


# Catholic to the MAX

Sep 2012 

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Despite GFC's, most of us still live pretty comfortable lives... How much does God feature in yours?  
By Francine Pirola

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**This Month...**

Su 2 **Ord Time 22**  
**A Pure Heart**

Sa 8 Birth of Mary

Su 9 **Ord Time 23**  
**Be Opened**

Th 13 St John  
Crysostom

Su 8 **Ord Time 24**  
**Who Am I?**

Fr 21 St Matthew

Su 23 **Ord Time 25**  
**The First is Last**





We 26 Sts Cosmas &  
Damien

Sa 29 Archangels  
Micheal, Raphael  
& Gabriel

Su 30 **Ord Time 26**  
**One in Christ**

## Are you 'Catholic lite' or 'Catholic to the Max'?

As the Olympic Games conclude, it is difficult not to be impressed by the religious commitment of the Muslim athletes who competed even as they adhered to the extreme fasting regime of Ramadan. Yet, it is not so long ago that Catholic devotional practice called for similar commitment, a commitment which many Orthodox churches continue to this day. For example, abstaining from meat and dairy is maintained on Wednesdays and Fridays by many Eastern Orthodox Churches throughout the year, not just on Fridays during Lent as is the practice for modern Roman Catholics.

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# Mediocre VS HARDCORE Catholicism!

Being a Christian is more than a part time identity that we practice once a week on Sundays, or twice a year at Christmas and Easter. The salvation offered by Christ requires us to give our whole selves in love and service to him – he wants all of us, all of the time, not just the leftovers at the end of a busy weekend as we slip in late to the last Mass on a Sunday.

Moreover, unless we are living and breathing our faith as a daily practice, it will be very difficult to communicate the value of it to our children.

**A Story: It was our habit to complain about the singing and the liturgy as we drove home from Mass – we loved the Mass and were frustrated by the situation. Then one of the kids asked if it was so bad, why did we make them go? We realised that our negativity was undermining our efforts to raise our children to love the Mass as we did. We resolved to foster a more positive conversation about the Mass and got involved in some of the ministries.**



There's no doubt about it... modern Catholics in the West are a bit wimpy compared to our forebears.

## Long-forgotten Traditions

*"I remember as a kid going to MacDonalD's on a Friday in Lent – you could pick the Catholics easily - they were all eating the dreaded Filletto-fish burger!"*

*"When we were kids, Confession was always offered before Mass on Sundays. If we'd been a bit too passionate in our kissing on Saturday night, we wouldn't dream of receiving Communion without first going to Confession".*

*"At our school, the bell always went at midday and every class would stop to pray the Angelus".*

*"There were no evening Masses when we were kids; we had to fast from midnight so all the Masses were in the morning."*





One unfortunate consequence of this is the loss of a sense of distinctive **Catholic Identity**. In the same way that clubs have a uniform and schools have a motto and school song, our Catholic practices help us to develop a sense of belonging and identity; they help us to live distinctively from the rest of the population.

This distinctiveness is as important for us as it is for the wider community; it helps us to deepen our faith commitment and it helps us evangelise those whom we meet. Our parish priest once commented, that when he wore his collar, strangers were much more likely to initiate a conversation with him, including parents, the homeless, commuters and school students; it branded him a Catholic priest and opened the door to a relationship.



# CATHOLIC PRIDE

One of the most commonly noted experiences of people who attend World Youth Day, World Meeting of Families, or other major Catholic events like Canonisations, is the experience of being part of massive crowd of believers. It's easy to be 'Catholic to the Max' at these events – but how do we proclaim our faith proudly in our day to day lives?

Here are five ideas to 'man-up' in our faith and become more visible in our communities.





# 1. When Bells Ring

It's been my practice for the last few years to say the Angelus when my alarm goes off on my phone. Sometimes I will invite my companion at the time to say it with me. Then a few weeks ago my husband and I were at a Catholic conference. On queue my alarm started chiming – right in the middle of a keynote address! I quickly silenced it, only to hear someone else's alarm 'ringing the bells' behind me. My husband took inspiration from this and we are now inviting all our Catholic co-workers and friends to join us in this simple prayer. It takes less than 3 minutes and is a wonderful way to ground your day in God.

Set your phone alarm for midday. Choose a nice 'bell tone' (Bell Tower on the iPhone is perfect). Download the words of the Angelus from the internet to store on your phone or print your own prayer cards (see page 15)

**HARD CORE EXTENSION: Set your alarm for 6am and 6pm as well.**



# 2. Meat-free Fridays

When an Orthodox Christian joined our office staff, we decided to make every Friday lunch meat free. It's not always convenient but we've found it helpful to make this small sacrifice – it helps our office staff feel part of a community and gives us an easy opening to talk about our faith when visitors join us.

Yes, it takes planning and forethought – not always easy when we're busy. But it's amazing how when you make the firm decision to adhere to something no matter what the obstacles, it ends up being easier than when it is a weak decision.

**HARD CORE EXTENSION: Why stop at meat? Make your meal meat, fish and dairy free.**





### 3. Ten Percent plus

When visiting a Pentecostal church some time ago to check out the youth group which my daughter wanted to attend, I was impressed by their commitment to financially support their church. Even the youth were expected to contribute, and not just their loose change! I picked up an envelope entitled 'Other Giving'. In addition to their commitment to tithe (10% of their income) which is considered the minimum obligation, they were encouraged to give extra. Their 'Other Giving' was seen as a true gift since the tithe is understood as God's rightful claim – it already belonged to God as the author and creator of everything we have.

**HARD CORE EXTENSION:** Don't be limited to generosity with your money – the tithing principle can also be extended to your time – that's a minimum of 16 hours a week! It can be spent in prayer, worship or service to others.



### 4. Keep the Lord's Day Holy

With foundations in the Jewish scriptures (see Genesis 1, and the Ten Commandments Exodus 20), the command to set aside one day a week for the Lord is compelling. While the Jewish people begin the Sabbath at sundown on Friday evening, for Christians, the Day of the Lord is Sunday to commemorate Christ's resurrection.

Many families fill up their Sundays with sporting activities and shopping so that Mass is forced to fit around their 'more important' commitments. Rather than make God second, third or last on Sunday, make him first. Decide that celebrating Mass as a family is more important. Yes it will cost. It may mean that Little Nippers or Soccer or Dance has to be scrapped from the activity timetable if it can't be relocated. But really, isn't that a small price to pay to live in obedience to our God who promises us eternal life?

**HARD CORE EXTENSION:** Catholics are obliged to fast from all food for at least one hour before receiving communion (excepting the elderly and the sick). Why not extend your fast from midnight?





## 5. Visible Symbols

We like to tease our friends when they enter the Catholic Church by giving them some rosary beads to hang from the rear-vision mirror of their car: “You know, you’ve really bought in when you’ve got a glow-in-the-dark Jesus swinging around your windscreen!”

There are many ways to visibly proclaim your faith; a cross or crucifix necklace, a prayer space in your living room, religious art on display at home or your desk at work, bumper stickers, rosary beads, memes (pictures) posted on your social media page, religious titles on your bookshelf etc. (see p14).

Don’t go incognito – wear your faith proudly – you’ll be amazed by how many people are genuinely interested and open to conversation.

**HARD CORE EXTENSION:** While it is important to be sensitive to the views of your friends and guests, why not invite them to join you in prayer, such as grace before meals or saying the Angelus.



# Matrimonied Couples

Francine & Byron Pirola

## Are you simply married or are you ‘Matrimonied’?

People often point out that Catholics divorce at the same rate as the rest of the population. To the outside observer most Catholic couples look and behave the same as any other couple; by and large we live our marriages according to secular standards and goals. So it shouldn’t surprise us that the divorce rate is roughly the same.

To be a Catholic couple is to live your marriage differently to the secular norm. As more couples breakup and people lose confidence in marriage, it is increasingly important that Catholic couples provide a radical example of Christ-centred love that reflects the vows taken at the altar: freely given, total and unconditional, faithful until death, and fruitful.

Taking the words of the wedding vows from the Catholic tradition, spend some time writing down how you are living each phrase.



*I, take you, to be my wife/husband.*

*I promise to be true to you*

*in good times and in bad,*

*in sickness and in health.*

*I will love you and honour you*

*all the days of my life.*



**SMART Loving**

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Find out more about Catholic marriage and how you can enjoy deeper intimacy and spiritual connection.

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# Family Rituals

## Father's Day (Sept. 2)

Any time of year is a great time to honour our fathers and their unique contribution to our lives. Try these links for some of CathFamily's articles and activities to commemorate Father's Day.

[CathFamily.org](#)

## Prayer Space

Give God pride of place in your home – set up a prayer space in a prominent location.

[CathFamily.org](#)



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# The Angelus

It's the season of Angels with the feast of Archangels on September 29 and Guardian Angels on Oct 2. Based on the Annunciation, the Angelus celebrates Mary's great "Yes" to God.

The Angelus is replaced in the Easter Season, and on the feast of Mary Queen of Heaven (Aug 22) with the **Regina Coeli** (Queen of Heaven).

CathFamily.org



## October 7th is the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

September is full of Special Marian feasts:

- 8th Mary's Birthday
- 12th Feast of the Holy Name of Mary
- 15th Our Lady of Sorrows

Why not celebrate Mary and introduce your children to a powerful, uniquely Catholic Prayer: The Rosary.

*The Rosary Keychain for Kids* is a fun craft activity that comes with catechetical material to help you engage your children with this important aspect of Catholic Prayer life.

The **Marriage Resource Center Shop** is offering a special discounts in honour of Our Lady. Get in quick! Offer ends October 31st 2012!



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# We Remember - Sep 11

This fire fighter's tattoo depicts Christ over the badge of the New York Fire Department (NYFD). The badge has its origin in the Maltese Cross – dating back hundreds of years, it is a symbol of courage and honour. Almost the entire fire department in NYC was staffed by the descendants of Irish Catholic migrants.

The NYFD lost some 343 fire fighters in the September 11 terrorist attacks. On that fateful day, Fr Mychal Judge, the chaplain of the fire department hastily conducted a Reconciliation service before the men entered the evacuating Twin Towers, knowing that few would survive. Fr Mychal Judge himself also perished that day.

On the anniversary of the attacks, we remember the bravery of those who willingly gave their lives that day to save the lives of countless others.

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