

THE FRUITFUL SERVANT

***Preparation 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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Eighth edition

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Contents

Acknowledgments	1
Contents	1
Chapter One	3
<i>THOSE WHO LIVE IN ME AND I IN THEM WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT</i>	3
<i>Purpose of the booklet</i>	3
<i>The fields are ripe for harvesting</i>	3
<i>Who are sent?</i>	4
<i>What makes God's labourer fruitful?</i>	4
<i>Why is union with Christ necessary?</i>	5
<i>The Sacraments of Initiation</i>	5
<i>Life, eternal life</i>	6
<i>Baptism</i>	7
<i>Exercise</i>	8
Chapter Two.....	11
<i>YOU MUST LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD; YOU MUST LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR</i>	11
<i>Love</i>	11
<i>Why is love necessary?</i>	11
<i>Love God</i>	12
<i>How to love God</i>	12
<i>Effects of loving God</i>	13
<i>Love your neighbour</i>	13
<i>How to love our neighbour</i>	14
Chapter Three.....	19
<i>YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER</i>	19
<i>Purpose</i>	19
<i>The Sacrament of Confirmation</i>	19
<i>Fruit</i>	19

<i>Gifts</i>	20
<i>Exercise</i>	21
<i>Note</i>	23
Chapter Four	25
<i>THE HOLY EUCHARIST; AND</i>	25
<i>THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION</i>	25
<i>The Holy Eucharist</i>	25
<i>The Sacrament of Reconciliation</i>	26
<i>Examination of conscience</i>	26
<i>Exercise</i>	29
Chapter Five.....	31
<i>PRAY</i>	31
Chapter Six	35
<i>AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I AM SENDING YOU</i>	35
<i>The Church</i>	35
<i>What we can do</i>	36
<i>Exercise</i>	37
Means to closer union with God	41
Other books by Andrew Jerome Yeung	43

Chapter One

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

Purpose of the booklet

This book consists mostly of quotations from the Holy Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The objective is to gather together from both of these preeminently reliable sources a summary of the basic guidance for men and women who wish to be more effective servants of the Lord.

[Please note: the quotations in the booklet are from British and American sources. That is why some spelling are British and some are American.]

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)

In this first chapter, we discover very quickly who are called to be servants for the Lord, and what would make them truly fruitful.

The fields are ripe for harvesting

Jesus tells us: “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘In four months the harvest will be here’? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest.” (Jn 4:34–35, NAB)

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 our belief in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” What does “apostolic” mean? Paragraph 858 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives the derivation of the word. “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)” (CCC 858)

Besides the twelve apostles, who else are sent? Here is 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.’” (CCC, 863)

What makes God’s labourer fruitful?

“‘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 864)

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)

“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.” (CCC 859)

“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 concentrate on the first of the two above-named requirements. Please bear in mind, though, that union with Christ and charity are inseparably connected.

The Sacraments of Initiation

Union with Christ 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)

Life, eternal life

The first apostle, Peter, wrote the following in his letter. “Symeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of equal value to ours through the righteousness of our God and savior Jesus Christ: may grace and peace be yours in abundance through knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for *life* and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to *share in the divine nature...*” (2 Pet 1:2-4, NAB. Emphasis added.)

Peter’s fellow apostle, John, said: “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)

Jesus himself stated: “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)

This *eternal life*, the *life* that is in the Son of God,

can be present in a human being right now. The believer “*has*” eternal life. “*You have* eternal life.”

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 can eventually bear good fruit.

How do we let divine life remain and grow in us?

The following texts suggest ways for this to occur. What are they? Write your answers on lines 1 through 5 in the chart entitled “Means to closer union with God” found on page 41, near the end of this book.

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)

“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)

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

4. “I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them. That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed.” (Lk 6:47-49, NAB)

“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” (Jn 14:23, NIV)

“The one who keeps God’s commands lives in him, and he in them.” (1 Jn 3:24, NIV)

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, and in charity. We therefore first reminded everyone about the sacrament of Baptism which began our union with Christ.

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

Why is love necessary?

St. Paul says, “If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.” (1 Cor 13:1-3, NAB)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church picks up on this point: “‘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.” (Mt 22:37-38, NJB)

The worker who truly loves God is the one who will be trusted to look after and take care of his people. Watch what the Lord tells his first apostle. “Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ He then said to him a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’” (Jn 21:15-17, NAB)

How to love God

“If you love me, keep my commands.” (Jn 14:15, NIV) “They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me.” (Jn 14:21, RSV) “Those

who love me will keep my word.” (Jn 14:23, RSV) “For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments.” (1 Jn 5:3, NAB)

Effects of loving God

1. “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” (Jn 14:23, RSV) The servants who love God by keeping Jesus’ word will be loved by the Father, who, with Jesus, will live in them and be united with them even more closely.

2. “They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” (Jn 14:21, RSV) Along with the love of the Father the labourers will also receive the love of the Son, and will possess a much better knowledge of Jesus and his ways through his promised further 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) In other words, you will also have the Holy Spirit as your advocate.

If you love God, if you keep his commandments, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all alive in you, with their love, their wisdom, and their help.

Love your neighbour

In the above quotations, Jesus tells us repeatedly that to love him we must keep his commandments.

And what does he command? He says, “I give you a new commandment: love one another; you must love one another just as I have loved you.” (Jn 13:34, NJB)

How to love our neighbour

Some courses of action are suggested in the next set of Jesus’ sayings. Take note seriously, and consider how you would put them into practice in your own life.

(a). “When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance.” (Mk 11: 25, NAB)

(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 mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if

you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Lk 6:27-36, NIV)

(d). “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

“His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

“But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the

debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

“Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” (Mt 18:23–35, NIV)

(e). “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)

Chapter Three

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 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 gives us special strength so that we can do our part serving the Body of Christ – in whatever capacity.

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

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 (a) and (b) 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	_____

Note

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

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

Remember that it is not how many 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. Please read the passage in your Bible.

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

(1). 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?

(2). 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 Four

The Holy Eucharist; and The Sacrament of Reconciliation

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.” (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)

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 go to Confession regularly – if possible, once a month.

To prepare ourselves, let us examine our consciences. We can look at our relationship with God, with our family members, relatives, acquaintances, friends, 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 people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” (Mt 5:21-22, RSV)

(3). “You brood of vipers, how can you say good things when you are evil? For from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. A good person brings forth good out of a store of goodness, but an evil person brings forth evil out of a store of evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Mt 12:34–37, NAB)

(4). "... 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). "Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant..." (Phil 2:1-7, NIV)

(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 strong Catholic tradition, 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 which go on inside the Church, we sponsor numerous diocesan fund-raising projects, we donate

lots of money to our parish priest and he will do favours for us whenever we ask, we have gone on pilgrimage to many holy sites, we show up at every spiritual conference and event, we are already very familiar with the Bible verses quoted in this book ...”

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 Five

Pray

It is of utmost importance that we ask God for help in our work. With the Lord at our side, our labours will be blessed and fruitful.

The prayers of petition can be offered up with the following Gospel texts in mind. The requests need not take long – only a few moments filled with faith and reverence for God. When we ask 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 you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (Jn 16:24, RSV)

(d) “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)

(e) “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)

(f) “Everything is possible for one who has faith.” (Mk 9:23, NAB)

(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 Six

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

The Church

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

"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 we can do

We have now come to the last chapter in the booklet. Let us take decisive steps to be fruitful servants for the Lord.

(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)

Exercise

1. Practice what you have learned from this booklet.

2. Use the following to fill in lines 6 through 13 on the page entitled “Means to closer union with God” at the end of this book, page 41.

(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 often; pray in a quiet place.

“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)

“The whole town was gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases...

“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 1:33-35, NIV)

“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.” (Mt 6:6, NAB)

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

“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 1:8, 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)

(e). 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)

(f). Be not afraid.

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

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

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything.” (Phil 4:5, 6, NIV)

“Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you.” (1 Pet 5:7, NAB)

Means to closer union with God

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

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