would you like to keep up with everything going on in the universal Church? You can subscribe to Zenit, an international news agency that covers events, documents and issues concerning the Catholic Church. Receive free, daily news items and summaries of important talks. Visit www.zenit.org for more information.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ❖ You can write a letter to the Holy Father, using the salutation “Your Holiness.” Address the letter like this:
 - His Holiness
 - Pope <insert name>
 - Vatican City State 00120
- ❖ Vatican City is the smallest sovereign state in the world—108.7 acres with a population of one-thousand. It has a flag, its own stamps and coins, a daily newspaper (*L'Osservatore Romano*), and an astronomical observatory. Also, *Vatican Radio* broadcasts programs in thirty-seven languages. Vatican City is home to Vatican Museums as well as the prestigious Vatican Library—an impressive aggregate of nearly two million books that includes many rare collections. The Vatican secret archives is also in the city, containing documents dating as far back as the twelfth century.
- ❖ The papal flag is yellow and white and bears the papal insignia: a triple crown over two crossed keys, one gold and the other silver, tied with a red cord with two tassels. The triple crown represents the teaching, sanctifying, and ruling roles of the pope. The keys symbolize his authority.
- ❖ The Swiss Guard has performed services of honor and order and have been responsible for the pope’s safety since 1506. When the forces of Emperor Charles V sacked Rome in 1527, nearly 150 Swiss Guard members sacrificed their lives, making it possible for the pope to escape. Vatican legend attributes the design of the colorful blue-red-and-orange-striped uniforms of the Swiss Guard to Michelangelo.
- ❖ Cardinals elect the pope in strict secrecy in an event called the *conclave* (meaning “with key”). After celebrating Mass, the eligible cardinals file into the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel, and the conclave doors are sealed. The cardinals discuss proposed candidates and then cast private ballots on the altar of the Sistine Chapel. Two-thirds of the votes are required for a new pope to be elected. Following each discussion and vote, if a two-thirds majority is not reached, the ballots are burned with chemicals so that black smoke pours out of the Vatican chimney telling the outside world they are still without a pope. Once a new pope has been chosen, the ballots are burned without chemicals to send white smoke billowing out of the Vatican chimney.

The Parish: Where the Action Is

Your experience of the universal Church is most likely found in your parish, the local community of people led by your pastor. You celebrate the Eucharist and other sacraments with this community. Together you carry out works of mercy as directed in Matthew 5:7.

A parish is only as good as its members. One way to discover abundant living is to follow Jesus' example of service by sharing in community. In Luke 10, Jesus tells the story of the good Samaritan who saw a man stripped and beaten and left for dead. Others passed by, but the Samaritan man was moved with pity and stopped to care for the man. Jesus instructs: "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:38). In addition, just as the early Christians—including the apostles—were encouraged in community, participating in parish life strengthens you to live your Catholic faith. Your parish has a variety of activities to introduce you to other Catholics, get involved in your faith community, and serve the larger world. Consider volunteering for the following opportunities and any others your parish offers:

Parish council—Check with your pastor to see if this is an elected or appointed position.

Choir—St. Augustine said, "Singing well is praying twice."

Musicians—Play an instrument, or volunteer to turn pages for a pianist or organist.

Lector—Read one of the readings at Mass, or lead the Prayers of the Faithful.

Altar server—Serve at Mass.

Eucharistic minister—Distribute the sacred bread and offer the cup at Mass and bring Communion to the sick and homebound.

Sacristan—Help prepare the church for Mass and worship.

trivial tidbit...

The title *Pope* comes from the Greek word for "father"—*pappas*. Other titles for the head of the Church include Holy Father, His Holiness, Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Sovereign Pontiff (meaning "bridge between heaven and earth"), and Servant of the Servants of God.

a cool
website...

You can contact the Holy See at www.vatican.va. This site will take you to a wealth of information about your Church.

RCIA team—Share your faith with others interested in joining the Church.

Bible study group—Join one at your parish, or start one of your own and invite others to join.

Prayer group—Pray alongside other men and women in your parish by joining a rosary, charismatic, or other prayer group in your community.

Holy Name Society—Help encourage reverence towards the holy name of Jesus.

Altar and Rosary Society—Promote devotion to the Blessed Mother in this women's group.

Parish school—Help children and Confirmation candidates learn about and love the Catholic faith.

Youth ministry—Mentor a teen; lead a teen Bible study, retreat or music group.

Bereavement ministry—Cook a meal for a parishioner coping with loss; assist a support group leader.

Catholic Members

Catholics are everywhere! One of the fun things about being Catholic is the large community of believers who share your faith. In many parts of the United States, there is a Catholic parish in every town—in some cities, they're in every neighborhood! Many celebrities are Catholic.

SOME CATHOLIC VIPS

Liam Neeson—star of stage and screen who played in *Les Miserables* and *Schindler's List*

Martin Sheen—U.S. President in the TV show *The West Wing*

Paul Newman—actor, founder of the Paul Newman food brand who donates profits to charities

Celine Dion—singer, popular Las Vegas performer

Ben Affleck—Academy Award winning actor and co-writer of *Good Will Hunting* (1997)

Minnie Driver—actress in more than thirty films including *Circle of Friends* (1995) and *Phantom of the Opera* (2004)

Regis Philbin—host, *Live!* talk show and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* game show

John Cusack—actor who co-wrote and played in *Grosse Pointe Blank* (1997)

Jim Caviezel—actor in more than twenty movies including *The Passion of the Christ* (2004)

Tara Lipinski—youngest figure skater in history to win the Olympic gold medal

Mel Gibson—movie star who played in *Braveheart* and *The Patriot*, producer of *The Passion of the Christ* film

Ray Romano—television star of *Everybody Loves Raymond*

Adele—Grammy-winning pop and soul singer-songwriter from London

Aaron Neville—rhythm-and-blues artist known for secular and gospel songs

Sister Helen Prejean—Catholic religious whose story of befriending a man on death row is told in her book and the movie *Dead Man Walking*

Paul McCartney—musician in the popular band *The Beatles* who grew up in a Catholic family

Around the world, Catholics share the same core beliefs and are united under the same leadership hierarchy. Catholics, however, are a mixed bag. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta was a Catholic, so was Hitler. There are many “brands” of Catholics: those who declare they are Catholics *in name only*, *fallen-away* Catholics, *lukewarm* Catholics, *devout* Catholics, and *activist* Catholics. There are Catholics who are anxious for the Church to change and Catholics who wish things were the way they used to be before the Second Vatican Council.

A papal blessing is a special way to commemorate someone’s significant birthday, wedding anniversary, sacrament reception, or similar occasion. The document is inscribed on parchment and has the Holy Father’s signature. To apply for a papal blessing, contact your chancery to find out the process your diocese follows.

for your
spiritual
health...

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, first published in 1994, gives an overview of the essentials of the Catholic faith in an interesting way, incorporating quotations from many sources. Buy a copy and read it regularly to grow in understanding of your faith. Whenever you wonder what the Church teaches about a topic, refer to the Catechism.

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website...

Test your knowledge of the Catholic faith by taking the quizzes based on the catechism that you'll find at www.usccb.org/catechism/quizzes/index.htm

What kind of Catholic are you? What kind of Catholic would you like to be? If there is a difference, remember that the choice is yours—labels are for jars, not people; you can easily redefine your commitment to Christ at any time by the power of free will. It is possible for you to be a lifelong Catholic, committed to Jesus Christ, living a life of faith and integrity, and dedicated to going forth from Mass *to love and serve the Lord*. All it takes is some effort on your part—and a healthy dose of God's grace.

Don't be surprised if at times you struggle with your faith. Even the saints had doubts and temptations. This is how spiritual life grows. Singing a song of trust, David has the voice of God say: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Hang in there and count on God's help. Remember that faith gives meaning to your life. Without it, nothing makes sense.

Why are you glad to be a Catholic? _____

Describe the "brand" of Catholic you'd like to be.

Who are some Catholics you admire? _____

