

Liturgical Components of the Christian Initiation Process:

Gateways and Sources of Grace for Conversion

MYSTAGOGY AND THE NEOPHYTE YEAR

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Devoted to post-baptismal catechesis, this period is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.

RITE OF ELECTION
Call to Continuing Conversion

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

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*Coinciding with **Lent**, this period consists more in interior reflection than in instruction. It is intended to enlighten the minds and hearts of participants with a deep knowledge of Christ the Savior.*

Minor Rites in the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- Penitential Rite (Candidates)
- Scrutinies (Catechumens)
- Presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer
- Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday

CATECHUMENATE

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This is an extended period for pastoral formation and guidance aimed at training participants in the Christian life; it includes a thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life.

Minor Rites in the Period of the Catechumenate

- Celebrations of the Word of God
- Minor Exorcisms
- Anointings (Catechumens)
- Blessings

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE
Rite of Welcoming

PRECATECHUMENATE

This is a time for inquiry and evangelization, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

PRECATECHUMENATE

Start



CATECHUMENS



CANDIDATES



PERIODS



STEPS

Faith: How to Get It

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. ~ Ephesians 1:16-18

Because the work of catechesis is oriented towards conversion, the catechist needs to understand clearly how a person gets faith, grows in faith, and loses faith.



HOW TO GET FAITH (SEE CCC 153-156, 162)

Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man (CCC 162):

- ✧ The grace to believe is granted to all — God desires all to be saved (see 1 Timothy 2:4)
- ✧ God always initiates and enables belief by his grace — we believe by the authority of God who reveals himself
- ✧ Accepting God's free gift is an act of the will and the intellect — it does not depend upon emotions or feelings
- ✧ This belief does not stem from, but always accords with our reason — faith elevates reason
- ✧ The sacrament of Baptism bestows the power to believe, the theological virtue of faith — faith is an act above what is natural to us

HOW TO GROW IN FAITH (SEE CCC 94, 162)

Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very Word of God (CCC 157):

- ◆ Nourish it with the Word of God (Scripture) and with the works of God (charity)
- ◆ Participate in contemplation, study, and prayer with other believers
- ◆ Live with a steadfast hope of God's love, his mercy, and of Heaven
- ◆ Root ourselves in the faith of the Church, listen to the voice of those who have the 'sure charism of truth'
- ◆ Beg the Lord to increase our faith

HOW TO LOSE FAITH (SEE CCC 164, 2087-2088)

Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test (CCC 164):

- ▲ Continue in the company of non-believers or those who are spiritually lazy
- ▲ Nurture an unhealthy fascination with evil, suffering, injustice, and death
- ▲ Spurn the commandments and the precepts of the Church
- ▲ Cultivate doubt by disregarding revealed truths or fostering objections and anxiety due to some obscurity
- ▲ Fail to seek to know God in the Scriptures, in the life of the Church, and through prayer

FAITH AS AN ACT

The human act of responding to God's gift

- ✖ Listen
- ✖ Consider
- ✖ Assent
- ✖ Obey



FAITH AS A VIRTUE

God's gift nurtured by God's grace

- ✖ Fed by truth, that which we believe
- ✖ Theological virtue, by which we believe
- ✖ Incremental growth in holiness (sacramental life)
- ✖ Seeking understanding (continual study)

The Rites of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion

This next liturgical “gateway” requires that conversion is already complete and the participants have the intent to receive the sacraments of initiation that Easter. (see RCIA 120) These Rites lead them into solemn preparation during the “retreat time” of Lent. It should be spent in reflection, spiritual reading, prayer, fasting, penance, and acts of charity.



The Period of Purification & Enlightenment

(Teaching to the Rites: see RCIA 573, 580 and 591 ✦ Teaching from the Rites: see RCIA 558)

The focus of the catechesis is now on spiritual preparation for the sacraments of initiation. The themes of repentance and holiness are constant throughout this period. Interior reflection (on God’s love for us, his faithful provision for us, and our need to turn to him fully) should lead to repentance and penance, thanksgiving, and more fervent fraternal charity. The elect and candidates for full communion should turn once again to a study of Christ the Savior, especially the events of the Paschal mystery – Jesus’ Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. (see RCIA 118, 121, 138, 139)

The Catechetical components of this period include the following:

- ✦ Meditations and exhortations
- ✦ Spiritual reading of Scripture and the lives of the saints
- ✦ Prayer times such as intercession for the needs of the Church, meditation on the life of Christ in the rosary, recitation of Evening Prayer or Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- ✦ A retreat weekend is especially appropriate during this time (This might be the first opportunity offered for the sacrament of Reconciliation for the candidates for full communion)
- ✦ Participation in the Lenten activities of the parish should certainly be part of this time. With all of the above and explanations of such devotions as the Stations of the Cross there would certainly be continuing education, but not in the same manner as in the previous stages

The Liturgy and the Community as Means of Insertion in Christ:

Participants are learning all the time during their experience of the catechumenate, not just in the formal teaching. Attendance at the ceremonies for Holy Week with godparents, sponsors, and team members will be an experience of the liturgy as the prime teacher.

“The unique catechetical value of the liturgy essentially derives from the way in which it contains and makes us familiar with the heart of the Christian religion the mystery of Christ... The liturgy gives what it teaches.” ~ *Johannes Hofinger, S.J., et al, The Good News and Its Proclamation, pp. 53, 56*

Without the teaching and converting aspects of the liturgy and the witness of the community, formal instruction runs the risk of becoming just information, instead of light for the path of faith. (see CCC 89)



Catechesis in Purification and Enlightenment: Preparing to Receive the Life of God

CATECHETICAL THEMES FOR PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The guidelines for this period (which normally coincides with Lent) as well as the Rites associated with it, enable catechists to shift the focus of teaching from an exposition of the Deposit of Faith to reflection and meditation.

Before they receive the sacraments of initiation:

“...the elect must have the intention of achieving an **intimate knowledge of Christ and his Church**, and they are expected particularly to progress in **genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance.**” (RCIA 142)

Below are themes appropriate to this period, taken directly from the RCIA guidelines and Rites:

1. The Mystery of Sin

- ✝ The power of sin (RCIA 141, 143)
- ✝ Acknowledgement of sin and failing (RCIA 153)
- ✝ Forgiveness of sin and freedom from the effects of sin (RCIA 144, 154, 469)

2. The Power of Darkness

- ✝ Satan and his minions (RCIA 141)
- ✝ Freedom from the effects of the devil (RCIA 144)
- ✝ Protection against temptation (RCIA 141)

3. Purification of Heart and Mind

- ✝ Searching the conscience (RCIA 139)
- ✝ Renunciation of self and penance (RCIA 139, 469)
- ✝ Conversion and change of heart (RCIA 153, 469)

4. The Healing Effect of Mercy

- ✝ Revelation and the healing of weakness (RCIA 469)
- ✝ Freedom from falsehoods concerning God (RCIA 470)
- ✝ Christ, the Lord of Mercy, in Baptism and Reconciliation (RCIA 167, 299)

5. The Incredible Sacrament: Baptism

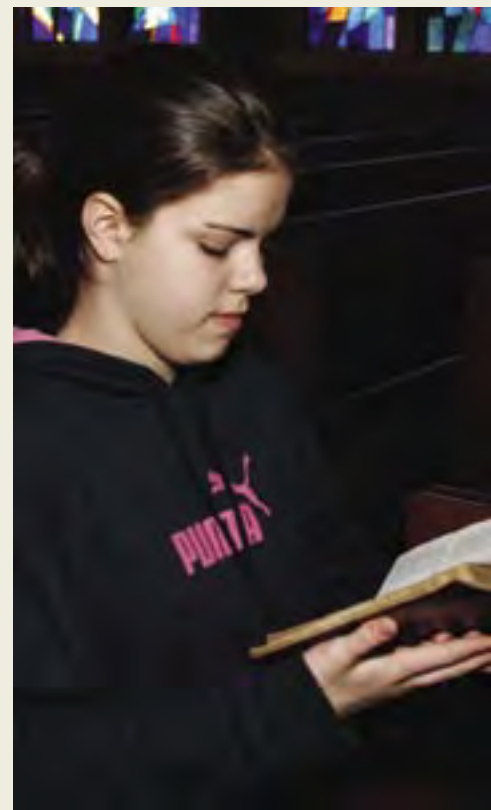
- ✝ Reflection on their Baptism (or their coming Baptism) (RCIA 452, 556)
- ✝ Ransomed by Christ, being baptized into his death and resurrection (RCIA 168, 174)
- ✝ Members of his body, brothers and sisters in God's family (RCIA 134, 452, 465)

6. A Deeper Knowledge of Christ, the Savior

- ✝ Recognition of Christ's presence in daily life (RCIA 470)
- ✝ Obedience to him (RCIA 131, 556)
- ✝ Being conformed to Christ's suffering (RCIA 456)

7. Prayer

- ✝ Spiritual recollection (RCIA 138)
- ✝ Interior reflection (RCIA 139)
- ✝ The help of the Holy Spirit (RCIA 153)



THE LITURGICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS PERIOD

Catechesis in the period of purification and enlightenment should be significantly informed by the Rites that inaugurate and permeate these weeks of preparation for the sacraments of initiation.

Rite of Sending to the Bishop (for Election and for Recognition)

- ✠ “found strength in God’s grace” (RCIA 537)
- ✠ “support in community’s prayers and example” (RCIA 537, 540)
- ✠ “prayers in spiritual formation” (RCIA 537, 540)
- ✠ “listened to the Word of Christ” (RCIA 541)
- ✠ “in the weeks ahead” (RCIA 544)
 - ✠ Strengthened in their call
 - ✠ Built into the kingdom of Christ
 - ✠ Sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit

RITE OF ELECTION AND CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION

Unbaptized

- ✠ Be faithful to God in return for his faithfulness (RCIA 554)
- ✠ Strive to reach the fullness of truth (RCIA 554)

Baptized

- ✠ Join in a Lenten spirit of repentance (RCIA 558)
- ✠ Hear the Lord’s call to continuing conversion (RCIA 557)
- ✠ Be faithful to the baptismal covenant (RCIA 557)

Penitential Rite (*baptized*)

- ✠ 2nd Sunday of Lent—Year A, B, C (Transfiguration of Christ from one of the synoptic Gospels)
 - ✠ “help to prepare to celebrate the sacrament of Penance” (RCIA 461)
 - ✠ Seek forgiveness of sins and healing of weaknesses (RCIA 469, 470)
 - ✠ Seek readiness for sealing by the Holy Spirit (RCIA 469)
 - ✠ Seek readiness for being fed at the Lord’s Table (RCIA 469)

Scrutinies (*unbaptized*)

- ✠ 3rd Sunday of Lent—living water (John 4:5–42 ~ the Samaritan woman at the well)
- ✠ 4th Sunday of Lent—light of the world (John 9:1–41 ~ the man born blind)
- ✠ 5th Sunday of Lent—resurrection and life (John 11:1–45 ~ the raising of Lazarus)

Presentations (*unbaptized*)

- ✠ Creed—“the wonderful deeds of God” and “the great mysteries” (RCIA 147)
- ✠ Lord’s Prayer—“a new spirit of adoption” (RCIA 147)

Deepening an inner adherence to the Church (RCIA 477) (*baptized*)

- ✠ Reflection on the mystery of their Baptism (RCIA 556)
- ✠ Reflection on their heritage: the tradition of the Church (RCIA 556)

Sacrament of Penance (RCIA 482) (*baptized*)

- ✠ Healing the wounds of sin and strength for the way of holiness (RCIA 470)
- ✠ Trust in God’s mercy (RCIA 469)

Preparation Rites (RCIA 185)

- ✠ Recitation of the Creed (RCIA 193)
- ✠ Ephephtha Rite (RCIA 197)
- ✠ Choosing a baptismal/Confirmation name (RCIA 200)



SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

IDEAS THAT HELP INCORPORATE LITURGICAL OR PARA-LITURGICAL ASPECTS
IN THE WORK OF PASSING ON THE CATHOLIC FAITH

The liturgy is connaturally the center and soul of the whole striving toward perfection in the way in which Mother Church officially proposes it to her children.

~ Fr. Cyprian Vagaggini, OSB, in Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy

Suggestions for different subjects for guided meditations:

- Guided meditation on the prayers of the RCIA major Rites
- Guided meditation on the prayers of the Baptismal Rite
- Guided meditation on the prayers of the Confirmation Rite
- Guided meditation on the prayers of the Penitential Rite
- Guided meditation on the prayers of each of the Scrutinies
- Guided meditation on specific Gospel stories, on the Psalms, Wisdom Books, or other passages in Scripture
- Guided meditation on the Creed
- Guided meditation on one of the Eucharistic Prayers
- Guided meditation on other major prayers of the Mass (e.g. the Confiteor, the Gloria, the Sanctus, the Agnus Dei, the Communion Rite, etc.)
- Guided meditation on the Divine Praises, or other litanies
- Guided meditation on the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, or well-known prayers
- Guided meditation on the verses of hymns

Suggestions for places to visit and tour:

- ✧ The parish church
- ✧ The parish sacristy
- ✧ The diocesan cathedral
- ✧ A monastery or a retreat house
- ✧ A local shrine or other Catholic worship site
- ✧ An Eastern Rite Catholic church
- ✧ A local Catholic historical site
- ✧ A large or very old Catholic cemetery

Suggestions for different prayer forms:

- ▲ Adoration
- ▲ Liturgy of the Word (according to various themes)
- ▲ Silent prayer time alone
- ▲ Silent prayer time in an outdoor setting
- ▲ Silent prayer time in small groups
- ▲ Silent prayer time in a church or chapel
- ▲ Explain and offer Masses for various intentions
- ▲ Explain and pray formal *Lectio Divina*

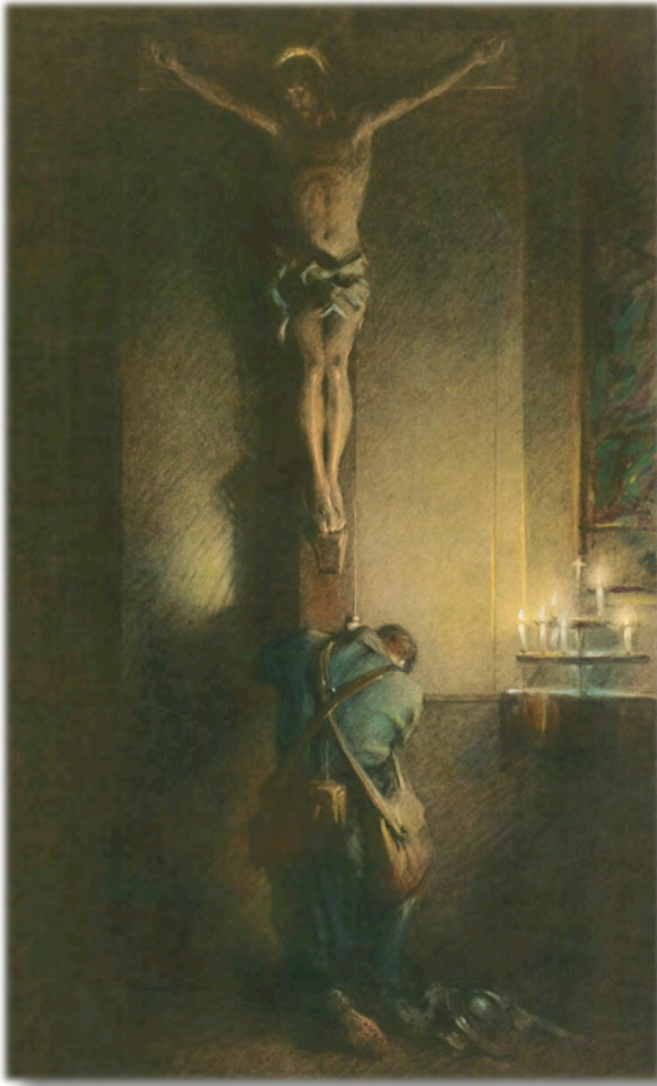
- ▲ Explain and pray the Liturgy of the Hours
- ▲ Explain and pray the rosary
- ▲ Explain and pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet
- ▲ Explain and pray the Stations of the Cross
- ▲ Explain and pray the Stations of Light
- ▲ Explain and pray the Angelus or Regina Caeli
- ▲ Explain and pray a litany
- ▲ Explain and pray by laying on hands
- ▲ Explain and begin a novena for a specific intention
- ▲ Explain and pray a prayer in Latin
- ▲ Sing psalms, sing hymns, sing common Mass settings
- ▲ Personal silent meditation on a passage of Scripture or a description of a Biblical scene
- ▲ Personal silent meditation on a description of an event in Church history
- ▲ Personal silent meditation on a saint's writing or on the life of a saint
- ▲ Personal silent meditation on a prayer text
- ▲ Personal silent meditation on a hymn text
- ▲ Personal silent meditation on a poem with suitable themes

Suggestions for other creative elements:

- ✚ Walk through the Mass
- ✚ Walk through the Bible or a specific Gospel
- ✚ Walk through a missalette
- ✚ Walk through a part of the Liturgy of the Hours (e.g., morning, midday, evening, or night prayer)
- ✚ Walk through an examination of conscience
- ✚ Demonstrate how to go to Confession
- ✚ Demonstrate how to receive Holy Communion, and how to offer a thanksgiving prayer after Holy Communion
- ✚ Explain and hold a Jewish Passover Seder
- ✚ Explain different Catholic objects (sacred vessels, sick-call crucifix, special statue, medal or devotional item, relic, etc.)
- ✚ Virtual computer tour of Catholic places
- ✚ Video tour of a major shrine or other Catholic places
- ✚ Video of a major papal event
- ✚ Movie on a Biblical story, life of a saint, or Catholic theme

AN EXERCISE IN LITURGICAL CATECHESIS:

Take five common doctrines, and come up with (in a single sentence for each) an ear-catching proclamation of how each doctrine connects to the sacred liturgy. Do not limit this to articulating connections to the Mass only, but also the broader liturgical reality that the Church understands.



The Call to Be His . . .

In the seldom visited, poorly lit corner of Holy Innocents Catholic Church in New York City, is a little known painting called *The Return*. It is not even three feet tall, and is attached to a column. You have to know that it is there; it's not visible as you enter the church.

The artist, Charles Bosseron Chambers, was inspired to paint this scene during the one of the most horrible periods in history – the immense human tragedy that we now call World War I. This war, occurring a hundred years ago, resulted in the death of 17 million people.

A devout Catholic, the artist had just attended Mass when he noticed a young soldier kneeling at the foot of a large crucifix. He was deeply moved as he silently observed this intimate moment of prayer. The soldier was seeking forgiveness for his sins, just days before leaving to join the French Army. Well over a million French soldiers lost their lives in that war.

The fate of the man in this painting is unknown. Was he a husband? A father? Were his parents still alive to witness their son bravely facing the call to arms and going away into the jaws of such a conflict? We don't know.

We do know that at this moment in his life he felt the deep need to turn to his Savior. He found a place that met his heart's need. A place that spoke of tremendous sacrifice. A place that reminded him that a life was given. Given freely. Given to free him, a sinful man. He went to the foot of that great cross, in a darkened church, with a few votive candles flickering near him, marking the offering of others' prayers. He went there because he understood his need.

Do you understand your need?

As we begin this workshop together, think about your need for a Savior. The whole history of human need, human suffering, and God's choice to come to the cradle and to the cross, brings us to this moment.

Right now. Your soul. Your neighbor's soul. The constant and grave danger of temptation, your weakness, your sins. And the steadfast offering of God's immense, all-sufficient, and generous graces. A life for a life. His life, to save yours.

Do you need a Savior?

All of salvation history comes to this question for each human heart, for your heart now, a person who desires to learn to give God more fully to others. Do you see, through the blinding and distracting temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, the one great need you have – for God to have mercy on you, a sinner?

As you consider the great sweep of salvation history, of all the Bible records and the unfolded generations to the present day, allow yourself to really question whether this is more to you than just a history of days gone by and people long past.

"I thirst" Jesus said from the cross (John 19:28). As His life ebbed away, Jesus spoke these two words – to you.

So let us begin this workshop with the words of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who received her First Holy Communion and Confirmation as her nation's people battled and suffered in the First World War:

"He longs for you. He thirsts for you. . . My children, once you have experienced the thirst, the love of Jesus for you, you will never need, you will never thirst for these things which can only lead you away from Jesus. . . It is very important for us to know that Jesus is thirsting for our love, for the love of the whole world. . . Ask yourself, have I heard Jesus directly say this word to me personally? Did I ever hear that word personally? 'I thirst.' 'I want your love.' . . . If not, examine yourself: why could I not hear?"



Discernment in Accountability to Christ

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.
~ Lamentations 3:22-23*

Love must, as St. Francis de Sales said, eventually become devotion. What is devotion? It is a love that acts in three ways:

Carefully / Diligently

Frequently / Readily

Promptly / Quickly

- ⬆ Do you need to know all the answers before you will follow God in new directions?
- ⬆ Have you laid down your will for your career, and your vocation, and the vocations of those under your care?
- ⬆ What does submission to the local Church mean to you?
- ⬆ Do you do practice intentional acts of reconciliation in your community of friends, your workplace, and your home life?
- ⬆ How do feel – immediately – when humiliated or embarrassed?
- ⬆ In your closest relationships, whose will comes first most often?
- ⬆ What is left in you of any desire to make an image of yourself to others in the parish?
- ⬆ Do you seek detachment in your daily interactions with your possessions?
- ⬆ Do you practice detachment from your finances – trusting God with your money?
- ⬆ Do you practice detachment from those you love?
- ⬆ Do you practice detachment from your future – giving God only the present moment?
- ⬆ Are you generous?

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A 'Kempis ~ Book IV, Chapter Seven

Carefully examine your conscience, then. Cleanse and purify it to the best of your power by true contrition and humble confession, that you may have no burden, know of no remorse, and thus be free to come near. Let the memory of all your sins grieve you, and especially lament and bewail your daily transgressions. Then if time permits, confess to God in the secret depths of your heart all the

miseries your passions have caused. Lament and grieve because you are still so worldly, so carnal, so passionate and unmortified, so full of roving lust, so careless in guarding the external senses, so often occupied in many vain fancies, so inclined to exterior things and so heedless of what lies within, so prone to amusement and indulgence and so indisposed to sorrow and tears, so inclined to ease and the pleasures of the flesh and so cool to rigor and zeal, so curious to hear what is new and to see fancy things and so slow to embrace humiliation and dejection, so covetous of abundance, so miserly in giving and so tenacious in keeping, so inconsiderate in speech, so reluctant in silence, so undisciplined in character, so disordered in action, so greedy at meals, so deaf to the Word of God, so prompt to rest and so slow to labor, so awake to empty conversation, so sleepy in keeping sacred vigils and so eager to end them, so wandering in your attention, so careless in saying prayers, so lukewarm in celebrating Mass, so heartless in receiving, so quickly distracted, so seldom fully recollected, so quickly moved to anger, so apt to take offense at others, so prone to judge, so severe in condemning, so happy in prosperity and so weak in adversity, so often making good resolutions and carrying so few into action.



The love of the Sacred Heart without a spirit of sacrifice is but empty illusion.

~ Blessed Maria Vischering

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Let us resign ourselves in any sicknesses which befall us. Worldly people call illness misfortunes, but the saints call them visitations of God and favors. When we are ill we ought certainly to take remedies in order to be cured, but we should always be resigned to whatever God disposes. And if we pray for restoration of health, let it always be done with resignation, otherwise we shall not obtain the favor. But how much do we not gain when we are ill by offering to God all we suffer! He who loves God from his heart does not desire to be cured of his illness in order not to suffer, but he desires to please God by suffering. It was this love which made the scourge, the rack, the burning pitch sweet to the holy martyrs. We must also unite ourselves to the will of God with regard to our natural defects, as want of talents, being of low birth, weak health, bad sight, want of ability, and the like. All that we have is the free gift of God. Might He not have made us a fly or a blade of grass? A hundred years ago were we anything but nothingness? And what more do we want? Let it suffice that God has given us the power of becoming saints. Although we may have little talent, poor health, and may be poor and abject, we may very well become saints through His grace, if we have the will. Oh, how many unfortunate beings have been damned on account of their talents, their health, high birth, riches or beauty! Let us then be content with what God has done for us; and let us thank Him always for the good things He has given us, and particularly for having called us to the holy faith. This is a great gift, and one for which few are found to thank God. ~ Saint Alphonsus Liguori

In dryness and emptiness the soul becomes humble. The earlier arrogance disappears when one no longer finds in oneself anything that would give reason to look down on others; instead, others now appear to one to be more perfect; love and esteem for them awakens in the heart. One is too occupied with one's own misery to be concerned about the opinion of others. Through her helplessness the soul also becomes subservient and obedient; she longs for instruction in order to reach the right way. Spiritual greed is thoroughly healed; when one no longer finds any practice to one's taste, one becomes very moderate and does whatever one does purely for the sake of God without seeking any satisfaction for the self. And so it goes with all imperfections. All the confusion and unrest disappears with them. Instead, a deep peace and a constant remembrance of God are established. The only care that remains is the concern not to displease God. ~ Saint Edith Stein

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No unclean soul can see God. To be clean is to give yourself wholly to My will, holding nothing back. How much better it is to sever yourself here and now from all desires which do not lead you closer to Me. Seek after that which is hard, rather than that which is easy – for My love. Seek after that which is unpleasant, rather than that which is pleasant – for My love. Seek after that which is little, rather than that which is great – for My love. Seek to desire nothing but what I send you, and refuse nothing that I permit to happen to you – for My love. Are these harsh words? Do they mean that you are henceforth to give up all pleasure? By no means! I shall guide you to the degree of self-renunciation that is best for you. What is suited to one is not to another. If you strive to do all that I ask for love you will find joy in sacrifice.... Now I shall tell you a great principle. Strive less for de-tachment than for at-tachment. Concentrate more on filling yourself with what is Me, than on emptying yourself of what is not Me. Allow Me to come into your soul and I will push out of it what is alien to Me. Let Me flood your soul with grace, washing away the unclean bonds of worldliness. This is the peaceful way to purity of heart, the quiet, easy, trusting way, the way of a little child. ~ Clarence Enzler

Never say to God "Enough." Simply say "I am ready."

~ Blessed Sebastian Valfre

The Battle of Your Life

Be still, and know that I am God.

~ Psalm 46:10 ~

Nothing can hurt you. God is near. ~ St. Francis de Sales

The greatest of all evils is not to be tempted by Satan,
because then you can believe that the devil already looks upon you as his property. ~ St. John Vianney

Do not become upset because you are tempted.
The fact that Satan puts up a fight against a soul is a sign that he does not possess it. ~ St. Francis de Sales

It is for him to fear death who is not willing to go to Christ. ~ St. Cyprian

The soul that wants to be converted from sin to a life of perfection cannot expect to attain it immediately.
Only little by little does the dawn drive away the darkness. ~ St. Francis de Sales

Humility, humility, always humility. Satan fears and trembles before humble souls. ~ St. Padre Pio

We are so very much attached to our own opinions and our own judgments, and we esteem them so highly.
That is why so few of us reach perfection. ~ St. Francis de Sales

One cannot be strong in prayer and also continue to sin habitually.
Either he will give up prayer or he will stop sinning. ~ St. Alphonsus Liguori

Complain as little as possible of the wrongs which are done to you, for ordinarily the person who complains, sins.
~ St. Francis de Sales

All hope consists in Confession. Believe it firmly. Do not doubt, do not hesitate, never despair of the mercy of God.
Hope and have confidence in the Sacrament of Confession. ~ St. Isidore of Seville

Take it as a certain sign that your love is not genuine if your words, no matter how true, are not charitable.
~ St. Francis de Sales

When you are tempted, invoke your guardian angel. Ignore the Devil and do not then be afraid of him.
The devil trembles and flees when faced with your guardian angel's power. ~ St. John Bosco

God loves simple souls as children and takes great delight in them.
He certainly takes a far different view of those who are crafty and calculating. ~ St. Francis de Sales

Satan, the enemy, surrounds us, and we shall perish
unless we fight. If we really fight, we are given
assurance of victory. ~ St. Francis de Sales

The more we indulge ourselves in soft living and
pamper our bodies, the more rebellious they will
become against the spirit. ~ St. Rita of Cascia

Most of the faults committed by good people arise from
their not keeping a sufficient steadfast recollection
of the presence of God. ~ St. Francis de Sales

God guides all by the action of His grace.
Therefore do not be lazy or lose heart, but call to God
day and night to ask Him to send you help from above
to teach you what to do. ~ St. Anthony of Padua





Good Questions

In considering
my spiritual walk
as the masterwork of
my life . . .

How well do I know
Jesus from the Gospels?

Who will be my
guides, my deep
companions in my
daily walk?

To whom am I
accountable in my
spiritual life?

What does it look like
for me to listen
in earnest?

What sins do I most
lament and struggle
with – those that steal
my peace?

What sins do I least
lament and struggle
with – those I have
made peace with,
wrongheartedly?

What do I bring to
my confessor about
my prayer life?

Does God the Father
desire to hide Himself
from me?

How does God the
Father desire to show
me His life, my call,
and our shared
eternity?

What could I leave to
follow Him?

What could I gain by
following Him?

What would I
consider two positive
habits I have
successfully and
intentionally formed in
recent years?

What is the best time
of day for me to give
time to God regularly?

What could a chosen
prayer environment at
home look like for me?

What does my
Sunday look like;
it is His day?

What do I do with
my soul at bedtime?



*The
school
of
holiness
is
always
familial.*



*Jesus
My
Jesus,
show
me
what
is not
yours
in my
life.*

How has my
childhood fathering
and mothering
impacted me as a
praying adult?

How has my
awareness of your call
as a father or mother
impacted me as a
praying adult?

How does God
father me?

How does the Church
mother me?

In God's plan, why
do I need a Mother?

What do I need
from God in terms of
intimacy?

In what ways might
prayer offer that
intimacy to me?

What do I need
from God
in terms of
toughening?

In what ways might
prayer offer that
toughening to me?



Good Questions

In considering
my spiritual walk
as the masterwork of
my life . . .

What is a saint?

What are my most
persistent human fears?

What are my
greatest fears
in considering the idea
to explicitly seek to be a
saint?

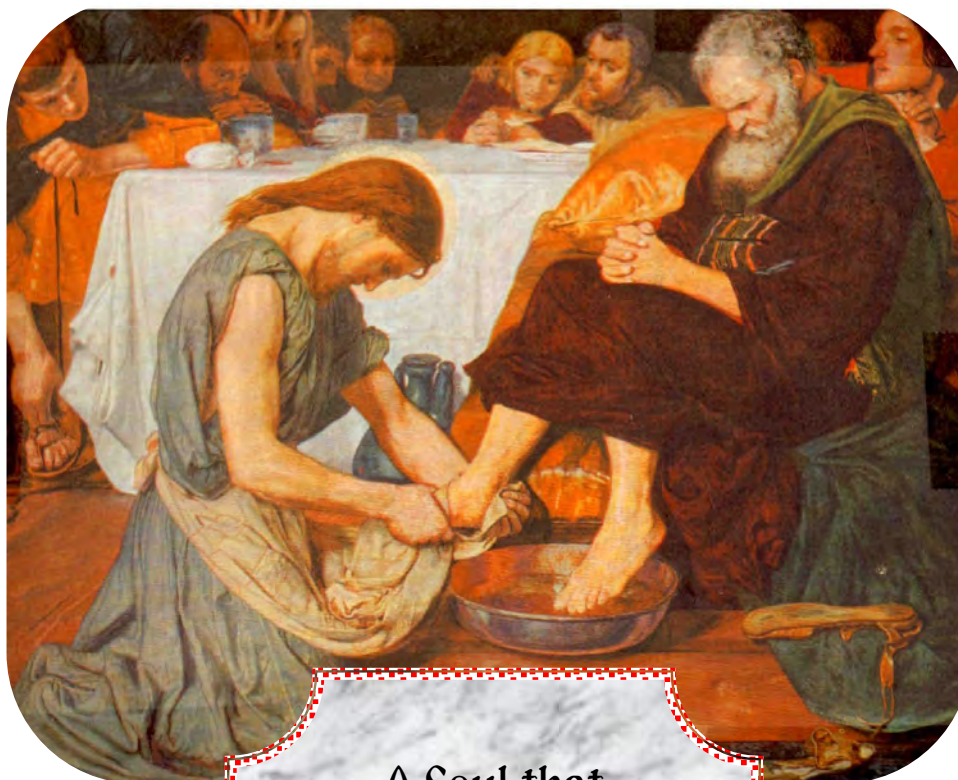
What does it mean to
be devout?

What currently is my
greatest spiritual
weakness; doing God's
will . . .
Quickly? Carefully?
Constancy?

Can I sit
with the Lord through a
few holy hours
(constancy), in the near
future (quickly) and
journal with all these
questions in earnest
(carefully)?

Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity. No legislation could by itself do away with the fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness which obstruct the establishment of truly fraternal societies. Such behavior will cease only through the charity that finds in every man a "neighbor," a brother.

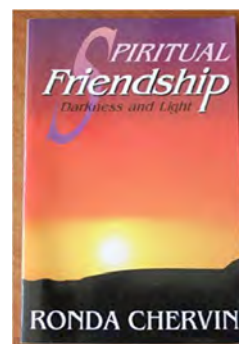
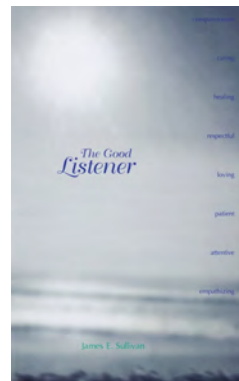
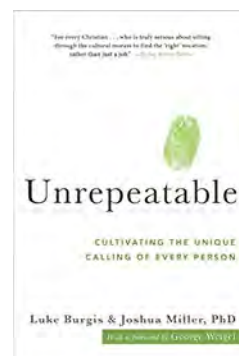
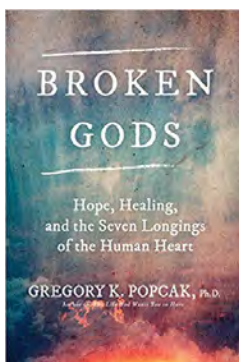
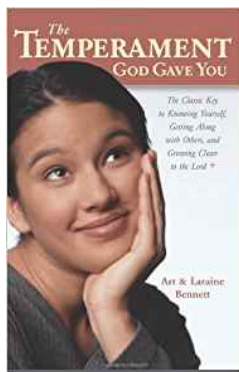
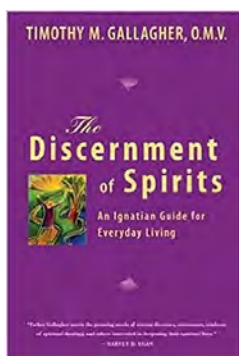
~ Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1931



A Soul that Serves Other Souls

Suffering, personal imperfection, and emotional problems have never been satisfactorily explained, yet many saints have found in their faith in the Living Christ the means to fill every void with Presence and love.

~ Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, in The Practice of the Presence of God



I, the Lord, distribute the virtues quite diversely; I do not give all of them to each person, but some to one, some to others. I shall give principally charity to one, justice to another, humility to this one, a living faith to that one. And so I have given many gifts and graces, both spiritual and temporal, with such diversity that I have not given everything to one single person, so that you may be constrained to practice charity towards one another. I have willed that one should need another and that all should be my ministers in distributing the graces and gifts they have received from me.

~ Dialogue with God, from St. Catherine of Siena