



THE FLAME

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RALEIGH

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

February 2025 issue



Beginning Again

By Maria Muratore

As we move deeper into 2025, many of us are reflecting on the past year and gearing up with plans and hopes for this new year. The Lord has put on my heart to be expectant in our faith and to wait on the Lord and try again and to not be overwhelmed or discouraged as we step out. Jesus is reminding us He is always with us wherever we go, whatever we do.

The Saints have much to say about the idea of beginning anew. They know that God's mercies are new every morning (Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23). So everyday of the year, we can begin again.

"The saints did not all begin well, but they all ended well." -Saint John Vianney

"Begin now to be what you will be hereafter." -Saint Jerome

"Always we begin again." -Saint Benedict

"Everyday I say to myself, today I will begin." -Saint Anthony of the Desert

"It is right that you should begin again every day. There is no better way to complete the spiritual life than to be ever beginning it over again." -Saint Francis de Sales

"Begin now ... Believe me, don't wait until tomorrow to begin becoming a saint." -Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

In order to begin anew, we need to embrace where we are in this very moment of the brand new year. This is exactly how God wants us to come to Him in prayer.

"Trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be." -Saint Teresa of Avila

"Go to our Lord just as you are. Be natural in your meditation. He wants the thought and prayer of that heart as the genuine expression of its love for Him." -Saint Peter Julian Eymard

"He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows." -Saint Gregory of Nissa

Top of the Hill

By Chris Rayala

One of the things I love about my new job is that I always have a three-day weekend. When I was interviewing for the position, the manager sheepishly asked, “Your admin day will be Monday. Is this okay?”

I almost wanted to shout, “ARE YOU ASKING ME IF I’M OKAY WITH HAVING A LONG WEEKEND EVERY SINGLE WEEK? OF COURSE, I’M OKAY WITH IT!”

Instead of saying that, I sheepishly said, “Sure.”

It was one of those admin days. Even if I didn’t have to work, I needed to travel to Occ Health and get fit tested

for an N95 mask. I de-
mass at St. Michael be-
tal. However, I was slow
late for mass. I was still
the Holy Spirit tell me,
I went downstairs and
cheek. She reminded
diocese were having a
that no masses would be
I then realized that the
ing me down and nudg-
Michael half asleep, on-
After my N95 fit testing,
breakfast. I was craving
went to Biscuitville. I
Spam Classic Crunch



cided to go to the 7 am
fore heading to the hospi-
to get ready and would be
going to try when I heard
“Go to the hospital first.”
pecked my wife on the
me that the priests of our
retreat with the bishop and
celebrated that week.
Holy Spirit had been slow-
ing me not to drive to St.
ly to find an empty church.
I decided to have a good
biscuits and gravy, so I
was tempted to order the
Combo but ordered a Sau-

sage Gravy Biscuit and a cup of coffee instead. Lately, I’ve been doing something called “Coffee with Jesus.”

This is how it goes. When the alarm goes off at 6 am, I say, “Good morning, Abba. Good morning, Jesus. Good morning, Eema (“mother” in Hebrew).”

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I then head downstairs and pour myself a cup of cold-brew coffee. With my cup in hand, I will go upstairs, put my cup beside my laptop, and start my morning chat with the Lord. Sometimes, I converse with the Lord like I would with another person. Sometimes, I would type our conversation in my journal.

That day was a little different. It was Coffee **and Biscuits** with Jesus. The biscuits were good, and the coffee was so-so. I was enjoying my breakfast when I felt another nudge from the Spirit to look at my phone.

I unlocked my phone and remembered that my brother asked me the day before if we could have a pint after he finished work. I had not replied to his message yet, so I told him I was available. He suggested a brewery called Top of the Hill.

It was raining hard, but there was no way I would miss my date with my brother. Top of the Hill is located at

the heart of the University of North Carolina (UNC).

I've been there many times during weekends but never visited the campus on a school day.

My brother recommended an open-air parking lot

closer to the brewery, but a sign indicated it was full as I drove by the entrance. So, I decided to go to the parking deck that was farther away.

On weekends, parking is easy on the campus. But as soon as I entered the deck, I realized that day would be different. I did not find parking on the first level, and I was getting a little frustrated. As I entered the second level, I



whispered, "Lord, parking, please." As soon as I finished saying that I saw an empty parking slot on my left!

Had I asked the Lord for help earlier, I wondered if I could have avoided a longer walk in the rain.

My Sheep Hear my Voice

By Chris Rayala

I have a confession to make. We chose my daughter's name based on the most secular of circumstances. I was bantering with my medical assistants at a clinic I was working at when I asked them to help me pick a name for our firstborn. "How about Angelina?" I asked them. I was a big fan of the Tomb Raider movies, so I wondered if I should name my daughter after the actress who played

it, Angelina Jolie.

"No!" they collectively declared.

"How about a more wholesome name?" they asked.

I then remembered one of my favorite romantic comedies, Serendipity, in which Kate Beckinsale played the main female protagonist. So I proposed "Kate," and they all

thought it was a good name for my daughter. So "Kate" it was.

We picked our next child's name under holier circumstances. I was in deep prayer when we were pregnant with our second child. Suddenly, in my mind, I heard a voice that said, "Name him Andrew." This voice brought a sense of peace. And somehow, in my heart, I was sure the Lord was speaking. So, we named our child Andrew. In the past, I felt that the only way God communicated with me was through the events of my

life. For example, I wanted to attend Philippine Science High School, but I was not accepted, so I took that to mean that God did not want me to study there. God also uses the Holy Bible to communicate with me. Sometimes, when I read a particular verse, I feel it profoundly touching me. The Lord has also spoken to me through other people. I have confessed with a question in my heart, only to have the priest tell me something that answers my question. But never in my wildest dreams did I think God could speak with me directly. I was surprised when the Lord said,



"Name him Andrew." Several years have passed since I heard God speak to me in this way again. After working for a large healthcare system for eleven years, practicing my Christian faith with this employer became more difficult. I attended a silent retreat at a beautiful center called St. Francis Springs. During the retreat, I felt the Holy Spirit nudging me to "have more of St. Francis in my life." I thought this meant that as a physician, I should spend more time helping "the least of my brothers." *Continued...*

My Sheep Hear my Voice

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That directive encouraged me to look into other clinics and healthcare centers that would allow me to work with the poor. I ended up working for a smaller organization in their downtown office. One of the things I liked about my previous clinic was that it was only ten minutes from home. My new clinic was farther away. My typical commute is 30 minutes. On my second week of working with this group, I hit heavier-than-usual traffic on my way home. Suddenly, I doubted the logic of my move. I had buyer's remorse with my new job!

I felt depressed that evening. I didn't know what to do. Suddenly, I heard a voice that said, "You are where I want you to be." And just like that, all my doubts disappeared because I was sure this voice I heard was the Lord's. God knew that He had to speak in a clear, loud, and distinct voice to erase my uncertainty quickly.

In the instances I mentioned, God spoke to me loudly so His message would be unambiguous and memorable. True enough, whenever I have doubts about my new job, I would remember the Lord's reassurance that I am where He wants me to be.

However, as Elijah found out in Mount Horeb, the Holy Spirit prefers to speak in a still, small voice or a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12). What does this voice sound like? Are you ready to be surprised? God's voice often sounds like ours. God speaks to us through

us, and the Holy Spirit uses our voice to communicate with us.

Everything changed when I learned this. I've had many thoughts and ideas that profoundly blessed me or changed the course of my life, but I've always assumed that these were my thoughts and ideas. In retrospect, these thoughts could have been from the Holy Spirit, but I didn't recognize that it was Him speaking.

Armed with this knowledge, I started testing the voices that I heard in my head. I knew they could be mine, the Lord's, or the devil's. For me, attributing a voice I just heard to the devil is more straightforward. Anxiety and a lack of peace typically accompany the enemy's voice. It proved more challenging to distinguish whether a voice is mine or the Holy Spirit's. One thing that helped me learn was to test it out.

I was late for work once because I had to feed my caffeine addiction by driving by a Starbucks and getting a nitro cold brew coffee. As I entered the general parking area, I heard a voice say, "Park in the back." This command sounded silly because the rear parking lot would be full by then. But I decided to test it out, and the lot was full. So I learned that if a voice sounded like that, it was not the Lord's.

My Sheep Hear my Voice

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Another way I tested the Lord's voice was by seeing if the nudge bore fruit. As I was getting dressed for work once, I felt a nudge to wear my wooden cross necklace. It was a simple enough nudge, so I heeded it. Later that afternoon, a patient commented on my necklace, which became a conversation topic. From this experience, I learned that if the voice sounds this way, it is the Holy Spirit speaking.

As time passed, I became better at hearing the Holy Spirit's still, small voice to the point that I started conversing with Him frequently throughout the day. I chatted with God whenever I was not actively doing anything. We have been talking about anything and everything. I ask Him for help with many things, even something as trivial as finding parking. I also thank Him frequently because if you think about it, there are a million things to thank Him for! But most of the time, I just chat with Him as I would a person beside me. I ask Him a question, and He answers me in words—lots of words. When I tell people about this, some probably think I need to take Seroquel, an anti-psychotic medication. Others believe that this ability to hear the Holy Spirit is a unique blessing God has bestowed upon me, but this is a lie that the enemy would have us believe.

Jesus said in John 10:27, **"My sheep hear my voice."** We are Jesus' sheep, and we can hear His voice and converse with Him.

**After the earthquake came a fire,
but the Lord was not in the fire.
And after the fire came
a gentle whisper.**

1 Kings 19:12



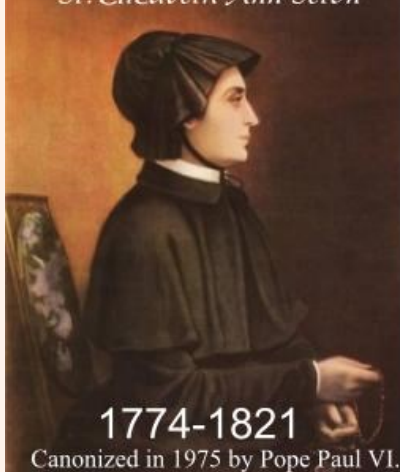
WHAT SAINTS SAY ABOUT STEPPING OUT FOR GOD...



If I be not, in a state of grace,
I pray God place me in it,
if I be in it,
I pray God keep me so.

St. Joan of Arc (1412-1431)

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton



1774-1821

Canonized in 1975 by Pope Paul VI.



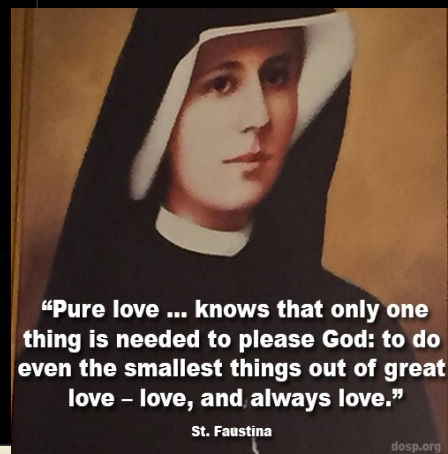
**"REMEMBER,
GOD DOES
NOT PAY US
FOR RESULTS,
BUT FOR
EFFORT."**


ST. DON BOSCO

**"The Smallest thing when
done for the love of
GOD is Priceless!"**

-St. Teresa of Avila

*"The first end I propose
in our daily work
is to do the will of God;
secondly, to do it
in the manner he wills it;
and thirdly to do it
because it is his will."*



**"Pure love ... knows that only one
thing is needed to please God: to do
even the smallest things out of great
love – love, and always love."**

St. Faustina

dosp.org

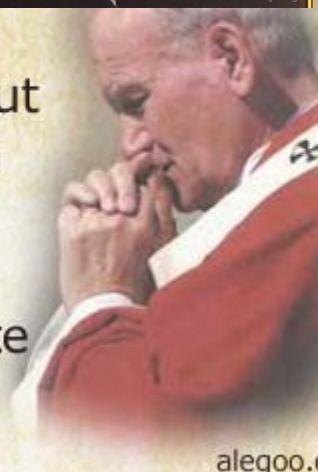


**"Love God, serve God:
everything is in that."**

-St. Clare of Assisi

Have no fear of moving into
the unknown. Simply step out
fearlessly knowing that I am
with you, therefore no harm
can befall you; all is very,
very well. Do this in complete
faith and confidence.

John Paul II



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UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE 2025 DATES:

***2025 Healing Masses to be announced soon**

Spiritual Warfare and Discernment 2025 Series dates (participants will receive separate detailed emails): (Feb. 3rd Orientation meeting) Feb. 10, 17, 24 and March 3, 10 and 13, 2025 via zoom

April 4th & 5th 2025 21st Annual Ignited By Truth Catholic Conference with Eucharistic Adoration and Prayer teams Friday Evening and Saturday Conference April 5th at NC State Reynolds Coliseum, Raleigh, NC **registration details to be announced*

Life In the Spirit Seminar coming soon in May at St. Mary Magdalene Apex, NC-*Date to Announced*

June 14, 2025 Charismatic Picnic at Harris Lake Park-*details to Follow*

October 17th and 18th 2025 Diocese of Raleigh Charismatic Conference with Speaker Fr. Philip Scott at St. Joseph's Church, Raleigh NC-**more details to follow*

December 13, 2025 Charismatic Renewal Christmas Party at St. Andrew's, Apex NC 6:00-9:00 pm-*details to follow*

*****Visit our website for more information, on prayer groups, events and more;**

<https://ccsraleigh.weebly.com/>