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section five

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Section Two

practices

28 sacramentals (57-58)

How are sacramentals both similar to and different from things like photographs and mementos of loved ones and important events?

Why are sacramentals *not* superstition or silly, cute religious piety?

What sacramentals do you own or have in your home?

Which sacramentals really say something to you, and why? (They don't have to be things you use or think about every day—one of them could be the once-a-year ashes on Ash Wednesday.)

29 seasons of the liturgical year (58-61)

What are the seasons of the liturgical year...in order, beginning with Advent?

Do you have any liturgical-season memories that connect in some way with faith and worship? What are they? Things like candy eggs at Easter don't count; they're tasty, not liturgical. Think prayers, practices, and traditions.

Advent (58-59)

Have a Bible handy as you do this section

Advent should be a time of quiet, hopeful waiting for the fulfillment of dreams and promises, but usually we're caught up in preholiday frenzy. Name some ways to recover some of the purpose and spirit of Advent.

What dreams and promises have already been fulfilled in your own life? How did God enter into this?

What dreams and promises are you waiting for now? How is God working it out?

How can your favorite Christmas memories and current Christmas activities remind you that God truly is Emmanuel...“God is with us”? Make some links.

Read the actual Christmas stories or “infancy narratives” of the New Testament (first two chapters of Matthew and Luke) as though you’re reading them for the first time. What stood out?

Lent (59)

What were your experiences of Lent as a child? Did you give anything up? How do you look back on those practices—as worthwhile then, but now childish and outgrown? Something to build on—or get back to?

Lent calls us to purify ourselves of things that shouldn’t be in our lives at all. Think of two or three such things in your life. For privacy, write a code name or a symbol of them on these lines.

If during Lent you were to free yourself, with God’s help, of these things (or even make progress toward that), how would you feel about yourself, how would you feel about your relationship with God, and how would your life change?

People who feel intimidated or even helpless to break a bad habit are sometimes able to do it anyway because they keep telling themselves, "I can't. *God* can. I think I'll let him." Write your own version of that idea, perhaps in prayer form.

30 penance (61-62)

The phrase "doing penance" has a gloomy image for some people, but for many Catholics it's a joyful thing. Not necessarily easy, but joyful. Describe a time when, for religious or other reasons, you made up for something you had done wrong and felt much better than you would have if you had simply tried to forget it.

What would be a good penance for you personally at this time of your life (and how can you avoid putting it off)?

31 receiving reconciliation (62-63)

When was a time you experienced and deeply felt forgiveness—you *knew* from some tangible sign or event that you were forgiven, and you felt renewed, refreshed, and ready to start over?

Do you sometimes think you would receive reconciliation and get some things out and over with if it were easier to do so? What would make it easier—and likely to happen?

32 receiving Communion (64-65)

Receiving Communion should not be difficult or accompanied by fear that we're not doing it right. However, a distracted, "Oh, yeah—time to go up and get Communion now," while we're thinking of other things isn't right, either. Reflect on your current way of receiving Communion. Could you prepare yourself better...show greater reverence...make it mean more?

In the past, receiving Communion was seen as a private experience. We now realize that the Eucharist is a community, family event. But have we lost sight of the personal, physical presence of Jesus within us during the moments after Communion? How can you combine the elements of community and a personal encounter with Jesus? How can you best spend the moments after receiving Communion?

33 holy days of obligation (66)

For some, these days have sunk to, "Oh, well, nobody does that anymore." Actually, many people do, and they're not just "old people who have nothing else to do but go to church." What benefit, what *grace* lies in making special feast days holy through worship?

Bury the dead.

Spiritual

Instruct the ignorant.

Admonish the sinner.

Counsel the doubtful.

Comfort the sorrowful.

Bear wrongs patiently.
Forgive all injuries.

Compared

Keep the wrong from

Leave debts in the highway

Pray for the living
and the dead.

Choose a new outlook

Visit those in prison

Seek for the needy

Love the world