

Life in the Spirit Series – Week 4 – Outline for Homily – 110828

WEEK 4 – RECAP OF PREVIOUS 3 WEEKS – OUTLINE FOR HOMILY

We begin a 4th week of pondering Life in the Spirit. We can expect the Word of God to stir us up inside.

We have been hearing that God loves us – do you believe that? Are you convinced in your bones, in your flesh, that God loves you?

We have been hearing that God freed us from darkness and the power of Satan through Jesus Christ. Do you feel free from darkness, sin, fear of death, and the power of Satan?

We heard for three weeks in a row that God wants to give us a new life through the Holy Spirit, that God is offering us a relationship in which we can have the divine life of the Holy Trinity, life in the Spirit; He will change and heal us, make us new; He will join us with bonds of love to our Christian community and to other brothers and sisters so we can help each other to grow in this vitality that the world cannot give.

In order for us to have this experience – either for the first time, or in a new way, or with greater depth and intensity – we have to turn to the Lord in a fresh way to allow him to do what He is offering to do.

The Sunday Readings – The Word of God from Scripture – 22ND Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 20:7-9 The prophet Jeremiah was enticed to enter into intimate relations with God and he gave in to the Lord. Jeremiah was glad to give in to the love God showered on him, but what came next wasn't fun. God sent him to warn people that unless they stopped doing evil and separating themselves from God they would experience violence and destruction. It was difficult to say that, and people hated Jeremiah for calling them to repent. Jeremiah didn't feel like warning people anymore, but the love of God was like a fire burning in his bones and he just couldn't keep it inside; God wants to have mercy on people.

Romans 12:1-2 Paul proclaims that all Christians are called to live lives that are prophetic for society, and to accept the suffering this causes us. It is a burden, a cross to find ourselves at odds with the world around us and endure people's reactions when we tell them why we refuse to do as everyone else is doing. God sends us out to bring his light into the darkness of human society to extend his mercy to sinners as they suffer from immorality and selfishness – He sends Christians out as salt for the earth and light for the world. Accepting to endure this burden of being disciples of Jesus is our spiritual worship of God, the best way we can adore and praise God and serve Him. This becomes possible as we allow the Holy Spirit to renew our minds and give us his light to see what is really going on and to understand the will of the Father.

Matthew 16:21-27 In Matthew's Gospel we see that once Peter makes an act of faith in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah that God has sent into the world to save the world from darkness, sin, and death; Jesus opens his heart not only to Peter but to the other 11 apostles as well. Jesus warns them that, as Jeremiah experienced centuries before, and as Paul will experience decades later, when we accept to give testimony to the goodness and truth of God and call people to turn away from darkness, sin, and the works of death, people don't like it. Jesus loves his apostles, so He warns them that people will put Him to death to stop the call to repentance. Peter doesn't want Jesus to suffer and die, but the Lord tells him he is listening to the feelings of his weak mortal flesh, which is what Satan wants us to do. God's adversary doesn't want us to do the will of the Father because he doesn't want us to help Jesus bring people out of the darkness and pain of their desperate lives. Satan doesn't want us to enjoy the intimacy and happiness of working with God on earth and being with Him in eternity. Jesus calls us to resist the tempter as He did by not paying attention to the weak feelings that want to avoid suffering and rejection at all costs, even though that suffering is motivated by the love and mercy God wants to give to every human being.

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- I. In order to receive the new life God is offering us, we must turn away from those things which block our relationship with God and accept Jesus as our Lord.**
- A. We need a change of direction, a reorientation of our lives:
1. Away from those things which block our relationship with God and give Satan a hold on us;
 2. Towards God and obedience:
 - ❖ Only when we follow him can he lead us to a new life;
 - ❖ God does not want the obedience of slaves, who obey out of fear of punishment, or the obedience of employees, who obey because they are rewarded; he wants the obedience of sons who obey out of love and respect for their father.
 - ❖ We must accept Jesus as our Lord.
 3. The word “repentance” refers to this change of direction.
- B. Repentance involves:
1. Honesty – the admission that there are things in our lives that are wrong and need changing;
 2. Humility – the willingness to change; the awareness that we need God’s help;
 3. Renunciation – turning away from wrongdoing; deciding not to do it again;
 4. Asking forgiveness for what we have done wrong.
- C. We must specifically turn away from non-Christian religions, because they know nothing about the love God has for us; spiritualism, witchcraft, occultism, which are an appetite for power; any sexual intercourse outside of a marriage for life of one man with one woman, because it is a rejection of God’s plan for our happiness; murder, robbery, shoplifting, cheating (in business deals, on exams), lying, slander, drunkenness (using alcohol in a self-destructive way), getting “stoned” on drugs.
- D. Those who have committed serious sins need sacramental confession to complete their process of reconciliation. Sacramental confession can also be very helpful for those who have not committed serious sins, but who are turning to the Lord in a new way, or to deepen our bond with Jesus.
- II. In order to receive the new life God is offering to us, we must ask him for it in faith, expecting to receive it because he wants us to have it and he promised he would give it to us.**
- A. Faith means relying on what God has said (Matthew 14:22-33).
1. We know that everything God says is true, because he knows everything and does not lie:
 - ❖ Our Christian lives are based on facts; we put faith in the facts, our feelings follow.
 - ❖ We deal with feelings of doubt by looking at the facts.
 2. When we see the fact that God promised us something, we can expect that it will happen to us – we need more than doctrinal belief alone, we need to claim the promises of God.
- B. We can expect God to baptize or immerse us in the Spirit because:
1. He said He wants it for us (Luke 11:9-13), He loves us and wants us to be united with Him;
 2. We can have it because of what Jesus did for us, not because we can earn it or deserve it.
- C. If a Catholic has not been confirmed, he should be in order for his initiation as a Catholic to be complete. Prayer for release of the Spirit does not take the place of the sacrament of Confirmation.
- III. Next week you will be able to pray with others to be baptized or immersed in the Spirit, and when you do, you will in fact be immersed in the Spirit. You are always free to accept, delay, or decline.**

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- A. Next week there will be an opportunity to be prayed with to be baptized or immersed in the Spirit. We can ask for the full life of God's Spirit by:
1. Calling upon the Father in prayer, claiming Christ's promise to give us the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), but Jesus often encouraged his disciples to pray together in his Name; so
 2. At the same time, members of the community, prayer groups, and healing ministry will pray for you with the laying on of hands to ask the Father to fully release the Spirit in you.
- B. What we can expect to have happen:
1. What happened at the first Pentecost: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4)
 - ❖ Something did happen – they were filled with the Holy Spirit
 - ❖ All were filled, not just some
 - ❖ They themselves did something; they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance: they voiced their joy at being filled with the Spirit without worrying about what words to say
 2. We can expect God to touch us personally with the power of his Spirit.
 3. Initial experience varies from individual to individual; some effects are: experiencing the presence of God in a new way, peace and joy, tongues, prophecy.
- C. Obstacles to receiving God's gifts include:
- A feeling of unworthiness
 - The fear of making a fool of oneself, or the fear of having our personalities taken over
 - Doubt, temptation by Satan to not believe or to reject God's gifts
 - Pride – the feeling that we don't need God's gifts
 - The fear of what others think
 - All these feelings are empty, they are illusions, so many ways we resist being open to God
 - At all times, we remain free to welcome God's grace or to resist his blessings.

IV. Mary has been traditionally seen as the model for Christians receiving the action of the Holy Spirit into their lives. She set no conditions for God and offered no resistance to his grace. (Luke 1:26-38)

- A. Mary was the representative of the human race who, as the mother of the saviour, made it possible for God to become man. It was by the overshadowing of her by the Holy Spirit that Jesus was born.
- B. Mary accepted her call from God in obedience and in faith in the word that had been spoken to her, (Cf. Luke 1:45, "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.")

Next week: there will be an opportunity to receive prayer to be baptized or immersed in the Spirit. I will explain then how we will go about doing this. In the meantime, I invite you to chat about these things this week with me, our Deacons Dunbar, Pedro, or Brian, or with our Prayer Group leaders or members of the Prayer Ministry. I will be available after Mass this. Abouna Badeea is on vacation until September 4th.

If you are interested in learning more about spiritual gifts, or about abundant life in Christ and life in the Spirit, please see the resources and references posted 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.