

Life in the Spirit Series – Week 1 – Outline for Homily – 110806

- 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 this better life through Christ:
 - 1) Christianity as restrictive morality, rules to keep to get to heaven;
 - 2) Christianity only as loving your neighbour – “As long as I live a good life it doesn’t matter what I believe or whether or not I worship God on Sunday”;
 - 3) God as someone whom we can not contact, who does not do anything that we can experience personally or know to be his work in the world.
 - B. The truth is:
 - God loves us;
 - He wants to make contact with us and 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 as a result of authentic Christianity:
 - The knowledge of God and the power to live the Christian life;
 - Happiness; peace and joy; better personal relationships; healing;
 - Genuine community.
- II. In the Life in the Spirit Series, 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 merely nominal Catholics or who have fallen away from practicing their faith: during the next 7 weeks, Jesus will offer you a whole new life – you can find or recover a genuine relationship with him and be immersed in the Spirit and experience spiritual gifts.
 - 2) Those who have been trying to live the Christian life in some way but who have found it difficult or who have not experienced much contact with God: during the next 7 weeks, Jesus will give you an experiential contact with Him so that you will know that you know Him, and He will give you new power to live the Christian life – He will immerse you in the Spirit and let you experience spiritual gifts.
 - 3) For Catholics who have already experienced personal contact with Christ, during the next 7 weeks, Jesus will give you a new and fuller relationship with Himself through prayer in the Spirit and spiritual gifts.
 - 4) For those of you who have already been baptized or immersed in the Spirit, the Lord will teach you more during this time about what it means to be baptized or immersed in the Spirit and He will lead you into a deeper life in the Spirit.

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B. But the Life in the Spirit Series or Seminars are only the beginning:

- 1) To enjoy the better life Christ offers, you need to grow to maturity in your relationship with Him.
- 2) In the next 3 weeks we will help you to understand and take the first steps.
- 3) In the last two weeks, we will explain to you how to go on from here.
- 4) After that, there are other opportunities and helps in our faith community and local Church which will make it possible for you to grow in what you have begun during this series.
- 5) In the next week or so, you are invited to make contact with someone in the community you recognize as someone living the Christian life dynamically in the Holy Spirit, or one of our prayer groups, or a Parish leader known for their holiness, or one of our priests, and we will help you find a place of your own within one of our many active community groups that study, pray, and share about faith together, where you will find encouragement to continue growing in the Spirit.

III. You can begin right away to turn to the Lord.

A. The Lord will reach 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. Starting today:

- Pray every day to the Lord and meditate on his words;
- Open and begin or resume reading prayerfully the Bible: Acts of the Apostles, Psalms, Proverbs;
- Check out the reference materials to be posted on the website **fathergilles.net**

The Sunday Readings – The Word of God from Scripture – 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13 Though a powerful figure, Elijah was still subject to human fears. The Lord gives him a personal encounter with God and Elijah discovers through a personal connection with God that the Lord is not to be found in the powerful manifestations of wind (see our physical human prowess), nor of earthquakes (see our human feelings and emotions), nor of fire (see the light of human intellect and brilliance), but rather in the sound of sheer silence (see the inner stillness of our human soul at the center of our person where God dwells in the humble and gives them abundant life.

Romans 9:1-5 Now that Paul enjoys the new life in the Spirit he is anxious out of divine love for his beloved people Israel to also enjoy life in the Spirit through the personal encounter with Jesus and faith in Him as Lord.

Matthew 14:22-33 Though the Apostles know Jesus and are close to Him, in this incident we see that they have not yet been filled with the Holy Spirit – they are still overly impressed by their own fears and by signs of power in the world: in nature, in powerful human rulers, and in supernatural manifestations from God. Jesus is not yet the most important reality in their lives because they have not yet been immersed in the Holy Spirit.

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.