

BRINGING *Christ* TO CAMPUS

WORDS OF ADVICE FOR COLLEGE
STUDENTS STRIVING FOR HOLINESS

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AUGUST 1, 2020

**DEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
OF LONG ISLAND:**

So much has changed in the world since last semester, and so much will be different on campus this year. Yet one thing remains: the love of Jesus Christ. Whether you are navigating long distance learning or returning to a campus on Long Island or a campus in another part of the country, entering as a transfer student or just beginning, the Holy Spirit calls you to live in this love. The Holy Spirit desires spiritual greatness from you right in the midst of the heavy crosses the world is carrying.

As the year begins, I would like to offer you some short words of advice as you strive for holiness in this unique moment of history. Know that each one of you is daily in my prayers and Masses along with your family and every friend you make on campus.

1 First, be radically faithful to the Sunday Mass.

As you plan your schedule, make your presence at Sunday Mass the top priority of your week. Make that decision right now and live it every week of your life until the week of your death.

The Mass keeps you anchored, focused and directed on the mind, heart and life of Jesus. Live the rhythm of the Sunday Mass — a rhythm of giving and receiving — in your daily life. Remember with St. Ephrem that when we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, we eat and drink fire and spirit.

2 Pray daily. Carry a small copy of the New

Testament everywhere you go or keep it on your phone. Read, meditate, pray, contemplate and live the inspired Word of God. Set aside 15 minutes a day to pray in silence.

When you can, enter into a Catholic University Chapel or Catholic Church and pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Listen to Father, Son and Holy Spirit streaming through and illuminating your soul. In a social media addicted world, listen deeply to God in silence and listen deeply to others with the face, eyes, ears, empathy, concentration and compassion of Jesus Christ. Listening daily to God in silence is the best investment to discerning your educational, career and vocational path.

BEYOND



3 Embrace and live the Ten Commandments given to us by God.

Reject moral relativism — the belief that there is no right or wrong — and the dysfunctional separation of freedom from truth. Reject moral relativism’s mirage-like paths of self-destruction. Realize that true freedom means forming our consciences and actions with the truths of Jesus Christ.

Embrace the objective splendor of truth of the Sacred Scriptures, the Creed, the Sacraments, Catholic Moral Teaching, and the teaching on prayer of the Catholic Saints and Mystics. Make frequent use of the sacrament of Penance and experience Christ’s mercy and forgiveness consistently. Become a courageous forgiver and instrument of the Divine Mercy of Jesus Christ in the World.

4 Have a deep devotion to the Holy Spirit.

Say the prayer, “Come, Holy Spirit!” many times each day. Allow the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit — wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord — to have free rein in your life. Dedicate your educational path, your career path and your vocational path to the Holy Spirit. Have a burning daily desire for Heaven and eternal life.

Realize that the people who are most productive in their life on earth are precisely those who have the long view, those who have a burning desire for Heaven. (See the section on Hope in C.S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity* for more on that thought.)



5 Serve generously. Live the seven Corporal Works of Mercy — feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, bury the dead — and the seven Spiritual Works of Mercy — counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offenses, bear wrongs patiently, pray for the living and the dead.

When you perform these works, you show Christ to others and they show Christ to you. Of course, time is precious, especially during the busyness of the semester, but be willing to make sacrifices with your schedule to help those in need. A practical first step is to call your grandparents consistently. You will never know what a lift that gives them every time you call. Be generous with your time and remember the truth St. Francis of Assisi tells us: “It is in giving that we receive.”



6 Sanctify your daily academic work. As you sit down for a three-hour study block of biology, engineering, mathematics, accounting, literature, art history or theatre, begin with a short prayer that offers God your academic concentration, determination and tenacity and transforms the study into prayer and a practice of the presence of God.

Be a Renaissance person who is able to integrate step-by-step the history of music, art, cinema and literature as you study engineering, accounting, journalism, education, history or some other dimension of liberal arts. A Renaissance person grounded in the truths, mission and mysticism of his or her Catholic faith can cast a wider net of mission and evangelization because of a capacity to engage in a wide range of conversations with a wide range of people



7 Build authentic friendships. Be known for being a strong, sincere, virtuous and loyal friend, and let friendships lead you to stimulating discussions of Faith. So many university students through the decades have entered the Catholic Church because a Catholic friend took interest in them and gave powerful witness to our Faith. Make the compelling and sincere way you live your Catholic faith a light of Christ to every fellow student, faculty and staff member you meet.

8 Learn to articulate the Catholic Faith by cultivating the art of Catholic Apologetics. This is an orderly and heart-felt approach to explaining what and why we believe. To develop this skill, study incrementally the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Catholic apologists like G.K. Chesterton and Bishop Robert Barron, whose writings and YouTube presentations engage contemporary culture and events so effectively.

“Be the Holy Spirit’s instrument of casting Fire on the earth!”



Honing this craft of Apologetics will help you express the reason for the Faith that is within you. St. Peter tells us to be ready to do this always (1 Peter 3:15), and on campus, having that reason at hand will be a gift to yourself, your Catholic community, and the variety of people the Holy Spirit will place before you.

9 Explore the work of Catholic intellectuals. Search YouTube for talks by professors like Helen Alvaré of George Mason University Law School and Robert George of Princeton University. Both are strong witnesses of living the Faith in society, and both will remind you of the importance of integrating your Faith and your academic discipline.

Whatever that discipline is, see how our Catholic Faith intersects it. If you are a physicist, be able to discuss intelligently your Catholic perspective on the relationship between religion and science and how the Catholic Church has been the greatest advocate of

ethical scientific development in history. If your focus is literature, understand the contributions of Catholic novelists, poets, playwrights and screenplay writers.

Be the Holy Spirit’s instrument of casting Fire on the earth! Live and express your Catholic faith charitably and compassionately in the public square.

10 Be an instrument of Catholic social justice, racial justice and harmony, and social change that is grounded in the sanctity of human life, the non-violence expressed in history by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., your commitment to daily conversion and holiness, and a creative Catholic missionary spirit.

Remember the lessons of history that violence and a spirit of destruction set back authentic movements of social change by decades. Carry the Cross of Jesus Christ courageously on behalf of the poor, the marginalized, the ignored, the forgotten, the victims of discrimination and racial injustice.



11 Remember throughout your lives your experience of the traumas and loss of lives in the COVID-19 crisis. We pray for their souls and their families today. Your Catholic faith has given you and your families much strength and direction during these challenging times and you have been inspired by the heroism of so many medical personnel and first responders on the front lines. Their example will be a lifelong memory and inspirational point of reference for you for your entire life. Live their spirit of fortitude, courage, sacrifice and magnanimity.

12 Finally, go to your Mother Mary, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Mother of the Church, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guadalupe. Pray decades of the Rosary each day. Take her advice at the Wedding of Cana: "Do whatever my Son Jesus tells you to do."

Thank you for your witness to your Catholic faith on your university campus. Be not afraid! Remember with St. Paul that eyes have not seen and ears have not heard what God has prepared for those who love Him. God Bless you! †

Sincerely in Christ,



Bishop Barres with students from Long Island colleges at the Fellowship of Catholic University Students SLS Conference in Phoenix, Arizona in January 2020.

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