

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.

How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?

[1] From a homily by Saint John Chrysostom; Office of Readings; Friday after Ash Wednesday

[2] CCC - 2524

[3] Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary

[4] Fr. John Hardon, S.J.; *Modern Catholic Dictionary*; page 301

[5] Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary

[6] John 14:23 [7] Luke 10:42

[8] Saint Therese of Lisieux [9] Matthew 11:28

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

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.’”

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – Monday of the 3rd 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 greatness, 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.*

The Christian: A House of Prayer – Lesson and Discussion

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

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.”[1] 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.”[2] 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”[3]

Justice – “Justice is the constant and permanent determination to give everyone his or her rightful due.”[4]

These virtues of modesty, humility, and justice if practiced will be a sign of contradiction to the world. Although they are a contradiction, 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.”[5] 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.”[6]

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.

Inside the house of the Christian God is dwelling. This is the indwelling 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. Pray 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.”[7] 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.”[8] Jesus the one whom says to us, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest,”[9] 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.