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The Ultimate Guide  
*to Lent*



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# *Swedish Death Cleaning*

{ don't wait until you die }

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BY MARGARET SWENSEN

*Take a look around.* Your things will outlive you. And when you die, your possessions become someone else's problem. Death Cleaning, therefore, should be on everyone's to-do list. To death clean is to physically prepare your home for a time when you are no longer its caretaker.

But this practice is not only for the dying. Even the young and vital can find they have accumulated so many possessions that they are overwhelmed. Imagine if you took all the time spent on activities like moving, organizing, cleaning, sorting, or cursing your things, and reallocated that time.

*To prayer.*

*To rest.*

*To eternity.*

Fewer things to deal with means more time for what matters. No matter your age or state in life, here are a few steps you can take to do a little death cleaning this Lent.

**START WITH THE BIG STUFF**, like that old piece of furniture that no longer serves your needs. If you intend to pass it on to a loved one, do it now. Why wait till you're dead? If this piece of furniture isn't destined to be an heirloom, it's time to donate or sell. The removal of this big item will have a big impact on your space, creating momentum for further paring down.

1 TIMOTHY 6:6



For we brought  
nothing into the  
world, just as we  
shall not be able  
to take anything  
out of it.

**BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF** and continue on. The goal is that inch by inch, drawer by drawer, closet by closet, eventually you'll come in contact with every item in your home. You'll realize that most of your unused items are not heirloom quality, so it's time to say goodbye long before your last breath. If you balk at the idea of donating or throwing away something you spent money on, realize that you're not going to recover any of that money while that item remains unused in your possession. Furthermore, that item will eventually cost your loved ones additional time and stress after your death. Don't let your things have that kind of power over you.

**YOU DON'T NEED TO BE FACING DEATH** head on in order to death clean. Every day the sacraments remind us that we will not live on this earth forever. By beginning to assess all the items you own today, you can bless those who live in your home right now. Once you have pared down your possessions to a manageable number,

your home will be much easier to maintain. Home will feel like the respite you deserve, rather than an additional source of stress. And perhaps most importantly, there will be more room for the Holy Spirit in your Domestic Church. Once you've lifted the burden of all the physical things that no longer serve you, you will have more time, space and energy to serve others.

**WASTE NOT, WANT NOT.** While this exercise may feel wasteful, the truth is that having less helps you to waste less going forward. And let this be your constant refrain: making these hard decisions now, saves your family from making these hard decisions later. "For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it." 1 Timothy 6:6



*visio divina*





## *Christ in the Garden of Olives*

{ visio divina }

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BY EMMA CASSANI

You may have heard of *lectio divina*, “divine reading,” where we read and pray through scripture. *Visio divina* is similar, but means “divine seeing.” When practicing *visio divina*, we look at and pray through sacred art.

In college, I took a few art history classes and immediately fell in love with the way I could learn so much about the world simply by looking at a piece of art. For me, art is its own beautiful, powerful language.

The language of art can be cultivated and expanded with knowledge and practice. Each week this Guide will provide you with some tools to help you better understand art's language.

## *Christ in the Garden of Olives*

EUGÈNE DELACROIX, (1824-26 CE)

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This week we'll take a look at Eugène Delacroix's painting, *Christ in the Garden of Olives* (1824-26 CE). It is from the Romantic period (1800-1850 CE). You *might* recognize Delacroix's name. He painted *Liberty Leading the People*, depicting freedom from the July Revolution in Paris, France. But Delacroix created much more than that. In fact, he crafted over 800 paintings, thousands of drawings, and written letters and journals.

The Romantic period follows the Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical movements.

What these prior movements all *generally* had in common was the belief of relying

on mathematics to achieve what is ideally beautiful. Romanticism completely rejects this idea.

Delacroix describes Romanticism beautifully:

“I have told myself a hundred times that painting—that is, the material thing called a painting—is no more than a pretext, the bridge between the mind of the painter and the mind of the spectator... Cold precision is not art. Skillful invention, when it is pleasing or when it is expressive, is art itself.”

Romanticism is all about finding beauty in **emotion** and **subjectivity**. It is not about attaining perfect composition based on geometry, perspective or precise measurement. An extension of humanism coming from the Baroque period, Romanticism is understanding what it means to be **human** and executing a physical portrayal of those deep feelings.

Delacroix often paints **challenging** subject matters, mainly influenced by Napoleon's downfall, the Industrial Revolution and the literature he consumed (Shakespeare, Goethe,

the Bible). However, his **fresh brush strokes** and **rich color** communicate something entirely different; something that is **vibrant** and **welcoming**. Creating this juxtaposition, Delacroix **invites** us to enter into the **difficult world** of his painting, wanting us to understand and **sympathize** with the figures.

Romanticism is characterized by the use of:

- strong emotion, expression
- subjectivity; individualism
- vibrant colors
- visible paint strokes
- idyllic and/or dramatic scenes
- movement; dynamic compositions, positions, gestures
- rejection or suspicion of science and mathematics
- idealization of nature

Pause here and examine the painting. Think about what the artist is trying to tell you through these Romantic characteristics.

Made a guess? Great. Let's break it down.

## ART ANALYSIS

This scene depicts the agony in the garden in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36-46, Mk. 14:32-42, Lk. 22:39-46). It is the moment when Jesus realizes He will soon be arrested and crucified. This painting is interesting because we see a side of Jesus that is very **human** and **vulnerable**. He wrestles with fear and anxiety for what is to come. Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives to pray to His Father. He even asks if it is in God's will to stop this, "take this cup away from me" (Lk. 22:42).

Jesus takes Peter, James and John with Him to keep watch while He prays. Jesus stays relatively close to them: "about a stone's throw away" (Lk. 22:41). In the bottom left corner of the painting, we see the apostles sleeping close by. In the Gospel readings, it says that Peter, James and John cannot stay awake: "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt. 26:41).



Let's start by looking at this painting as a whole. The subject matter is **challenging** and **vulnerable**, yet we see **rich, vibrant colors** **inviting** us into the scene. It's exquisitely melancholic.



**light**

*shows us what's important*

Light spills from the top right of the canvas bringing our attention to the cloud of angles and Jesus. Delacroix paints not one, but *three* angels. This is unique in this particular biblical scene as other artists depict one or no angels. Delacroix does this to **dramatize** the scene and show how tragic this news is to not only Jesus, but also to these Heavenly beings.

All the angels are portrayed as **human** women in flight with feathery wings. The **movement** of the angels' garments elegantly hug their bodies and ripple in the wind. You can see the wind pushing back the middle angel's hair. The angel in green clings to the middle angel in solace. Her chin points downwards and her **expression** is somber. The middle angel slightly frowns and her eyes are open, gazing at Christ in shock and fear. The angel closest to the viewer buries her face in her hands, sobbing.

There is **drama** in the way she throws her head into her hands. She leans into the middle angel, and her hair falls to the right side of her body and in front of her face, revealing her ear and neck. This pose is not only **dramatic** and **dynamic** but is also such a *relatable* and *human* posture of utter despair.





The audience can **sympathize** with the angels. We can truly feel and experience the confusion, shock and anguish. *Why does Jesus have to die?*

Following the light, Christ sits at the center of the composition, His right arm propping His body up on two rocks. He holds up His left arm to the group of weeping angels in a way that says “stop” or “halt.” However, His **gesture** does not seem forceful, as His fingers and palm are relaxed, rather than stretched out and stiff. His gesture portrays authority and power, but in a gentle, loving manner.



Christ's face communicates so many different **emotions**, even though, at first glance, it does not appear to do so. Christ tilts His head towards the ground with His eyes closed, communicating pensiveness, stoicism and resignation. Christ shows this *gravitas* (a neoclassical characteristic meaning seriousness and gravity). Jesus has come to the realization that nothing can be done. He has to follow through with His Father's will. He must be arrested and put to death.

On the left side of the canvas, behind Jesus and the sleeping apostles, faint light from held torches illuminate a mob of men. These are the Romans and Judas coming to arrest Jesus, foreshadowing what is to come.



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. Jesus is fully divine *and* fully human.  
He experiences fear, anxiety and pain.
  2. Jesus agonizes about the future, but brings His worries to His Father in prayer and continues to trust and fulfill God's plan.
  3. We, as human beings, must trust in God even when we don't understand His will.
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## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is your initial feeling when viewing this piece?
- What do you do when you are worried?  
Do you bring your fears to God in prayer?
- Who do you identify with in this scene?
- The apostles could not stay awake because "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt. 26:41). Their human nature caused them to be weak and fall asleep. What is something of the flesh that is pulling you away from following Christ?



## **PRAYER**

Say a prayer in thanksgiving for the ability to connect with God through art and beauty. Give your fears and anxieties to Jesus. Pray that not your will, but God's will be done.



## *Mac & Cheese Souffle*

{ meat-free lenten recipe }

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One of our Lenten vegetarian go-tos is pasta. And while one easy option is to heat up a jar of marinara and boil noodles, there are a lot of fun vegetarian options to try. Check out this mac & cheese souffle for a fun, new take on the traditional macaroni and cheese.

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## INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup cooked macaroni noodles
- 1 1/2 cup scalded milk
- 1 cup soft bread crumbs
- 2 cups grated American cheese
- 3 egg yolks, beaten
- 1/4 cup chopped pimento
- 3 Tbsp. melted butter
- 1 Tbsp. chopped parsley
- 1 Tbsp. grated onion
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3 egg whites
- 1/t tsp. cream of tartar

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## DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Pour hot, scalded milk over bread crumbs.
3. Add 1 1/2 cups of cheese, cover and let stand until cheese melts.
4. Add macaroni noodles, beaten egg yolks, pimento, butter, parsley, onion and salt.
5. Beat egg whites with cream of tartar until stiff, but not dry.
6. Fold into macaroni mixture.
7. Pour all ingredients into a baking dish.
8. Set dish in shallow pan. Fill pan with about an inch of water.
9. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 to 60 minutes.
10. Once done, cover with the remaining cheese.
11. Serve once melted.



## *Pick Up Litter*

{ secret service }

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Lent is a season of almsgiving, and while we typically think of almsgiving in terms of financial gifts, it also includes acts of service.

We invite you to engage with this season by giving alms in a whole new way. Add some surprise and delight to the world around you with secret acts of service.



Each week we will give you a simple service challenge to fulfill some time during the week.

## THIS WEEK'S SECRET ACT OF SERVICE

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### *Pick up litter.*

This is an excellent activity for a family, especially if you can find a day with nice weather. Pick a park or someplace similar where your family likes to spend time, take a couple garbage bags and work gloves, and go pick up litter for an hour. No service hours, no cash back to the local school... just cleaning a public space for the sake of taking care of the environment.

Two notes: we highly recommend using trash grabbers and make sure you tell everyone to avoid broken glass, medical waste (such as needles), or other potentially hazardous litter.

## COMPLETED YOUR SECRET SERVICE?

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Let us know how it went on **Facebook** and **Instagram**: @thecatholictelegraph



## *Peace & Quiet*

{ mindfulness for catholic families }

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Catholic Mindfulness is like taking the spiritual classic, *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence and living it rather than reading it.

It's a chance to focus on the present moment. With young families, it's easy to focus on "what's next"—the practices, the projects, the grades... but Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:34, "Do not worry about the things of tomorrow. Today has enough worries of its own."



## 1. PICK A TIME

Find 15 minutes to set aside for you and your family.



## 2. ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Try to avoid technology and bedrooms.



## 3. CHOOSE YOUR LEADER

We've written this activity to be led by mom or dad, but it can just as easily be adapted for others such as aunts, uncles, grandmas, grandpas or beloved guardians.



## 4. SPREAD OUT

Have each kid grab a pillow, carpet square, or something similar to sit on. Make sure everyone spreads out.



## 5. CREATE YOUR SPACE

The whole family should sit comfortably in their own space, but criss-cross applesauce on the floor is the rule of thumb.

## **BREATHE**

Mom or dad (or the adult leader) should ask everyone to close their eyes, then lead the family through six deep breaths.

Instruct everyone to breathe in for a count of six, hold the breath for a count of four, then breathe out for a count of four.

*Begin with the sign of the cross.*

## **READ**

*The adult should read aloud. Read slowly, calmly and clearly.*

“Jesus said, ‘When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. This is how you are to pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread;  
and forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors;

MATTHEW 6:6



When you pray,  
go to your  
inner room,  
close the door,  
and pray to  
your Father in  
secret.

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and do not subject us to the final test,  
but deliver us from the evil one.  
If you forgive others their transgressions, your  
heavenly Father will forgive you.  
But if you do not forgive others, neither will  
your Father forgive your transgressions.”

Matthew 6:6, 9-15

### **SAY**

Have you ever noticed how hard it can be to  
focus when you pray? Sometimes we are worried  
about something that's going on at school  
or a situation happening with our families.  
Sometimes we are looking forward to something  
and so excited that we can't stop thinking about  
it. Other times our minds just wander.

Maybe you've even had this happen at Mass?  
Have you ever left church on Sunday and  
forgotten the readings or what the priest said  
in his homily?

Worries and excitements can be distracting, and  
sometimes our minds wander during prayer. It's  
okay. It happens to everyone. But we should  
work to try to get better at staying focused  
and present during our prayer.

Let's close our eyes, center our minds, and say one Our Father prayer together without letting our minds wander or get distracted. We're all going to try to say the words together and totally focus on this present moment. We're going to hear each other speaking the prayers, feel our bodies as we sit in this room, and be present now.

Let's take a few seconds to focus on our breathing and practice keeping our minds from distraction. Keep your eyes closed and focus on breathing:

*Breathe in for six.*

*one — two — three — four — five — six*

*Hold for four.*

*one — two — three — four*

*Breathe out for four.*

*one — two — three — four*

*Again, breathe in.*

*one — two — three — four — five — six*

*Hold.*

*one — two — three — four*

*Breathe out.*

*one — two — three — four*

*Breathe in.*

*one — two — three — four — five — six*

*Hold for four.*

*one — two — three — four*

*Breathe out for four.*

*one — two — three — four*



Our Father,  
Who art in Heaven  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
On Earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our trespasses  
As we forgive those who have  
trespassed against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
And forgive us our sins.  
Amen.

Sometimes when you are worried, excited or  
feel distracted, the best thing to do is be quiet  
and still, focus on your breathing, and try to  
feel God in the present moment.

*Close with the sign of the cross.*



## *An Unexpected Visit*

{ explore your local catholic cemetery }

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BY SCOTT WRIGHT

When I tell folks that I work at Calvary Cemetery in Dayton, their reaction is usually one of shock.

*What is there to do all day? Isn't it very quiet? Isn't it kind of creepy being around all that death?*

However, I have come to realize that Catholic Cemeteries are actually very vibrant places. Here are three reasons to visit your local cemetery this Lent.

## **REMEMBRANCE**

Our Catholic cemeteries are a place to go and remember our loved ones. At Calvary Cemetery in Dayton, we are home to almost 90,000 graves throughout our 200-acre cemetery. I visit my grandfather's grave almost daily while at work. Although he passed away before I was born, it gives me a comforting connection to my family roots. I'm sure that my experience is not unique, especially among genealogists. Although our burial records are searchable online, there is always something special about visiting our ancestors' burial locations in person.

## **PUBLIC GREEN SPACES**

It should come as no surprise that cemeteries provide large, maintained green spaces that support both wildlife and the local community. However, the COVID pandemic led to many changes within our cemetery when Governor Mike DeWine recommended that people participate in outdoor activities such as walking around cemeteries. During the nice weather months, we now see the local neighbors walking the hills with their dogs, high school cross country teams training, and local hiking



groups touring the grounds. One of the more astounding moments occurred last spring when local anthropologists, walking around the cemetery during their lunch break, re-discovered a section of Calvary as one of the last remaining native earthworks in Montgomery County. Who would have thought our cemetery is also home to such a historic site?

## **PRAYER**

Most importantly, our cemeteries are places of prayer. As Catholics, we remember our deceased loved ones on their birthdays, at funeral and remembrance Masses, All Souls Day, and many other occasions. However, Calvary's gates are open year round so the faithful can gather in prayer. One of the most beautiful things I see while working at Calvary is when visitors walk

the older sections of the cemetery dating from the 1800's and perform the corporal work of mercy of praying for the dead. It really highlights our shared hope in the resurrection of Christ that people are willing to sacrifice their "free time" to remember complete strangers in prayer. Every time I see this, I am reminded of the funeral Mass where the priest prays the line "for life is changed, not ended." I would invite you to spend a few free moments in prayer at your local cemetery and, if possible, to say a prayer for those whose families are unable to visit them.

As you can tell by now, I am deeply passionate about our Catholic cemeteries and invite you to visit, pray and see the vibrancy contained within our gates.

WRITTEN BY SCOTT WRIGHT, CCCE

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Scott Wright, CCCE serves as the Community Outreach Director of Calvary Cemetery in Dayton, OH. He is also the president of the Ohio Cemetery Association and the secretary/treasurer for the Catholic Cemeteries of Ohio.