



“Live Your Faith”

Notes to Accompany the DVD Series

"Live Your Faith" is a series presented by Fr. John Girotti. Building on his original series "Know Your Faith", these 15 presentations trace the journey of Christian discipleship as outlined in Parts Three and Four of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Fr. John W. Girotti is a priest of the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Ordained in 2002, he was a parish priest for many years before earning a degree in Canon Law in 2015. Currently, he serves as Vicar for Canonical Services for the Diocese of Green Bay. He regularly teaches and speaks about the Catholic Faith, helping Catholics and those of other faiths to better understand and to follow the Way of the Lord Jesus.

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February 2020

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SESSION #1 “What Difference Does It Make?”

Introduction & Opening Comments

- This series is based on the 3rd and 4th books of the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Based on “Discipleship” = Love of Jesus

Fr. Girotti is striving to have a “face to face” conversation using words and stories. He will not be using any type of SCREEN; PowerPoint or otherwise.

Fr. Girotti encourages us in community to become friends and build community by attending and participating in this series.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord!

3 Short Stories with 1 Point “God says, ‘Look at ME’”

1. Family in restaurant distracted by artificial world of technology
2. Carmelite Monastery living as cloistered community: intercessory prayer. No mirrors! “We look at each other and we look at God.”
3. Fr. Girotti talks with his Dad. “I just want to look at you!”

Story of Rich Young Man – “Jesus looked at him with love”

Luke 22 Passion narrative Peter denies Christ “I don’t know the man!”
Jesus looked at Peter ; Peter wept bitterly.

John 19 “Behold your Mother – Behold your son”

We avoid looking at God because it makes us uneasy.
Western world attitude “Faith is Private”

Missing in Action Catholic: Why I don’t attend Mass?? “The Church is filled with hypocrites!”
That’s why we all fit.

These are the reasons we need a Savior! Jesus gives us FREEDOM.

I’m “spiritual not religious” argument: nonsense because it’s irrational

Fr. John's personal story of his Mom wanting to meet his friends; "When I look at your friends I can see who you are.

-Young mother looking at her baby.

Fall in love with Jesus Christ and He gives us the grace to look back!

Fall in love with Jesus and the gaze of God is no longer scary but comforting.

Sin: the turning away from God

"The Hound of Heaven" God outruns us!

Eternal Destination of heaven NOT automatic / we actually have to want it!

Beatific Vision: we look at God and He looks at us.

God looks at us with LOVE.

The Spiritual Life: how to live our faith.

"Look at ME and you will see!"

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SESSION #2 “How to Become a Saint”

Introduction & Opening Comments

A point to remember: We are all CALLED to sainthood

How is being a “good person” or “I want people to like me” or “I just want to be good” contrary to sanctification? Why is this attitude NOT enough for a Christian?

3 Short Stories with 1 Point “Holiness is not just for windows or statues”

1. How did Gene live his marriage to Betty in a saintly way?
2. Dr. Doyle’s refusal to perform abortions
3. Fr. Tom devoted to bringing anointing of the sick to the hospitalized

Christians are called to a much higher calling than simply being a “good person”...called to SAINTHOOD.

Do you desire heaven?

All residents in heaven are saints. Some are canonized/recognized saints; others are saints with a lower case “s.”

Saints were imperfect people: Jerome famous for having a bad temper, Vincent DePaul suffered with temper also; Augustine struggled with sins of the flesh; Anne Seton had difficulties galore and Teresa of Kalcutta suffered from spiritual darkness for many years.

Canonized Saints worthy of being called heros/ admiration

Vatican II was a “Universal call to holiness”

THE MISSION FIELD

Holiness occurs within the vocation we have been called to.

Marriage: help spouse to grow in holiness = get to heaven

Parents: help children learn faith and grow in holiness

Priesthood: goes where Bishop tells him

Your role is to sanctify the world one soul at a time. Go out!
Priest's job is to enable you to do this

PLAN OF LIFE (to grow in holiness)

1. PRAYER
2. CHARITY
3. SACRIFICE
4. COMMUNITY

SPIRITUAL LIFE TAKES TIME! God is slow but always on time.

WATCH OUT for deadly Pride: generated by original sin: God's love & mercy continues

Embrace being a Spiritual NUT!

Image to consider: BLOCK OF MARBLE God is the sculptor creating you into your most beautiful self...but it's painful. OUCH

FEAR: greatest challenge today; huge stumbling block to holiness. "What if I fail?" "What if I'm not good enough?"

JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR

With God's grace all things are possible.

TIME IS PASSING:

Don't put off: forgiveness; bury the hatchet; GROW IN HOLINESS NOW

Turn toward the Lord and LIVE.

JOY: (Jesus Others You) infallible sign of a Christian life well lived.
Joy is something that lasts.

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SESSION #3 “God Doesn’t Like Leftovers”

Introduction & Opening Comments

Fr. Girotti ordained on May 18, 2002 in the Diocese of Green Bay. At that time he made various promises one of which is to pray the “Liturgy of the Hours” daily.

Liturgy of the Hours: also known as “Breviary” or the “Office.”

Consists of 7 prayers throughout the day; objective is to punctuate the day with prayer.

Idea=to be in constant prayer with God throughout the day.

Distractions are real. Some days easy some days difficult; yet if we don’t give God the best – inevitably we’ll throw Him scraps.

HOW DO WE GIVE GOD THE BEST?

1. Listen to Him
2. Commandments “Laws of Love” FOLLOW THEM!

Commandments 1-3 Loving God

Commandments 4-6 Loving Neighbor

Americans obsessed with FREEDOM

What is Freedom? “ability to do whatever one wants whenever one wants” yields enslavement and/or hell

A world without structure and/or a foundation and/or rules results in CHAOS which yields fear which results in tyranny.

Actual FREEDOM is doing what we ought to do. Consider laws/commandments as guardrails on the highway of life; gives us safety and guidance.

10 Commandments are not burdensome once we understand God’s love for us.

Here’s example to aid understanding::

The laws are like training wheels on a bike. They support us and keep us balanced yet they are laws. Any law can be difficult to follow especially if we don’t understand the reasoning behind the law.

The *spirit* of the law helps us to focus on God. We need to act out of love and then there's an ease and a joy.

"Light and Laws of Love"

1. I, the Lord am your God, you shall not have other gods besides Me.

Golden calf illustration – not a joke!

False gods in today's culture:

- wealth
- lust; sexual obsession, pornography
- power/control/influence
- sports/youthfulness/physical beauty and/or strength
- politics
- entertainment: beauty/fame (remember it's make believe)
- technology
- spouse or children or parents (any other people)
- materialism; remember we only take with us love
- new age religion: paganism; worship of self
- superstition
- idolatry
- atheism/agnosticism: a result of a broken heart
- graven images
- worship of the environment; God wants us to be good stewards of the gifts He's given

us

"Worship the Creator not the creation." St. Augustine of Hippo

PUT GOD FIRST IN ALL THINGS! Focus attention on Faith, Hope & Love (Charity)

What does God do with our scraps? He takes them and makes it good.

When we are faithful God blesses us. When we are unfaithful God blesses us, but not as much.

People often ask, "how little can I give God and still be in His good graces?"

Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul and love your neighbor as yourself.

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SESSION #4 “Don’t Bite the Hand that Feeds You”

Introduction & Opening Comments

2nd Commandment: “Don’t take the name of the Lord your God in vain”

Fr. Girotti shares a childhood story on imitating an adult’s response to a painful situation.

Your name; the name your parent’s blessed you with is part of your identity.

We feel happy, loved and seen when someone uses our name lovingly and in the correct context.

We feel diminished when someone mispronounces, misspells or doesn’t use our name properly.

Out of respect for our parents we call them Mom and Dad or something similar.

Confirmation name: you chose it...how and why?

Principle “Familiarity breeds contempt”...the better we know someone the greater the tendency to take them for granted. Example Fr. Girotti used was a telephone conversation with a spouse.

How does this principle apply in your life?

Devout Orthodox Jews will never use God’s name; Yahweh as this is seen as a sign of disrespect or blasphemy! God’s name is too holy to even utter.

Christians are more relaxed because Jesus spoke of His Father in heaven and so do we.

The holy name of JESUS has tremendous POWER! In prayer and/or faithful conversation call out to the Lord and use the name Jesus!

Fr. Girotti gave example of homily that bombs because it did not contain the name of Jesus.

What are your experiences praying the name of JESUS?

NEVER use the Lord’s name in anger. This is sinful!

OMG and other BAD habits

-Blasphemy: use God’s name in malicious hateful way = serious sin.

-Perjury: false oath based on a lie.

-“Bloody _____” sin against Jesus’ blood; common in British language. AVOID
-Vulgarism: four letter words; ugly words; usually make no sense but makes the world uglier

Respect the Lord! He’s given us everything.

3rd Commandment: “Keep holy the Sabbath Day”

Cultural shift once it became a common practice to shop on Sunday.
God calls us to: REST REFLECT BREATH

God doesn’t want us to be like gerbils running on a wheel. What would happen if you didn’t answer/check emails on Sunday? NOTHING; the world will not end.

God gives us a day to rest because He knows what we need to be healthy. God gives it...take it!

Pride – how does the sin of pride affect this concept?

Fr. Girotti gave example of how Early Christians lived life on a Sunday: MASS
Modern life is filled with pressures.

Missing Mass on Sunday is a sin. Why? It’s about what we are putting in its place.
God blesses us when we are faithful to HIM. Initially perhaps it’s seen as an obligation but with prayer it will grow into a loving response...I go to Mass on Sunday because I love God; I need Him; I want to be in relationship with Him.

How do we each live Sunday? Does it look different than every other day? Why is this important?

How can we intentionally live Sunday?

Listen to God...He made you...He knows what you need...He is wise.

Love the Lord. He is looking at you! Put HIM first! Live our faith boldly by being principled, moral, peaceful and joyful...so different than the rest of the world.

Be radical! Be CATHOLIC.

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SESSION #5 “Charity Begins at Home”

Introduction & Opening Comments

4th Commandment: “Honor Your Father and Your Mother”

Loving God and Loving your neighbor:

Charity begins at home with family and local community.

A Picture and A Perfect Family: how do you relate to this in your own life?

Fr. Girotti shares the photo taken on his ordination day, May 18, 2002. The photo includes both Mom and Dad along with Bishop Banks.

First time parents were together in 10 years...happy but understandably nervous.

Do you have a “picture” of the perfect family?

Fr. Girotti emphasized the “family life is rarely idyllic but most families are trying their best.”

Do you believe this statement is true?

Relationship between loving family and loving God:

- family isn’t always easy to love but if we can’t love our own, who can we love?
- most grudges are held against a family member
- family is always there until they’re not

Family: man + woman with children and relatives

Even though families are not perfect God works within and through that imperfection.

Domestic Church: families and homes = places of faith, hope, light and love

Think of the happiest family you know; what practices do you see within that home?

The Church is a visible reality in the world = we can see it; we have signs

The Catholic Church is a family

- priest = Father
- pope=Holy Father
- religious orders = brothers & sisters
- Holy Mother Church
- Blessed Mother Mary

“Nations rise and fall based on the strength of the family” ie, strong leaders come from strong families

Duties of children In relationship to the 4th commandment:

-children are called to love, respect, and have obedience toward parents (under 18 years old)

-adult children called to respect and obey out of love

Correlation between loving family and loving God:

Fr. Girotti asserts that when a child doesn't receive love from their parents it is very difficult (but not impossible!) for them to love God. Abused children in particular struggle with this relational aspect of faith. Relates to a broken level of trust.

Adult children are responsible for their elderly parents and must cope with them via patience, love and consoling them in their loneliness. Reference to book of Sirach

What experiences have you had when it was difficult to love your parent in their need?

Fr. Girotti reminds us to be legally fair to children in wills and estate plans.

Difficult truth: “Children don't belong to their parents – they never did - they belong to God. Parents are “stewards” of the children God entrusts to their care.

Fr. Girotti's advice, “allow your children the opportunity to fail” **Comment on this idea.**

Order for a happy, holy and successful life: God, Spouse, Kids, Everything else

*best gift you can give kids is to love your spouse

*if you don't have kids the best gift you can give the world is to love your spouse

God calls us to love your neighbor as yourself and to love your enemy...liking them has nothing to do with loving them. **What's that all about?**

Fr. Girotti comments on the “Crisis of Fatherhood/Manhood” **How has this concept effected your life and/or those around you? Do you believe this statement to be true?**

“Breakdown in family life; men not wanting to own their fatherhood and women who won't allow men to own their role.” How has this affected family life and the life of The Church?

Men and women are equal in dignity but different!

Ask God to bless our families with unity and peace because charity begins at home. Amen

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SESSION #6 “Life is Beautiful”

Introduction & Opening Comments

5th Commandment: “Thou Shall Not Kill”

In one of Fr. Girotti’s opening comments he says that “it’s countercultural to be Catholic and to live this commandment.” **Let’s identify ways that we believe this statement to be true.**

On Christmas Eve 1968 Apollo 8 circled the moon for the very first time. The astronauts read Genesis 1 to the nation as they gazed upon the earth. They said, “The earth is so fragile and life is so precious...” **How does this image stir in your heart?**

God commands us not to kill.

- obviously speaks to violence but also to dignity of all life
- life is precious
- speaks to how we respect other people and how we love our neighbor

A HISTORICAL RECAP

-In the last 100 years the world has endured tremendous violence; hatred and division. WWI and WWII; holocaust of 5-6 million Jews during WWII; Genocide in Africa;

-Yet all these deaths pale by comparison of abortion; since 1973 over 50 million lives have been lost to abortion in the United States alone.

-3000-4000 performed daily; “we have blood on our hands”

-The answer is found in “How we love our neighbor/enemy/others.”

-Human life in the womb is precious.

-We are all affected by abortion in our families, within the Church community, in the workplace.

-ALWAYS leads to regret and sorrow.

-GOD CAN FORGIVE ANY SIN.

-Those who choose abortion make this decision based on FEAR.

Fr. Girotti said, “those who have fallen into this sin are not monsters.” How does that statement sit in your heart and how can we minister to those devastated by this sin?”

Indirect Killing of Others: gossip, bullying, ruining a reputation, verbal putdowns, etc.

How can we embrace/act upon this concept?

Euthanasia: end of life is now a danger-zone

We must take a stand for all life; not just at the beginning but also at the end.

“Healthcare Power of Attorney” make sure you have documentation/conversation on wishes

Suicide: we entrust their souls to God. Fr. Girotti comforts those left behind by reminding us that "God is all love; He is so kind and He actually loves the one who took their own life even more than you do." He is mercy itself. He knows the psychological circumstances.

Infertility Issues

- Dignity of life is absolute
- IVF is wrong
- Infertility is very painful and causes so much suffering but the end does not justify the means
- We do not artificially produce human beings
- Surrogate Motherhood is also wrong; creates all kinds of emotional struggles and reduces the woman to being a "womb for rent."

"Thou shall not kill" also refers to Poverty – Discrimination – Homelessness – Just Wages

All life is beautiful and for 2000 years this is the Catholic stance: respect life in the womb, the homeless, the elderly, the poverty stricken EQUALLY.

What about SOLDIERS – POLICE – SELF DEFENSE??

Death Penalty: Catholic stance is to work toward abolishing it; doesn't allow for true repentance; we have safe/secure prison system

Scandal: when we lead others into sin due to our poor example; leads a soul astray
How does relevance speak to the sin of scandal?

Gossip/Slander: "it's not enough to kill a man – first you must ruin his reputation."

Healthcare & Education: respect the body as temple of the Holy Spirit; we have a responsibility to make sure people have adequate healthcare and opportunity to be educated.

"Cult of the Body" beauty, praise, admiration for gorgeous flesh

"Hatred of the Body" pierce, color it, tattoo, etc...painfully decorate ourselves

Our body is a reflection of our souls: resurrection of the body (in the CREED)

Organ donation is good and virtuous.

Corporal Work of Mercy: Bury the Dead (show respect for the dead)

"If you want peace; work for justice" Injustices; real or perceived leads to hatred.
Peace begins at home.

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SESSION #7 “The god of Our Age - Lust”

Introduction & Opening Comments

This talk focuses on the following two Commandments:

6th Commandment: “Thou Shall Not Commit Adultery”

9th Commandment: “Thou Shall Not Covet thy Neighbor’s Spouse”

Fr. Girotti opens by once again emphasizing these words, “God wants us to be HAPPY! He loves us so much! When we go our own way, we end up UNHAPPY.”

We must strive to open our hearts and our minds to God’s love. God looks at us with love; we look at Him and see His love.

Father opens with a story of the car wash. His encounter of seeing women waiting to go to work in a house of ill-repute; a “gentleman’s club.” (ultimate oxymoron)

The daytime reality: worn out, broken and wounded

The evening fantasy: glamorous and exciting

Fr. Girotti takes on a rather sad and wistful attitude upon sharing his car wash observations; discuss in group why you feel he has this demeanor.

Both 6th and 9th Commandment is about human relationships and how to be successful in them.

Lust is a secular religion: Lust is god, sex is the sacraments

This is nothing new! Since Adam and Eve there’s been a struggle in the area of human sexuality.

3 Phrases of Doom

1. You deserve it
2. No one will know
3. Everybody’s doing it

Discuss in group times in your own life you’ve experienced the “3 Phrases of Doom.”

God loves us so much and trusts us enough to be co-creators with Him in the marital act. Your love will live forever in the souls of your children.

Commandments = FREEDOM

Sin = enslavement to sin

Male & Female He created them; fit together perfectly; yet are DIFFERENT in role yet EQUAL IN DIGNITY.

Christ and His Church analogy/understanding of Marriage:

- Christ = Groom
- The Church = Jesus' bride

Only Catholics believe that marriage is a sacrament. Marriage is a visual image of The Church.

Share at your table why you think the Church has elevated marriage to the level of a sacrament.

Guilt is good and leads to repentance / shame does not.

All Christians are called to CHASTITY

- Chastity: successful integration of our sexuality into our state in life
- Chastity is self-control over our passions.
- Chastity calls us to give ourselves as a gift.

Has this understanding of "Chastity" challenged your idea of what living a chaste life truly means?

Lust: god of our age/culture

SINS AGAINST CHASTITY

Marriage is for unity between husband and wife and secondly for the procreation and openness to children.

Lust is disordered desire for sexual pleasure.

Sex as compared to a beautiful diamond ring: precious, multi-faceted, rare, valuable, a special gift. The diamond stone looks best set off in a ring/ a beautiful setting...the same can be said of married love. Sex is the diamond, sex in marriage is a diamond in a gorgeous setting. Complimentary.

Intercourse before marriage is wrong because someone's going to end up getting hurt.

Prostitution is sin against chastity; wicked and evil. If you don't believe in Satan just ask a prostitute.

Human Trafficking: child labor, slavery, sex slaves, prostitution, persons bought and sold

Pornography: highly addictive, is cursed with demonic images used in background; a real challenge in today's easy access, leads to big problems

Rape: is vial, illegal, scars person for life; is a form of sexual abuse in children and adults as the person is objectified

Masturbation is sinful; it's selfish and turned toward self which is opposite of what sexual intimacy is supposed to be about

Sodomy: homosexual acts, contrary to natural law, disordered act and is not life-giving

How would you respond if someone challenged you by stating that The Church is outdated in Her teaching on human sexuality?

Dignity of Marriage

Husband's job is to get his wife to heaven

Wife's job is to get her husband to heaven

Sin of Adultery: deceit enters into marriage and is always wrong, destructive and against the faithfulness of what marriage is supposed to be.

Faithfulness is hard in the day-to-day but is worth it in the end.

In marriage we are called to be open to life. **Children are always a blessing and a responsibility.** Contraception is a sin; God wants to create life and we tell Him "NO."

Pope Paul VI wrote encyclical "Humane Vita"...what warnings did he make?

Infertility is a painful struggle and causes real suffering.

Marriage is a commitment: Divorce is a great sadness.

Fr. Girotti's parents are divorced and he shares what a great heartache this is.

Annulment brings healing and peace to couple's life following divorce.

Polygamy: many wives, contrary to the dignity of a married couple; yet on the rise.

WE NEED A SAVIOR and He is Jesus Christ! Jesus is our individual Savior.

Pope St. John Paul II wrote *Theology of the Body* which is a tool to understand our sexuality in this modern age/ understanding a series of "yeses" to God's design.

Look at the Mass; "this is my body given to you" a directive/relation to human sexuality. Priest gives himself to the Church during consecration at every mass.

Christianity =COUNTERCULTURAL

We can't do this by ourselves! We need God's grace! We need Jesus! Go to confession!!

Due to the fall in the garden we are all broken people looking to be loved.

Lust may be fun for a moment but it yields emptiness and broken heartedness/ it's a lie/ a false god.

FOLLOW HIM FOLLOW HIM FOLLOW HIM FOLLOW HIM FOLLOW HIM FOLLOW HIM

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SESSION #8

“The Truth Will Set You Free”

Introduction & Opening Comments

This talk focuses on the 8th Commandment: **“Thou Shall Not Bear False Witness”**

Fr. Girotti opens by asking the age old question, “What is truth? Is truth a concept or a person?” As Catholic Christians we embrace Jesus Christ as “the TRUTH” because He identified Himself as, “The Way, The Truth and The Life.”

In your group Identify how Jesus is “the Way” “the Truth” and “the Life”

As we begin, let’s consider ourselves; do we reflect the truth of the person of Jesus Christ or are we looking at a dirty mirror?

St. Thomas More is “a man for all seasons.”

Fr. Girotti shares that the story of Thomas More has been deeply influential within his own life and within his own story as a priest.

St. Thomas More in a snapshot:

- *he lived in the late 1400’s in England
- *intelligent, honest and man of high integrity and respect
- *married with a family
- *Chancellor to King Henry VIII of England – 2nd in command “Henry’s right hand man”

King Henry VIII in a snapshot:

- *married and wanted a son to inherit the crown; unfortunately his wife kept giving him daughters
- *was in an adulterous affair with another woman whom he wanted to marry and confident that she’d give him a son
- *wanted to divorce wife, which The Catholic Church would not approve of
- *arrogantly decided to create his own church with his own rules/values which became known as “The Church of England” or “The Anglican Church” or “Episcopalian Church”
- *Thomas More was Henry’s right hand man and friend, yet Thomas More continued to tell Henry the truth, which caused the King to become outraged
- *Henry ordered Thomas to denounce the truth of the Catholic Church
- *Imprisoned Thomas More for high treason and condemned him to death

St. Thomas More was martyred for the TRUTH of Catholicism despite people telling him to “Ignore the truth! Go along to get along.”

Share in your group how this attitude plays out within our every day culture.

John 18 Jesus and Pontius Pilate dialogue regarding who Jesus is..."Are you the King of the Jews?" "It is you who say that I am"

The ultimate nod to relativism, "Truth. What is truth?" Pontius Pilate

Pilate had the TRUTH right in front of him and couldn't see HIM.

Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me."

There are NO other Saviors! The truth is Jesus Christ.

The truth is not something, it is somebody!

Do you think that Pontius Pilate regretted his cowardly decision?

Telling the absolute truth is not a popular notion in the culture of "fake news."

Telling the truth is costly, painful, and hurts— yet we are called to always tell the truth in charity/love.

Breaking the 8th Commandment

1. Bearing false witness under oath. Example: court of law/trial
2. Rash judgment: jumping to conclusions/generalizations
Iceberg example: we only see 10% judge behaviors not people
3. Detraction/Gossip: telling a truth that doesn't need to be told
4. Calamity: made up lies to destroy other person's reputation...this is a grave sin
5. Adulation: encouraging sin for personal gain
6. Boasting * Bragging * Arrogance
7. False Charity or False Humility: true charity/humility embraces responsibility

Why do we lie? So others will like us; to get out of trouble

Little lies lead to big lies; "what a tangled web we weave when we practice to deceive."

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SESSION #9 “Be Satisfied”

Introduction & Opening Comments

This talk focuses on the 7th and 10th Commandments:

“Thou Shall Not Steal” and “Thou Shall Not Covet Thy Neighbor’s Goods.”

Fr. Girotti opens with the call be “BE SATISFIED.”

We live in a materialistic focused culture which measures our worth in terms of the possessions we each acquire.

In our hearts we know that this disordered desire is wrong, yet we struggle with understanding how to actually change this perspective.

Fr. Girotti’s simple solution: BE THANKFUL

“If we count our blessings, the desire to accumulate stuff dissipates.”

God’s Formula: Prayer + Gratitude = happy, contented and joy-filled life

Fr. Girotti shares personal story about Nono (Grandfather) and Nani (Grandmother).

- 1st generation Americans
- Lived through Great Depression
- Embraced frugality
- Prized cherry coffee table

Why are certain possessions so near and dear to our hearts? Because they remind us of **special relationships** we’ve experienced in life...with spouse, parents, grandparents, etc.

Q. Why do we struggle with being satisfied? A. It’s part of fallen nature as a result of Adam & Eve

#7 “Thou Shall Not Steal”

Stealing is universally understood as wrong within every culture.

Sins against the 7th Commandment:

1. Taking something without permission is stealing; plain and simple.
Theft = taking Robbery = taking by force
2. Stealing from employer: wasting time when one should be working. Employers shouldn’t defraud workers with unjust wages either

3. Plagiarism: stealing someone else's working and pawning it off as your own
4. Games of Chance: when gambling deprives your loved ones of care – stealing from our own.
5. Abuse of God's Creation: planet was made for us but don't abuse it because then we are stealing resources from the next generation.

Stealing requires not only confession but also restitution: what to do? Be creative! Give, to make-up for stealing.

How to avoid the desire to steal? Be grateful and satisfied with what God has given you.

How do we interact with the poor? The poor tend to be inconvenient. Poverty can also look different: lonely, un-catechized, emotionally in need.

What do we do to give back? Those of us blessed with more are required to help those in need.

Do we give of our time/money? Generosity comes in a variety of forms...it all circles back to being thankful because everything we have is a gift from GOD.

#10 "Thou Shall Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Goods"

Sins against the 10th Commandment:

1. Greed: desire to amass earthly possessions
2. Avarice: desire for riches, money, power and control
3. Envy: sadness at another's good fortune, looks, skills, etc.

"Green with envy" = jealousy. Very destructive force and something we all have struggled with but when we are GRATEFUL there's no room in our heart for jealousy and the issue disappears.

Strive for **DETACHMENT**: virtue of focusing on God and embracing simplicity in life = happiness. Daily prayer of thanksgiving helps to develop detachment. The more thankful we are the easier it is to be satisfied.

Our hearts were made with a hole in them that only God can satisfy. Excessive desires only lead us wanting more and more and wondering why we aren't fulfilled and happy.

St. John of the Cross, "in the evening of life we will be judged by how well we have loved."

Notes:

“Live Your Faith” DVD Series
Notes to Accompany the Series

SESSION #10 “7 Habits of Holiness”

Introduction & Opening Comments

This talk focuses on the 7 virtues: faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance

Fr. Girotti opens this discussion with the example of the now-common business practice of promoting “leadership training” within secular places of employment.

Better leadership = success; which means more income stream.

Why now in history has this phenomenon occurred?

As people have pulled away from religious ideology; employees need direction on how to positively interact in the workplace; to develop ethics:

- Trust the people you work with
- Be optimistic
- Be kind
- Look before leaping
- Be just
- Be honest
- Encourage others

These translate into the 7 virtues the Church has taught for centuries.

Virtue: how we live out the commandments, with the grace of God we acquire a firm disposition to do good; decision to embrace God; results in growing in holiness.

Habits require: training, PRACTICE, and effort

1. **FAITH** – a gift from God which invites a response. Cannot be **imposed** but be **proposed**.

Faith is a FREE gift which is either accepted or rejected.

Hebrews; “Faith is assurance of things hoped for and conviction of things NOT seen.”

Never contradicts reason.

God is all truth.

Jesus healed so people could have faith. Spiritual always trumps the physical.

In moments of darkness and we do not feel God’s presence, the DECISION to believe is essential.

2. **HOPE** – confident expectation of blessings and salvation
Mama said, “Stay in the sunshine John, stay in the light.” Very good advice.

Despair is opposite of hope; allows an opportunity for devil to worm his way in to lie and deceive you. Hope shoots evil one in the foot.

Anointing of the Sick is primarily for the person's spiritual good rather than their physical being so the person doesn't fall into despair.

"For every Good Friday there's an Easter Sunday."

Resurrection of Jesus Christ is ALL HOPE.

Looking for HOPE ponder the cross which tells us that "the best is yet to come."

Practice the virtue of hope with dedicated prayer and gratitude.

3. **LOVE (CHARITY)** – Love God above all things; love neighbor as yourself.
Love between the Trinity is richly fluid and demonstrates that God IS LOVE.
In our language the word 'love' encompasses all levels of affection.

Love desires the greater good for the other person. God didn't say "Like others" you are called to love others.

Love is a higher calling. Love is sacrificial; the CROSS is a visual for love.

Die to self; live for others.

Love is tough, demanding and sacrificial.

Theology of 'welcome' has deceived some and is a false dichotomy. Welcome is not charity if done falsely. **Charity is the TRUTH said in love.**

Charity is tough love; requires a foundation of truth.

To grow in love meditate on the cross.

4. **PRUDENCE** – looking before leaping, thinking before speaking, praying before acting; discernment on how to do good.
Prudence is 'weighing the pros and cons' before making a decision.
Prudence is the gateway to Wisdom; discerning properly and then acting; being careful.
It is Prudent to exam one's conscience at the end of the day and thinking things through.
5. **JUSTICE** – fairness in all things.
St. Pope Paul XI is known to have said, "If you want peace - work for justice."
Justice is having a sense of wanting things to be fair; balancing the scales.
On a spiritual level give God the BEST in your life.
Give God 1st fruits...not the scraps left over.
Do we see Christ in others?
Strive to be equitable, fair and clear.
Practice this virtue by looking at people as persons not as statistics.
6. **FORTITUDE** – ensures firmness in difficulties. Embracing attitude of "never giving up!"
BE NOT AFRAID
Fortitude is being strong, courageous and not surrendering. Fight sin! Get up when we fall; again and again and again...never become discouraged, especially with yourself.
"To fight is to win in the Spiritual Life!"
Perseverance in living out a vocation well.

Martyrs are examples of people having great fortitude.
Study the lives of the saints for inspiration.

7. **TEMPERANCE** – moderates the balance of pleasures in life.
Temperance is moderation in all things; food, drink, media, electronics, emotional attachments, work, time, etc.
Balance in all things in life. When things get askew, people inevitably get hurt.
Extremities are always problematic. Pray for temperance!

The 7 virtues are the bi-way to holiness.
Use the 7 virtues as an examination of conscience before confession for a new perspective.

PRACTICE * PRACTICE* PRACTICE!!!

NEVER GIVE UP You are loved.

Notes:

“Live Your Faith” DVD Series
Notes to Accompany the Series

SESSION #11 “And Who is my Neighbor?”

Introduction & Opening Comments

Fr. Girotti opens with these words, “God looks at us with love and when we return His gaze it’s a call into friendship with Him and with others. How are we to love others? These words are easy to hear but very hard to put into practice.”

The story of a newly ordained priest and 1st Holy Communion

Fr. Girotti shared that one of the things he was very excited to experience after ordination was 1st Holy Communion.

The children looked beautiful, almost angelic. The parents are there being supportive. The Eucharistic prayer is underway during Mass when Fr. Girotti sees a drunken figure stumble into the very first pew. The homeless drunk man proceeds to lie down, fall asleep and begin snoring. Mass goes on as the stench of homelessness fills the air.

He isn’t asked to leave. He isn’t escorted out. He’s allowed to sleep it off in God’s house because this drunken, homeless man is a child of God.

The man asks Father, “Why are you helping me?” Father answers “because I see Jesus in you.”

Would I be capable of seeing Jesus in this individual?

The poor are often cited throughout the Gospels and the images of “the poor” vary greatly. Poverty doesn’t have only 1 face...there are many types of poverty.

Luke 10:25 Story of the Good Samaritan

Who is my neighbor? Who is the disciple of Christ? The priest? The Levite? The Samaritan?

The Samaritan responded with love.

Jesus said, “go and do likewise.” Jesus shows us how to be merciful.

Types of Poverty:

Sin makes us poor. Grief makes us poor.

All human beings have poverty within their hearts; including the financially rich.

NOT knowing Jesus is the greatest poverty of all.

What does it mean to be “poor in spirit?”

Social Justice

This is a concept we hear a lot about within “Church circles” but what is social justice?

Social Justice = conditions that allow others to obtain what is their due.

God gives each individual different types of gifts.

What are your God-given gifts? What are you lacking?

There is INEQUALITY in life because of the circumstances one is born into.

Social Justice strives to equalize life's injustices...begins by loving others as yourself.

Social Justice goes beyond "doing good" because true justice is done in the name of Jesus Christ for the love of God.

Love = sacrifice/ sacrificial love

Shift from an Agrarian society to an Industrial society created wider gap and more inequalities throughout society. **Why do you think this is the case?**

Solidarity: working together as brothers and sisters for unity, peace and commonality.

Currently we suffer from great division within families, societies and even within The Church. There's a pervasive sense of anger within the current culture.

3 Principles of "The Common Good"

1. Respect freedom
2. Accessibility to work, healthcare, food and education
3. Peace and security

3 Principles of "Well-Being"

1. Spiritual well-being: the most important principle as it affects *eternity*
2. Physical well-being: necessities of food, water, shelter
3. Material well-being: having access to material goods

Caring for the poor encompasses all of the above.

The Catholic Church has done an exemplary job of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked but has neglected to introduce people to Jesus Christ while performing corporal works of mercy.

Do you believe this statement to be true?

Immigration: USA is melting pot of nationalities

Secure borders are essential, but laws must be just, equitable and serve the common good.

Family Unit is Under Attack

"Destroy the family and you destroy society." People are formed at home within the family providing a moral compass and a sense of security/permanence.

What do you think is the greatest threat "the family" faces today? What is the remedy?

Homelessness is a direct result of government failure and personal choices.
USA needs to work harder to find solutions to this problem.

What have been your experiences with the homeless?

Personal Identity under attack: same sex attraction/gender identity.
The Church teaches that we must walk with those who suffer from these issues yet never condone sinful behavior.

Catholic Social Teaching boils down to love; love others as yourself;
love like God loves...easy to say ~ hard to do.

Notes:

“Live Your Faith” DVD Series

Notes to Accompany the Series

SESSION #12

“Beyond this Point there be Dragons”

Matthew 13: 1-9 That same day Jesus left the house and went to the lakeside, where he sat down to teach. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it, while the crowd stood on the shore. He used parables to tell them many things.

Once there was a man who went out to sow grain. As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the paths, and the birds came and ate it up. Some of it fell on rocky ground, where there was little soil. The seeds soon sprouted, because the soil wasn't deep. But when the sun came up, it burned the young plants; and because the roots had not grown deep enough, the plants soon dried up. Some of the seed fell among thorn bushes which grew up and choked the plants. But some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain; some had one hundred grains, others sixty and others thirty.

And Jesus concluded, saying, “Listen then, if you have ears!”

Introduction & Opening Comments

Beware! There are dangers/deadly things that strive to pull us away from God.

Fr. Girotti begins with a story from his youth. Why was his mother adamant that he was not to ride his bike to the park by himself? Perhaps her “NO” saved his life.

In the spiritual life; we must be aware of the dragons. God wants us to be free and happy but make no mistake, there's a very real battle going on for your very soul.

How do we cultivate a strong spiritual life?

1. Striving to develop a 'well-formed conscience'
 2. Knowledge of and respect for the 10 Commandments
 3. Knowledge of and participation in reading scripture
 4. Allowing Jesus to guide us safely along
- Important to acknowledge that Satan is real; hell is real but never ever forget that **JESUS IS STRONGER!!!**

10 Dragons in the Spiritual Life

1. Pride/Selfishness: original sin is the common denominator in every sin; must recognize and accept that “God is God and we are NOT.” Opposite of pride is humility. In humility we must actively say thank you to God regularly. Pride is very sneaky.

2. Temptation to compare ourselves with others: “Compare & Despair” Focusing on comparing ourselves with others is like chasing the wind. There will always be someone with more and with less. Just look at your own life. Focus on Christ = FREEDOM
3. Letting down our guard: It’s easy to grow cool in our zeal for the Lord/faith. Easy to forget our first love. Example: a married couple takes each other for granted. Husband loves work, wife loves kids = marriage bankruptcy. Focus on loving God with dedicated and consistent prayer. Parents should place their spouse above their kids. Tend the garden of your soul.
4. Danger of a double life: We have 3 lives: public, private and a secret life. Public life is what we show others. Private life includes intimate friends and family within the “inner circle.” Secret life is what we do when no one is looking – could be a life we’re ashamed of and spending too much time in the secret life is spiritually dangerous. Keep bringing it into the LIGHT. “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” syndrome. We all have a secret life. Keep in minimized and keep it in check.
5. Addictions: daily struggle with disease. Sinful choices compound over and over again. Addictions grow in the dark; and shrivel and die in the light. In our weakness we can grow once we give God our addiction and recognize that we are powerless without him.
6. Discouragement or Despair: Suicide/mental illness. What is it? Life feels meaningless and worthless. Giving up on life or God. Acedia = laziness in prayer. We have HOPE! Resurrection = HOPE! JESUS IS THE ANSWER.
7. Presumption: this is a trap/a double edge sword, We need God – we cannot do it without him.
8. Plagiarism/Gnosticism: Plagiarism is the belief that I can save myself by my own good works and then God will be obliged to let me in! False. God’s grace saves us. Gnosticism: knowledge of only certain people will be saved. Spiritual arrogance. Elitism. Unfortunately very common within church circles “I’m holier than you because I only attend the Latin Mass.”
9. Negative influence of other people: Surround us with those who lift us up. Ways to walk in the LIGHT. Avoid negativity. Embrace light & hope.

10. Don't take yourself too seriously! Totalitarian pressures have taken away our joy. It's healthy to chuckle at ourselves. Healthy spirituality = JOY. Laugh with God because he has a wonderful sense of humor. Life is filled with funny things! Don't be scared...God's got us!

Embrace God with joy and live free of fear! Walk humbly with God! Laugh! Enjoy life!

**St. Theresa of Avila Prayer
Carmelite nun and mystic lived during 1500's**

"Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you.
All things are passing. God never changes.
Patience gains all things.
Whoever has God lacks nothing.
God alone is enough."

BE NOT AFRAID!

Notes:

“Live Your Faith” DVD Series
Notes to Accompany Series

SESSION #13

“Sacrifice is difficult and usually irksome.”

Introduction & Opening Comments

Jesus looks at us with love – when we glance back we are then on the journey of a lifetime. Once we are in relationship with Jesus we see Him all around us. We recognize Him in all aspects of life: in nature, in the beautiful, in the ugly, in the poor.

We are now keenly aware of the dangers present in the Spiritual life, *so we cling to Jesus.*

In this session, we ponder the cross: **the cross is the REALITY OF OUR HOPE**

“Take up your cross and follow me...” HOW do we do that? What does it mean?

Fr. Girotti shares an emotionally complex and challenging story from within his own priesthood.

It’s the story of a lovely young woman planning her marriage to an excellent young man. She’s a gal raised in the faith and she’s chosen a wonderful young Catholic man, but sadly she’s filled with worries regarding her wedding day because her Dad is an alcoholic in the throes of the disease. Will he show up, will he behave appropriately? Will he be capable of walking down the aisle? Will he embarrass the family? So many concerns...

The day of the wedding Dad does manage to attend and is appropriate...prayers are answered! Unfortunately during the wedding Mass the bride’s dad begins to suffer from withdrawal and starts to shake uncontrollably. The family surrounds him with comfort and support. He receives communion and crushes the host due to the shaking and Fr. Girotti thinks, “Here is the suffering body of Christ.”

The story encompasses: Joy, sorrow, hope, compassion, fear, illness...all wrapped into one. Despite Dad’s illness his desire to be there for his little girl overrides the pain of alcoholism.

“Different Crosses – Same Shape”

There’s a beautiful exhortation before wedding Masses that exemplifies Christian understanding of marriage...

“Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome and only love can make it easy. Perfect love makes it a joy. In love we are willing to give in proportion to how well we love. And when love is made perfect, the sacrifice is made complete.”

Individual Struggles: Our faith allows us to make good out of difficulties. Suffering usually comes when we're least prepared: loss of loved one, unemployment, natural disasters, abusive governments, marital struggles, disease and illness...

The universal question remains: "Why do bad things happen? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why me?"

All world religions attempt to answer that question.

Philosophy only takes us so far; Philosophy struggles to answer the question of suffering. Religion attempts to get at that question.

As Christians we know that the answer lies on the cross.

The core and center of what it means to be a Christian = KERYGMA

KERYGMA: passion, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ – the center of what Catholicism is.

ESSENCE of KERYGMA: Jesus comes to save us. He is our Savior. The Essence of Catholicism.

What does this look like?

Why do we need a Savior? Don't we have all that we need? NO

All ponderings leads to the question, "Is that all there is? There's gotta be more!"

The human heart desires Salvation...we are built that way.

Jesus is our Savior. Due to Original Sin and Actual Sin we offend God. Infidelities, disobedience, we punch God in the nose. God is infinite yet despite our own finite existence we are given the gift of Jesus who came to save us. Consider this:

Jesus is 100% Divine Jesus is 100% Human

As God, Jesus can redeem us by dying on the cross to pay back for all our sins.

As Human, Jesus takes our place on the cross and gives it all to God on our behalf.

ONLY GOD CAN DO THIS!

Jesus FREES us! *We struggle with accepting this kind of love.* We struggle with this incredible divine love which is totally undeserved. God loves us that much. We are FREE through Jesus!

So why is there suffering? Do we have a reason for hope?

Every Good Friday He shows us suffering.

Every Easter He shows us HOPE.

Jesus conquers sin and death. He takes our sins to the cross and then conquers death by rising from the dead on Easter Sunday.

Can God truly understand and know the pains of the human experience? YES because Jesus is fully human. He was betrayed, lied to and about, was humiliated, unloved, misunderstood, hated and reviled. Jesus knew the human experience of work and challenges of loving others. Jesus knows all these things, because He is fully human...and fully God.

Christianity is not a philosophy of life.

Christianity is a relationship between US & Jesus.

Jesus is the best expression of LOVE because He is God who takes all our crosses upon Himself.

Suffering is only answered in the Christian faith. Yet we still wonder...why?!

Suffering still HURTS.

We might know all these things, yet we still worry about all the things of life and question God over and over...WHY? WHY me? What did I do to deserve this pain/cross?

As Christians we must UNITE our difficulties (crosses) and pain to Jesus on the cross – then and only then do our sufferings take on meaning. Our suffering is then no longer a meaningless difficulty with zero merit.

Redemptive Suffering: unite our pain with Jesus on the cross and miraculously the difficulty becomes more manageable. Suffering brings us to God! Unite our struggle! Make lemonade outta lemons...it's the only thing to do.

Our suffering helps us to become saints...pray like the saints, "Lord, take my difficulty and make something good of it."

God allows suffering to bring about a greater good. Suffering brings us to our knees!

We cannot avoid the cross. The cross is a symbol of our faith.

As Christians the cross is our hope and our joy because it represents OUR crosses. It's there on the cross that we are saved...on the cross.

In the Christian life suffering and the crosses we carry have tangible meaning because they show us the way...in our suffering HE shows us the way.

Grandma knew best...Redemptive suffering means "**Offer it up!**" Might be old fashioned but it's a profound theological truth.

Crosses are visible and well known but some (most) are invisible or hidden.

As compassionate Christians we know that all people carry crosses, so it's important to pray for the grace to show compassion to those people we find challenging...we simply don't know the battle they are fighting. WE NEED A SAVIOR

On the HUMAN SIDE we still HURT! There's a mystery at play here. St. Pope John Paul II wrote a treatise on suffering and concludes with; "it's a mystery."

When we approach others – know that caring for the sick and suffering is walking with God intimately and this ministry can be very beautiful and fulfilling. Once the loved one is gone this ministry is missed because it's a religious experience...then there's an emptiness = another cross.

Embrace the “Ministry of Presence.” When people ask, “why must I suffer?” Answer, “I don’t know why but I am here with you in it.” Presence...listen...be there

Joy found in Community (that’s who we are when we gather for these sessions)

Healing comes from being together. We’re not alone on the walk. Ask God for healing and strength. Ask Him to carry your cross for you. Thank God for what He’s given you. Thank God for the people walking with you.

A Simple Truth: at the resurrection we see Jesus’ glorified body and He still has His wounds. Jesus’ wounds make Him recognizable.
Perhaps our wounds also make us recognizable...perhaps our wounds are beautiful.
Look what the Lord has done for us!!

LOVE makes suffering easier...but still imperfectly.

For every Good Friday there is an Easter Sunday...guaranteed! WE HAVE HOPE.

Notes:

“Live Your Faith” DVD Series

Notes to Accompany the Series

SESSION #14

“Prayer Changes Things”

“For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” St. Therese of Lisieux

“True prayer is nothing but love for who can resist a lover’s glance, a lover’s call to one’s heart; who can resist the Lord? He is truly the hound of heaven. No matter how fast I run, He runs faster.” St. Augustine

“Prayer is the inner bath of love into which the soul plunges itself.” St. John Vianney

All quotes taken from “US Catholic Catechism for Adults”

Introduction & Opening Comments

God looks at us and when we return His gaze we enter into relationship. Just like all friendships, it survives because of conversation.

St. John Vianney encountered a man praying inside the church and when St. John Vianney inquired about his depth of prayer, the man replied, “Father, I just look at Him and He looks at me.”

Prayer is not complicated – it is a conversation with God.

Time with God is critical! God deserves our best – our first fruits. He’ll accept the scraps but we can do better!

Prayer requires the virtue of humility. Lifting one’s heart and mind to God begins by acknowledging our weakness...humility.

God takes what’s in our heart – quality not quantity. Prayer is about THIRST.

The woman at the well thirsts for God...but He also thirsts for US.

Why do we run from God? Began in the beginning; look at Genesis when Adam and Eve sinned they hid but God searches for them. GOD IS JUST CRAZY ABOUT US!

Psalms relate to human emotions.

“Our Father” prayer is bedrock of prayer – it’s the one Jesus taught us and speaks to conversion of heart.

Expectant Faith

God makes promises: seek Him = Find Him Knock on Door = it'll be opened

Approach the Lord straight away – Lord, I need this; You love me; I love You! Be straight forward, don't beat around the bush!

Persistence in Prayer

Monica prayed for her son Augustine for 30 years, through tears without seeing the results. Now Augustine is St. Augustine and she is St. Monica.
Never Ever- Ever- Ever- Ever give up!

There's power in identification: Name who you are praying to!

Father – Son – Holy Spirit

Tremendous power in the name of Jesus!

Pray to Him by name.

Pray to Holy Spirit for inspiration, guidance and wisdom

God answers every prayer: yes – no – not now or try something else

Strive to conform our will to His.

Pray for what we need not necessarily what we want...always with an eye turned toward eternity.

Fr. Girotti gave example of when he was a teen he prayed for his parents reconciliation within their marriage...no dice. Parents divorced ...difficult to understand.

God's promised/promises are kept despite our understanding.

5 Categories of Prayer

1. Blessing & Adoration
2. Petition – asking for things/help
3. Intercession – prayers for the sick, dying, etc
4. Thanksgiving – gratitude
5. Praise – immensity and grandeur of God

The pious often times do not pray for themselves but Fr. Girotti encourages us to pray for ourselves...especially in gratitude. Thank God daily for His gifts.

Our Father prayer contains all 5 categories of prayer.

Read God's word daily; ie, scripture

Fr. Girotti's Prayer Suggestions:

- Ignatius Study Bible excellent resource
- Encourage some silence at Mass

- Liturgy of the Hours
- Magnificat
- Laudate App
- Eucharistic Adoration
- Devotions: Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Novenas
- Marian Prayers
- Prayers to the Saints
- Ritual Prayers are beautiful – rich – powerful
- Spontaneous Prayer: prayers from the heart

Expressions of Prayer: talking, listening, meditation and silent reflection, contemplative

People often think, “God knows everything; why pray?!”

Answer: Because prayer expands our hearts.

Prayer when discouraged is very difficult, so we must battle our own will.

We can be mad at God! He can handle it!

Just keep talking to Him...no silent treatment! Bring it ALL to God!

Spiritual Warfare: there is a battle going on for our souls...this is REAL. Satan wants your soul!

This foul spirit is the accuser; he whispers in our ear that we are no good; he creates confusion and unfortunately he is very clever and cunning and knows our psychological weaknesses which he preys on...FIGHT! Stay close to Our Lady...her foot is on top of his head.

Fervently praying...daily prayer, regular Mass, consistent confession = State of GRACE.

Demons flee whenever we say the name of ‘Jesus’ ... say it often!!!

Notes:

“Live Your Faith” DVD Series
Notes to Accompany the Series

SESSION #15 “Living Our Faith Today”

Introduction & Opening Comments

Fr. Girotti opens with the gentle reminder that when Our Lord Jesus gazes at us with love – when we gaze back at Him we then begin the journey of a lifetime.

The faith reminds us of a few basic truths:

- Love others
- Know and live the commandments
- Embrace the virtues
- Love and care for the poor
- Pray daily
- Recommit ourselves to our faith
- Face the challenges of living the spiritual life
- Make a DECISION for Jesus and our Catholic faith

Basically we need to fall in LOVE with Jesus and embrace a true friendship with Him. Lord Jesus, we ask You to help us to love You more. Give us the courage to do so! Give us the gift of perseverance.

Quote from Walter Ciszek: “Nothing, not even death can separate us from God; nothing can touch us that doesn’t first come from His hand, nothing can trouble us...”

Is this concept too simple for us to embrace?

Walter Ciszek was a priest captured in USSR and imprisoned in Siberia for 20 years. He wrote “With God in Russia” and “He Leadth Me”

Fr. Ciszek endured severe hardships, was forced to sneak Mass in the woods for other prisoners, interrogation from KGB and many other horrors.

He was given up for dead.

He persevered! He made a decision for the faith and Jesus Christ.

Catholic Faith = the TRUTH

Make a big decision with little choices regularly.

To fight is to win (in the spiritual battle)

Often times, spiritual battle is a daily battle. Bend and do not break!

St. Paul to Timothy, “Fight the good fight!”

As Catholics we must embrace the cross BUT we must live with JOY....we know how this ends. Jesus is our Savior!

There's tremendous happiness and excitement truly living the faith.

I believe in God

I believe the Catholic Church is HIS Church

I believe in God who is way beyond myself

I believe that God has totally "got" me

I believe that ALL will be well

I truly believe that The Good Shepherd leads us!

Living our Catholic faith is, yes, embracing the cross but more about embracing the joy of having Jesus Christ in my life. WE ARE NOT ALONE!

We only need to open our hearts and respond to His loving invitation and God does the rest. He is truly the "hound of heaven."

The JOY to know Jesus Christ and have Him in our lives = the ULTIMATE joy.

Fr. Girotti's Four Critical Things to Remember

1. Grace
2. Mercy
3. Providence
4. Perseverance

GRACE: GGG = Grace Gift God

Grace is a FREE gift from God. Grace is God's work in our lives.

Consider this: when you look back on your life and you ponder/wonder...HOW did I do that?

Whatever "that" might be; educational journey, raising family, cross-country move, etc...GRACE is what got you through! Where'd I find the strength? GRACE

Sanctifying Grace: Divine friendship with God via Baptism.

Mortal sin separates us but confession reunites us into God's loving grace.

Actual Grace: Everything else – all of it! Nature, friendships, sunsets, senses, smiles, etc

Grace from State in Life: marriage, parenthood, grandparenthood, priesthood, single life, etc.

Graces come with your state in life/vocation.

Even our sufferings are a grace.

All is grace! Ask God for MORE grace!!!! ASK HIM! Beg Him for MORE! Live your faith joyfully.

MERCY: Here's the great news: God always welcomes us back! Always! What a relief!

We can always go home again. His arms are wide open. Run to Him.

Spiritually we can always return to our Father's house. Think: Prodigal Son, Holy Week, Easter, Confession...

God's love and patience for us is beyond our wildest ability to understand. Open your heart even a crack and He squeezes in. God's mercy is beyond gift!

Do not avoid going to Confession. Best kept secret of being Catholic! Opportunity to begin again. Come back! Be FREE! Humble yourself and accept God's loving mercy.

Heavy emphasis on "MERCY" via Divine Mercy Chaplet, Marian apparitions speak of God's mercy and need to confess.

Forgive others and yourself. Don't beat yourself up! We have a Savior and His name is Jesus.

PROVIDENCE: God's loving care for His creation.

God has a plan and it's perfect! God is always working; He never sleeps.

Fr. Girotti shares story of his personal debate over bringing his cello to seminary and how he ended up bringing it along and made friends with fellow seminarian who was concert pianist! Perfect!

Believe that things will work out for the best. Be positive! All will be well.

Believe in happy endings.

The Lord has risen from the dead and we are HIS! We have reason for our hope.

In Good times = thank God

In Tough times = thank God

Trust! Living our faith we testify and say, "Look what God has done for me! God has lovingly cared for me along the way!"

PERSEVERANCE: virtue critical for this exact time in history! Never, ever, ever, ever, ever give up!

St. Pope John Paul II was Pope from 1978 to 2005. He began his pontificate a healthy, vibrant handsome Polish man...larger than life! His vitality began to decline after the assassination attempt ... he seemed to age before our very eyes with Parkinson's disease yet he was the Holy Father to the very end despite his physical weakness.

Catholicism is under attack – we feel the difficulties and wonder, "how did this happen?"

Be brave! Live your faith! Remember that St. Monica prayed for Augustine for 30 years before his conversion. Persevere!

We can DO this! We are LOVED! Persecution? Doesn't matter because God's got you in the palm of His hand.

Call to Example:

Fr. Girotti bolsters us to be the light in the darkness! He explains that while the world appears to be disintegrating before our eyes we are to continue to be the light of Christ as this light is what will change the world.

People around us will notice the glow of sanctity and wonder, "why are you different?"

Your joyfulness will spill over into the everyday life and others will realize that you are not like everybody else and will be intrigued.

Joyfully explain that ***your joy is found in Jesus Christ – the Catholic Church – God loves us and we have nothing to fear.***

This is going to happen – it IS happening!

Cling to the Lord. Give joyful witness. Hold onto the Lord with both hands!

Be BOLD! Live your FAITH and Share with OTHERS.

This is not difficult so don't make it complicated...you know that heaven exists and is waiting for you...heaven is our goal. Don't take your eyes off the goal! With God's grace we will make it there!

Closing thought after 15 weeks of pondering:

God looks at us – right now – look at Me, He says – when we return His gaze our lives are transformed and we can see!

AMEN

Notes: