

# Link to Liturgy



## 3rd Sunday of Lent The Fig Tree

*Link to Liturgy provides fast, free, & faithful resources which use the latest audiovisual means alongside traditional means to evangelize & catechize thus linking life to the Gospel & the Gospel to life.*

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### Lessons and Discussions

#### **Page 5 – Repentance**

*“if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!”*

#### **Page 8 – Prayer: Light of the Spirit**

*“a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard”*

#### **Page 10 – The Christian: A House of Prayer**

*“a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard”*

#### **Page 13 – Are we Saved?**

*“it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down”*

**Entrance Antiphon – Roman Missal (Simple English Propers)**

Should be chanted three times so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred. Another song can be substituted, but should have the same theme; this should not be the norm.

Oculi mei Ps 25 (24): 15, 16

VII

**M** Y eyes are forev-er turned towards the Lord; \*

for he shall release my feet from the snare; look upon

me and have mercy on me, for I am abandoned and

destitute.

**Alternate options:**

Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation  
I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say  
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

**Collect –Roman Missal**

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

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness,  
who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving  
have shown us a remedy for sin,  
Look graciously on this confession of our lowliness,  
that we, who are bowed down by our conscience,  
may always be lifted up by your mercy.

V. Let me praise thee, most holy Virgin.  
R. Give me strength against thine enemies.

Let us pray. Grant, O merciful God, defense to our weakness;  
that we who now celebrate the memory of the holy Mother of  
God may, by the aid of her intercession, rise again from our  
sins. Amen


**The End Notes**

- [1] Josphus; *Antiquities* – footnotes from the NAB
- [2] Romans 3:23
- [3] Isaiah 11:6-9
- [4] Catechism of the Catholic Church – Section 1848
- [5] Luke 3:8
- [6] Jeremiah 1:5
- [7] From a homily by Saint John Chrysostom; Office of Readings; Friday after Ash Wednesday
- [8] Romans 8:26
- [9] Novena of The Holy Spirit; Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)
- [10] From a homily by Saint John Chrysostom; Office of Readings; Friday after Ash Wednesday
- [11] From a homily by Saint John Chrysostom; Office of Readings; Friday after Ash Wednesday
- [12] CCC - 2524
- [13] Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary
- [14] Fr. John Hardon, S.J.; *Modern Catholic Dictionary*; page 301
- [15] Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary
- [16] John 14:23
- [17] Luke 10:42
- [18] Saint Therese of Lisieux
- [19] Matthew 11:28
- [20] 2 Peter 3:13-15
- [21] *The Essential Catholic Survival Guide*; Catholic Answers; page 242
- [22] Luke 23:34
- [23] John 19:30
- [24] *Link to Liturgy*; The Cross: Trophy of Victory
- [25] 2 Corinthians 6:2
- [26] Philippians 2:12-13
- [27] John 1:14
- [28] Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary
- [29] CCC 1818
- [30] Fr. John A. Hardon S.J., *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, pg. 437

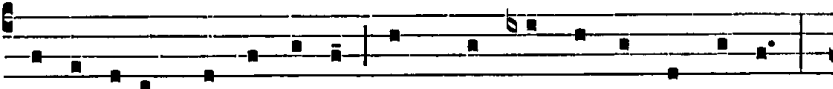
the fullness of joy in your presence, \*  
at your right hand happiness for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

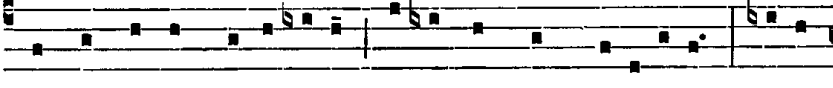
**Marian Antiphon – Divine Office (Sunday Compline) – Ave Regina Caelorum**

6. 

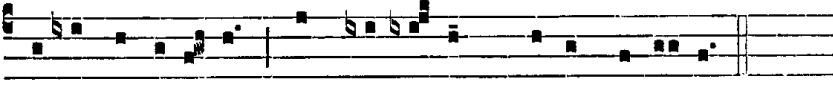
**A** -ve Regína caelórum, \* Ave Dómina Ange-lórum :



Sálve rádix, sálve pórtá, Ex qua mundo lux est órta :



Gáude Vírgo glo-ri- ósa, Su-per ómnes spe-ci- ósa : Vále,



o valde decó-ra, Et pro nó-bis Chrístum exó-ra.

V. Dignare me laudare te Virgo sacrata.  
R. Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.

**English Translation**

Hail, Queen of Heaven; hail, Mistress of the Angels; hail, root of Jesse; hail, the gate through which the Light rose over the earth.

Rejoice, Virgin most renowned and of unsurpassed beauty.  
Farewell, Lady most comely. Prevail upon Christ to pity us.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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

**Gospel Reading – Luke 13:1-9 – Roman Missal – Cycle C**

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

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. Jesus said to them in reply, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!”

And he told them this parable: “There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, ‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?’ He said to him in reply, ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.’”

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

**Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – Monday of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent**

*From a homily by Saint Basil the Great, bishop - boast only of the Lord*

*The wise man must not boast of his wisdom, nor the strong man of his strength, nor the rich man of his riches. What then is the right kind of boasting? What is the source of man’s greatness? Scripture says: The man who boasts must boast of this, that he knows and understands that I am the Lord. Here is man’s great-*

ness, here is man's glory and majesty: to know in truth what is great, to hold fast to it, and to seek glory from the Lord of glory. The Apostle tells us: *The man who boasts must boast of the Lord.* He has just said: *Christ was appointed by God to be our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption, so that, as it is written, a man who boasts must boast of the Lord.*

Boasting of God is perfect and complete when we take no pride in our own righteousness but acknowledge that we are utterly lacking in true righteousness and have been made righteous only by faith in Christ. Paul boasts of the fact that he holds his own righteousness in contempt and seeks the righteousness in faith that comes through Christ and is from God. He wants only to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to have fellowship with his sufferings by taking on the likeness of his death, in the hope that somehow he may arrive at the resurrection of the dead. Here we see all overweening pride laid low. Humanity, there is nothing left for you to boast of, for your boasting and hope lie in putting to death all that is your own and seeking the future life that is in Christ. Since we have its first fruits we are already in its midst, living entirely in the grace and gift of God. *It is God who is active within us, giving us both the will and the achievement, in accordance with his good purpose.* Through his Spirit, God also reveals his wisdom in the plan he has preordained for our glory. God gives power and strength in our labors. *I have toiled harder than all the others,* Paul says, *but it is not I but the grace of God, which is with me.* God rescues us from dangers beyond all human expectation. *We felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death, so that we might not trust ourselves but in God, who raises the dead; from so great a danger did he deliver us, and does deliver us; we hope in him, for he will deliver us again.*

### **Responsory – Office of Readings – [Wisdom 15:3; John 17:3]**

To know you, O God, is to reach holiness;  
– to acknowledge your power is the source of immortality.

This is eternal life:

to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

– To acknowledge your power is the source of immortality.

The gardener (Jesus) in the parable says to the owner, “it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.” The judgment or death sentence “cut it down” is not permanently removed; this sentence is dependent on the cooperation of the tree. If the tree is not receptive to the cultivation and fertilization it will not produce fruit in the future and it will be cut down. The gardener uses the word “may”. The bearing of fruit is dependent on our free will; our receptivity to God's grace is necessary.

### **Profession of Faith or Popular Devotion – Psalm 16**

*Psalm 16 is prayed in the Church each Thursday Night at Compline. This psalm is a declaration that God is our portion and our inheritance. It is He that preserves and delivers us. It is God that gives us “one more year” to bear fruit as Jesus teaches us in the parable of the fig tree.*

#### **Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you. †**

I say to the Lord: “You are my God. \*  
My happiness lies in you alone.”

He has put into my heart a marvelous love \*  
for the faithful ones who dwell in his land.

#### **Those who choose other gods increase their sorrows. †**

Never will I offer their offerings of blood. \*  
Never will I take their name upon my lips.

O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup; \*  
it is you yourself who are my prize.  
The lot marked out for me is my delight: \*  
welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel, \*  
who even at night directs my heart.  
I keep the Lord ever in my sight: \*  
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad; \*  
even my body shall rest in safety.  
For you will not leave my soul among the dead, \*  
nor let your beloved know decay.

#### **You will show me the path of life, †**

soil, which is the plowing or deep digging by hand. The second part is stirring of the soil to keep down weeds. In order for us to bear fruit there must be a tilling, a digging deep into our friendships, activities, work, entertainment, and environment in general. Is Christ a part of these areas? Our life needs to be turned upside down and examined. This tilling and digging deep is an examination of conscience and leads to the sorrow of sin and the resolve to sin no more and to avoid the occasion of sin in the future. We must continue to stir the soil and keep down the weeds by making a daily examination of conscience and frequently going to confession.

### **Give some examples of how Christ has cultivated our life.**

**What is the fertilizer?** The fertilizer is the countless graces by ordinary (sacramental) and extraordinary graces that Our Lord who is “full of grace and truth”[27] offers us. The grace that we receive from God penetrates our souls and transforms us into saints. Just how fertilizer transforms the ground and seeds to become fruit, grass, wheat, vegetables, etc. so too are we transformed.

### **Give some examples of the man graces (ordinary and extraordinary) that God have given us.**

*“I hope to be saved”*

**What is hope?** “The theological virtue by which we desire and expect from God both eternal life and the grace we need to attain it.”[28] Hope also, “responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.”[29]

We desire and expect salvation and we know that we are in constant need of grace to attain salvation.

**What is presumption?** Presumption “leads one to expect graces from God without doing anything to obtain them, and even when acting the opposite, as when sinning, the person presumes that forgiveness is assured.”[30]

### **Repentance - Lesson and Discussion**

*“if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!”*

In the Gospel reading, Jesus tells two stories; in both stories people perish.

**What were the two stories? What happened in each account?** The first is the slaughter of the Galileans at the hands of Pilate. The historian Josephus reports this slaughter. “Josephus reports that Pilate had disrupted a religious gathering of the Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim with a slaughter of the participants.”[1] The second story is that of the Tower of Siloam. This was a tower in Jerusalem that had fallen (an accident) and caused the death of eighteen people.

The people want to know from Jesus why bad things happen to good or innocent people. The Galileans were doing what they believed to be as good, offering sacrifice, and yet Pilate slaughtered them while they sacrificed. The falling of the Tower of Siloam was an accident, much like a natural disaster, car wreck, etc.

**Out of all the people in Jerusalem, why did those eighteen perish?** Jesus knows the questioners heart and mind and asks them if they thought the Galileans who suffered were greater sinners than other Galileans or if the eighteen were more guilty than others in Jerusalem. Did these occurrences take place because of the sin of the individuals?

God does not will evil (bad) nor does He want it, but because of human free will, God allows evil (bad) to happen if we choose it. Saint Paul says to the Romans, “...all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God.”[2] The consequence of sin is the deprivation of God who is all good and the source of all goodness. Evil exists not because of God, but because of man, who deprives himself and others of God.

The first story is about a man, Pilate, who used his free will to do evil. Pilate freely chose to deprive himself and others of the good, in this case the good of life. The second story is an accident, it may have been a human flaw in the engineering or it was simply the tower’s time to fall. Whether the case is intentional or incidental, the sin of the people who perish, is not the cause of their death. Pilate is the cause in one; an accident is the cause of the other.

**Is a natural disaster or accident the wrath of God?** Original

sin caused disorder not only in man's relationship with God, but also in the natural order. The prophet Isaiah describes the natural disorder that will be ordered by Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace at the end of time. "Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water cover the sea." [3] Jesus proves that He is the Prince of Peace when He throughout His earthly life shows control over nature. He brings order to natural disorder as in the calming of the sea. The following are a list of Jesus's miracles showing His control over nature.

### **How does Jesus show control over nature?**

#### **Nature Miracles**

John 2 – Changing of the water into wine at Cana

Luke 5 – First miraculous draught of fishes

Matthew 8; Mark 4; Luke 8 – Calming of the tempest (Storm)

Matthew 14; Mark 6; John 6 – First multiplication of loaves

Matthew 14; Mark 6; John 6 – Jesus walking on the water

Matthew 15; Mark 8 – Second multiplication of loaves

Matthew 17 – Stater in the fish's mouth

Matthew 21; Mark 11 – Cursing of the fig tree

John 21 – Second miraculous draught of fishes

Natural disasters and accidents also teach us how frail the things of the world and even the world itself is. We may love living in a certain area, but fear the natural disasters that occur there. This teaches us that our true home is not in this world, which does not last, but in heaven which is eternal. This also teaches us that nothing is perfect, but God alone. Many magnificent cities, which have taken man centuries to build up, can be gone in a matter of hours through a natural disaster. Great structures created by the hand of man have their limits and eventually crumble and fall. This reality reminds us of our frail humanity and humbles us in the presence of an all loving and all mighty God.

### **VIDEO – One man's house saw the beginning and end of the Civil War - POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 0:43**

<http://youtu.be/6mmWSF28AK>

up our Cross; participate in the Cross, and thus withdraw what has been given freely to us." [24]

The crucifixion of Christ is a temporal event that happened in history and is fixed to a certain time, but because of the eternal, divine nature of Jesus, the redemption of this event is eternal, it is applied to those who came before the Crucifixion and those who would come after. The crucifixion of our Lord is made present or re-presented through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is the same Sacrifice, with the same graces.

*"I am being saved"*

We are temporal beings and therefore we have "time" to desire Christ and to work with Christ. We have been given time, what will we do with that time? Saint Paul says, "Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." [25] Saint Paul also says, "...work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work." [26] A fig tree typically takes three years to produce, the owner of the orchard had patiently waited three years and there was not fruit, the owner was not ready to "cut it down". The gardener says to the owner, "Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down."

God gives us time. However, the time He gives us is meant to be used for the salvation of our soul and the souls of others. If we do not use this time we will be "cut down".

**What does the three years represent?** This represents the patience of God. It represents the expectation for each person to bear fruit. The three years also represent the fruitlessness of a life without Christ. Without Christ we can bear no fruit.

**What does the one year represent?** The gardener's plea for one more year shows us the continue patience and mercy of God. God's desire is the salvation of our souls. It is Jesus Christ who cultivates and fertilizes the ground around us.

**What is the ground around us?** This is our environment, our family, friends, activities, work, and entertainment. In order for us to bear fruit Jesus Christ must cultivate the ground around us. Cultivation consists of two steps. The first is the tilling of the

is given, the gardener (Jesus Christ) pleads that one more year might be given to the tree. We see, in this parable the patience of God. Saint Peter says, "... be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace. And consider the patience of our Lord as salvation..."[20] Through Christ Jesus, we have been delivered, are being delivered, and hope to be delivered. God's patience is our salvation.

**How do we answer the question: "Are you saved?"** "The Catholic should reply: 'As the Bible says, I am already saved (Rom. 8:24; Eph. 2:5-8), but I'm also being saved (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 2:15; Phil. 2:12) and I have the hope that I will be saved (Rom. 5:9-10; 1 Cor. 3:12-15). Like the apostle Paul, I am working out my salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), with hopeful confidence in the promises of Christ (Rom. 5:2; 2 Tim. 2:11-13)"[21]

#### **ACTIVITY – Are you saved?**

On the board or wall put three columns or categories: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE. Hand out the following scripture verses or assign groups to these scripture verses. 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 2:15; Phil. 2:12; Romans 5:9-10; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; Romans 5:2; 2 Tim. 2:11-13. Makes sure to mix the verses up before assigning them. Have each person or group read their verse. Then, have them choose what category the verse goes in, PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE. **(Answers can be found in question above)**

#### **[See also Link to Liturgy Lesson - Once Saved Always Saved?]**

*"I have been saved"*

We can say with confidence that we have been saved because of the saving, redemptive, action of Christ on the Cross. Jesus says to the Father, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they do"[22]. Jesus also said, "it is finished"[23] or in other words it is accomplished.

It is finished, but not finished. We can think of the Cross as a bank in which victory (redemption, salvation, grace, etc.) has been merited by Christ and deposited by Christ. There is debt that each person has -- some more, some less. Christ knows the exact amount of each one of our debts, and he pays that debt on the Cross, and through his Passion, Death and Resurrection makes a deposit of grace on the Cross that can pay all of our debts. The deposit is made; it is finished; what is lacking is the withdraw. We must come to the Cross; embrace the Cross; pick

The American Civil War started in Manassas, Virginia or Bull Run and ended near Appomattox Court House, Virginia. A man by the name of Wilmer McLean lived in Manassas at the first major battle of the war. To keep his family safe from the war he moved them south and west in Virginia. Almost four years later Grant and Lee would sit in his parlor negotiating the peace to the end of the war. We see by this quirky story in history that sometimes even when we try and run away from problems we still have no control over things. It shows us how indeed we truly rely on God's providence.

**Why does God allow evil?** First, He respects our free will. Second, although He allows evil, which is the deprivation of good, He is always working and offering the grace necessary to restore the good that humans deprive themselves and others of. God allows the evil of the crucifixion. Humanity not only rejected Jesus Christ, true God and true man, but also crucified Him. God allows this because of free will, but He brings the ultimate good, salvation out of the ultimate suffering.

"As St. Paul affirms, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.' But to do its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us 'righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God, by his Word and by his Spirit, casts a living light on sin: Conversion requires convincing of sin; it includes the interior judgment of conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man's inmost being, becomes at the same time the start of a new grant of grace and love: 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' Thus in the 'convincing concerning sin' we discover a double gift: the gift of truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Consoler."[4]

Jesus quickly brings the attention away from perishing physically to perishing spiritually. He takes the concern off of the people who did perish and places it upon to those who might perish if they do not care for their soul. Repentance is the key. Saint John the Baptist said, "Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance."[5]

In the parable of the fig tree, if the tree does not produce fruit, it will perish. If we do not produce fruit we will perish and we cannot produce fruit, unless we repent.

**Prayer: light of the Spirit - Lesson and Discussion***“a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard”*

**In this parable, who is the person? God is the person. Who is the fig tree?** We are the fig tree. **What is the orchard?** Our life on this temporal earth is the orchard. God in His goodness has given us life. He is the one that planted us in our mother’s womb and says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you.”[6] We are expected to bear fruit. We have been given life. We have been given soil, air, water, and all the resources necessary. We have been given a gardener, Jesus Christ, who says to the Father, “I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it”.

Although we are expected to bear fruit, the bearing of fruit cannot be done alone. Everything necessary for us to bear fruit has been given to us. God is the source of the soil, the seed, the air, the sun, the water, and God is the gardener. **What is asked of us?** All that is asked of us is to cooperate with His grace in order to bear fruit.

**How do we cooperate with God’s grace to bear fruit?** Two ways to cooperate with His grace and bear fruit is to live the sacramental life and to live a life of prayer. To learn more about the sacramental life see the lesson below. This lesson will discuss the life of prayer.

**[See Link to Liturgy Lesson - Faith: Seed, Root, Shoot, Fruit (Sacraments)]**

Saint John Chrysostom writes, “Prayer is the light of the spirit, true knowledge of God, mediating between God and man. The spirit, raised up to heaven by prayer, clings to God with the utmost tenderness; like a child crying tearfully for its mother, it craves the milk that God provides. It seeks the satisfaction of its own desires, and receives gifts outweighing the whole world of nature.”[7]

Today’s Gospel gives an analogy of complete dependence upon God. A tree is completely dependent. Saint John Chrysostom speaks of a baby, who also is completely dependent. Prayer expresses our dependence on God. Just as a baby groans or cries for his mother, our prayers are like groans or cries to our Heavenly Father. Even in prayer we need help and thus it is the Holy Spirit that assists us in prayer. Saint Paul says, “...the Spirit too

dwelling of the divine life; the interior life of the soul. God is the source. This is why we can be good, because goodness Himself dwells within us. God is not only the source of our faith, but also the subject of our belief. Our faith, which comes from within the house, manifests itself outside the house through prayer, liturgy, belief, and life. We have been given the gift of God and want to share this gift with others. The gift of God, who dwells in us, is shared each time we share the gift of self.

**What then is the purpose of the roof?** The roof, which Saint John Chrysostom says is prayer, serves as both security and crown. Prayer enables us to continue to be like Mary at the feet of Christ. Prayer helps us to protect our interior life and we realize the truth of Jesus’s words “there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.”[17] Prayer enables us to always choose Jesus, the one thing necessary, and to not allow the one thing to be taken from us. Prayer is also the crown of our house. What is it that we are crowning? It is the Blessed Trinity, the indwelling of God in three persons that dwells in our soul; we are therefore to crown this holy temple, this tabernacle of our soul. We say at Mass in the word of the centurion, “Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” Our baptism and confirmation have made us temples of the Holy Spirit and it is through the Most Blessed Sacrament that Our Lord wishes to make our temple His tabernacle and sit on the throne of our heart, crowned in glory. “The Divine Prisoner of the tabernacle awaits the visit and the gratitude of his creatures who abandon him! He knocks at the door of our heart to make of it a tabernacle where he can rest.”[18] Jesus the one whom says to us, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest,”[19] desires to rest in our heart. The human heart is restless only until it rests in God. God Himself desires to find rest in each human heart.

**Are we saved? - Lesson and Discussion***“it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down”*

In this parable the command is given “cut it down”. This is the sentence of death.

Saint Basil the Great says, “We felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death, so that we might not trust ourselves but in God, who raises the dead; from so great a danger did he deliver us, and does deliver us; we hope in him, for he will deliver us again.” Although the sentence of death, “cut it down”



tradition, they prove to be mysterious, attractive, and even inviting.

In the parable of the fig tree we see on the outside, fruit, which is a sign of what is on the inside, repentance. The virtues of modesty, humility, and justice which is what the Christian paints the exterior of his house invites others and God into the interior life.

For those that get to know the Christian, they are invited into a dwelling for which they will find the following.

**Good deeds** – The Christian is called to think well, speak well, and do well. Jesus tells us that there is only one that is good, and that is God. All good deeds therefore come from God and give God the glory. Those who get to know the Christian begin to understand the source of the Christian's goodness is not in himself but rather in the "He in me" the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, the Divine Life within our soul.

**Faith** – "Both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God who invites his response, and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed. It is this revelation of God which the Church proposes for our belief, and which we profess in the Creed, celebrate in the sacraments, live by right conduct that fulfills the twofold commandment of charity (as specified in the ten commandments), and respond to in our prayer of faith." [15] It is our faith, which invites God into our soul, into our house. We can think of faith as the fire or fuel within our house for it is faith that is the fuel of our prayer, liturgy, doctrine and moral life. Jesus tells the apostles at the Last Supper, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him." [16]

**Generosity** – God loves a cheerful giver. How can the Christian not give, when he has been given so much? Read 2 Corinthians, chapter 9 to find out about God's indescribable gift. Once God gives the gift of Himself to the soul, the soul is moved to give the gift of self to others.

**CHANT – "Ubi Caritas" in English – POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 3:02**

[http://youtu.be/fwQJ\\_xxB-k](http://youtu.be/fwQJ_xxB-k)

Inside the house of the Christian God is dwelling. This is the in-

comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings." [8] There is no better image of the beatitudes, "poor in spirit" and "hunger and thirst for righteousness" than that of a newborn crying for their mother. Those who are "poor in spirit" know they are in need of God. They feel the poverty of their soul that will find rest only in God's mercy and grace. This poverty and need leads to a hunger and thirst for God which Saint John Chrysostom promises will be satisfied in "gifts outweighing the whole of nature."

**MUSIC – "From This Valley" by The Civil Wars – POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 3:38**

[http://youtu.be/DIU\\_98i1Hu](http://youtu.be/DIU_98i1Hu)

The song is about all of us longing for the source of our joy and happiness, which is God. The song uses various similes and analogies to get the point across, but we all hope to be taken up to "Mount Zion", Heaven.

**Prayer shows our dependence.**

Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) writes of the Holy Spirit, "Who are you, sweet light, that fills me and illumines the darkness of my heart? You lead me like a mother's hand, and should you let go of me, I would not know how to take another step... Are you the ray that flashes down from the eternal Judge's throne and breaks into the night of the soul that had never known itself? Mercifully relentlessly it penetrates hidden folds." [9] We can only have true knowledge of our self and of God, when the light of the Holy Spirit penetrates the hidden folds of our life.

**Prayer gives us knowledge of self and knowledge of God.**

"Prayer stands before God as an honored ambassador. It gives joy to the spirit, peace to the heart. I speak of prayer, not words. It is the longing for God, love too deep for words, a gift not given by man but by God's grace." [10]

**MOVIE – New York, I Love You – POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 5:31**

<http://youtu.be/HKKaifhNHr>

Many times we think of prayer as words, and at times words in a conversation can be annoying and unnecessary. Saint John Chrysostom speaks of prayer as a longing for God that is too

deep for words. When we see an older couple that is just sitting peacefully and joyfully in each other's presence we witness a communication that is not dependent on words.

Peace and joy are both fruits of the Holy Spirit. When we are honored through prayer to be in the presence of God, the fruit of this presence is peace and joy. Today's Gospel speaks of a tree that produces not fruit. The Christian that does not know how to pray will not produce the fruits of peace and joy.

**Prayer gives us peace and joy.**

**ACTIVITY – Rosary of Thanksgiving**

One simple, five-minute way we can pray is to take a rosary in hand and begin with the Sign of the Cross, the Apostle's Creed, an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory Be. After these prayers, starting with the first bead and then for each bead after we can say one thing we are thankful for. This litany of praise and thanksgiving takes very little time but it allows us to quickly understand our dependence on God. We begin to understand the role of God as our Father and provider, and our role as Child and receptor of grace. We also begin to be filled with the fruits of peace and joy as will fill our heart and mouth with praise and thanksgiving rather than despair and complaints.

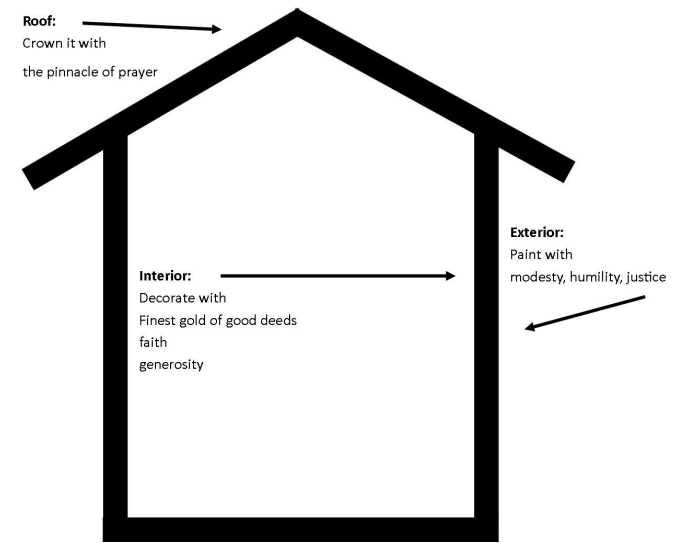
**The Christian: A House of Prayer – Lesson and Discussion**

*“a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard”*

**Prayer is our roof and our crown**

Saint John Chrysostom uses the analogy of a house to show the importance of prayer. He says, “Practice prayer from the beginning. Paint your house with the colors of modesty and humility. Make it radiant with the light of justice. Decorate it with the finest gold leaf of good deeds. Adorn it with the walls and stones of faith and generosity. Crown it with the pinnacle of prayer. In this way you will make it a perfect dwelling place for the Lord. You will be able to receive him as in a splendid palace, and through his grace you will already possess him, his image enthroned in the temple of your spirit.”[11]

The house that Saint John Chrysostom describes is what a Christian should look like to the world.



On the outside this is what people should see from a Christian.

**Modesty** – Modesty is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. “The forms taken by modesty vary from one culture to another. Everywhere, however, modesty exists as an intuition of the spiritual dignity proper to man. It is born with the awakening consciousness of being a subject. Teaching modesty to children and adolescents means awakening in them respect for the human person.”[12] To be modest is to say, “I am a subject” not “I am an object”. Our bodily actions should reflect the purity of our heart and the dignity of our soul.

**Humility**- The virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good. Humility avoids inordinate ambition or pride, and provides the foundation for turning to God in prayer (CCC - 2559). Voluntary humility can be described as “poverty of spirit”[13]

**Justice** – “Justice is the constant and permanent determination to give everyone his or her rightful due.”[14]

These virtues of modesty, humility, and justice if practiced will be a sign of contradiction to the world. Although they are a con-