

Life in the Spirit Series – Week 6 – Outline for Homily – 110911

RECAP THE 5-WEEK PROCESS

- A. These past 5 weeks we have reflected on the new life God the Father is always offering us**
1. There is plenty of evidence that all is not well in the world, and all is not well in individual lives too.
 2. God our Creator from the beginning has wanted us to be happy and offers us the guidance we need.
 3. We human beings turn away from God's guidance to follow our own impulses and preferences.
 4. By refusing to let God direct us, we lose our way and get stuck in dead ends of our lives and habits.
 5. Jesus can save us from the attraction of evil and from our distrust and disobedience of God.
- B. Last week we prayed together to ask God to give us new life by immersing us in the Holy Spirit.**
1. We repented of all the wrong we have done in our life and made an act of will to turn away from it.
 2. We committed ourselves to Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.
 3. We renounced Satan and professed our faith in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 4. We received the laying on of hands to show our willingness to follow Jesus and receive God's gifts.
 5. We decided to participate more in the Christian practices that make us grow in holiness.
- C. The Holy Spirit helps us understand that God works patiently to bring change and growth in our lives.**
1. The Holy Spirit teaches us to observe what He is doing in us and how He is guiding us in everything.
 2. In confession we get to know and trust Jesus more and He helps us learn to obey the Holy Spirit.
 3. It is in prayer each day that we develop intimacy with the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 - ❖ The Holy Spirit helps us know God's ways as we prayerfully read and study the Bible.
 - ❖ We practice trust in God's guidance by visiting generously with God in prayer every day.
 - ❖ We express gratitude and adoration to God by our faithful participation in the Sunday Liturgy.
 - ❖ We draw near to Jesus by preparing ourselves well to receive Him in Holy Communion.
 4. It is normal in the Christian life to experience doubts, fears, many troubles, and resistance to God.
 5. We can help and support each other at Sunday Liturgy and in a faith sharing or prayer group.

The Sunday Readings – The Word of God from Scripture – 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sirach 27:30-28:7 Sirach is a grandparent. While there is still time he tries to share with the young his knowledge of life and of God's ways. Anger, wrath, vengeance block the life and love of God, depriving the person we are angry with but also depriving ourselves of God's love and mercy. We must open our heart to give others forgiveness and mercy, because our heart has only one door that allows forgiveness and mercy to go out to others and also God's forgiveness and mercy to come in to set us free and heal us.

Romans 14:7-9 Paul affirms that as we live but also as we die we are connected to God. We are God's creatures; our lives belong to Him. He does not possess us in a way that imprisons us; on the contrary, God leaves us free. He makes our living fruitful and our dying a birth into eternal life; if only we obey Him. God is not indifferent to our lives, but takes great interest in each human being and cares deeply for us.

Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus affirms the teaching of the Old Testament and gives this amazing and sobering parable to illustrate the importance of cultivating a forgiving heart. In the story, the king's extravagant gift of forgiving an unpayable debt had no effect on the ungrateful slave as is shown in his violent unwillingness to pass on to a fellow slave the forgiveness he had himself so recently enjoyed. It's like being released from a debt of a billion dollars one minute and strangling a fellow worker who says he can't pay back ten bucks. It is not enough to know the truth, wisdom, and goodness of God, because just knowing doesn't change us for the better. Only our good will and real efforts to practice the truth, wisdom, and goodness of God can open up our spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to change us and develop our relationships with God and with others.

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I. In order to grow in the life of the Spirit, we have to make use of the means of spiritual growth.

- A. Being baptized or immersed in the Spirit is a new beginning; we need to grow in the life of the Spirit.
- B. In order to grow, we all need Christian practices in our lives: prayer, study, service, and community.
 - 1. The power that comes from the Holy Spirit makes us grow.
 - 2. But we need to keep in contact with Christ in order for the Holy Spirit to keep strengthening us.
 - 3. Prayer, study, service & community are means to growth, ways of staying in contact with Christ.
 - 4. The **Christian Life Wheel** diagram – what we need to grow in our life in the Spirit

The **rim** represents the Christian's daily life. The hub is the source of power and direction for the whole wheel and holds the wheel together. The **hub** of the Christian life is Christ himself.

Spokes put our whole life in contact with Christ, so he can transform it with his power & direction: **prayer, study, service** and **community, belonging** to a **group of committed Christians, receiving the sacraments**, and **participating in the regular liturgical life** of the Church.

II. We should spend time with the Lord in prayer every day.

- A. Personal relationships (friendships) don't grow without two people spending time together, so we have to spend time with the Lord to grow in our relationship with him.
- B. We can expect the Lord to speak to us and reveal himself to us if we give him a chance.
- C. Set aside time every day for prayer and scripture reading: Decide on a specific time & place

Personal testimony to the value of a daily period of prayer: What can happen at Daily Mass – Liturgy of the Hours – Rosary – Praying with the Bible (Psalms, Gospels, Proverbs, New Testament, Old Testament) – Christian meditation.

What is most helpful to develop our life in the Spirit is the **Word of God**, the Bible. Scripture is read and understood within the Church, as it is given to us in Christian Tradition. We should not just rely on the way we can understand it with the personal light the Holy Spirit gives each of us individually, but seek our Church's interpretation of the Bible.

There is a very helpful book on prayer – Ralph Martin's **Hungry for God**: Practical Help in Personal Prayer – explains in greater depth the role of prayer for trying to build or maintain a relationship with God through a regular prayer life.

III. We should be part of a Christian community and can also participate in a prayer group.

- A. We need to meet regularly with a group of Christians with whom we can grow in what we've found.
- B. Community is not an optional extra; it is essential to the life of the Spirit.
 - 1. God's plan is for us to come to him with others, in a body, an assembly.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit works through others to build us up – this is what spiritual gifts are.
 - 3. The result of Pentecost was to create a community of Christians (Acts 2:41-47).

- C. In addition to Church life in the parish, to grow in the life of the Spirit we need to get together with Christians who have experienced the same thing we have. Community is part of God's plan:

- The Lord wants to become more active, better members of the Church.
- **Personal testimony** – how community has been of personal value.
- Here people share their lives with one another and help one another to grow in the Spirit.
- Next week we will see how to make contact with our community and prayer groups.
- Most of our Parish groups and ministries practice mutual support to grow in our faith.

- D. To grow as a Christian be an active church member and good parishioner, but choose carefully.
 - Some may, in fact, need to cut down on the activities in their lives.
 - Seek the right kind of involvement so you are growing in the Lord and serving Him better.
 - Whether you should take on more Church activities is a matter for individual discernment.

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- E. Many who experience a release of the Spirit, especially if they have not been active enough church members before, may experience a disappointment in the Sunday liturgy or even weekday liturgy.
- The liturgy is meant to be an important part of our spiritual life, but because of our human nature, we are in constant need of renewal.
 - We are confident that as the church is renewed, the parish and the liturgy can become all that they are meant to be. Rather than become critical, we need to participate as servants, looking for the ways the new life in us can be shared with others.
 - As you seek to know what you can do for Christ and his Church the Lord will give you growth.

IV. We should share with others what we have found.

- A. One main form of service is to share with others what we have found ourselves.
- B. With our friends and family we should begin by showing them a selfless love that they can feel as love, by showing them the fruit of our changed lives.
- C. Once they experience something new in us they like, they'll be more open to listen. We can be freer when we have a close, warm, trusting friendship with someone, but we should not be unwilling to share our faith. Others will rarely find new life if they are not told about it.

Invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Assembly

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, conscious of our sinfulness, aware that you always gather us in the presence of our heavenly Father and of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Fill us with your light to know the Father's will, with your strength to make it our own as Jesus did, and with love to live it in our lives. Guide us by your wisdom, support us by your power, for You are God, Lord and Giver of life, united to the Father and the Son. Do not allow us to be confused by ignorance, corrupted by fear, or misled by preferring anything else instead of your guidance. Unite us to Jesus and to all those who make up his living Body the Church in the bond of peace and in the love You pour into us from the Father and the Son. Come Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the Earth.

Personal Prayer of Repentance and Commitment to Jesus Christ

Lord, Jesus Christ, I want to belong to you from now on. I want to be free from the dominion of darkness and the rule of Satan, and I want to enter with the trust of a little child into your kingdom and I want to belong with all my heart to your people.

I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life. *(Take a few moments to ask His forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience.)* Please forgive me.

I now turn from everything which I know is wrong and I will avoid everything that leads me to wrongdoing. I offer my life to you, and I promise to obey you as my Lord.

Thank You that You died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.

Thank You that You offer me forgiveness and the gift of Your Spirit. I now receive that gift. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen.

You will find the full series of homilies and other relevant resources on my website <http://fathergilles.net>

Taken with a few adaptations from The Life in the Spirit Seminars Team Manual. Catholic Edition. Developed by the Word of God, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Servant Books, Ann Arbor, Michigan. 1979.