

# The Shield Feature.....by Fr. John Jasica

## CATHOLIC ATHEIST: REMEMBERING GOD GOD LOVES US!!

### DRIFTING AWAY FROM GOD

This new message series challenges us to reflect on what we believe about God and how our faith does or doesn't connect with our daily lives. We can so easily and slowly drift from our faith dealing with so many other good and important things.



We can see our faith as simply a burden, a set of rules, lacking depth and not being practical for our daily lives, never being the source of our happiness. We so often place our trust, hope and joy in others, things, status and power. We so often lean towards things that are tangible and give us immediate satisfaction. This drifting is often slow and gradual. We become disconnected, or better yet, dis-membered from God. He can become more of an idea rather than our best friend and Saviour.

### THE SEASON OF LENT

The Lenten season reminds us of who we really are and who is the source of our happiness—God. Lent calls us back from the slow drifting away and beckons us back, pulling us into the light of His love, mercy and joy. We are challenged to turn away from sin and embrace the Gospel.

Lent is not about giving up frivolous things like coffee, chocolate or your iPad. Don't get me wrong, any sacrifice is good during Lent, but do our trivial sacrifices help us draw closer to God? The heart of the Lenten journey is to move closer to Jesus, to get to know Him better and to embrace His everlasting love. This happens by deepening our prayer life, understanding our faith more and becoming Jesus in our world today by helping those who are in need.

Whatever we give up in Lent needs to allow us more time and more room for Jesus while adding opportunities during Lent allows us to run closer to Christ and to be more like Him so that others may see His face through us.

### EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

One of the key ways we slowly move back towards God is to recognize that He really loves us. God wants us to be happy, to live a full life and to enjoy our world. Yet we know that this is not so easy or simple. Our lives are

complicated, challenging and painful. God knows this and realizes life isn't easy. He offers us help along the way. God does not abandon us and leave us to our own devices—Jesus seeks to walk with us out of love. **How does God love us?**

### (1) WE ARE NEVER ALONE

Through the gift of our prayer and spiritual lives we can daily invite Jesus into our hearts. There are a variety forms of prayer but at the heart of it all is to know that we are never alone. Jesus walks with us through our joys and sorrows and helps us make those difficult decisions in our lives. God guides us, speaks to us, encourages us and protects us so that we may be happy and the best version of ourselves.

### (2) GOD HEALS US

The sacraments are tangible and visible signs of God's presence in our journey to heaven. Each of the sacraments are there for us to be filled with His grace and love. The sacraments help us celebrate life but also heal our hearts.

There are two powerful sacraments of healing that the Lord has given us to help us in the day to day battles in our lives. Both sacraments help heal our hearts.

The *Sacrament of Reconciliation* meets us right where we are at and frees us from our sins. The sacrament is truly powerful, helping us let go of the baggage we carry — sin, regret, anger, frustration and resentment. We as sinners are able to start over, start fresh and start anew. This sacrament is like no other.

The *Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick* is another sacrament of healing that helps us in our times of suffering. This includes physical, spiritual and emotional challenges we face at all stages of our lives. This sacrament reminds us that in the midst of our

sufferings, God is there. He never abandons us and walks with us reminding us of the great gift of heaven that is before us. We are strengthened to know that Jesus, who suffered for us, knows the pains we endure and encourages us to carry our crosses each day.

### (3) GOD FEEDS US

Jesus does not leave our hearts empty. He feeds us with his body and blood. The gift of the Eucharist is not just a nice meal or a good time for Catholics to come together when it is convenient or when we have nothing else to do. The Eucharist brings us together so that we may be fed, nourished and strengthened each week to be messengers of hope. God fulfills our hunger with the very gift of Himself. Where else would we want to be?

### (4) GOD WRITES TO US

The gift of the Sacred Scriptures tells us the story of God's everlasting love for all of humanity. The Bible is not a set of rules or simple stories, but a love letter from God describing the continuous ways He reaches out to us to help us, heal us, guide us and lead us to the Kingdom. We need to read and listen to these stories of love, light, hope and joy.

The first step in **REMEMBERING GOD** is to know that He loves us!! He will do anything and everything to remind us that He walks with us and will help us if we open our hearts to Him. May we try to do that each and every day!!

