

THE FRUITFUL SERVANT

***Preparing for productive Christian service
with guidance from the New Testament
and the Catechism of the Catholic Church***

***By
Andrew Jerome Yeung***

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Fourth edition

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Chapter One

Those who live in Me and I in them will bear much fruit

Purpose of this booklet

Jesus says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more.” (Jn 15:1-2, NJB)

The objective of these brief writings is to lead servants of God to greater oneness with Christ in love, so that they may cooperate more effectively with the Holy Spirit to bear good and lasting fruit for the Lord.

The harvest is ready

Jesus tells us: “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work. Do you not have a saying: Four months and then the harvest? Well, I tell you, look around you, look at the fields; already they are white, ready for harvest! Already the reaper is being paid his wages, already he is bringing in the grain for eternal life, so that sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the proverb holds true: one sows, another reaps; I sent you to reap a harvest you have not laboured for.” (Jn 4:34–38, NJB)

And Jesus tells his Father: “As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.” (Jn 17:18, NAB)

Who are sent?

In the Nicene Creed we confess, among many other things, our belief in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” What does “apostolic” mean? Paragraph 858 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: “Jesus is the Father’s Emissary. From the beginning of his ministry, he ‘called to him those whom he desired; ... And he appointed twelve, whom also he named *apostles*, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach.’ (Mk 3:13-14) From then on, they would also be his ‘emissaries’ (Greek *apostoloi*). In them, Christ continues his own mission: ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.’ (Jn 20:21)”

Besides the twelve apostles, who else are sent? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (paragraph 863) gives the answer: “The whole Church is apostolic, in that she remains, through the successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, in communion of faith and life with her origin: and in that she is ‘sent out’ into the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways. ‘The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well.’”

In other words, each member of the Church is sent: to be a labourer in the Lord’s vineyard.

What makes a labourer for God fruitful?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (paragraph 864) tells us: “‘Christ, sent by the Father, is the source of the Church’s whole apostolate’; thus the fruitfulness of the apostolate for ordained ministers as well as for

lay people clearly depends on their *vital union with Christ*. (cf. Jn 15:5) In keeping with their vocations, the demands of the times and the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, the apostolate assumes the most varied forms. But *charity*, drawn from the Eucharist above all, is always ‘as it were, the soul of the whole apostolate.’”

Clearly, the prerequisites for a fruitful labourer are (a) “vital union with Christ” and (b) “charity.”

Why is union with Christ necessary?

Jesus says: “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn 15:4-5, NIV)

Paragraph 859 of the *Catechism* says: “As ‘the Son can do nothing of his own accord,’ but receives everything from the Father who sent him, so those whom Jesus sends can do nothing apart from him, from whom they received both the mandate for their mission and the power to carry it out.”

“You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last.” (Jn 15:16, NJB)

In this chapter we are concentrating on the first of the above-named requirements. Please bear in mind, though, that union with Christ and charity are inseparably connected.

The Sacraments of Initiation

Oneness with God begins at Baptism; it is strengthened at Confirmation and then nourished by the food of the Eucharist. But Baptism is the opening step of the process. “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit.” (CCC, paragraph 1213)

God-life

In the Gospel, God-life is referred to as *life*, or *eternal life*, or *the kingdom*. Here are some examples of Jesus’ use of these terms.

“I am the resurrection and the *life*.” (Jn 11:25, NIV)

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has *eternal life* and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to *life*.” (Jn 5:24, NIV)

“The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, ‘Look, here it is,’ or, ‘There it is.’ For behold, *the kingdom* of God is among you.” (Lk 17:20-21, NAB, emphasis added)

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is *the kingdom* of Heaven.” (Mt 5:3, NIV)

As can be seen from the above, Jesus asserted: “I am ... the *life*.” This life can be present in a human being right now. He “*has*” eternal life. The kingdom of God “*is*” among you. Theirs “*is*” the kingdom of Heaven.

The writer of the First letter of John says: “This is the testimony: God has given us *eternal life*, and this *life* is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has *life*, and

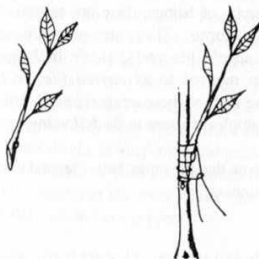
whoever has not the Son of God has not *life*. I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have *eternal life*.” (1 Jn 5:11–13, NJB)

The author of the Second letter of Peter says: “By his divine power, he has lavished on us all the things we need for *life* and for true devotion, through the knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, the greatest and priceless promises have been lavished on us, that through them you should *share the divine nature* and escape the corruption rife in the world through disordered passion.... for in this way you will be given the generous gift of entry to the *eternal kingdom* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet 1:3, 4, 11, NJB)

Baptism

The grafting of plants provides a nice analogy to what happens at baptism.

In grafting, a live twig is taken and inserted into a cut in the stem of a living plant. It is then securely held in place.



With proper care and nourishment, the twig takes on life from the living plant, and grows!



Something comparable occurs with baptism. And so St. Paul speaks of Christians as being baptized into Christ. “For all of you who were *baptized into Christ* have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Gal 3:27, NIV)

Therefore, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20, RSV)

Exercise

Through Baptism human beings enter into the life of God, and those who allow this life (and charity) to grow in them will eventually bear good fruit.

How do we let divine life increase in us?

The following texts suggest ways for this to occur. What are they? Write your answers on lines 1 through 5 of the chart entitled “Means of growth in union with God” found at the end of this book, page 45.

1. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” (Jn 6:54, NIV)

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person.” (Jn 6:56, NJB)

“As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will also draw life from me.” (Jn 6:57, NJB)

2. “Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life.” (Jn 3:36, NJB)

“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life.” (Jn 6:40, NIV)

3. “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” (Lk 9:35, RSV)

“The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.” (Jn 6: 63, RSV)

“I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life.” (Jn 12:49-50, RSV)

4. “Whoever keeps his commandments remains in God, and God in him.” (1 Jn 3:24, NJB)

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock... And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand.” (Mt 7:24, 26, NAB)

“Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn 2:5, NJB)

5. “And now a lawyer stood up and, to test him, asked, ‘Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?’ He replied, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have answered right, do this and life is yours.’” (Lk 10:25-28, NJB)

Chapter Two

*You must love the Lord your God;
you must love your neighbour*

Love

So far, we have said that every member of the Church is called upon to be sent out to work for Jesus. We have also indicated that the most fruitful workers are those united to him in charity. We therefore reminded everyone about the sacraments of initiation which begin, strengthen and nourish our union with God.

We now turn to the other interrelated part of the prerequisite for effective service: charity, from “caritas” – the Latin word for love.

Why is love necessary?

St. Paul says, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” (1 Cor 13:1-3, RSV)

“‘If I... have not charity,’ says the Apostle, ‘I am nothing.’ Whatever my privilege, service, or even virtue, ‘if I... have not charity, I gain nothing.’” (CCC,

paragraph 1826)

“Grace, by uniting us to Christ in active love, ensures the supernatural quality of our acts and consequently their merit before God and before men.” (CCC, paragraph 2011)

Love God

Jesus says, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.” (Mt 22:37-38, NJB)

How should a person love Our Lord?

“If you love me, keep my commands.” (Jn 14:15, NIV) “Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me.” (Jn 14:21, NJB) “Whoever loves me will keep my word.” (Jn 14:23, NAB) “For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments.” (1 Jn 5:3, NAB)

Effects of loving God

1. “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.” (Jn 14:23, NAB) The servant will receive the Father’s love, and will be united with him and Jesus even more closely because they will be living in him.

2. “Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and

reveal myself to him.” (Jn 14:21, NJB) Along with the love of the Father the labourer will also receive the love of the Son, and will possess a much better knowledge of Jesus and his ways through his promised self-revelation.

3. “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.” (Jn 14:15-17, NIV) You will have the Holy Spirit as your advocate, permanently.

If you love God, if you keep his commandments, the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all alive in you, with their love, their wisdom, their strength, and their help. These will flow out from you to his people.

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He replied, ‘Yes, Lord, you know I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Look after my sheep.’” (Jn 21:15-16, NJB)

The worker who loves God can be trusted to feed and care for his people effectively.

Love your neighbour

In the above quotations, Jesus tells us repeatedly that to love him we must keep his commandments. What does he command? He says, “This is my command: love each other.” (Jn 15:17, NIV)

Exercise

How are we to love our neighbour? Some courses of action are suggested in the next set of Jesus' sayings. Please study them and put them into practice.

(a) "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" (Mt 25:31-40, NIV)

(b) "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it

over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:25-28, NIV)

(c) “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your coat as well. Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish.” (Lk 6:27-35, RSV)

(d) “That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor

was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.” (Mt 18:23–35, NAB)

Chapter Three

Go; and sin no more

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

“Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him.” (CCC, paragraph 1440) “The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship.” (CCC, paragraph 1468)

To repair any separation from Christ through sin, let all his labourers try to go to Confession once a month.

To prepare ourselves, let us examine our consciences. We can look at our relationship with God, our families, relatives, friends, acquaintances, co-workers; we can look at our own behaviour, our ambitions, goals, and ways of doing things.

Examination of conscience

(1). “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: ‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.” But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his

eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Lk 18:9-14, RSV)

(2). “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire.” (Mt 5:21-22, RSV)

(3). “How can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Mt 12:34–37, NIV)

(4). “After all, brothers, you were called to be free; do not use your freedom as an opening for self-indulgence, but be servants to one another in love, since the whole of the Law is summarised in the one commandment: You must love your neighbour as yourself. If you go snapping at one another and tearing

one another to pieces, take care: you will be eaten up by one another.” (Gal 5:13-15, NJB)

(5). “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...” (Phil 2:1-7, RSV)

(6). “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Cor 13:4-7, RSV)

(7). “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar... the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. He went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins ...

“He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee

from the coming wrath? Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance; and do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father,” for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.’

“And the crowds asked him, ‘What then should we do?’” (Lk 3:1-10, NAB)

Exercise

What then should I do as evidence of my repentance?

Meditate on the Scripture passages given above. Apply them to your own situation. For example, when you read John the Baptist’s warning, “And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’” let it mean something like this: “And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We come from a Catholic country, we have relatives who are priests and nuns, we are well-connected with influential people in the hierarchy, we know a great deal about the politics that go on inside the Church, we donate lots of money and sponsor fund-raising and private projects, we show up at every spiritual conference and event, we are already very familiar with the Bible verses quoted ...’”

Remember that, even though Jesus was without sin, the first act of his public ministry was taking part in the baptism of repentance by John the Baptist – a man of whom Jesus said, “The least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” (Mt 11:11, NJB)

Chapter Four

Pray

Prayer

Under “What is Prayer?” in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* this definition is given through a saying of St. John Damascene: “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” (Paragraph 2559)

The topic on prayer is very large. Here, we can only touch briefly on three types of prayers – meditation, vocal prayer and contemplation.

(1) Meditation

“Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history – the page on which the ‘today’ of God is written.” (CCC, paragraph 2705)

“Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart and strengthen our will to

follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.” (CCC, paragraph 2708)

Now let us try our hand at meditation. We will use the following Gospel passages as starting points, and watch how Jesus handles personal attacks, comparing his actions with how we react to our colleagues, relatives and those we reckon to be inferior to us.

(a) “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were *looking for evidence against Jesus* so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. *Many testified falsely against him*, but their statements did not agree... Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, ‘Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?’ *But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.*” (Mk 14:55-56, 60-61, NIV)

(b) “And when *he was accused* by the chief priests and elders, *he made no answer*. Then Pilate said to him, ‘Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?’ *But he did not answer him one word*, so that the governor was greatly amazed.” (Mt 27:12-14, NAB, emphasis added)

(c) “When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard

about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length; *but he made no answer*. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, *vehemently accusing him*. And Herod with his soldiers *treated him with contempt and mocked him*.” (Lk 23: 8-11, RSV)

(d) “Meanwhile the men who guarded Jesus were *mocking and beating him*. They blindfolded him and questioned him, saying, ‘Prophecy! Who hit you then?’ *And they heaped many other insults on him*.” (Lk 22:63-65, NJB)

“Pilate then had Jesus *taken away and scourged*; and after this, the soldiers twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head and dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him and saying, ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ and *slapping him in the face*.” (Jn 19:1-3, NJB)

“*And they spat on him* and took the reed and *struck him on the head* with it. And when they had finished *making fun of him*, they took off the cloak and dressed him in his own clothes and *led him away to crucifixion*.” (Mt 27: 30-31, NJB)

(e) “So they took Jesus, and he went out, *bearing his own cross*, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Gol’gotha. *There they crucified him*.” (Jn 19:16-18, RSV)

[A few minutes of silence.]

(2) Vocal prayer

As the name implies, this type involves speaking.

“Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master’s silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father. He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, he raised his voice to express his personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony of Gethsemani.” (CCC, paragraph 2701)

“Because it is external and so thoroughly human, vocal prayer is the form of prayer most readily accessible to groups.” (CCC, paragraph 2704)

“By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: ‘Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervour of our souls.’” (CCC, paragraph 2700)

Now, let us put into practice a vocal prayer by saying one decade of the Rosary while meditating on some Scripture passages.

The third Glorious Mystery: the Decent of the Holy Spirit. The Bible texts are from Acts 2, NJB.

(a) “When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the

Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.” (vs. 1–4)

Our Father, two Hail Mary’s.

(b) “Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, and each one was bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language... Everyone was amazed and perplexed; they asked one another what it all meant. Some, however, laughed it off. ‘They have been drinking too much new wine,’ they said.” (vs. 5–6, 12–13)

Two Hail Mary’s.

(c) “Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed them in a loud voice:

‘Men of Judaea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, make no mistake about this, but listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you imagine; why, it is only the third hour of the day. On the contrary, this is what the prophet was saying:

In the last days – the Lord declares – *I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people shall see visions, your old people dream dreams.*” (vs.14–17)

Two Hail Mary’s.

(d) “‘Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God

worked through him when he was among you, as you know. This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and fore-knowledge of God, you took and had crucified and killed by men outside the Law. But God raised him to life...

‘Now raised to the heights of God’s right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit.’” (vs. 22–24, 33)

Two Hail Mary’s.

(e) “Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘What are we to do, brothers?’ ‘You must repent,’ Peter answered, ‘and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’... They accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.” (vs. 37–38, 41)

Two Hail Mary’s, and the Glory Be.

(3) Contemplation

“What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: ‘Contemplative prayer [*oracion mental*] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.’” (CCC, paragraph 2709)

There are many degrees of contemplation. But a simple way to begin is by examining the word itself.

“Contemplation” is a combination of the prefix ‘*con*’ which means ‘with,’ and ‘*templum*’ which means ‘a place set apart.’ To contemplate is to be with God in a place set apart. This place is the heart.

“One cannot always meditate, but one can always enter into inner prayer, independently of the conditions of health, work or emotional state. The heart is the place of this quest and encounter, in poverty and in faith.” (CCC, paragraph 2710)

“Do you not realise that you are a *temple* of God with the Spirit of God living in you?” (1 Cor 3:16, NJB) The word “temple” also comes from “*templum*.”

In contemplation, there are no books or aids involved. We purposely make time for God and focus on him who lives in us and loves us. Ideally this happens in a quiet environment such as a chapel, and for a set duration; but whenever and wherever we desire to be conscious of God’s presence we can always turn our attention to him – at home, in the car or bus, at the office, on the street, in the park, while waiting, when we cannot fall asleep, when we are dealing with a problem, ...

We can try that now. Just relax and look inside yourself for God – God who conquers all in heroic silence, who wins for you with absolute trust in the Father, and who gives you the Holy Spirit so that you may bear fruit overwhelmingly.

[We remain silent now for a few minutes, *taking time to be alone with him who we know loves us.*]

Exercise

1. Each day spend some quiet moments with God through contemplation and meditation; turn off the radio, television, and all audio and visual devices.

2. Vocal prayers, such as the Holy Rosary, should not be mere recitations, but be from the heart, and accompanied by contemplation and/or meditation.

3. Prayers of petition are best when we heed the Gospel texts below. The requests need not take long – only a few moments filled with faith and reverence for God. When we pray according to Jesus’ teachings our heavenly Father will reward us richly.

(a) “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.” (Jn 15:7, NAB)

(b) “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name.” (Jn 16:23, RSV)

(c) “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened. Is there anyone among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish? If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Mt 7:7–11, NJB)

(d) “In truth I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Be pulled up and thrown into the sea,’ with no doubt in his heart, but believing that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. I tell you, therefore, everything you ask and pray for, believe that you have it already, and it will be yours.” (Mk 11:23–24, NJB)

(e) “Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” (Jn 16:24, NIV)

(f) “Everything is possible for one who believes.” (Mk 9:23, NIV)

(g) “Things that are impossible by human resources, are possible for God.” (Lk 18: 27, NJB)

(h) “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (Mt 6:5–8, NAB)

(i) “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He

said: ‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, “Grant me justice against my adversary.”

For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, “Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!”

And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.’” (Lk 18:1–8, NIV)

Chapter Five

You will receive power

Purpose

The goal of this chapter is for us to become more attentive to the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to be aware of his fruit and gifts; to recognize which of these he is emphasizing in us so that we may use them boldly for the good of the Church.

The Sacrament of Confirmation

“Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.” (CCC, paragraph 1316)

This sacrament increases in us the strength of the Holy Spirit so that we can be more active in building up the Body of Christ in faith and love.

When we prepare for productive work, the Holy Spirit will accentuate in us one or more of his gifts and fruit. We should therefore know what they are, and try to identify which ones are operating in us.

Fruit

Tradition lists twelve fruit of the Holy Spirit. The first three are goodness, modesty, and chastity.

Nine others are named in the following New Testament text: “In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal 5:22-23, NAB)

Gifts

Tradition lists seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. (See Is 11:2)

In the passages below, several more are mentioned. “The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good. To one is given from the Spirit the gift of utterance expressing wisdom; to another the gift of utterance expressing knowledge, in accordance with the same Spirit; to another, faith, from the same Spirit; and to another, the gifts of healing, through this one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the power of distinguishing spirits; to one, the gift of different tongues and to another, the interpretation of tongues. But at work in all these is one and the same Spirit, distributing them at will to each individual.” (1 Cor 12:7-11, NJB)

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortations; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Rom 12:6-8, NAB)

“And to some, his ‘gift’ was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; to knit God’s holy people together for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ.” (Eph 4:11-12, NJB)

“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies.” (1 Pet 4:10-11, NAB)

Exercise

1. Review all the materials in this chapter.

2. The activity below may help us to discover the kind of work the Holy Spirit wishes us to do. It may dispel any mistaken notions of tasks we desire but which are not meant for us. It may help to destroy our jealousies, illusions and false ambitions. It gives us direction, focuses our energies on our strengths, and lets us function in joy, humility, and genuine holiness.

Please answer the following two questions by filling in the blank with a

0 – which means “not even a little;”

1 – which means “perhaps a hint;”

2 – which means “moderately;”

3 – which means “quite a fair bit.”

Write the numbers with a pencil in the spaces provided. Most of them are “0” or “1” for now, especially the ‘gifts’, but some may change later.

(a) To what extent are the gifts of the Holy Spirit emphasized in me?

- Wisdom _____
- Understanding _____
- Counsel _____
- Fortitude _____
- Knowledge _____
- Piety _____
- Fear of the Lord _____
- Word of wisdom _____
- Word of knowledge _____
- Faith _____
- Healing _____
- Miracles _____
- Prophecy _____
- Discernment of spirits _____
- Tongues _____
- Interpretation of tongues _____
- Ministry _____
- Teaching _____
- Exhortation _____
- Contribution of money _____
- Leadership _____
- Works of mercy _____
- Apostle _____
- Evangelist _____
- Pastor _____
- Preaching _____
- Service _____

(b) To what extent am I allowing the fruit of the Holy Spirit to develop in me?

Love	_____
Joy	_____
Peace	_____
Patience	_____
Kindness	_____
Generosity	_____
Faithfulness	_____
Gentleness	_____
Self-control	_____
Goodness	_____
Modesty	_____
Chastity	_____

3. The pre-eminent “Gift” we received is the Holy Spirit. Let us cherish him, and walk in his presence.

4. Keep in mind also that the greatest fruit of the Holy Spirit is love.

5. Remember that it is not how many other gifts have been given to us that is important, but what we do with them. The parable of the ‘talents’ in Mt 25:14-30 demonstrates this point.

6. The charisms of the Holy Spirit are intended for the common good of the Church. Think about the following questions.

(a) In what way will I use the particular gift(s) which have been entrusted to me for the spiritual benefit of my family and relatives, my circle of friends and colleagues, the community in general, especially the poor and the less fortunate?

(b) In what way can I develop and use the fruit of the Holy Spirit to improve my relationships with my parents, spouse, children, relatives, friends, fellow workers, acquaintances, and the needy?

Chapter Six

*As the Father has sent Me,
so I am sending you*

The Church

The prophet Haggai's remarks below about the "house" can be adapted to portray the present and future condition of the Church. The treasures that he speaks about, and the silver and the gold, may be thought of as symbols for God's precious children whom he desires to bring to his Church from every nation.

"Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? But now be strong, Zerubbabel," declares the LORD. "Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land," declares the LORD, "and work. For I am with you," declares the LORD Almighty. "This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory," says the LORD Almighty. "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," declares the LORD Almighty. "The glory of this present house will be

greater than the glory of the former house,” says the LORD Almighty. “And in this place I will grant peace,” declares the LORD Almighty. (Hag 2:3–9, NIV)

What does this prophecy say to you? “Be strong, all you people of the land,” declares the LORD, “and work.”

What can we do?

(a). “Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, ‘At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.’ Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor 6:1-2, RSV)

(b). “That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess through the laying on of my hands. God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power and love and self-control.” (2 Tim 1:6-7, NJB)

(c). “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Pet 4:8-10, NIV)

(d) “Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not

take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

“Love never comes to an end. But if there are prophecies, they will be done away with; if tongues, they will fall silent; and if knowledge, it will be done away with. For we know only imperfectly...

“Make love your aim.” (1 Cor 13: 4 – 9, 14:1, NJB)

The Holy Eucharist

The role of the Eucharist in Christian service is inestimable. In Chapter One we read this: “‘Christ, sent by the Father, is the source of the Church’s whole apostolate’; thus the fruitfulness of the apostolate for ordained ministers as well as for lay people clearly depends on their vital union with Christ. (cf. Jn 15:5) In keeping with their vocations, the demands of the times and the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, the apostolate assumes the most varied forms. But charity, *drawn from the Eucharist above all*, is always ‘as it were, the soul of the whole apostolate.’” (CCC, paragraph 864)

“The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’ ‘The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.’”(CCC, paragraph 1324)

“The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime

cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit." (CCC, paragraph 1325)

Thus, it is extremely important for all labourers of Christ to receive Jesus in the Eucharist at Holy Mass – as often as every day.

Never forget what Jesus said: "I am the bread of life... The bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world... In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you... Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person." (Jn 6: 48, 51, 53, 56, NJB)

Exercise

1. Review the material presented in this chapter.
2. Practise what you have learned from this booklet.
3. Use the following to fill in lines 6 through 13 on the page entitled "Means of growth in union with God" at the end of this book, page 45.

(a). Pay constant attention to the Holy Spirit, and be open to his presence and inner inspiration.

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." (Jn 16:13, RSV)

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." (Acts 1:8, RSV)

(b). Pray. Pray in a quiet place. Pray in simplicity.

“Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” (Lk 5:15-16, NIV)

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mk 1:35, NIV)

“When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret.” (Mt 6:6, NAB)

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” (Mk 6:31, NIV)

(c). Remember that God loves you; and he loves all those whom you serve.

“As the Father loves me, so I also love you.” (Jn 15:9, NAB)

“For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have come to believe that I came from God.” (Jn 16:27, NAB)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” (Jn 3:16-17, NAB)

“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” (Jn 10:10, NJB)

(d). Reverence God.

“Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be

shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.” (Heb 12:28, NIV)

“But the hour is coming – indeed is already here – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.” (Jn 4:23–24, NJB)

(e). Acknowledge your sinfulness, and sin no more.

“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth... If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us... If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.” (1 Jn 1:5, 6, 8, 10, NIV)

“That is why you must not allow sin to reign over your mortal bodies and make you obey their desires; or give any parts of your bodies over to sin to be used as instruments of evil. Instead, give yourselves to God, as people brought to life from the dead, and give every part of your bodies to God to be instruments of uprightness.” (Rom 6:12-13, NJB)

“Go, and from now on do not sin any more.” (Jn 8:11, NAB)

(f). Go to Confession.

“In the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God.” (2 Cor 5:20, NJB)

“Therefore confess your sins to one another.” (Jas 5:16, RSV)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn 1:9, NIV)

“John the Baptist was in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins.” (Mk 1:4-5, NJB)

“Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” (Lk 3:21-22, RSV)

When you have repented and confessed your sins, guess who will be present as on that day at the river Jordan? The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! And your Father will not wait too long to tell you, “You are my beloved son, you are my beloved daughter; with you I am well pleased.”

(g). Love and honour Mother Mary.

“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, ‘Woman, this is your son.’ Then to the disciple he said, ‘This is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.” (Jn 19:25-27, NJB)

(h). Be not afraid.

Jesus said, “In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world.” (Jn 16:33, NJB)

“Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (Jn 14:27, RSV)

“And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.” (Mt 28:20, NJB)

Means of growth in union with God

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

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