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28th Sunday of Ordinary Time Good Teacher

Lessons and Discussions

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“he went away sad”

Introit Entrance Antiphon – Daily Roman Missal

This should be chanted so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred.

Si iniquitates *Ps 130 (129): 3, 4*

III

Lord, if you were to take in-to account our in-

i-quities, * who would withstand the test? But forgiveness

abides with you, O God of Is-ra-el.

Alternate options:

Breathe
Consume Me
I Sing the Mighty Power of God
In the Secret
Out from the Deep (Thomas Tallis)
Life is Not (Remnant)
Your Arms (Remnant)

Collect – Roman Missal

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

May your grace, O Lord, we pray, at all times go before us and follow after and make us always determined to carry out good works. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Gospel Reading – Mark 10:17-30 – Roman Missal

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark
- Glory to you Lord

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: *You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.*" He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

The Gospel of the Lord.
- Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings - 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time Cycle B

*From a commentary on Haggai by Cyril of Alexandria, bishop
My name is great among the nation*

When our Savior came, he appeared as a divine temple, glorious beyond any comparison, far more splendid and excellent than the older temple. He exceeded the old as much as worship in Christ and the gospels exceeds the cult of the laws, as much as truth exceeds its shadows.

Furthermore, I might point out that originally there was just one temple at Jerusalem, in which one people, the Israelites, offered their sacrifices. Since the only-begotten Son became like us, and as Scripture says, though *he was Lord and God, he has shone upon us*, the rest of the world has been filled with places of worship. Now there are countless worshipers who honor the universal God with spiritual offerings and fragrant sacrifices. This, surely, is what Malachi foretold, speaking, as if in the person of God: *I am a great king, says the Lord; my name is honored among the nations, and everywhere there is offered to my name the fragrance of a pure sacrifice.*

With justice, therefore, do we say that the final temple, the Church, will be more glorious. To those who are so solicitous for the Church and labor for its construction, Haggai declares that a gift will be made, a gift from heaven given by the Savior. That gift is Christ himself, the peace of all men; *through him we have access in the one Spirit to the Father.* The prophet goes on to say: *I will give peace to this place and peace of soul to save all who lay the foundation to rebuild the temple.* Christ too says somewhere: *My peace I give you.* Paul will teach how profitable this is for those who love: *The peace of Christ, he says, which surpasses all understanding will keep your minds and hearts.* Isaiah, the seer, made the same prayer: *O Lord our God, give us peace, for you have given us everything.* Once a man has been found worthy of Christ's peace, he can easily save his soul and guide his mind to carry out exactly the demands of virtue.

Haggai, therefore, declares that peace will be given to all who build. One builds the Church either as a teacher of the sacred mysteries, as one set over the house of God, or as one who works for his own good by setting himself forth as a living and spiritual stone *in the holy temple, God's dwelling place in the Spirit.* The results of these efforts will profit such men so that each will be able to gain his own salvation without difficulty.

Responsory – Office of Readings – Psalm 84:5; Zechariah 2:11

Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord;
– they will praise you for ever.

blessed fruit of they womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

“The End” Notes

[1] This lesson uses: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teresa_of_%C3%81vila and http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=208

[2] Fr. John Hardon, S.J.; *Modern Catholic Dictionary*

[3] CCC 2709

[4] Cf. chapters 10-22

[5] The Order of the Mass

[6] CCC 2728

[7] Glossary, Catechism of the Catholic Church

[8] Wis. 7:10

[9] cf. Divine Intimacy pg. 119

[10] Deut. 6:4-7

[11] Divine Intimacy pg. 119

[12] CCC1618

[13] JP II, Homily on Boston Common

[14] Navarre Bible Commentary, St. Mark pg. 142

[15] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 5, 38.3

[16] JP II, Homily on Boston Common

[17] 1 Timothy 6:7

[18] Fr. John Hardon, S.J.; *Modern Catholic Dictionary*

[19] Russell Shaw; *Catholic Laity in the Mission of the Church*

[20] Matthew 9:43-48

[21] Footnotes St. Mark's Gospel NAB

[22] JP II, Homily on Boston Common

[23] Navarre Bible Commentary, Gospel of Mark, pg. 141

[24] Mk. 10:27

[25] Divine Intimacy pg. 120

[26] Mk. 10:23

[27] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 5, 38.3

[28] Navarre Bible Commentary St. Mark, pg. 138

[29] Luke 1:46-47

[30] Navarre Bible Commentary St. Mark, pg. 139

[31] Jn. 14:6

[32] <http://www.apostleshipofprayer.org/otherprayers.html>

Marian Antiphon – Salve Regina – Simple Tone

IV. ANTIPHON SALVE REGINA, SIMPLE TONE
From First Vespers of the Feast of the Blessed Trinity to None on Saturday
before the First Sunday of Advent.

Ant.
5.

S Alve, Re-gí-na, * ma-ter mi-se-ri-córdi-æ : Vi-ta, dulcé-do, et spes nostra,
salve. Ad te clamámus, éxsu-les, fí-li-i Hevæ Ad te suspi-rámus,
gemén-tes et flentes in hac lacrimá-rum valle. E-ia ergo, Advocá-ta
nostra, il-los tu-os mi-se-ri-córdes ócu-los ad nos convér-te. Et Je-sum,
bene-díctum fructum ventris tu-i, nobis post hoc exsí-li-um osténde.
O clemens : O pi-a : O dulcis * Virgo Ma-rí-a.

V. Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.

R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi

Let us pray. O almighty and everlasting God, who, by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, didst prepare the body and soul of Mary, glorious Virgin and Mother, to become the worthy habitation of Thy Son: grant that we may be delivered from present evils, and from everlasting death, by her gracious intercession, in whose commemoration we rejoice. Through the same Christ our Lord, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

English Translation

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the

Many nations will join the Lord on that day, and they will be his people.

– They will praise you for ever.

St. Teresa of Avila – Lesson and Discussion[1]

“The Dark Night of the Soul”

St. Teresa is one of the greatest saints in the Catholic Church. Her life and works still resonate in our church after almost 600 years! She was born into a life of turmoil, both personally and globally. In the world, exploration had just begun to boom, and two years after her birth the Protestant Reformation began. Teresa helped to combat Protestantism and reform and restore the Carmelite Order through her words, life, and action.

Childhood

Saint Teresa was born Teresa Sanchez Cepeda Davila y Ahumada on March 28, 1515 in Avila, Castile, Spain. Born to wealthy and noble family, she received a good education, and was quite bright. At age five, she had convinced her brother to go with her to die and become martyrs so they could go straight to Heaven, but they were intercepted by their uncle and were stopped. When she was a teenager, she would be seen as a “typical” teenage girl even for our time. She cared about clothes, boys, and even rebelled against her parents. When she was sixteen, her father Don Alonso Sanchez de Cepeda, a holy and pious, but also very strict man, put her in a convent because she was too out of control. She would later say that she hated it at first, but eventually grew to like the convent because the nuns were less strict than her father and more importantly, she began to grow in love for God. A few years later, when deciding whether or not to enter the convent, she decided to join to grow in holiness and avoid the temptations of sin in the world.

Entering in the convent

Early on in the convent, she had struggles. First, her father, who was very strict, denied her entry into the convent, but her piety finally won her father over, and Teresa was allowed to enter. Next, the temptations of worldly sins that she hoped to escape from did not leave her when she entered. At that time, there were many women in the convent who had no desire or call to a religious vocation, and as a result, some women wore the religious habit with more vanity and even wore jewelry. The struggle for power and money was being played out in the convent. How-

ever, Teresa fought back against these temptations early on by practicing mental prayer. As she put it “[I] tried as hard as I could to keep Jesus Christ present within me...My imagination is so dull that I had no talent for imagining or coming up with great theological thoughts.” Some would think that this is when Teresa had her breakthrough with Jesus, but she actually struggled with this prayer for eighteen years.

While in the convent, Teresa fell ill with malaria, and there were even times she was so ill they thought she had died. As a result of her terrible illness, Teresa fell out of prayer and began praying only as a “guise of humility”. Yet, although she thought these prayers were in vain, they were building up to be something amazing. God heard her prayers, even if she thought she was faking them.

Conversion and Ecstasy

At around age forty, a priest convinced Teresa to really try and pray again from the heart. The first few times when she was getting back into prayer she said, “I was more anxious for the hour of prayer to be over than I was to remain there. I don't know what heavy penance I would not have gladly undertaken rather than practice prayer.” She was distracted often: “This intellect is so wild that it doesn't seem to be anything else than a frantic madman no one can tie down.” Teresa sympathized with those who find difficulty in prayer: “All the trials we endure cannot be compared to these interior battles.”

Slowly though, something began to change. Teresa began to feel God's presence when she would pray. More and more, she began to feel an amazing spiritual delight, and at times be so in tune with God that she would levitate off the ground and would call on the nuns to hold her down. She never exalted these things though, but rather humbled herself because the more in love she was with God the harder it was to fall into the temptation of sin. She said, “The memory of the favor God has granted does more to bring such a person back to God than all the infernal punishments imaginable.”

It was at this point in her life that she saw Jesus come to her in person. Although she could see Him, His presence was invisible to others, so many people thought she was possessed by a demon or that she was doing something evil. Her confessor, a Jesuit priest named Saint Francis Borgia, reassured her that she was not crazy or possessed by a demon. These visions lasted for

1. Recall you are in the presence of God. You are a creature in the midst of creation, and your Creator loves you.
2. Give thanks to God for favors received. Pause and spend a moment looking at this day's gifts. What did you receive and what did you give?
3. Ask for the Holy Spirit's help. Ask to receive the Holy Spirit so that you can look upon your actions and motives with honesty and patience. The Spirit gives a freedom to look upon yourself without condemnation and without complacency. The Spirit helps you be open to growth.
4. Now examine how you have been living this day. Recalling the events of your day, explore the context of your actions. Review the day, hour by hour, searching for the internal events of your life. Look through the hours to see your interaction with what was before you. Ask what you were involved in and who you were with, and review your hopes and hesitations. What moved you to act the way you did? What was God trying to tell you through the events and the people you encountered today?
5. Pray words of reconciliation and resolve. Having reviewed this day of your life, look upon yourself with compassion and see your need for God and try to realize God's manifestations of concern for you. Express sorrow for sin, give thanks for grace, and praise God for the times you responded in ways that allowed you to better see God's life. Most of all, thank God for how He used you as an instrument of his love, peace, and mercy.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

and 4th (shall not dishonor mother and father). It is clear that the rich young ruler is following the 4th-10th commandments (love of neighbor), but has failed to follow the 1st-3rd (love of God). We are called to the love of God as our primary vocation, the call of holiness. We are also called therefore to love neighbor for the sake of God.

Do we want the Sacraments or Salvation? Do we want Heaven or Holiness? Sacraments are the ordinary [means] of salvation [end]. They are the “good” we do to “gain eternal life” If we are just preparing to receive a Sacrament, for the sake of the Sacrament alone, but have no desire for holiness, the Sacrament will have little effect in our life. Yes, the Sacrament is valid and real, but our disposition is necessary for the Sacrament to be effective in our life. If Heaven is our goal, but not holiness, we have missed the point of a Life in Christ. Yes, Christ came to open heaven, but He also came that we might become holy. Jesus says, “If you wish to be perfect...Then come, follow me.” We are called to heaven, because of our call to holiness. Let us no go away sad, but dignified and hopeful that holiness is attainable through the grace of God.

What would we say if a parent bought a teenager a brand new car, and then after buying it told the teenager that it must be parked in the garage and never be driven? Many times, parents work hard to prepare their child for First Holy Communion. They are so proud on day their child receives Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. After this holy day, however, the parents never attend Mass again, and therefore their child is deprived of receiving their 2nd, 3rd, 4th (and so on) Holy Communion. What a deprivation! If we seek only the Sacraments, but not what the Sacraments give us, we like the rich young ruler walk away from Christ.

Profession of Faith or Popular Devotion – The Examen[32]

The Examen is an important prayer of meditation St. Ignatius developed to take stock of one's day. It recalls the Morning Offering and examines the day with love, contrition, and gratitude in the power of the Holy Spirit. Traditionally St. Ignatius' Examen has five steps:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

almost two years straight. In another vision, she saw an angel, specifically a seraph, “in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great, that it made me moan; and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it...” Bernini depicts this vision in his famous work *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, which can be seen at Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

What does “ecstasy” mean? Ecstasy is “the state of being beside oneself through some overpowering experience. As a mystical phenomenon, it includes two elements, one interior and the other exterior. The invisible element consists in the mind being riveted on a religious subject. The corporeal aspect means that the activity of the senses is suspended, so that not only are external sensations unable to influence the soul, but these sensations become very difficult to awaken. Many saints have received ecstasies as a supernatural gift from God.”[2]

Although she experienced ecstasy and closeness to God, she also struggled. At one point, in the midst of her suffering, Jesus told her, "Teresa, that's how I treat my friends" Teresa responded, "No wonder you have so few friends." What real and authentic passion she had towards Jesus to speak to Him as a friend with honesty and even humor.

As mentioned before, the convent that Teresa lived in was full of many nuns that were not serious about holiness. She understood that she needed to make sure the few friends Jesus truly had in the convent stayed there In her view, a few good nuns was better than a whole convent of lukewarm nuns. She, unlike Martin Luther, looked to reform from within, specifically the Carmelite Order.

Carmelite Reforms

Teresa spent the rest of her life forming cloistered convents with the aim of correcting the lax approach of the convents of her time. She lived under a strict rule of poverty, chastity, and obedience. While she faced some opposition early on, Teresa was granted a convent in Avila after receiving approval from her Bishop. Soon after, she was allowed to form two more houses for men who wished to live this new life of reform and received help

from St. John of the Cross and Anthony of Jesus. In November of 1568, they founded the first convent of the Discalced Carmelite Brethren in Duruello. Over the next decade, Teresa established more convents in Segovia, Beas de Segura, Seville, and Caravaca de la Cruz. In the three years before her death, she founded five more convents in Northern Andalusia, Palencia, Soria, Burgos, and Granada. In all, Teresa directly founded sixteen of the seventeen new convents and had helped to found as many men cloisters during her work.

Her Death and Canonization

Beginning with her bout with malaria, Teresa fell to constant illness for the rest of her life, and died as a result while traveling from Burgos to Alba de Tormes in 1582. We are unsure of the exact date of when she died because many Catholic nations were switching from Julian calendars to Gregorian calendars at this time. Her last words were, “My Lord, it is time to move on. Well then, may your will be done. O my Lord and my Spouse, the hour that I have longed for has come. It is time to meet one another.”

In 1617, Spain had made her their patroness of their country. In 1622, she was canonized by Pope Gregory XV, and on 1970 was named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI along with Saint Catherine of Siena, making them the first women to receive this amazing title. Saint Teresa is also known as the Doctor of Prayer, and is patroness of bodily ills, headaches, lacemakers, laceworkers, loss of parents, people in need of grace, people in religious orders, people ridiculed for their piety, sick people, and sickness.

Her writings

St. Teresa has been well known since her death because of her great writings, which stand as some of the most remarkable literature in the Catholic Church, especially in regards to mystical literature. Some of her writings include her autobiography written in 1567, *El Camino de Perfeccion*, *Meditations on Song of Songs*, and *El Castillo Interior*.

The Ascent of the Soul – Lesson and Discussion

When it comes to prayer and more specifically, contemplative prayer, there is no better teacher or devotee than Saint Teresa of Avila. She is quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church saying, “Contemplative prayer [*oración mental*] in my opinion is

to embrace all of Christ. In other words Christ cannot be our “savior” if He is not our “Lord”. The Blessed Virgin Mary gives us the example of embracing “the whole Christ” in her Magnificat, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.”[29] Mary gives praise to Jesus, both Lord and savior.

What does the ruler want? “...what good must I do to gain eternal life?”

What does Jesus call him to? “If you wish to be perfect...Then come, follow me”

What is the result? “When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad.”

Did Jesus treat this man too harshly? No, not at all. In fact Jesus is showing how much he loves this young man. “Our Lord knows that this young man has a generous heart. This is why he treats him so affectionately and invites him to greater intimacy with God. But he explains that this means renunciation – leaving his wealth behind so as to give his heart whole and entire to Jesus. God calls everyone to holiness, but holiness is reached by many different routes. It is up to every individual to take the necessary steps to discover which route God wants him to follow.”[30] While there are different paths of holiness there is only one path, one way and that is Jesus Christ. “I am the way, the truth, and the life”[31]

What question would we ask Jesus? We also ask what is necessary for salvation. The rich young ruler was under the assumption that the Commandments were necessary and he was correct, but Jesus wanted to take things deeper. The Commandments are the means to following God, to holiness. Today we might say The Sacraments are necessary and for a Catholic this is true, but Jesus uses the Sacraments as a means to take us deeper, they are the means of sanctification, of holiness.

Which of the 10 Commandments did Jesus ask the young man if he followed? “You know the commandments: *You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.*” These commandments are 5th (shall not kill), 6th and 9th (shall not covet neighbors wife and adultery), 7th and 9th (shall not steal, covet neighbors goods), 8th (shall not lie),

says, “all things are possible with God”[24]. “God will not deny this favor to anyone who asks it with humble confidence, and who resorts to divine help for overcoming the obstacles that stand in his way. The Apostles were fortunate, for having little they had not hesitated to leave all: homes, nets, fields, mother and father, brothers and sisters, for the sake of Christ and for the gospel.”[25] The rich young man came to Jesus with a humble heart, but when faced with reality, he could not commit. We hope that he later came to a realization of what he rejected and failed to commit to. In the same way, if we fail to realize Christ’s call in our life or even reject Christ, we must pray that we will be able to realize our failure, show sorrow, and resolve to choose Christ. The Examen prayer in the packet is a daily practice in the Ignatian Spirituality which helps us to actualize this desire to follow Christ daily.

Notice how Jesus did not go running after the young man after he decided to leave. Jesus seemed to be saddened by the choice the young man makes when He says, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God”[26]. The same goes for us when we choose to use our freewill to walk away from Christ when the demands of love are too great. Let us not let this opportunity slip away nor lose the invitation. “We need to make his life and his teaching part of our very being, of the very air we breathe.”[27] The prodigal son is a perfect example of the reality that when we are still alive, it is never too late to return home to the loving arms of our Heavenly Father.

Sacraments or Holiness – Lesson and Discussion

“he went away sad”

This lesson is based on Matthew’s Gospel of the Rich Young Ruler, Matthew 19:16-22.

How did the young ruler see Jesus? The rich young ruler only sees Jesus as a teacher, a human. Jesus tries to correct his thinking by responding, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” “It is not that Christ rejects the praise he is offered: he wants to show the depth of the young man’s words: he is good, not because he is a good man but because he is God, who is goodness itself.”[28]

We are not called to embrace part of Christ, but the whole Christ. People have said that they receive Christ first as their savior and then later as their Lord. To embrace part of Christ is

nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.”[3]

TV SHOW – Boy Meets World – POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 1:15 (Stop at 4:30)

http://youtu.be/vAp_6Oibg0o?t=3m15s

At the end of this episode Cory gives his teacher and neighbor a plant after he fell ill. After returning home, Mr. Feeny goes to place the plant in his garden. He tells Cory that with the right nurturing it can grow strong and healthy. Throughout her writings, she describes prayer as to watering a garden.

Her thoughts on prayer can be found throughout her autobiography. We will take a look at the four stages of prayer as described by her in her books: *The Autobiography*[4] and *The Interior Castle*.

First Stage: Mental Prayer

The first stage requires a person to contemplate and concentrate not on self, but on of Christ—to withdraw the soul into observance of Jesus. As mentioned earlier, mental prayer is nothing more than intimate sharing between close friends. “The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything.”

How do we quiet our mind and heart to concentrate on God and not self?

Saint Teresa looked to the Passion of Christ, which immediately bring to mind the great sacrifice and love of Jesus. Any meditation on Christ is good, perhaps the mysteries of the Rosary or divine reading from the Gospel. Many times we spend the day thinking and maybe worrying about ourselves or others; it therefore takes an intentional effort to think then of Jesus.

MOVIE – Into Great Silence Trailer – POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 2:31

http://youtu.be/sgNj2Sf_mgo

The movie is about an order of Carthusian monks who remain in great silence throughout most of their day in prayer and meditation. As the maker of the movie says, “Gröning, sans crew or artificial lighting, lived in the monks’ quarters for six months—filming their daily prayers, tasks, rituals and rare outdoor excursions. This transcendent, closely observed film seeks to embody

a monastery, rather than simply depict one—it has no score, no voiceover and no archival footage. What remains is stunningly elemental: time, space and light. One of the most mesmerizing and poetic chronicles of spirituality ever created, INTO GREAT SILENCE dissolves the border between screen and audience with a total immersion into the hush of monastic life. More meditation than documentary, it's a rare, transformative theatrical experience for all.”

Second Stage: Prayer of Quiet

The next stage of contemplative prayer is to begin by letting go of the human will and resting it within God. As we allow ourselves to give away more and more distractions of this world the more we allow God to replace it with his virtues and supernatural state. St. Teresa states that while repetitive prayers and writing can help with a partial distraction from the world, if we quiet our souls we can begin to go even deeper. We have to be patient, as both quietness and silence are not things we are accustomed to. In fact, many times quietness or silence is awkward and instead of facing the silence, we break it.

Third Stage: Devotion of Union

This stage of prayer is both a supernatural and ecstatic state. When reached, the soul has a deep peace, a greater love of God, and ability to reach some of the higher faculties of the mind, body, and soul. The soul can feel God's reason within it and become raptured by its love.

Fourth Stage: Devotion of Ecstasy

The final stage of contemplative prayer is the greatest because while in it, one completely disappears. Saint Paul speaks about it in 2 Corinthians 12:2, “I know someone in Christ who...was caught up to the third heaven.” The soul is in complete intoxication of God while both body and soul experience the terrifying and sweet ecstasy of God. It is terrifying because we sinful imperfect beings are getting just a tiny sliver of a taste of eternal bliss, and it is ecstasy because it is what our souls were created for and are destined for. St. Teresa said that the body is lifted in the air, but then soon let go of this rapture of love for a time to relax. After all this we will awake in tears because of this experience.

Can we ever really reach the fourth stage? Yes. The question should be: will we ever reach these stages? Of course that is completely up to God. Remember, Saint Teresa prayed for well

writing down thoughts, ideas, etc. If the pen is used as a weapon to stab, there is a violation of its nature and therefore a misuse or evil. If the pen or any material thing is worshiped or preferred over God, this too is a violation of its nature (for only one is to be adored and worshiped). This adoration is a misuse or evil.

ACTIVITY – The icons you venerate

What are the icons (pictures, images, things) in our society?

Ten popular images could be taken as a sample, perhaps from “trending” images from the web, etc. Saint John Damascene says, “Show me the icons you venerate, that I may be able to understand your faith.” Veneration means to regard somebody or something with profound respect of reverence. What are the pictures, images, and material things in our lives. **What do the icons (pictures, images, material things) that we show respect and reverence toward say about our faith or lack of faith?**

Blessed Pope John Paul II said that life is not a series of sensations to be experienced but rather a work to be accomplished. Our life and the joys in our life should not be reduced to just a handful of situations we experience in this life or a roomful of objects, but the continuing work we put in to love God above all else. Only then will we fully live out our lives.

Why does Jesus bring up a camel and an eye of a needle?

Because we live in a different world than Jesus did, the message He is trying to teach can be lost in translation. In today's society, many people think Jesus is referring to an actual sowing needle and a camel, but this was not what Jesus was speaking about. The eye of the needle was a passageway made in the wall of the ancient cities. Animals would pass through the eye of the needle so that animal feces would not make a mess in the main passage way into the city. The eye of the needle was just big enough for a camel to pass, but if the camel was carrying a large amount of goods, luggage, then the camel could not pass. When looking at our lives today; Do we have too many things attached to ourselves? Could we pass the “eye of the needle” test?

[See Link to Liturgy Lesson - The Kingdom of God]

Does this attachment to wealth permanently keep us from God? No. Many of the apostles were worried about what Jesus said about possessions and money and thought that it would be impossible for anyone follow Jesus teaching, but then Jesus

er, and merit generate false security, Jesus rejects them utterly as a claim to enter the kingdom. Achievement of salvation is beyond human capability and depends solely on the goodness of God who offers it as a gift (27).”[21]

Mark tells us in today’s Gospel that a man ran up and knelt before Jesus. Saint Matthew and Saint Luke tell the same story, but Luke says the man is an official and Matthew says he is a young ruler. What is important is that even the “rich”, the “young”, and the “ruler”, and in fact all of mankind, are asking the same question... “In its precise eloquence this deeply penetrating event expresses a great lesson in a few words: it touches upon substantial problems and basic questions that have in no way lost their relevance. Everywhere young people are asking important questions – questions on the meaning of life, on the right way to live, on the scale of values: ‘What must I do..?’ ‘What must I do to share in everlasting life?’...To each one of you I say therefore: heed the call of Christ when you hear him saying to you: ‘Follow me!’ Walk in my path! Stand by my side! Remain in my love! There is a choice to be made: a choice for Christ and his way of life, and his commandment of love.”[22]

VIDEO - Follow Christ! Pope John Paul II in Boston, 1979 – POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 5:26

<http://youtu.be/mpniUToYf8U>

This video is the closing comments from Blessed Pope John Paul II’s homily from his visit to Boston, some of which has been quoted throughout this packet. Only a few months after being elected as Pope, Blessed Pope John Paul II came to America to bring the message that Jesus brought to the young ruler, and brings to every one of us today. Come, and follow Christ. **Why do you think the Pope brought this message, specifically to the United States?**

[\[See Link to Liturgy Lesson - Material vs. Spiritual\]](#)

Are material things bad? No. The majority of material things are not inherently or intrinsically bad. However, it is our excessive obsession with our material things that causes problems. “The sin lies in ‘trusting’ in them, as if they solve all life’s problems, and turning one’s back on God.”[23] We should ask basic questions about material things: What is it? What is it for (its nature)? What is its purpose or end? Let’s use a pen for example. What is it? A Pen. What is it for (its nature)? Writing. What is its purpose or end? A tool for which one can communicate by

over a decade and “felt” nothing through prayer. We have to will ourselves to prayer. We all know the many difficulties it is to just pray simple prayers, but we must also strive to reach all four stages. If we never reach all four stages that does not mean we are bad people or not close with God, nor does it mean we should stop trying. Think how amazing it would be to even reach stage three. We should take time and pray everyday especially to enter into these stages of prayer. It is important to remember that the stages of prayer are steps we must climb, starting with the first before we get to the second, then third and fourth. Similarly, we should not be obsessed with “devotion to ecstasy” if we are not even able to think of Jesus through mental prayer. How can we unite ourselves with Christ, if we are unable to meditate on Him?

How do the stages that St. Teresa suggests compare to the practice of *lectio divina* (spiritual reading)? The stages of *lectio divina* are to read, meditate, pray, and contemplate.

Read – Mental Prayer

To read, we must look at the words and concentrate not only on the thoughts in our heads, but also on the text. In the first stage of prayer St. Teresa says that we must focus on Jesus intently and not on our own thoughts concerns, etc.

Meditate – Quietness and Stillness

St. Teresa says the second stage is to enter into the quietness and stillness. In *lectio divina*, we patiently wait after the reading and allow God to reveal to us, in the silence, what He intends to reveal to us. The tendency is to rush God, but we must remember that God is always ready to reveal, but He waits for the stillness of our hearts. If a bridge is swaying, it would not be wise to walk across the bridge; we must wait until the bridge is calmed and then we cross. The captain of the boat would wait until the storm subsides prior to crossing a lake and for fear of risking the loss of both ship and men. Meditation is the calmness needed to cross from reading to prayer.

Prayer – Devotion to Union

After we have looked at God (first stage) and listened to God (second stage), what is our response? Do we desire to be united to Him? Do we want communion? It is one thing to look and

listen to another, but our heart should desire to take the next step and respond. God desires us to respond. We must look and listen so that we know what it is that we are responding too. After we have seen God and listened to God, it's our turn to speak from our hearts. Psalm 130 expressed this prayer or devotion to union perfectly, "Out of the depths I cry to You O Lord".

Contemplation – Devotion of Ecstasy

Once we have experienced union with God, we can cherish the relationship. We can long for that union again. We can be at peace with the relationship and enter deeper into it. At this stage we "behold" what we first looked at, listened to, and then responded to.

In the first stage we perceive, the second we receive, and the third we respond. After we have perceived, received, and responded, we now behold that which we have encountered.

How do these four stages of our relationship with God, mirror human relationships? We usually see a person first (we look at them, they look at us). We then desire to listen to them, to see what they have to say. After we have seen and listened, if we have the desire to be in union with them, to meet them in a more intimate way, more than looks or words, we put forth the effort to meet them, to spend time with them, to respond. Many times at this stage a relationship is based on events or experiences, short moments in time that can be identified and recorded. For example a couple that is dating experiences the short moments and experiences as they get to know each other, but this moves into engagement, and then into marriage, the final stage in which two become one flesh.

How does Marriage and the Church parallel to the final stage in prayer? Marriage is parallel to the final stage in prayer when we become one with God. This is the desire of God. Isaiah 54 speaks about God marrying His people Israel, this come to fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ, who lays down His life for His Bride, the Church. This is why during the Mass the priest says, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." [5] We are called to Heaven. Mass is a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy, the supper of the Lamb in Heaven.

[See Link to Liturgy Lesson - Seven Words (Part I)]

The ultimate sign of willingness to detach is martyrdom, to be willing to give the good of our life, for the greater good of God. Saint Gianna Beretta Molla died in 1962, she chose to give her life in order to save the life of her unborn child. "Toward the end of the second month [of pregnancy] she started experiencing sharp pain. The diagnosis was a fibrous tumor of the ovary. As a doctor, Gianna knew the score: either a hysterectomy that would kill her baby or surgery that would spare the child but leave her own life at risk. She chose the later. 'Save the baby,' she told her husband and her physician...Pope John Paul II beatified her April 24, 1994, and on May 16, 2004, declared her a saint. Her husband and children were present at the ceremony. In his homily at the Mass of canonization the Pope said, 'The extreme sacrifice she sealed with her life testifies that only those who have the courage to give of themselves totally to God and to others are able to fulfill themselves.'" [19]

[See Link to Liturgy Lesson - Detachment is the first of four steps] – Saint Teresa of Avila's Train Analogy

When is it absolutely necessary to detach from a worldly good or person? In regards to detachment we should always be able to detach from worldly things and people IF necessary; we do not necessarily have to detach, but must be able to. For example, when people and worldly things bring us to holiness, this is good! If these things lead to sin and especially mortal sin however, then we must be able to detach. Specifically, we must detach when the thing or person separates us from God. Jesus asks us to radically separate ourselves from that which causes separation from God. "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'" [20]

Why do the disciples struggle to understand what Jesus says about material wealth? "In the Old Testament wealth and material goods are considered a sign of God's favor (Jb 1, 10; Ps 128, 1-2; Is 2, 10). The words of Jesus in 23-25 provoke astonishment among the disciples because of their apparent contradiction of the Old Testament concept (24-26). Since wealth, pow-

their responsibility: escape in selfishness, escape in sexual pleasure, escape in drugs, escape in violence, escape in indifference and cynical attitudes. But today, I propose to you the option of love, which is the opposite of escape. If you really accept that love from Christ, it will lead you to God. Perhaps in the priesthood or religious life; perhaps in some special service to your brothers and sisters: especially to the needy, the poor, the lonely, the abandoned, those whose rights have been trampled upon, or those whose basic needs have not been provided for. Whatever you make of your life, let it be something that reflects the love of Christ.”[16]

Fleeting Wealth – Lesson and Discussion

“Come and follow me”

Wealth is of the world and will stay in this world. We cannot take our wealth with us when we die. A priest once said there will not be a U-Haul truck with all our possessions being driven right behind our hearse. Saint Paul writes to Saint Timothy, “For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it.”[17] Whether we are insanely rich or completely broke, we all inevitably end up at death’s door. Jesus gives the rich and the poor the same invitation and says, “Come and follow me”. Salvation is a complete gift from God. We (humanity) had it and threw it away (original sin). We do not deserve it and yet we receive it free of charge through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

How can we follow Jesus? We follow Jesus by having a complete trust in Him and detachment of all things and people in this world.

What is detachment? It is asceticism, or the withholding of undue affection for creatures for the sake of the Creator. Detachment from creatures that are an obstacle to complete service of God is a normal condition for growth in holiness.[18] We stray from the path of holiness for two primary reasons: one, we love something more than God or two, we fear something more than we fear God. We might love the senses more than God and therefore do not resist temptation. We might fear human respect and opinion more than God and therefore do not stand up for the truth. Detachment is therefore, loving God, detaching from anything love that would hinder us from the love of God. We are called to love God and neighbor for the sake of God. Our love of neighbor is disordered if it causes us to fail in our love of God.

[See Link to Liturgy Lesson - Seven Words (Part II)]

The Seven Words Lesson also help us to see how through Jesus Christ we come to union with God and share in the Divine Life. The Seven Words are centered on Jesus Christ. The Cross of Christ – Name of Christ – Words of Christ – Prayer of Christ – Works of Christ – Body of Christ – Life of Christ.

What are the difficulties in praying? The greatest difficulty in prayer comes from within. We can blame our lack of prayer on outside forces, but ultimately it is up to each and every person to find time to pray. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says it best, “Finally, our battle has to confront what we experience as failure in prayer: discouragement during periods of dryness; sadness that, because we have ‘great possessions,’ we have not given all to the Lord; disappointment over not being heard according to our own will; wounded pride, stiffened by the indignity that is ours as sinners; our resistance to the idea that prayer is a free and unmerited gift; and so forth. The conclusion is always the same: what good does it do to pray? To overcome these obstacles, we must battle to gain humility, trust, and perseverance.”[6]

Also See the Following Link to Liturgy Lessons on prayer:

Lesson - Pray without ceasing

Lesson - Prayer and Liturgy: The Deserted Place

Lesson - Prayer: Spoken and Unspoken

The Value of Wisdom – Lesson and Discussion

What is wisdom? Besides being one of the books of the Old Testament it is “A spiritual gift which enables one to know the purpose and plan of God; one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.”[7]

In today’s readings, we read about God wanting to give His wisdom to us. In the first reading from the Book of Wisdom, King Solomon praises the value of wisdom of God over anything else in the world. Solomon understood true wisdom of God is the true light and “her radiance never ceases”[8]

How does Jesus fit in with wisdom? Jesus is the very embodiment of wisdom and also shows the wisdom of God the Father in the commandments.[9] A title for Mary is, Mary, Seat of Wisdom. Jesus Christ, who is Wisdom, sits within her womb, and all who

truly seek wisdom are seeking Christ. For example, although ancient philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle were pagans who lived before Christ, they DID know, love, and serve wisdom. In fact, we get the word “philosopher” from the Greek word *philosophia*, which means love of wisdom! The Church Fathers have said that if Socrates and Aristotle would have met Christ they would have recognized Him as the wisdom they knew, loved, and served. Therefore, philosophy (the love of wisdom) and theology (the study of God) go hand in hand. We can keep this in mind when we meet those that do not believe in God. If they do not believe in God, we can begin with wisdom. Does the person believe in wisdom, truth, virtue and if so what is the source of wisdom, truth, virtue?

Why does Jesus list off the commandments? Jesus restates the commandments because as He says in Matthew 5:17 that He came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. All persons are obliged to follow these wise laws of God out of love.

On Saturday Night prayer we read from Deuteronomy, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest.”[10] In fact, in Matthew 22: 37-40, Jesus reiterates and expands the command from Deuteronomy by saying, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

If we strive to live our lives by these two commandments Jesus says, then we will live out all of the commandments. When we have the wisdom of God, we begin to love deeper and appreciate the love of God has given us. We are able to instill this wisdom and love into our children. God establishes the law and the wisdom to follow this. Through the Incarnation, we were given Jesus, the God-man, a physical person whom gives us wisdom and guidance. Truth, wisdom, and virtue are not just a thing, but a person, the person of Jesus Christ.

What wisdom is Jesus trying to impart on the rich young man? After the young man says he is following the Law, Jesus

offers him something greater. “Jesus was offering him the highest wisdom: to renounce all goods of earth and to follow him, Infinite Wisdom, exclusively.”[11] “Christ is the center of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social.”[12]

Why does the young man leave Jesus? As the Gospel says, the young man went away sad because he had a lot of possessions. He was faced with the true wisdom of God and he could not fully accept it right then. More deeply, “He was not ready to say yes to Jesus, and no to self, to say yes to love and no to escape. Real love is demanding. I would fail in my mission if I did not clearly tell you so. For it was Jesus – or Jesus himself – who said: ‘You are my friends if you do what I command’. Love demands effort and a personal commitment to the will of God. It means discipline and sacrifice, but it also means joy and human fulfillment.”[13]

Why does Jesus speak of “persecutions”? Jesus, who is all Wisdom, knows one who follows His wisdom will be persecuted. “He adds ‘with persecutions’ because opposition is part of the reward for giving things up out of love for Jesus Christ: a Christian’s glory lies in becoming like the Son of God, sharing in his Cross so as later to share in his glory: ‘provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him; (Rom. 8:17); ‘all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted’ (2Tim 3:12)”[14]

Why should we reflect on God’s wisdom in our lives? Just like the young man, we may be striving for holiness and looking to do more to be with God in Heaven. However, by reflecting on today’s readings and on this packet, “If we should notice a trace of sadness in our heart, perhaps it is because the Lord is asking from us something which we do not want to relinquish. Maybe we have not yet freed our heart from some earthly attachment.”[15]

How do we follow the wisdom of God? “The message of love that Christ brought is always important, always relevant. It is not difficult to see how today’s world, despite its beauty and grandeur, despite the conquests of science and technology, despite the refined and abundant material goods that it offers, is yearning for more truth, for more love, for more joy. And all of this is found in Christ and in his way of life....Faced with problems and disappointments, many people will try to escape from