Rediscover Catholicism

A SPIRITUAL GUIDE TO LIVING WITH PASSION & PURPOSE

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New York Times bestselling author of The Rhythm of Life
AT A TIME WHEN MANY CATHOLICS ARE DISILLUSIONED, QUESTIONING THEIR FAITH, AND FILLED WITH DOUBTS ABOUT THE RELEVANCE OF CATHOLICISM IN THE MODERN WORLD, THE VOICE OF ONE MAN CRIES OUT TO THE WORLD'S LARGEST FAITH COMMUNITY WITH A CLARITY THAT IS RARE AND INSPIRING.

Rediscover Catholicism, takes us on an adventure of life-changing proportions. Beginning with our common yearning for happiness, Kelly reveals the essence of authentic Catholic spirituality while addressing some of the most important questions we face today both as individuals and as a Church.

- Are you happy?
- Are you living an authentic life?
- Do you really think you will find happiness where you are looking?
- How would you like your life to change?
- What is God's dream for your life?
- Why have so many people rejected Catholicism?
- What does it mean to walk with God in the modern world?
- Do the saints have anything to offer you?
- Is Jesus still relevant?
- Can the ancient traditions of Catholicism help us deal with the modern challenges of our lives?

For more great resources designed to help you rediscover the genius of Catholicism, please visit: Rediscover-faith.org

Cathedral of Saint Paul
National Shrine of the Apostle Paul
Saint Paul, Minnesota

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Chapter Seven

THE PATH IS WELL TRODDEN

I spent my childhood pursuing excellence on the sporting field. My seven brothers and I were constantly engaged in a variety of sporting endeavors and fiercely competitive. Each day when school was finished, we went to training: tennis, cricket, soccer, swimming, basketball, volleyball, golf, cycling, track, football... On the afternoons when we didn’t have training, we would test each other's skills in the backyard of our family home in suburban Sydney, Australia.

My father always encouraged my brothers and me to study the champions of each sport we played. Every good coach I have ever trained under, regardless of the sport, has encouraged me to do the same. My father and my coaches wanted me to study these great athletes for two reasons: firstly, to be inspired, and secondly, to learn the best techniques from the masters. "If you want to be good at something, study the best," they would say.

At the time, I thought I was just being trained to be competitive in the sporting arena. Little did I know how important these lessons would become in the arena of life.

Growing up, I went to church every Sunday, but I didn’t begin to take an active interest in my faith until I was about sixteen. When I began to explore the riches of Catholicism, I quickly came to understand that God calls each of us to live a life of honesty and integrity—an authentic life. I discovered that when we pursue what is good, true, beautiful, and noble, with honesty and integrity, we are holy, yes, but this is also when we are most fully alive and most truly ourselves.

Being young and idealistic, I was immediately attracted to the concept of holiness. The discovery of this ideal was the single most important event
of my life. It was not just the discovery of an idea; it was an awakening. It was the revelation of my essential purpose. It was an eclipse that brought focus and clarity to my life. By the grace of God, and with the direction that mysteriously emerges from the Scriptures and the Sacraments, in the months and years that followed, a transformation began to take place within me.

Today, I am still very much in the midst of that transformation. At times it seems as if I am progressing, while at other times I cannot help but feel that I am slipping back down a mountain I have struggled so hard to climb. All in all, I have learned that my feelings are a poor indication of the work God is actually doing in my soul. I have come to believe that at every turn in the road, God is drawing us along the path, whether we are aware of it or not. My courage to accept the present and my hope to look toward the future come from remembering how God has used the circumstances of my past to achieve his purpose in my life.

• In Search of Excellence •

Over the ten years since my original conversion experience, I have learned to apply the wisdom my coaches shared with me in the sporting realm to my pursuit of excellence in the spiritual realm. Our faith is rich with examples of great men and women who have trained tirelessly and perfected the art of firmly establishing virtue in their lives.

If you came to me and told me that you wanted to become a great basketball player, I would tell you to study the great players who have gone before you. Learn everything you can about Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, and Magic Johnson. Similarly, if you told me you wanted to be a great golfer, I would tell you to study Arnold Palmer, Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, and that carefree swing of Fred Couples. Read books, watch videos, research their training techniques—find out what qualities led them to become extraordinary athletes. If you want to be a great violinist, study other great violinists. If you want to be a great artist, study other great artists. If you want to be a great business leader, study other great business leaders. And of course this same principle applies to those of us who want to become great Catholics.
Whom will you study?

There is a path that leads to the authentic life. It is not a secret path; the path to holiness is well worn. For two thousand years men and women of all ages, from all walks of life and every social class, have been treading this path. If you came to me and told me you were going on a journey to a place you had never been before, I would advise you to travel with a guide. If you had to choose a guide, you wouldn’t choose someone who had never been to where you wanted to go. You would choose an expert, someone who has made the journey before.

The spiritual life is a long and difficult journey, and we are all pilgrims on this path. There are many men and women who have gone before us who are willing to serve as our guides as we make this journey. Their stories provide a living legacy of spiritual wisdom. If we seek their counsel in the wisdom of their life stories, we will discover that they have faced and conquered many of the snares and pitfalls that seek to trip us up along the way. If we open our hearts to their stories, we will learn from their successes and failures, and they will teach us and inspire us to become all we can be.

• The Saints •

As we live in the midst of this modern culture, the sweet deceit of secular humanism calls to us with an ever-increasing intensity. How can you and I muster the strength to resist the diabolical distraction of this call? The answer, I am certain, is no secret. The path Jesus invites us to walk, the path our age desperately needs someone to explore, has been walked before. This path may be covered with grass and leaves, and some shrubs may have even worked their way across it, but it is there. The path of true Christian spirituality has been well worn throughout the centuries. It may be sorely neglected of late, but for those who seek it with a sincere heart, it will not take much to rediscover—and the rewards are infinite.

If we sincerely wish to follow Jesus, it is only natural to ask: Who have been his greatest followers? Who has thrived by following Jesus? Who has walked this path successfully before us? Which men and women have made
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this perilous and difficult journey? Who has embraced the adventure of salvation? Are these people available to guide you and me along the path today?

The answer, of course, is the saints. But they have become unpopular among modern Catholics. We have stopped reading their stories to our children. We have taken their statues from our churches. And we have stopped reading the books they wrote.

As Catholics, we must ask ourselves an important question in relation to these spiritual ancestors of ours: Why have so many modern Catholics turned their backs on these great spiritual leaders? We would be fools to believe all this has happened in response to a handful of abuses and exaggerations that have at times found their way into our relationship with the saints.