

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

In other words, blessed are those who want to be holy. And actively seek it. Most of us have some desire to please God, to grow in holiness, and to spend forever in heaven – at least we should...I hope we do! But actively seeking holiness is more challenging. How do we hunger for holiness?

An analogy...

As children, we learned the basics about health and nutrition by the food pyramid – a guide to help build a healthy diet. The food pyramid helps us make sure that we are getting enough of each of the different food groups and all our essential vitamins and minerals. The Spiritual Food Pyramid can help us build a strong and healthy spiritual life, making sure that we are getting the things we need for righteousness!

Digging deeper...

As with real food, in our spiritual lives, we can have “favorite foods” or “favorite food groups” that are the base of our spiritual diet, the things we return to time and time again and that we really enjoy. This is good. But what about the foods or groups that you’ve not yet acquired a taste for? That *lack* does indeed affect your spiritual life. You may be “eating” enough, but are you really being *nourished*?

Perhaps one of the reasons we stick to our “routine” spiritual foods is that we are unsure and uncertain, especially about the spiritual life. We don’t know how to pray (or at least, we don’t think we do); or we aren’t sure what is best. The Spiritual Food Pyramid can help us move past this and help us identify one area at a time to work on. It also gives us plenty of ideas for starting to build a wider and balanced appetite. Don’t be afraid of the unknown...think of all the delicious possibilities that await you!

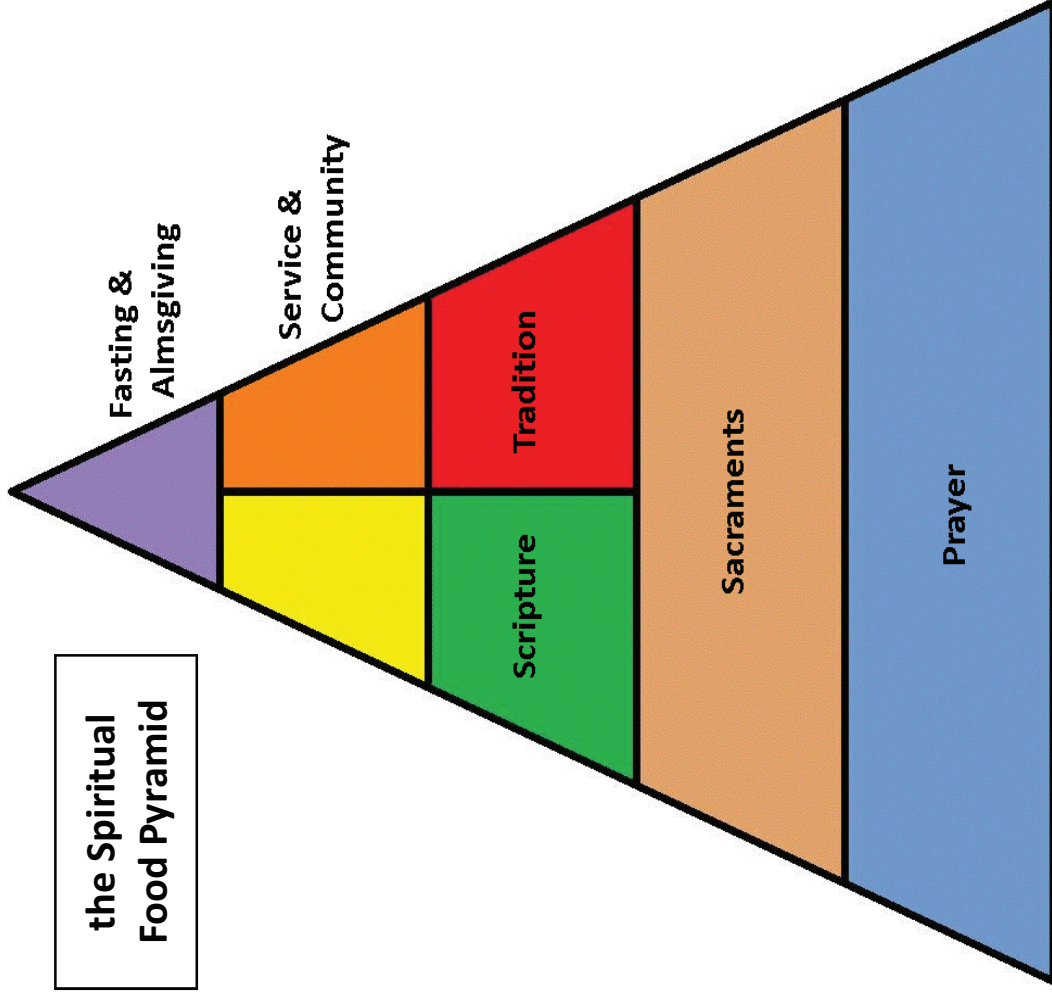
Using the Spiritual Food Pyramid...

We start at the bottom and work our way up, because each builds on the one before and provides a solid foundation for what is still to come. For example, though service is an essential part of the Christian life, it bears little spiritual fruit if you are not yet rooted in prayer and a relationship with the Lord. This is why, when identifying what spiritual group to work on first, you should pick the one closest to the base of the pyramid and then move up after you have established a good habit.

- Use the pyramid to evaluate your current spiritual life – what are the groups that you seem to be lacking and what are strong?
- Identifying the ones you need to grow in, pick one towards the base of the food pyramid and make a game plan – how are you going to add this food group to your spiritual diet? Start slowly and simply, one thing at a time, giving yourself a few weeks to make it a habit.
- Challenge yourself to try new things and move beyond your comfort zone – trying praying out loud, volunteering once a month at a soup kitchen, fasting in between meals, reading part of the Gospels every day, committing to a ministry in your parish. Take your spiritual diet seriously and learn to like the foods that are best for you – your soul will thank you!
- Find an accountability partner to help you! (The bossiest person you know would be a great help here!) Ask them to remind you of your resolutions and be firm with you when you start to waver.
- Don’t forget to fast! It is on the top of the pyramid – not because it is to be avoided – but because sacrifice makes the spiritual life so sweet. It is the cherry on top a healthy and holy spiritual diet!

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.”

the Spiritual Food Pyramid



What is my favorite *spiritual food*?

Which *spiritual food groups* are nourishing me now?

Which *spiritual food groups* am I lacking?

What can I do this Lent to acquire new tastes and sustain a balanced *spiritual diet*?

FASTING AND ALMSGIVING Make 1 sacrifice each day - Skip snacking - Eat a simple meal - Buy something extra at the store to give to the poor - Sacrifice for a particular ministry - Skip the condiments - Unite your small sufferings to the Cross

SERVICE AND COMMUNITY Make a friend at a nursing home - Serve lunch once a month at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen - Volunteer at a Crisis Pregnancy Center - Join your parish Prayer Line - Go to Theology on Tap - Participate in a Scripture Study - Join a Liturgical Ministry

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION Make the USCCB Daily Mass Readings your homepage - Pray 1 Psalm each morning - Do 15 minutes of Spiritual Reading twice a week - Read the lives of the Saints - Arrive at Church 15 minutes early to read through the Readings and Gospel - Learn *Lectio Divina* - Read Catholic magazines & papers

SACRAMENTS Go to Daily Mass at least once each week (or more!) - Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once each month - Commit to 1 hour of Eucharistic Adoration each week - Leave to/from work 15 minutes early and make a visit at a nearby parish - Renew your baptismal promises

PRAYER Turn off your radio - Use a prayer journal - Keep a rosary in your car and pray to/from work - Tape the morning offering to your bathroom mirror - Begin your lunch with the Angelus - Spend 5 or 10 minutes each day in silence - Keep a crucifix in your pocket - Make an examination of conscience each night - Count your blessings