



ST. MARY CHURCH  
OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION



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CATHOLIC CHURCH

# Catholic Atheist

WEEK 1 - February 22-28, 2026

## *A Disciple Believes . . . THAT GOD LOVES US!*

*In this first week of the series, we will introduce the concept of the Catholic "Atheist," beginning with the reading from Genesis about Adam & Eve. Adam & Eve commit the first sin because they believe God is holding out on them, keeping them from the forbidden fruit ... not out of love, but out of spite. We'll dive into God's love for us and why we need to believe in His love as the bedrock on which to build a lively faith.*

### OPENING PRAYER

**Heavenly Father**, thank You for loving us the way that You do. Forgive us for the times that we do not think or act as though we believe in Your unwavering love. We truly want to be Your disciples, disciples who are confident of Your love and Your presence in our lives. We ask You to help us on this journey to become true Believers, full disciples who listen and follow Your will. We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### INSIGHTS FROM WEEKEND'S READINGS

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS WEEKEND'S READINGS](#)

This Sunday's **first reading from Genesis** describes how God created us with personal, intimate love in a world designed for goodness. Yet, it soon shows us how Satan began, from the very beginning, to plant seeds of doubt in our hearts that God really loves us: "You will certainly not die! God knows well that the moment you eat of it [the fruit] your eyes will be opened and you will be like the gods." What a statement! Not only does Satan tell us that God does not love us, he tells us God lies to us and fears we will become His competitors! If we buy that lie, as Adam & Eve did, we take the first step to practical atheism.

**Second reading from Romans:** ends with a wonderful reminder of God's love for us: "just as through one transgression, condemnation came upon all, so, **through one righteous act, ... life came to all.**" And that one act was the greatest sign of God's love -- His Son died for each of us!

Finally, in our **Gospel**, we hear the story of Jesus' temptation in the dessert. In response, Jesus says, "One does not live on bread alone, but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God." And every Word from God reminds us that He loves us!

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE

Take some time to reflect on this week's message and discuss with your group:

1. Who is one person you know that loves you without a shadow of doubt? Why do you have confidence in his/her love?
2. On a scale of 1-10, how certain in the depth of your heart, are you sure of God's love for you today? Why do you answer as you do?
3. What circumstances or thoughts cause you to question or doubt God's love for you?
4. Why is it vital for a healthy relationship with God to have a deep faith in His love for us?
5. Read out loud Romans 8, ***"For I am convinced that neither death nor life neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** Ponder on this thought. How does it bolster your knowledge that God truly loves you?
6. How will you keep God's love in your mind this week?

## SCRIPTURE FOR MEDITATION

*"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."* **Isaiah 43:1**

*"But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."* **Romans 5:8**

*"For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, that I know very well"* **Psalms 139:13-14**

### PRAY

- Write down a scripture verse about God's love and put it somewhere you will see every day
- Spend 10 minutes with *Psalms 23* – The Lord is my Shepherd – remembering God's Goodness and great love for you
- Visit the adoration chapel for a few minutes this week

### ACT

- Write an Affirmation Letter to Yourself from God (scripture can help remind us who we are)..being with "My beloved child..."
- **Sign up to attend the "Abide" Lenten retreat as a small group (2/28)**
- Make a Lenten (Pray, Fast & Give) Plan if you have not already- how are you going to try and grow as a disciple this season?

### INSPIRE

- Reach out to someone and remind them in God's love - send a letter of affirmation
- Invite someone to join you on the Lenten Retreat - someone who wouldn't otherwise come
- Bring a food item to donate to the SVDP food pantry or Loaves & Fishes, remembering God's great love for ALL his people.

## INTERCESSIONS FOR THE GROUP

Take some time to pray together for the persons or people on the Hearts of your small group members.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for helping us to recognize the times we have doubted Your love, creating gaps between what we say we believe and our actions. And thank You for the comfort You give us when we consider how much You have loved us from our very beginnings, even when we have been disobedient and have sinned.

Please help us to pause when doubt approaches and to trust in Your great love for us, eliminating those gaps between our beliefs and our thoughts and actions.

Thank You for loving us. Amen.