

Life in the Spirit Series – Week 2 – Outline for Homily – 110814

WEEK 1 – RECAP OF THE FIRST WEEK'S MAIN POINTS

- I. God is not beyond our contact, but someone who loves us and wants to be in a personal relationship with us, and who wants to give us a better life.
 - A. Our misconceptions of Christianity can be an obstacle to our finding a better life through Christ:
 - 1) Seeing Christianity as only about restrictive rules;
 - 2) or only as living a good life and staying out of trouble;
 - 3) or that we can not contact God directly, that He does nothing in the world.
 - B. The truth is: God loves us – He wants to have a personal relationship with us – He wants to give us a new and better life – For this reason, He sent his only Son, Jesus
 - C. We can experience a better life by responding to God with our whole self.
- II. During this Life in the Spirit Series of 7 weeks – we are in week 2 – you can take steps which will allow Jesus Christ to establish or restore or deepen a relationship with you.
 - A. Everyone can experience a change:
 - 1) Those who have been Catholics only in name;
 - 2) Those who have found Christian life difficult or have not experienced much contact with God;
 - 3) Catholics who have already experienced personal contact with Christ; and
 - 4) Those who have already been baptized or immersed in the Spirit.
 - B. This Life in the Spirit Series is a gift from God of a new beginning for all of us.
- III. You can begin right away to turn to the Lord – He is always attentive and welcoming.
 - A. The Lord is reaching out to you, but you must reach out to Him. “When you call to me and come to me, I will listen to you. When you seek me, you shall find me.” (Jeremiah 29:12-13)
 - B. Opening ourselves up to God and what He is offering is a spiritual work of every day because this is what it means to be in a living relationship with someone:
 - Visit every day with the Lord in prayer and meditate on his words;
 - Read prayerfully the Bible: Acts of the Apostles, Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels;
 - Listen to a homily again or if you missed one – recordings are on <http://fathergilles.net>
 - Read the reference materials that will be posted on the same website <http://fathergilles.net>

WEEK 2 – OUTLINE FOR HOMILY

- I. **There is something seriously wrong with the world (with society as a whole and with individual lives) – something major is needed.**
 - A. God made the world to be a place of peace and justice and happiness, a place in which he would reign. He still wants the world to be that way. Isaiah 2:1-5
 - B. But everyone agrees that there is something seriously wrong with the way the world is now (war, poverty, riots, racial conflict, disconnect between the generations, exploitation).
 - C. We realize this isn't just an accumulation of individual problems – society as a whole, the system as a whole, has something wrong with it (where is it all going? Social problems are getting worse, no

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one is on top of the situation, technology and social change are out of control, and marketing and the pursuit of unhindered profit seem to be the dominant driving force even of governments).

- D. Individuals suffer from the situation and from lack of help, and they experience many problems (loneliness, isolation, depression, anxieties, insecurities, lack of direction, meaninglessness, and personal relationships characterized by disappointment, fear, suspicion, mistrust, exploitation).
- E. Something major is needed to correct the situation in the world.

The Sunday Readings – The Word of God from Scripture – 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7 Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord declares his desire to welcome into his house all peoples. He will make joyful all those who accept to enter into a right relationship with Him as their Lord, for He is good and just. In order to relate to God we must also be good and just and do what is right. He offers us to join with Him, to minister to Him through prayer and the offering up of our life which is the most precious gift we have to offer him as a sacrifice, as our worship in spirit and in truth, as an expression of our sincere desire to be his people and to do his will, to put our trust in Him above all others and even above our own self. In fact we cannot be fully alive until our heart, mind, and soul expand enough to actually love God and his holy Name and out of love for Him be eager to honour Him all day on the Lord's Day and serve Him all week. The very things God shows us we need to do to have life are the very things we resist or only do half-heartedly.

II. **The cause of what is wrong with society is more than human fault and bigger than man can handle on his own (Satan exists, sin is inescapable, the dominion of darkness is a real force in the world), men need God to find the new life they want.**

A. Men make various efforts to improve the world:

- 1) There are a variety of secular efforts, but they are not succeeding
 - Even the most educated people in our universities and the most highly placed executives in our modern business corporations suffer symptoms of troubled lives or discontent
 - Even they are having a hard time making a go of their own lives, work, and relationships
- 2) Religions which men have developed try to achieve a solution: Buddhism, yoga, transcendental meditation, and others, but definitive solutions continue to evade humanity.
- 3) Secular Christianity and some forms of traditionalist Christianity reduce Jesus' Gospel to man's efforts to follow religion to force God to grant us prosperity and change the world; But these are all based on man's wisdom; God's wisdom is needed. Isaiah 55:8-9

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32 In writing to the Romans Paul says to us it is not good for us to manipulate God; so He doesn't let us do that. This is what Paul means that God lets us be locked into our own sinfulness and rebellion. Only the truth can free us to enter into a real relationship with God. This is what Paul desires for the Jewish people, to know the full truth and extent of the love of God for us in Jesus Christ. God's mercy is so great that the very rebellion of the Jews who rejected Christ became the instruments of God's mercy to all the nations. In Jesus' death and resurrection God forgives our sins and delivers us from slavish fear of death. The original sin of the first human beings is what we all continue to do: we rebel from God's will and prefer any other opinion, especially our own, and we prefer to do our own will, to follow our own preferences and inclinations, even though they are all dead ends.

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B. God tells us that:

- 1) We are not just confronted with particular wrongs in society or in ourselves. Behind the particular things that are wrong there is something bigger than most men can handle:
 - The pervasive power that sin has over us – Romans 3:9, 23
 - A kingdom, the dominion of darkness – Colossians 1:13
 - A force in rebellion against God, at enmity with Him – Ephesians 6:12
 - Satan is behind it – 1 John 5:19
 - We are not free, nor is our society (people are in spiritual bondage, under the oppression of evil, and we don't have the power to extricate ourselves) – Ephesians 2:1-3
- 2) Man was created to need God to achieve true peace, justice, and truth – but only in relationship:
 - The spiritual realm is not an optional extra – John 15:5c
 - Only in God's kingdom (under his rule) are life and freedom possible – Isaiah 2:1-5; 45:22
 - Under God's rule, life can be changed now – Isaiah 48:17-18; Mark 1:14-15
- 3) There is a choice before us: to live under the dominion of darkness or in the kingdom of God.

III. God sent his Son Jesus to break the hold of Satan and give us new life through his death and resurrection. Jesus is the Lord and Saviour.

- A. God sent his Son to free us from darkness and Satan. Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the one God sent) – Colossians 1:13; John 11:21-27; Matthew 16:13-17
- B. Jesus died for our sins and rose to give us new life – Romans 4:25; Colossians 1:20; Titus 3:3-7
 - If he had not died, we would not have been freed from our sins – Isaiah 53:4-6; Hebrews 9:11-28
 - He broke the hold of Satan on us – John 12:31; 1 John 4:4
 - Salvation isn't just going to heaven: it is a whole new way of life on Earth too – John 10:10b; 4:14
- C. Jesus is Lord (God gave full power and authority to Jesus to bring freedom and new life to those who accept Him) – Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:5-11. Jesus lives in his Church and acts through it and in it to bring life to those who are his followers – Ephesians 2:17-22

Matthew 14:22-33

What Paul says we at first view find terrible: that "God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all." We see what he means in the Gospel, when Jesus seems not at all interested in responding to the pagan Canaanite woman. It is not that God is not interested in all human beings – in fact He loves each one personally – He is not interested in solving our earthly problems. God is interested in one thing and one thing alone: opening up for each person on Earth the eternal life of love that is his and which He desires to share with us even now on Earth. As soon as the woman shows that she is willing and quite eager to put her faith and trust in God, Jesus immediately grants her request. It is not the request granted that brings life that endures but our faith that opens us up to a real relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in them enduring life now on Earth and beyond death.

- D. Next week: we will discuss in detail what the new life in God is, how it is different from just a good life in this world, and what a person can expect from being baptized or immersed in the Spirit.

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