
Life in the Spirit Seminar

Sober Intoxication Series

“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were.” (Act 2:1-2)

- 1. January 18th @ 7:30pm – God’s Love**
- 2. February 22nd @ 7:30pm – Salvation**
- 3. March 8th @ 7:30pm – New Life in the Spirit**
- 4. April 12th @ 7:30pm – Preparing to Receive God’s Gift**
- 5. May 17th @ 7:30pm – Pray Over for Release of Holy Spirit**

Life in the Spirit Seminar: Sober Intoxication

Purpose:

In the spiritual life, if we cooperate with the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are always becoming more and more like Christ. Sometimes, on the spiritual journey, we become spiritually lazy and get stuck. We can lose the passion of our first love for the Gospel. For this reason, we need to be re-evangelized. This is why St. Paul in Phil. 2:12-18 says to us:

So then, *my beloved...* work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, *works in you...* Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life, so that my boast for the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. (Phil. 2:12-18)

An honest, humble acknowledgment of our sinfulness (*heartfelt repentance*) is necessary in order to receive a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit. True contrition is a wonderful grace from the Holy Spirit. In the Acts 2:37-39, we read about the people's response to Peter's first homily after Pentecost:

"Now *when they heard this*, they were *cut to the heart*, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter said to them, "*Repent and be baptized*, every one of you, *in the name of Jesus Christ* for the forgiveness of your sins; and *you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. For *the promise* is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:37-39)

Imitating the humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we must chose to *radically open ourselves* to a fresh hearing of the Word of God... throw open the doors of your heart! We need to truly listen to the Word of God. We need to truly hear and receive the Word of God. We need to truly obey the Word of God with total abandonment. Every day, God personally visits us, speaks to us, and invites us into Holy Communion. Like Blessed Virgin Mary, we can become a dwelling place of the Most High, a temple of Holy Spirit. Therefore, let us pray unceasingly with Mary's most Pure and Immaculate Heart:

"Let it be done unto me according to your Word" (Luke 1:38)

The Life in the Spirit Seminar is twofold: to facilitate a personal *metanoia* for individuals and to initiate a renewed involvement in evangelization. *Metanoia* is a Greek word which is used in the Gospels to describe "*a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart*" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, On Evangelization in the Modern World, 10).

This change of mind and heart or this transformation is absolutely necessary for an individual to become personally and passionately engaged in the Kingdom of God.

What should emerge from this personal *metanoia* is, namely, *a desire to tell others*. In its simplest form, 'telling others' is evangelization. After Pentecost, the Good News spread like a wildfire. Why? It's because people were filled with the Holy Spirit. The Life in the Spirit Seminar is about truly immersing our human spirit into the Holy Spirit. When this happens, our souls experience 'New Life' in the Spirit. It is this 'New Life' that we will long to tell others about. Throughout the Scriptures, when people encounter Jesus they are changed! Jesus says,

"I have come that they may have LIFE and have it in abundance" (John 10:10)

It has been the Catholic Church's mission, since her beginning, to introduce people into this New Life in the Spirit... to live more abundantly in the Kingdom of God! Pope Paul VI reminded us in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World), that the "words of Jesus Christ's evangelization, are available to every human being" (EN10). Pentecost is for everyone! To be Christians -- to say, believe, and live based on the truth that JESUS IS LORD! -- and to evangelize the world -- so that others too may profess and proclaim that JESUS IS LORD! (1 Cor. 12: 3) -- the Church must build a "culture of witness" (U.S. bishops - 'Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization').

"On what does the Church live? The Church lives on the Holy Spirit. The Church's first need is always to live Pentecost... The Church has a need for the Holy Spirit: a basic need, an existential need, a need that cannot be satisfied with illusions, with substitutes... a universal need, a permanent need... For this reason, if we really love the Church, the main thing we must do is to foster in it an outpouring of the divine Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who makes us Christians and raises us to supernatural life is the true and profound principle of our interior life and of our external apostolic activity..." Pope Paul VI, General Audience, October 12, 1966

"I hope that the Holy Spirit will be ever more welcome in the hearts of believers and that the 'culture of Pentecost,' which is so necessary in our day, might continue to spread." Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, September 28, 2005

As Catholic Christians, we must radically open ourselves to this personal – Pentecost *metanoia* experience. Then, we'll be able to evangelize others around us. The Life in the Spirit Seminar is concerned with the most basic part of Christian life. It seeks to help establish and root a person in Jesus Christ by deepening their personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ through the preaching of the basic Gospel message - God's love for humanity and the salvation which is offered ONLY in Jesus Christ. Each person is invited to yield and receive more deeply this New Life in the Holy Spirit:

“For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21)

The Life in the Spirit Seminar is presented in a series of talks and meditations. One opportunity during the Seminar is for participants are prayed over to receive what Jesus described in Acts 1:4 as “the promise of the Father,” a release of the power of the Holy Spirit. The first four sessions will be focused on preparing participants for this transforming event, while the last two sessions provide the guidance needed to integrate this yielding to the Holy Spirit in their daily lives and their local parish community.

Topics Include the Following:

1. God's Love
2. Salvation
3. The New Life in the Spirit
4. Preparing to Receive God's Gift
5. Pray Over for the Release of the Holy Spirit
6. Growth Through Ongoing Conversion
7. Transformation in Christ

History:

During the Last Supper, Jesus assured His disciples,

“I will pray to the Father and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever” (John 14:16).

Jesus knew when He was no longer on earth, His disciples, limited to their own strength and ability, would not be able to live the kind of life to which He had called them. He pledged to them the very Spirit of God as a helper. Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven and on the Jewish feast of Pentecost the Holy Spirit assuredly came down upon and filled each of them with Himself. Ever since that time, the third person of the Trinity has remained with the Christian people. As St. Paul says, we are temples of the Holy Spirit. We celebrate this event every year on Pentecost as the birthday of our Catholic Church.

When Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council in 1963, he prayed, “Renew in our day, O Lord, your wonders as in a new Pentecost.” His prayer was answered because the new Pentecost has been happening. Just as those 120 men and women who were gathered at that Jewish feast over 2000 years ago were transformed and empowered for their witness and mission,

Catholic Christians today are also experiencing the Holy Spirit in a transforming and empowering personal Pentecost. This experience of a personal Pentecost is a renewal of an individual and therefore an integral part of the renewal of the Church, which was initiated with Vatican II.

Pope Benedict XVI pointed out what is occurring within the Church when he said, "What the New Testament describes ... as visible signs of the coming of the Spirit is no longer merely ancient, past history: This history is becoming a burning reality today."

Pope John Paul II praised the Pentecost renewal when he said, "The vigor and fruitfulness (of this renewal) attests to the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church."

Building on the sacramental life of the Church, the Holy Spirit received in Baptism is being "fanned into flame" (2 Timothy 1:6). The flame is showing what Pope Benedict describes as "a burning reality" with confirmable results. It is evident that Christians filled with and led by the Holy Spirit are living a more deeply committed Christian life. They are receiving and operating in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they contribute to a stronger spiritual life in Christian community within the universal Church. They are visible signs of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church today.

The Life in the Spirit Seminar began in the early 1970s shortly after the birth of the Charismatic Renewal at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. For over 30 years, these structured seminars provided the background and guidelines for teams of individuals to help others experience a fuller release of the Holy Spirit, or as it is also called, the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In the early days, Catholics who experienced this release were sometimes referred to as Catholic Pentecostals because charisms (or gifts of the Holy Spirit) are released which were just as those experienced at Pentecost (Acts 2). The early references to Catholic Pentecostals often created misunderstanding with more traditional spiritualities within the Church. Now, the expression for Catholics receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit is commonly termed "charismatic." Charismatic means "a personal attractiveness or interestingness that enables you to influence others." We are created to be interested in a personal God!

Introduction: Praying with Scripture, Journaling and Study

We will be using Scripture as a significant resource for growing in our understanding and love of God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit want to reveal themselves to you during these next seven weeks. It is for this reason that we should become dedicated to reading and meditating upon the assigned Scriptures and Catechism passages. As you begin to pray with the Scriptures, the following thoughts and guidelines may be helpful.

Prepare Your Heart with Silence: Soil is prepared for seeds; our soul must be prepared for the Word

Try to set aside a quiet time each day when you are most alert, preferably the same time each day. We don't want to rush into prayer. Spend a few moments quieting your mind and relaxing, settling into a prayerful but comfortable position (5-7 minutes). You might prayerfully say the name of "Jesus" or "Come, Holy Spirit." In the midst of our busy lives, settling into the silence can be difficult. Repeatedly praying the name "Jesus" can help quiet or redirect our heart thoughts. The purpose of silence is to help us recognize God's presence in our lives. This awareness of God's presence will give birth to a spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Remember that God reveals himself in ways other than through Scripture. We may experience God through sacred art, music, nature etc... God is truth, beauty, and goodness.

Give Thanks and Praise – Eucharistic Spirituality

Begin your prayer time by praising and thanking Jesus for a specific blessing you become aware of in the silence, or just thank the Holy Trinity for giving you quiet time. This does not have to be a long prayer. For instance, "Thank You, Jesus, for the children being back in school," or "Thank You for helping with that difficult situation with my boss/spouse today," or simply "Praise you for the beauty of your creation." You are developing an intimate exchange / relationship with the Lord so feel free to use your own words. Over time, you will become more and more accustomed to simply praising and thanking the Lord. This attitude of gratitude is a very healing way to live your life! It's Eucharist! This is Jesus, within you, returning his love to the Father by the Holy Spirit!

Ask for Forgiveness

Next, ask the Father to forgive of any area of sin in your life. Remember, when you address the Father, it is only because yielding your body, mind, and soul to Jesus and the Holy Spirit! Never be afraid to humbly and honestly acknowledge the most recent or conscious sins. God loves honesty! Sometimes, we will find it hard to be honest about our sinfulness. This is because of deeply rooted lies which we believe about God. Forgiveness is facing the lies! After asking the Father for forgiveness, thank Him and praise Him for forgiving and forgetting your sins.

Listen to God's Word

Now ask the Holy Spirit to be present in your heart and mind to guide you in your understanding and acceptance of what God is saying to you or about to say to you in the particular passage of scripture you are about to read. Now, you're ready to begin reading the passage of Scripture for the day. God invites us to listen as we read His Word. Listen like you've never heard before. This is the basic attitude of prayer. This form of prayer is called *lectio divina*.

Begin by reading the Scripture passage slowly and attentively. Do not hurry! After you have read the passage once, go back and read it a second time. Pay attention to where your mind and heart are drawn. In the third reading of the same scripture, you may picture in your mind that Jesus, the Son of God, is speaking directly to you, alone. Take in the passage and let it come alive within you. This is how we imitate the Blessed Virgin Mary. We allow the Word of Life to come to full term in our souls!

If the passage recounts a specific event of Christ's life, try to enter into the mystery of it. This form of prayer is traditionally known as Ignatian prayer. St. Ignatius of Loyola invites us to image and dialogue with the persons involved in the Scripture passage. You might use your prayer journal for this. The method of using our imagination, when we read Sacred Scriptures, is at times difficult and slow; but, it will become more rewarding the more we practice it. Don't give up! The same goes for journaling! As Americans, we are looking for progress and we want it now. We want instant gratification. We can treat Jesus like a drive thru. We have to step outside of our culture to realize that this is not necessarily God's way for us to meet with Him. He is present and we simply need to trust Him. We are learning how to pray and listen. This is the necessary attitude of humility!

Journaling

Respond in your journal to what Jesus or the other characters in the Scripture might be saying to you. Some words or phrases will carry special meaning for you. Pay attention to these. At times, you might even experience different emotions or memories will arise. Pay attention to these emotions or memories. Please take time to discuss them with Jesus in your journal. Often, the Holy Spirit is prompting us and we run onward to the next verse. The interior movements (thoughts, memories, emotions etc...) may be very profound, but normally you will sense subtle impressions such as a sense of closeness to Christ, an experience God's love or peace, you might have a sense of being spiritually uplifted, you may be moved to do something (write a letter of forgiveness...), or you might be experience happiness and content just to be in God's presence. *God is speaking to you in the words of Scripture.* Do not hurry to move on. This is the time to pause. Wait until you are no longer moved by what you are experiencing. Remember to allow the Scripture(s) to grow life in you! These are spiritual consolations.

On the other hand, don't get discouraged if nothing seems to be happening. Sometimes God allows us feel dry and empty in order to let us realize it is not in our own power to communicate with Him or to experience consolation. This is desolation. Do Not Be Afraid. Bring everything to the Lord! Prayer is a dialogue NOT a monologue. Refuse to shut-down or become despondent. God is very close to us in His seeming absence. A humble attitude of listening is a sign of love for Him and a real prayer from the heart.

“Where can I hide from your spirit? From your presence, where can I flee? If I ascend to the heavens, you are there; if I lie down in Sheol, you are there too.” (Psalm 139:7-8)

After you are finished reading and meditating, write a letter to Jesus, thanking Him for whatever you received while reading. At first it may only be, "Dear Jesus, thank you. I love you. Your friend, _____."

However, with continued prayer and spiritual growth, your "love letters" to Jesus will become longer and longer. Write to Him as you would a friend that you can see, hear and touch. Jesus is for real! He's not just an idea. He is truly alive and He wants to be the most important person in your life. These letters will be a source of inspiration for you during those dry, difficult times in the future. They become a track record of God's grace in your life!

Further Study and Reflection

As Catholics, we believe that God speaks not only through Scripture but also through the teaching of the Catholic Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is a valuable source of insights into God's action in our lives right now. Throughout the *Life in the Spirit Seminar*, selected Scripture passages and paragraphs from the *Catechism* are suggested for your reading. This will help connect your life to that week's seminar. You may also want to use the insights that you gain from the *Catechism* as material for further reflection and journaling. Expect God to impress things on your mind as you read, reflect, and focus on these spiritual exercises. This is a way of God speaking to you! Nothing is impossible with God. He may speak to you throughout your day. Pay Attention!

Seminar 1 – God's Love

The Old Testament sets the stage for the full expression of God's love in His Son Jesus. As we read and pray certain passages from the Old Testament, we can become more deeply aware of how much God really loves us. This is important because we will love ourselves as we know love to be. We need to know and experience God's love if we are going to become love for others. "The glory of God is man fully alive" (St. Irenaeus). The Holy Spirit WILL show us our sins, NOT to condemn us, but because He is pure Light and Truth. He wants to heal our understanding of love. God, the Holy Spirit, wants to communicate pure, personal healing love. Seeing our faults, failures, and sinfulness can tempt us to question how God could possibly love us. When the Holy Spirit shows us our sins, we will also experience the lies which hold us in bondage. The lies encourage us to run and hide. Prayerfully take time to read Genesis chapter 3; you will discover a deeper understanding of yourself in this Scripture.

By praying with Sacred Scriptures, we become more personally aware and convinced of God's total and unconditional love for us. The Scripture is not just another book. It is the Living Word of God and this is attitude with which we should approach the Scriptures. The conviction that God loves you with an infinite, everlasting love is the foundation of a personal relationship with Him. He is like none other! Nothing you ever do will ever change the Truth of his love for you! We must come to know Him as a loving, kind, compassionate and forgiving Father who welcomes His children with open arms. He is the Father you are looking for! The one who loves you more than you will ever comprehend or imagine. There is always more love! God, the Creator of the universe, the person who made all things out of nothing, created you and loves you. He wants to care for you, share His divine life with you, and bring you into perfect union with Him, for all of eternity. This is why He left us the gift of the Eucharist, the gift of Himself!

An awareness of God's great love for us is the work of the Holy Spirit! This awareness leads us into a deeper prayer life... a more intimate exchange of self-disclosure. God always gives all and he waits for our response! When we truly believe that we are loved no matter what, we will respond by truly opening our hearts and letting him in. He is knocking! Come Holy Spirit, Come. Deeply aware of His loving presence, we whisper in the quiet, sacred place of our hearts, "I love you, too." We experience being known and loved at the very core of our being. We no longer require many words or thoughts. We simply rest in His presence. This prayer of the heart is the beginning of contemplative prayer. This experience of His great love becomes the basis for our spiritual growth and identity.

Reading Assignments

Scripture	Catechism
Gen 3	CCC 385, 410-12
Isaiah 43:1-3	CCC 50
Psalms 139:1-6	CCC 210
Ezekiel 34:11-16	CCC 214
Isaiah 49:1-6	CCC 218
Jeremiah 31:31-34	CCC 220
1 John 4:16-18	CCC 221
John 3:16-18	CCC 609

Seminar 2 – Salvation

In the first seminar, we focused on God's love for us. It's important to recognize and identify the unique nature and beauty of God's love. How God's love differs from the love we've experienced in this broken world. Every seminar is about a different ways of experiencing and living in God's love. You were baptized (immersed) into God's love. To live in God's love is to live in who you are... to live in your true identity.

This second seminar will also be about God's love, but with a different viewpoint. We will now look at our response, our acceptance of God's love. God's love stirs a response within us. In John 7:38, we read "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer that we pray at Mass captures the scope of God's plan: Even when Man disobeyed you and lost your friendship, *you did not abandon him to the power of death, but helped him seek and find you. Again and again* you offered a covenant to man, and through the prophets taught him to hope for salvation. Father, you so loved the world that in the fullness of time you sent you're only Son to be our Savior. By dying on the cross, Jesus became our Savior and offers us the Gift of salvation, of himself. We are free to accept or reject this invitation in 'New Life.' In John 10:10, we read "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. Christ does not force anything on us.

The question is often asked: "Have you been saved?" implying, "Are you going to heaven?" The answer is not found in a simple one-time 'yes' or acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is important to decide for Christ daily, but from a Catholic perspective, we answer 'Yes' many times. Salvation is not just for the future. We can begin Heaven on Earth (the indwelling presence of God). God wants give us salvation at every moment of every day. At Baptism, we literally tap into God's saving power and we are freed from original sin, which separated us from God's life. Over and over again we are saved through repentance and ongoing conversion. This is why Jesus instituted the sacrament of reconciliation. His priesthood has been extended into time through Holy Orders. We need his Divine Mercy daily. Those who "endure to the end" (Revelation 2:26) will be saved. In Philippians 2:12, St. Paul says to "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." In 1 Peter 5:8, we read "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." Salvation is a daily spiritual battle.

Salvation is a free gift which our Lord Jesus purchased for each soul on Calvary. He worked so very hard on the cross so that he could attain Divine Mercy for us. This Divine Mercy is the great gift and mystery which we enter into each time we celebrate the Sacraments, most especially the Holy Eucharist. As good as salvation is, some people stand at the threshold and hesitate. Let's jump in! Some feel unworthy of such love. Let's take a fresh look at our salvation and contemplate the fact that Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, gave His only Son's life for me! What a Gift! *Eucharistia – Thank You God!* Maybe we are still too strongly attached to the temporary pleasures of this passing world. God is calling all of us to a deeper trust in him, to be truly reconciled with him, and to repent with honest and sincere hearts in order that we can more fully receive His Gift of salvation. There is no love here on earth that will ever compare with God's love. No Gift is greater! Therefore, let's not try and comprehend or understanding God's love before we say 'yes.' Receive him boldly!

Reading Assignments

Proverbs 3:5-6	CCC 1846-1848
Micah 4:1-6	CCC 54
Isaiah 55:9	CCC 122
Psalms 45:1-9	CCC 207
John 11:21-27	CCC 55
Romans 5:6-8	CCC 604
Isaiah 53:4-6	CCC 1505
Colossians 1:13-14	CCC 517

Seminar 3 – The New Life in the Spirit

Throughout the ages, the prophets predicted that the day would come when God would give his Spirit freely to men. Yet, all of humanity was stuck in bondage to sin. It was prophesied that those who would turn (repent) to him and receive his Spirit would be changed. They would receive New Life. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17).

We remember this event in the third glorious mystery of the Rosary, “The Descent of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus’ promise to fulfill that prediction happened on Pentecost when the disciples were *gathered together in prayer* and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of tongues of fire. They began to prophesy, teach, and heal the sick; they prayed in tongues and proclaimed the Good News boldly to many nations. That very day thousands of Jews became believers in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Was Pentecost only a historical moment? Was it just a story made up by a few crazies? Why are we here today? Why do we pray? Why do we worship Jesus at Ablaze? The power of Pentecost continues to be operative today! Let us not limit God by our inability to understand this great Mystery. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

We received the same Holy Spirit in our Baptism and His presence in us was strengthened in Confirmation. *Be silent for a moment to greet Him within you! Try it!*

We are Baptized and Confirmed in order to live the Eucharist... to become extensions of the Incarnation! For most people, however, the fullness of the Holy Spirit's action in our lives is still awaiting our invitation. Have you ever pondered the questions: How do I allow the Holy Spirit to be more fully released in my life? We pray, Lord I want to immerse my life more fully into your Divine Life. Like St. Paul, I want to be able to say, “It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me.” (Gal. 2:19-20).

What an amazing gift it is to be baptized? Something very special happened to our soul at Baptism. *He lives in you!* The angels continue to stand in awe of God’s presence in us because of our baptism. In that sacred moment, everything Jesus Christ did is applied to our souls... the merits of his life, death, and resurrection! It’s purely God’s favor to give us this Gift of his life and to call us his sons and daughters. This divine life of grace which began at baptism has made us fit to worship at Mass where we, as members of the mystical body, enter into the perfect prayer of Jesus Christ. Lord, make us spiritually aware of this New Life in the Spirit.

We can experience the Holy Spirit in the same way the first disciples did. And when the Holy Spirit is released more fully in us, we will begin to experience a new kind of life. We get to know God in a new way and we become changed people. Then, as we continue to grow in faith, we want to reach out and serve others. God equips us with the spiritual gifts we need to do His work. Jesus told us, “I have come that you may have life and have it in abundance” (John 10:10). This abundant life is not only a promise of spending eternity with God in heaven but a new life here and now. We receive it by yielding to God to have Him more active in our lives. Our daily readings this week will reveal the extent of this promise.

Rest in the Truth that God desires union with you and he lives in you.

Reading Assignments

Ezekiel 36:22-28	CCC 1287
John 14:15-18	CCC 729
Acts 2:1-14	CCC 696
Acts 19:5-7	CCC 1288
Galatians 5:16-23	CCC 736
1 Corinth 12:4-11	CCC 801
Ephesians 2:19-22	CCC 756
Revelation 22:17	CCC 668-670

Seminar 4 – Receiving the Holy Spirit

The topics covered thus far have been about God’s love, salvation, and new life. This has been a time of Preparation, and, through prayer, praise and worship of the Father through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit you can begin to experience a new closeness to God. He truly lives within you!!! We are called to live our Catholic Faith and put it into action. Our faith affects everything that we do. St. James says show me your faith and I’ll show you my works! Our works of love should be an overflow of our intimacy with God. We cannot straddle the fence; there is no room for being lukewarm (see Revelation 3:16).

John the Baptist, the prophet who prepared the way of the Lord, preached one basic message, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Throughout the New Testament, the need for Repentance and Forgiveness is preached. Repentance was the path, which prepared the way for the coming of the Lord, and Jesus is calling us to repentance as we prepare our lives for His coming to us in a deeper way. Repentance brings revival. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you deeper contrition!

Repentance involves sorrow for our sins, turning toward God, and reorienting our lives. It involves a fundamental change of attitude, a conversion of heart towards God and away from sin. In addition, we are told, “Declare your sins to one another, that you may find healing” (James 5:16). For Catholics, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the way we live out this command. We are invited by God to receive His gift of forgiveness for any sins through the Sacrament, but confession of serious sins to a priest is necessary before Catholics can partake of other Sacraments, particularly the Holy Eucharist. It is also recommended as a first step when making a deeper commitment to our Lord. Repentance requires honesty with ourselves. Many times “pet” sins have become a part of our lives, and we have learned to rationalize away their sinfulness. Perhaps you have a habit of gossip, or drinking too much, or some form of impurity. Maybe it is being judgmental or selfish. Whatever your personal weaknesses may be, it is impossible to repent until we call them sin and no longer make excuses like, “That’s just the way I am.”

Daily Reading Assignments

Psalm 51	CCC 1850
Isaiah 1:16-18	CCC 1430, 1431
1 John 2:1-6	CCC 1422, 1424
Psalm 32	CCC 1502
1 John 3:4-10	CCC 385
John 20:20-23	CCC 1447
Hebrews 10:11-18	CCC 1442 14

Seminar 5 – Release of the Holy Spirit

Next week, after our opening time of praise and a brief teaching, prayer teams will be available to pray with you for the release of the Holy Spirit, commonly referred to as 'baptism in the Holy Spirit.' This release of the Spirit is an internal religious experience (or prayer experience) in which Christ is experienced in a deeper more personal way. It involves a humble openness to the power of the Holy Spirit whom we have received in Baptism and Confirmation, and this empowerment usually leads to a deeper devotional life and an attraction to prayer, Sacred Scripture, and the Sacraments of the Church. With continued nurturing, this event will be the beginning of a lifelong process of growing closer to God.

As you prepare for this important event in your spiritual life, keep in mind that what happens to others may or may not be the same thing that happens to you. When you are prayed with, the Holy Spirit will be invited to be more a part of your life... your decision making... your work... your all.... Pray to be completely surrendered and open to the love that God wants to express personally to you next week and in the days, weeks, months and years ahead. This is only the beginning of a life long journey with Jesus. Think of it as the first time your meeting Jesus... Put aside every reservation, prejudice, pre-conceived ideas... etc....

Simply be open to receiving all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that the Lord wants to give you (see 1 Corinthians 12:1-11). When you are prayed for, a word may seem to come "out of nowhere" or a Scripture passage may come strongly to mind. This is the Lord speaking. You may want to even re-read the original hand out. As you pray, you may "run out of words" and sense a desire to verbalize your love for God; the Lord may be giving you the gift of tongues (a heavenly prayer language) to praise Him... There are so many wonderful gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to his Church. Trust! God is still moving within you even if you don't feel anything. Remember, we don't rely on our feelings. If we start to always expect a warm good feeling when we pray, then we start to only think God is with us when we feel good. In other words, when we experience the cross we start to believe as we feel. God's abandoned me. Jesus felt abandoned on Calvary, but he did not allow these feelings to dictate his decision to keep on keeping on!

During the coming week, you may experience feelings of unworthiness, or you may feel reluctant or apprehensive because it seems that what you are doing is strange or unnecessary. These are fairly common, but recall God's call to you and focus on that. Review your journal and see how he has been preparing you for this event. Finally, be assured of the prayer support, which is being offered to our Father for you this week. If you are concerned about anything or if you have any questions, call or emails me (Fr. Michael: 402-333-8989, ablazeworshipministry@gmail.com). Do not let doubt or Satan keep you from receiving answers to questions and the assurance that Jesus wants you to have. Sometimes we can rationalize away what God wants to do.

Daily Reading Assignments

Matthew 18:1-4	CCC 576
Acts 2:33-36	CCC 731
2 Corinthians 12:1-10	CCC 273
Luke 6:27-36	CCC 2842
Matthew 11:25-30	CCC 2603
2 Corinthians 6:14-18	CCC 1179
2 Corinthians 4:1-6	CCC 298