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Putting the pieces of our faith together

St. Mary Faith Enrichment Evenings
November 11-14, 2007

The Four Basic Questions



- Who is God?
- If God is good, why is there evil in the world?
- If God is good and there is evil in the world, what has God done about it?
- If God is good and there is evil in the world and God is doing something about it, how do we get with the program?



Basic Question #4:
If God is good and there is
evil in the world and God
is doing something about it,
how do we get with the program?

Wednesday evening

Quick recap



- God created the world out of love, with an internal harmony, and gave humans a mission
- Sin has weakened that harmony and mission, leading to evil and suffering
- But God has not abandoned us – working in history, he has inaugurated a new “creation within creation” – the Kingdom of God, which is both coming but is already present
- Through repentance and baptism we become part of God’s People and we receive the Holy Spirit
- So...what is the meaning of life?

Harmony and mission



- With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have what we need to grow in communion with the Trinity
- Because we are conceived in original sin, this process of proportioning is gradual, but it can be steady – like tuning an instrument
- This harmony with the Trinity leads to a new sense of purpose in life – we discover our mission, rooted in gifts the Holy Spirit gives us
- Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we become a “new creation”, and the frustration of original sin is ended!

The harmony: growing the presence of the Holy Spirit



- Having the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit is like having a properly tuned radio
- With that Indwelling, the goal now is to turn up the volume

The 4 spiritual food groups



- Personal commitment to Jesus
- Knowledge of the Scriptures
- Living the sacraments
- Unity with the Church

Personal commitment to Jesus Christ



"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you."

- John 14: 15-17

- Recall the headphones: Christ is the mediator between the Father and the Holy Spirit for the sake of human beings
- "Putting on Christ" is the only way to possess the actual Indwelling
- Our commitment must be a living relationship
- A suggestion: Eucharistic devotion

Knowledge of the Scriptures



“All scripture is **inspired** by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

- 2 Timothy 3: 16-17

Steps to Bible study:

1. Get a Bible, preferably a Catholic one, preferably one with study notes
2. Start reading – I recommend Luke-Acts as a good place to begin, then 1 John
3. Get to learn Biblical history – the history in the Bible, and the history **of** the Bible

Living the sacraments



- “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3: 5)
- “When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8: 14)
- “[Jesus] breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.” (John 20: 22-23)
- “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to care for the church of the Lord.” (Acts 20: 28)

Living the sacraments



- Just as Moses first called the people to worship God before he gave them the Law, Jesus has given us ways to worship God which have priority over all other things to accomplish or avoid
- The most basic form of formal worship of God is blessing.
- The highest form of formal worship is found in the sacraments, which have not just a ritual moment but a preparation and a duration
- The greatest sacrament of all is the Eucharist, by which we are continuously initiated deeper and deeper into the mystery of the covenant with Christ

Unity with the Church



“You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

- Ephesians 2: 19-22

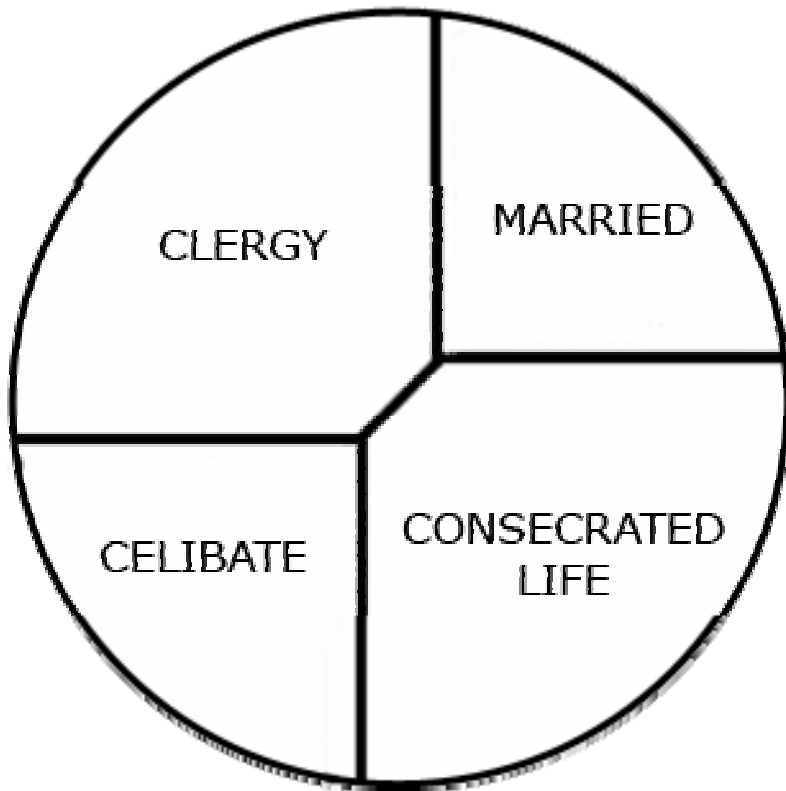
- Unity with the Church that has gone before us: knowing and living our Tradition
- Unity with the Church present: solidarity with our pastors and fellow Christians
- Unity with the Church that is to come: union of hearts with the saints

The mission: discovering our personal vocation



- Our personal mission is found within the mission of the whole Church, but is particular to us
- “The Church, which the Spirit guides in way of all truth and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts.” (Lumen Gentium, no. 2)
- In other words, to discover your vocation, follow your gifts, and to live your mission, join with those who possess complementary gifts

Hierarchical gifts



- Hierarchical gifts are the “vocations of being”
- Key questions:
 - Am I called to be ordained?
 - Am I called to consecrated life?
 - Am I called to marriage or celibacy?

Charismatic gifts



“God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, leaders, speakers in various kinds of tongues.” (1 Corinthians 12:28)

“His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.”
(Ephesians 4:11)

Charismatic gifts



“To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro...Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.”

- Ephesians 4: 12-16

Prayer: talking to God



Our Father, who art in Heaven,

- Hallowed be thy Name
- Thy Kingdom come
- Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven
- Give us this day our daily bread
- And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us
- And lead us not into temptation
- But deliver us from evil.

Prayer: listening to God



- Ultimately, it is the Lord himself who directs our spiritual growth and life, so listening to Him is far more important than all the spiritual “techniques” in the world
- Awareness of his presence, will and friendship grows as we become increasingly “proportioned” to the Holy Spirit dwelling in us
- All the previous means are helpful, even necessary, but the Holy Spirit himself even takes the lead in proportioning us to him!
- A few tips for listening to God...

Hearing his voice



1. Identify what kind of environment lends itself to interior calm and peace for you, and spend time there offering up your imagination and thoughts to God
2. When spiritual thoughts or experiences strike you, record them in some way
3. Look for the signs of God in every moment of life – beauty, truth, and goodness
4. Be thankful, in a deliberate way – it is always easier to listen when we are well-disposed

Prayer



- Lord Jesus, I pledge myself to your Kingdom, as your disciple, and I repent of my past life in the ways I was not following you.
- Holy Spirit, I open my heart to you, to renew in me the original image of God. I give you permission to act in my life with power.
- Heavenly Father, I thank you for the beauty of your creation, and for creating me. I bow before you in worship, and I humbly ask for the share in the heavenly inheritance you promised, when you will be all in all. Amen.



In the spirit of being thankful...

THANK YOU!



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