



Parish update from Fr. Jake Anderson

September 25, 2020

Hello Everyone,

In these autumn days, having a fire is almost essential to the full enjoyment of the season. Am I right? Fire is also one of the great images to describe things in life, in art, in poetry, in the human heart and in the life of loving God. Let's look at the image of fire in relation to the spiritual life, that is, the life of loving God and being loved by Him in the here and now.

Fire essentially needs three elements: fuel, heat, and oxygen. In the spiritual life, we also need all three to have a living relationship with God. The fuel or the combustible material is *you*, your heart, your mind, your hands... The more of you (the *real you*) that is given over to God, the more combustible material there is for the Fire of God to burn within us. This is the life of holiness. This dynamic illumines the great commandment: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all of our heart, mind, soul...*" The heat, or the flame, is God Himself (think of God appearing to Moses in the burning bush). For the fuel or material to "catch fire" it needs to be in close proximity to the flame itself. Then there is the oxygen, that which "fans the flame." This is the life of prayer in the Holy Spirit. "Prayer is the oxygen of the soul," as Padre Pio once said.

How do I keep the Fire going? This is the primary work of the spiritual life, giving the Lord more of ourselves. The more access and permission we give to Him to be Lord in everything, the more His Fire burns. The proverbial phrase "adding logs to the fire" may apply here. Additionally, we want to live in intimate closeness to the Lord and to not cut ourselves off willfully from the Fire, that is what we call mortal sin. You have heard the phrase "near occasions of sin"? To keep the Fire of God going we want to be placing ourselves in the "near occasions of grace."

What will put the Fire out? We all have had the experience of a campfire going out, yes? Neglect is a primary reason. Not adding fuel is the surest way of suppressing and even squelching fire of its power. Also, using "green wood" can also put the flame out. The analogy of this is our unmortified selves or our attachment to worldly things (money, our appearance, possessions, etc.). Just as quality wood for a fire needs to be dried of its sap to burn hot and bright, so too do we need to live "in the world but not of the world." This is the life of virtue, small "sacrifices of self" for love of God and neighbor. We must beware that "worldly riches and anxiety of life" do not choke off the Fire. Finally, lack of real community can put out our fire. After all, if you take a coal out of a fire, it will only burn for a time. We must be "embers with other embers" to continue to live in the Living Flame of Love.

“Become who you were meant to be, and you will set the world on fire” St. Catherine of Siena once said. Perhaps this raises the following question in our hearts: **“why is my Fire so...small, so contained?”** In order for the power of God to set the world on fire through us, our “walls of containment” need to be (gently) surrendered to the Lord for Him to demolish. A very popular “wall of containment” in our day might be called a “compartmentalization” of God, e.g. “I go to Mass on Sundays but the rest of my week is pretty divorced from God.” Pope Benedict XVI once said: “one of the problems we have in the Church is that there are many, many, baptized agnostics.” With such “walls” separating “my life of God” and “the rest of my life” the Fire of God is often restricted from setting the world on fire.

In closing, let me leave you with this quote:

“Beauty is what awakens our attention and gets us moving. It is what draws us out of ourselves so that our whole attention is fixed on something that is not ourselves.” Paul Murray

May we be drawn by the beauty of holiness, the life of being possessed by the Fire of God.

Here are some pastoral updates!

- As mentioned in last Sundays Masses, we would love you to **bring your Bibles** (or missalette I suppose) to Mass every Sunday and mark the Sunday readings with bookmarks. Two main reasons for this: To follow along with the readings by having a “visual aid” and 2) to become more familiar with God’s Word. We thank you!
- For those who have been watching and praying with our live stream of the Mass—we are in the works of improving the sound and picture quality. Thank you for your patience!
- A shout out to all of our parishioners who are not able to come to Mass or be physically present at St. Lawrence. I love you, miss you, and pray for you often!
- For those with celiac disease who normally receive a low-gluten host, our process for receiving Holy Communion has changed. Simply approach the main Communion line and mention a low-gluten host. We will now always have consecrated hosts in a separate pix. No need to bring your own pix or approach the sacristy before Mass.
- Do you know of anyone who is **interested in becoming Catholic?** OR, anyone who is just wanting to know more about the Catholic faith? Please have them contact Bro. Gary Davis (brogary@brohope.net) to learn more. Our next Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) program will begin in mid-October.
- We so appreciate and gratefully welcome your financial generosity! Particularly if you are “a regular” (and even if you are not) at St. Lawrence, we invite you to consider [giving electronically on our website](#). Nothing is too small or insignificant.

In the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,
Fr. Jake