

In Relentless Pursuit of God

Several biblical figures have pursued God in one way or another. In the Old Testament, we can study the way in which two kings had pursued God. King Saul's approach to God was defined by fear, partial obedience, and a desire to use God for political leverage rather than build a relationship with Him. Saul obeyed God only when it was self-serving, by sparing Agag, the king of Amalek and valuable livestock despite explicit orders to destroy them (1Sam 15). When God stopped answering his prayers due to his disobedience, instead of repenting, Saul turned to a medium, the witch of Endor, for guidance (1Sam 28). On the other hand, King David sought out God's heart. David described his desire for God as an intense thirst, like a land parched, lifeless and without water (cf. Ps 63).



In the New Testament, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, pursued God through radical surrender, deep spiritual reflection and unwavering obedience. Rather than chasing after grand displays, she responded to God's unexpected call with humble trust by responding, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (Lk 1:38) That was undeniably an act of total

surrender and obedience to God's will. When she was told that she would conceive Jesus, she asked a practical question, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" (Lk 1:34) However, she totally

believed and accepted the angel's response, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." (Lk 1:35) Mary gave up her safety, reputation and future plans to God's will. The Gospel of Luke mentioned twice how Mary pondered things that had happened to her with her Son Jesus in her heart: First, at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (cf. Lk 2:19), and second, after she and her husband Joseph had been searching for the boy Jesus for three days and finally found Him in the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Lk 2:51). In doing so, Mary sought to understand the deep implications of God's actions, rather than reacting impulsively to things that happened in her life. Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat (cf. Lk 1:46-55), conveyed what she had kept in her heart, praising God's mercy, justice and faithfulness. Ultimately, Mary's pursuit of God was not a one-time event; she remained a faithful follower, standing steadfastly by the Cross when Jesus was crucified (cf. Jn 19:25).

Several saints like St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Augustine have notably pursued God in their own unique ways. However, another saint worth mentioning is St. Teresa of Avila. Teresa entered the Carmelite order at age 20, but the turning point of her pursuit of God occurred at age 39. While gazing upon a statue of the suffering Christ covered in wounds, her heart underwent a radical change; experiencing the depth of Christ's love and her own lukewarmness, she wrote, "I felt so keenly aware how poorly I have thanked Him for those wounds." She realized that mental prayer is not a forced mental exercise, but an intimate sharing of one's heart by being alone with Jesus. At the time, Spanish authorities banned many popular vernacular books on prayer, which Teresa deeply mourned because she was unable to read the available spiritual books in Latin. Teresa recorded in her autobiography that shortly before her mystical experiences began, Jesus consoled her by saying, "I will give you a living book." Later on, despite intense and widespread opposition, Teresa reformed the Carmelite order by

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founding the Discalced Carmelites, which marked a return to the strict life of poverty, silence and deep contemplative prayer. In 1577, Teresa completed her classic work “The Interior Castle,” in which she mapped out the soul's journey toward divine union with Christ. St. Teresa of Avila teaches us that mystical experiences aren’t about dramatic experiences, but the gradual transformation of the soul through persistent prayer and complete surrender. Anyone seeking to grow closer to God will face opposition from spiritual forces, and mystical experiences must be tested by its fruits. True encounters with God always produced greater humility, deeper love for others, and more perfect obedience. Demonic deceptions led to pride, confusion and neglect of ordinary duties.

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

The OCIA Period of Inquiry is now open: During this period, people who have the desire to become Catholic ask questions about the Catholic faith and the OCIA program. All are welcome to contact Fr. Bill or any parish member, join in the celebration of the Eucharist and join the various activities of the parish. If you know anyone who has an interest in becoming Catholic, now is the time to reach out to them and pray for them.

Registration for Sunday School schoolyear 2026-2027 begins today. Classes begin on August 23, 2026. We welcome children of all ages to learn the Catholic faith!

We are offering Chinese language classes this year in the Fall and next year in the Spring. Classes are held on Saturdays and Sundays. Fall Semester begins yesterday and today, and the Spring Semester begins on January 9 and 10, 2027. The 2026 Fall Schedule and the 2027 Spring Schedule have been posted in our church website: hnojatl.org.

We will also have new classes to help our church members converse in the English language. Classes will be held on Sundays after the 10:30am Mass.

Today is potluck Sunday! This is a great activity for everyone to foster fellowship in our church community. Lunch begins after the 10:30am Mass. Please bring your favorite dish to share. If you are celebrating your birthday in the month of August, we have ordered a birthday cake for you.

Prayer List: Bian Cheng Zhang, Susan Lee, Jasmine Ho, Michael Tan, Bian Meiyi, Chen Shupeng, Chen Jianxin, Liang Chenjing and Xu Taicheng.

Mass Schedule	Confessions	Bible Study
Sundays 10:30 AM (Chinese)	By Appointment	Wednesdays 10:00 AM (Chinese)
Sundays 2:00 PM (English)		
	Anointing of the Sick	Eucharistic Adoration
Mondays 12:00 PM (English)	First Sundays after 10:30 AM Mass	Sundays 9:00 to 10:00 AM
Tuesdays 12:00 PM (English)	First Fridays after 6:30 PM Mass	
Wednesdays 12:00 PM (Chinese)		
Fridays 12:00 PM (English)		
First Friday 6:30 PM (English)		