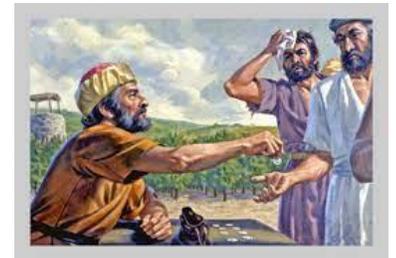


# Secrets From Heaven Hidden Treasures of Faith in the Parables and Conversations of Jesus



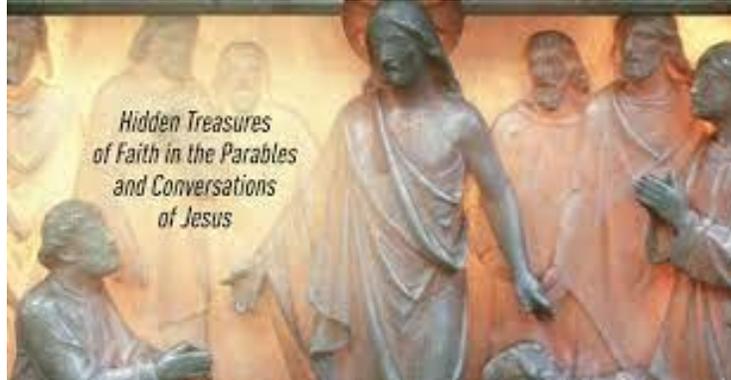
Join us Sundays from 8:45 AM to 10:45 AM in St. Joseph's Hall from January 8, 2023 to April 2, 2023

A Skype call link is also available: <https://join.skype.com/lclwJzQe0IJN>

Session #	Date	Covered in Session
1	January 8, 2023	Pages 7-24
2	January 15, 2023	Pages 25-32
3	January 22, 2023	Pages 33-50
4	January 29, 2023	Pages 51-64
5	February 5, 2023	Pages 65-78
6	February 12, 2023	Pages 79-86
7	February 19, 2023	Pages 87-98
8	February 26, 2023	Pages 99-110
9	March 5, 2023	Pages 111-121
10	March 12, 2023	Pages 123-135
11	March 19, 2023	Pages 137-147
12	March 26, 2023	Pages 149-172
13	April 2, 2023	Pages 173-181

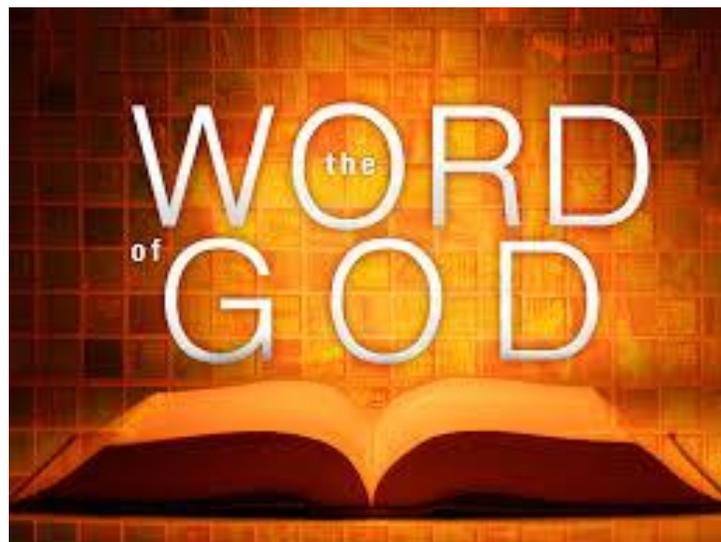


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**Session 1: January 8, 2023 Introduction**

- Do you read the Bible?
- If so, how do you connect with the Word of God?
- What moves you most from the Bible?
- Do you think you could learn more from the Bible if you had the right tools?
- This book aims to present the Words of Jesus, reflecting upon them in the light of the writings of the Church Fathers, saints, and Doctors of the Church.
- Will you commit to praying while reading this book? Place yourself in the Presence of God and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you as you read both this book and Scripture.

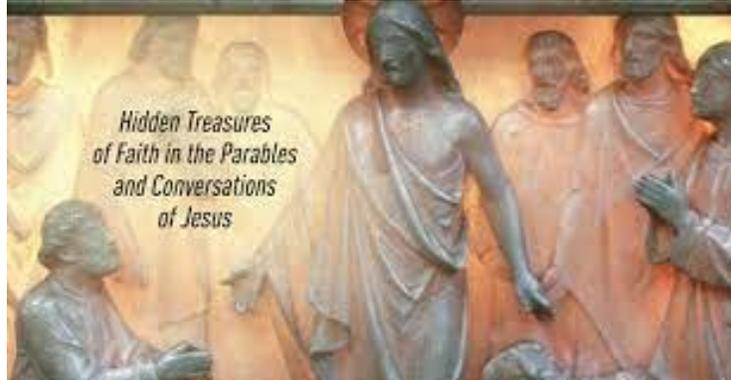


## Chapter 1: Reading the Word of God

- Why does God not compel us to believe in Him?
- How do we place our trust in God so that we have “eyes to see and ears to hear”?
- Please respond: “All Sacred Scripture is but **one book**, and the one book is **Christ**.”
- Please respond: The Word made flesh is as sacred as the Word of God.
- Do you believe that the Sacred Scriptures are the Word of God? Inspired by God? Meant for our salvation?
- Do you believe in the **inerrancy** of Scripture – that it tells the Truth?
- Do you believe that Scripture is God’s love letter to us and ought to inspire true charity in us?
- The senses of Scripture:
  - ❖ The literal sense – what the words plainly mean
  - ❖ The spiritual senses:
    - ✚ Allegorical – prototypes of Jesus
    - ✚ Moral – how we can be more like Jesus
    - ✚ Eschatological – how Jesus will be revealed at the end of time
- Can you think of Scripture passages which transmit one or more of these spiritual senses?
- Do/did you object to the Bible in any of the ways laid out in the book? Have you overcome your objections since reading this chapter?
- Do the explanations for the content and unity of Scripture strike you as coherent, logical, and true?



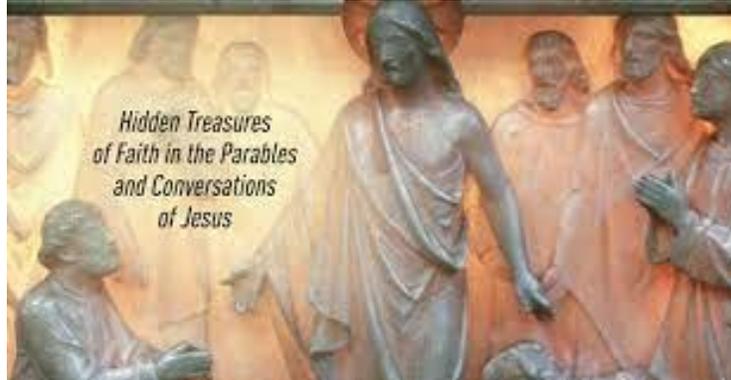
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**Session 2: January 15, 2023 Chapter 2**

- Do you agree with the observation of St. Thomas Aquinas?
- How does this observation relate to our understanding of Sacred Scripture?
- Principle #1: there are no “useless” words in Scripture.
  - ❖ Like “every hair on our heads is counted,” every word in the Bible is important.
  - ❖ If we want to know and love God better, we need to know how to understand the Bible
- Tool #1 – Definition – knowing not only the definition of a word but the connotations and inferences which can be made from the word will help us to understand the Bible
- Tool #2 – Doubling or “coincidences” – when a word or phrase is doubled, we ought to pay special attention. What does one have to do with the other? Do they shed light upon the meaning of the other?
- Tool #3 – Parallels – an expanded tool #2 applied to narratives or events related in the Bible
- Tool #4 – uniqueness – if a word or narrative is unique, we ought to pay special attention
- Tool #5 – what is left unsaid – often Scripture is silent when we are expected to draw the lesson **from this silence**
- Tool #6 – translations – even if you don’t know Greek, Hebrew, Latin, or Aramaic, a Catholic Bible will give you notes to understand how a word was used in the time and place it was written.
- Do you approach Scripture prayerfully, with an open heart?

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**Session 3: January 22, 2023 Chapter 3**

- Definition of a parable: A story either verbal or written which communicates a deep truth
- While parables draw images from everyday life, they can be difficult to plumb because of the profound truth it is telling
- Parables impart some truth to the “unlearned” while offering richer lessons to those who approach Scripture with prayer, humility, and a degree of understanding of the Bible



- The Parable of the Sower and the Seeds – Jesus explained this parable, so it is a good place to begin our journey into parables.
- Who is the sower?
- What is the seed?
- What happens to the seed on the path? Do you recognize yourself?
- What happens to the seed on rocky ground? Do you recognize yourself?
- What happens to the seed among thorns? Do you recognize yourself?
- What happens to the seed in rich soil? Do you recognize yourself?
- Why is this parable foundational for the other parables?
- What is the significance of the crowd standing on the land? Do you identify with their desire to stand on something fixed and certain?
- What is the significance of Jesus getting into a boat on the sea? Do you “risk” setting out into the deep with Him?



➤ Hardened hearts, like a beaten path, do not allow the Word to penetrate. Hearts can be hardened through heartbreaks, through callous use by others, through abandonment. Through all of our struggles, we are called to allow the grace of God to penetrate our hearts and transform our lives.

➤ Rocky, shallow soil allows the Word to penetrate but not to flourish. Oftentimes, when our desires run counter to God's commandments, our desires win out. These worldly desires choke out the beautiful garden God wants to plant in our souls; we are left with only the weeds of our selfish desires.



➤ Thorny soil – the Word of God takes root and grows, but this is not all that is growing in our hearts! We grow attached to the things of this world, including sin. To the extent that we love sin more, we love God less. To the extent that we love God more, we sin less. The thorns of sin and possessions choke out our love for God. The good seed cannot thrive when the thorns blot out the Sun and greedily drink in the rain we need for the good seed to flourish.

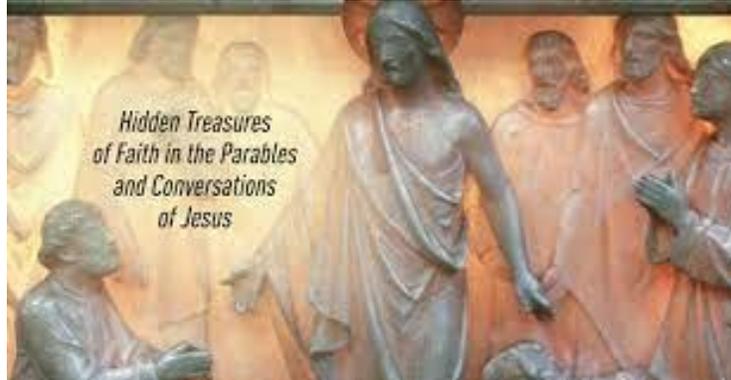
➤ Rich soil – the grain dies and produces life: the heart with rich soil participates in the Mission of the Sower: evangelization. **30** = three (Holy Trinity) times ten (Ten Commandments) – the lay faithful who profess their Faith and keep the Commandments. **60** = three times twenty; priests and religious who vow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience have a higher bar (twenty being more than ten) in their vocation. **100** = a number of completeness or perfection. Martyrs give everything for the Faith; therefore, they have given completely and perfectly.





- Which explanation of this parable resonates with you most:
  - ❖ The weeds help the wheat to grow stronger – God permits evil in this world so that we can rise to the challenge and become the best disciples, even unto martyrdom.
  - ❖ The weeds can become wheat as God, in His mercy, grants them time to convert. Wheat can become a weed if we do not pick up our cross and follow Him. God grants us the time to become good, healthy wheat, even though we have weedy moments.
  - ❖ Either explanation is informed by Jesus' two-fold Commandment: Love God above all others and love others for God's sake. Jesus also said: "The measure which you measure out shall be measured back to you." (Matthew 7:2) If you want mercy, be merciful.

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**Session 4: January 29, 2023 Chapter 4**

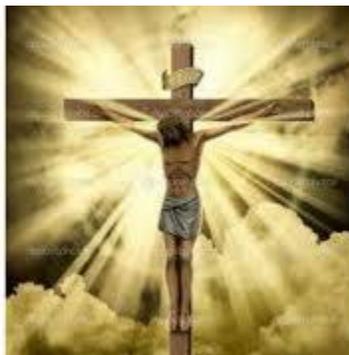
- Here we consider a conversation Jesus had, indicating with His words and deeds God's mercy and justice.
- This conversation is historical and not a parable. Nevertheless, Jesus' words and deeds have significance beyond the literal sense.
- Place yourself in this encounter:
  - ❖ The Pharisees wish to trap Jesus, so they smugly present Him with what they think is a dilemma. God's ways are not our ways! Have you ever triumphantly, smugly presented someone with an argument or a situation by which you thought you would win and they would fail?
  - ❖ Jesus silently stoops down to "engrave" in the dust. The Greek word is *katagraphhein*, used when God engraved the Ten Commandments. When He stoops, He is merciful. Do you keep the Ten Commandments?
  - ❖ He stands up to exercise His justice: giving every man his due. He is well aware of the sins of the accusers, who now stand accused by Jesus. We, too, will be in this position upon our death. Prepare for this moment!
  - ❖ Jesus stoops down to write softly in the dust. The Greek word is *graphein*. As He writes their sins lightly, He indicates that, in His mercy, He awaits their contrition. Let us not turn away from His mercy, but embrace Him in Confession!
  - ❖ Jesus stands up again to exercise His justice. As the accused woman stands meekly before Him, awaiting her sentence, Jesus tells her, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." Blessed are we when we hear these words in the Sacrament of Confession!



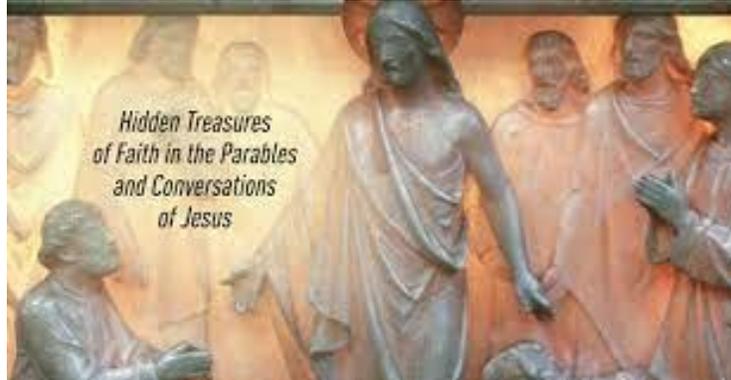
- Looking more deeply into this encounter, consider God’s mercy and justice. In His mercy, He reveals to us our sins, so that we might ask the Divine Physician to heal our wounds. In His justice, He gives us our due; we ought to be glad of the opportunity to pay our temporal debt here on Earth rather than in Purgatory.
- At our Particular Judgment, we will all see our own souls and the good and the evil we did throughout our life on Earth. At the end of time, everyone shall see the souls of everyone else. Don’t allow pride to cause you to shrink from this wonderful Final Judgment: as we see the manifold sins of each soul, we praise and thank God for His wondrous mercy, that He loves us although we have, every one of us, offended Him.
- At the Final Judgment, Jesus manifests our hearts to all. Are you ready to see all of your sins? Are you ready to see all of the good things you’ve done? Are you ready to glorify God for His great love, mercy, and justice?
- At each Particular Judgment, for those who died in friendship with God, contrite for their sins, they will truly “Go and sin no more,” for our wills are fixed as we make that last choice in our life: the choice for God or against God. Once we’ve chosen for God, we will never sin again – in Purgatory or in Heaven.



- The sin of Presumption is mentioned: this is the sin that “I’m going to Heaven no matter what because I “presume” upon God’s mercy.” This is taking God’s mercy for granted. We need to be truly contrite for our sins and extraordinarily grateful for God’s love and mercy.
- Mercy presupposes justice – if you have no idea that you’ve committed a sin, then mercy makes no sense. Part of His mercy is showing you your sins so that you can beg His forgiveness. He does not leave us in ignorance of our sins; in His justice, He shows us how far we’ve fallen from Him. In His mercy, He forgives the sins we’ve committed for which we are imperfectly or perfectly contrite.
- Imperfect contrition: I’m sorry for my sins because I fear God’s punishment.
- Perfect contrition: I’m sorry for my sins because I have damaged my relationship with God.
- Knowledge of our sins grounds us in humility, a virtue. Do you underestimate your sinfulness? Do you overestimate your sinfulness? Pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten you.
- Some of the Spiritual Works of Mercy:
  - ❖ Instruct the ignorant.
  - ❖ Counsel the doubtful.
  - ❖ Admonish the sinner.
- It truly is merciful and loving to show, in charity but with clarity, when someone has gone astray. First we must admit our own failings and approach our brother or sister in Christ with humility. True love wills the highest good of the other. That highest good is God Himself. If someone you know has turned their back on God, or is guilty of the sin of presumption, mercifully bring this to their attention.
- “Contemplate the Crucified,” advise the Dominicans. In Him we see true love and true obedience to God’s Will. In Him we see the good and gentle shepherd Who laid down His life for His sheep. In Him, we can approach our wayward brother or sister with love and truth, mercy and justice.

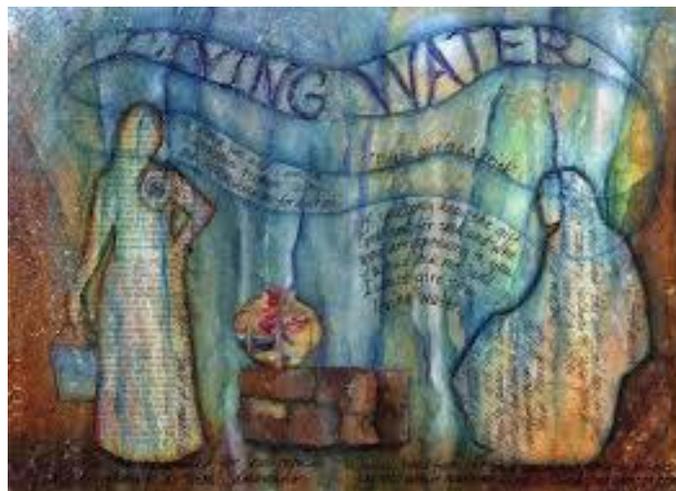


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**Session 5: February 5, 2023 Chapter 5**

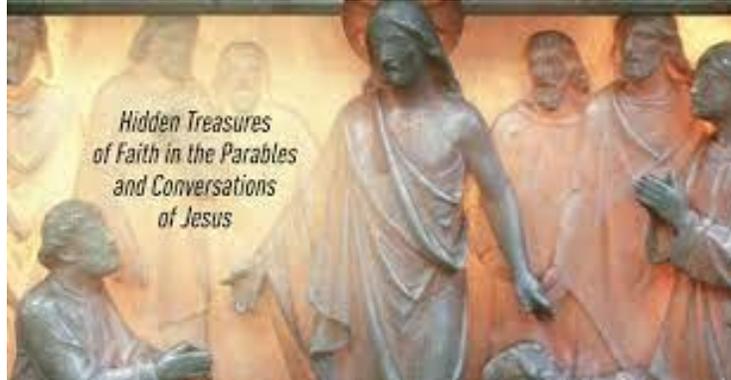
- The conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well is such a deep encounter that she is converted and immediately evangelizes. What can we learn from this encounter?
  - ❖ One person can make a difference in the lives of many others.
  - ❖ Jesus meets us even in our shame. The woman was at the well at noon in order to avoid the other women of the town. She was ashamed. She was a “manifest public sinner.”
  - ❖ Jesus knows all of our sins, faults, and disordered attachments. He comes to us with the Living Water to heal us. He knew that she had lived with five “husbands;” that the man she was living with was not her husband; and that He, the “seventh” husband, is the perfect Bridegroom.



- Notice the progression in the woman's conversion: first she addresses Him as "a Jew," estranged from the Samaritans – a stranger. At one point in our faith journey, Jesus was a stranger to us – or Someone we wanted to avoid.
- She next addresses Him as "sir" when He offers Living Water. Once we realize that Jesus has something wonderful to offer us, we begin to have respect for Him.
- She calls Him a "prophet" when He revealed her sins to her. Do we deepen our respect for Jesus when we encounter Him in the confessional?
- When Jesus proclaims the Kingdom to her, announcing Himself as the Messiah, she is filled with joy and runs to tell others about the Messiah. She has converted from shame (avoiding the townspeople) to announcing the Messiah to all who will listen to her. Do we cast our shame away when we encounter Jesus in the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist?
- Do you recognize yourself as one who has "dug for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water"? This means that you have made for yourself other gods, idols which take the place of the Living God: ambition, sex, money, drugs, possessions, sins and vices, or other people. When we turn to something other than God, we are disappointed. We can fully rely on God alone.
- Our conversion ought to bear fruit in Works of Mercy.
  - ❖ Corporal Works of Mercy: (1) Feed the hungry. (2) Give drink to the thirsty. (3) Clothe the naked. (4) Shelter the homeless. (5) Visit the sick. (6) Visit and ransom the captives. (7) Bury the dead.
  - ❖ Spiritual Works of Mercy: (1) Admonish the sinner. (2) Instruct the ignorant. (3) Counsel the doubtful. (4) Bear wrongs patiently. (5) Forgive others willingly. (6) Comfort the afflicted and the sorrowful. (7) Pray for the living and the dead.
- Once we fully grasp the Divine Truth, we subordinate our will to God's Will for the sake of the common good.
- In this historical conversation, there is the mystery of the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery:
  - ❖ Jesus comes to us from a far distance (the infinite distance between the Creator and us, the created. "Although He was in the form of God...He emptied Himself." (Philippians 2:6-7)
  - ❖ He thirsts for our love. "I thirst." (John 19:28)
  - ❖ We do not always give Him our best; in fact, we insult Him at times: "And in My thirst, they gave Me vinegar to drink." (Psalm 69:22)
  - ❖ He offers us a share in His own Divine life, and Living Water flows from His pierced side. "We have been purchased at a price." (1 Corinthians 6:20)



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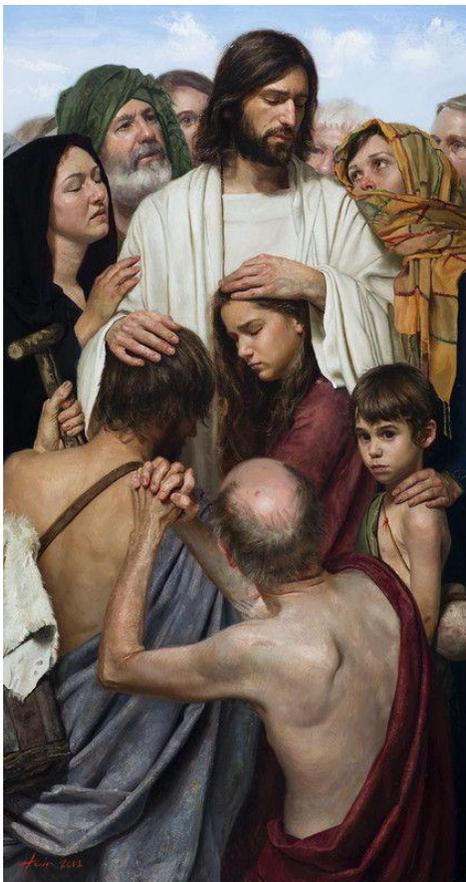


**Session 6: February 12, 2023 Chapter 6**

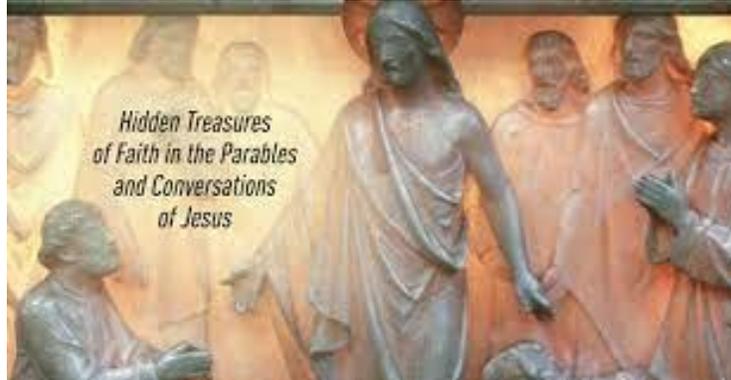
- Again we hear about a Samaritan. After the death of King Solomon, ten tribes broke away from his son and traveled north. False altars were set up in Bethel and Samaria to prevent the Israelites from traveling to Jerusalem to worship. The Temple in Jerusalem was the only place God proved His Presence by His “shekinah,” the glory cloud. The tribes who moved north were defeated by Assyria in 722 BC, and sent these Israelites into exile, forcing them to intermarry with pagans. The two tribes who remained in south and worshipped in the Temple of Jerusalem, Benjamin and Judah, were sent into exile in 587 BC by the Babylonians, but returned from exile in 537 BC. They never intermarried. These “Jews,” so called after the tribe of Judah, considered themselves “pure” or “authentic” Jews and considered the Samaritans to be pagans.
- For Jesus to present a Samaritan as the hero of this parable was shocking to those who heard Him.
- Jesus answers the question, “Who is my neighbor?” with this parable, which emphasized Works of Mercy in addition to knowledge of the Law. He also challenges us to see our neighbor in our “enemy” and in strangers. “Whatsoever you do to the least of My brothers, that you do unto Me.” (Matthew 25:40) “Be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only.” (James 1:22)



- Fr. Walshe delves into the spiritual sense of this parable:
- ❖ The Hebrew word *ādām* means “man” or “mankind.”
  - ❖ Beginning from Jerusalem – Jeru/city and salem/peace and moving on to Jericho, a city known for its corruption. The Hebrew word *Yareah* means “moon,” connoting change, waxing and waning in our faith life.
  - ❖ Is it any wonder that the man fell among thieves (demons)? Have you seen yourself journeying from a place of “peace” to a “den of thieves” in your faith life?
  - ❖ When we consort with evil, we lose the garment of salvation and are wounded. Thank God for the Sacrament of Confession, a Sacrament of Healing.
  - ❖ The Old Testament priest passed by. He did not want to incur ritual impurity, and the Law cannot save. “Christ Jesus has freed you from the Law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2) Paul means that the Law showed us what sins are, but did not confer any power to avoid sins or to be absolved from them. “Abundance of grace and the gift of justification came through Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:17)
  - ❖ The Levite passed by. He, too, did not want to become ritually impure, nor could his knowledge heal the wounded man. Only the grace which comes through Jesus can heal our wounds.
  - ❖ Only Jesus, the Man who “came down” from Heaven, stooped to heal the wounded man. Only Jesus “paid” for our sins with His salvific sacrifice. Only Jesus cares enough to bind our wounds, pouring the cooling oil of grace on our souls, and placing us in the care of His Church, promising to come again.



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**Session 7: February 19, 2023 Chapter 7**

- This man born blind enjoyed a privileged encounter with Jesus. What can we learn from this encounter?
- Jesus initiated this miracle – the man did not ask Him for healing. Jesus comes to us first, giving us the grace we need to come into a relationship with Him.
- Jesus spat on the ground and made clay – God **works** in Creation and for our salvation. Jesus shows us that physical, sensible signs convey invisible grace. This definition of “sacrament” has been used in the Church: “a visible sign instituted by Christ to give grace.”



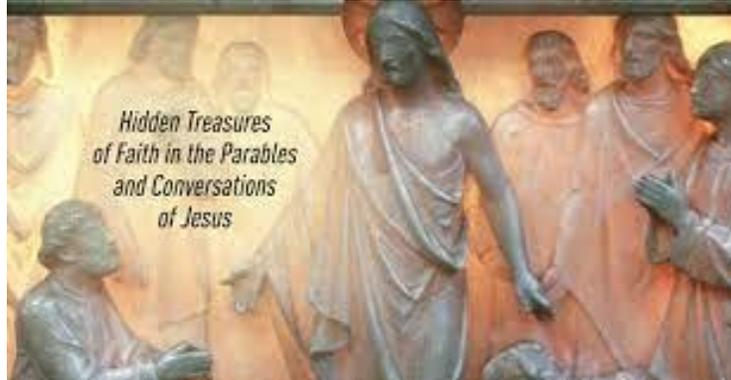
- There was an immediate price to pay for this miracle from the scribes and Pharisees and some onlookers:

- ❖ Did not believe that this was the man born blind they'd known for years
- ❖ Complained that this miracle had been performed on the Sabbath; they therefore disbelieved that Jesus' power came from God since He healed on the Sabbath
- ❖ They summoned the man's parents to inquire if he had, indeed, been born blind
- ❖ The parents were afraid and replied that their son could speak for himself
- ❖ The crowd accused Jesus of being a sinner. The blind man defended Jesus, emphasizing His **deeds**, which matched His **words** when He preached
- ❖ The man's faith in Jesus was immediate and deep. He even mocked the crowd: "You do not know where He is from, yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners..."
- ❖ For this defense of Jesus, the man was thrown out of the Temple.
- ❖ Jesus solicited from this man a **credo**, a declaration of faith in Him



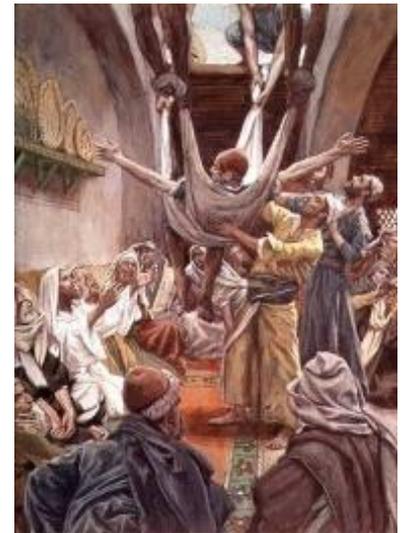
- The scribes and Pharisees heard Jesus say, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'we see,' your sin remains." Apply this to yourself – are you so blind that you "cannot" (stubbornly will not) see? Or do you recognize your spiritual blindness and approach God in prayer humbly, asking to be enlightened?
- Are any of us born with sin? If so, how can this be?
- Why does God allow physical evils such as illness and disability?
- Fr. Walshe remarks about the man born blind: "His humility was profound; his obedience; his faith perfect." Would that Jesus could say the same thing about us! This brings to mind the Beatitude: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."
- The Pharisees "see" something which is false when they proclaim: "We know that this man is a sinner." Have you "seen" or "known" something which was false? How were you corrected? How did you react to this correction?
- How is Original Sin and this man's blindness connected?
  - ❖ Original Sin is "inherited" from our first parents
  - ❖ Sin blinds us, especially habitual sins
  - ❖ Jesus is the Light of the World and comes to bring His light into our darkness
  - ❖ Only Jesus, fully Divine and fully human, could defeat Original Sin
  - ❖ Washing in the Pool of Siloam signifies Baptism, which washes Original Sin away

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**Session 8: February 26, 2023 Chapter 8**

- Consider what God is revealing to us with this conversation with Jesus:
  - ❖ **Four friends** brought the paralyzed man to Jesus. These four friends can be seen as the four evangelists – the four writers of the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We who are paralyzed in a miasma of sin can be brought to our Savior through these four friends.
  - ❖ These friends sought an unusual method to bring their friend to Jesus: through the roof of Peter’s house. There are many methods we can use to bring others to the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
  - ❖ Four is an important number, connoting “earthly things” such as the four seasons, the four corners of the Earth, the four winds, and the four elements. God reaches us supernaturally through earthly means. The sacraments use earthly elements to transmit supernatural grace to us: oil, water, bread, and wine.
  - ❖ Jesus spoke to the man’s deepest need, a need he perhaps didn’t know he had. When we pray, let us consider that God’s apparent lack of response may be because He knows what we really need. Only after forgiving the man’s sins did Jesus heal his paralyzed limbs.
- Notice the many miracles Jesus works with this one conversation:
  - ❖ He forgives the man’s sins.
  - ❖ He reads the minds and hearts of the Pharisees and the scribes.
  - ❖ He physically heals the paralyzed man.



- People’s response to these miracles is to praise God. Do you praise God when you see His face in your daily life?



- Jesus proclaims that He has the power to forgive sins as the “Son of Man on Earth.” He invested the Apostles with that power to the degree that “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loosed on Earth will be loosed in Heaven.” (Matthew 16:19) When He breathed upon them after the Resurrection and shared the Holy Spirit with them, He communicated this Divine power to them.

- ❖ Have you ever questioned why Catholics confess their sins to a priest?

- ❖ Has anyone questioned you about why Catholics confess to a priest?

- ❖ Remember that the priest is *in persona Christi* – in the Person of Christ – in the confessional. While he shares in God’s Divine power through the Holy Spirit to forgive sins, the priest is a human instrument in the Hands of God, forgiving sins in His Name, not on his own.

- The Apostles and some saints worked “greater miracles” than Jesus Himself. Why?

- ❖ When men trust God and allow Him to work through them, they glorify God and become the most authentic person they can be.

- ❖ God’s use of human means to work miracles showcases His power and His glory. “Nothing is impossible with God.” (Mark 10:27) “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

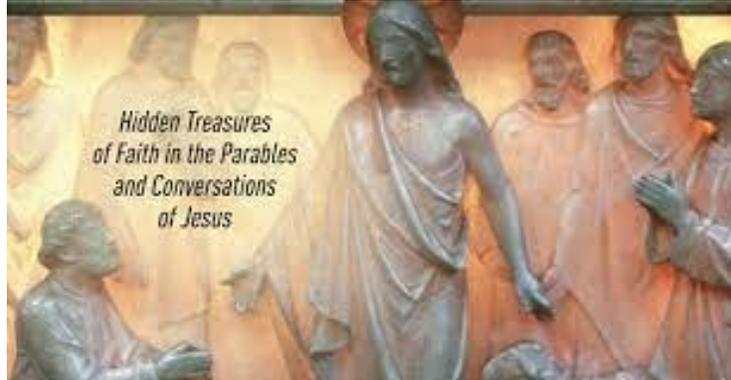
- ❖ God humbles Himself so that He does not frighten us. He became a babe in the manger; He takes on the appearance of bread so we can receive His grace.

- ❖ God uses the saints so that we might model our lives on theirs. We see His power at work in them, and we aspire to be like them, as they are like Him.

- ❖ The bonds of the people in the Body of Christ are strengthened when we see God at work in a saint. We are drawn to their holiness and we are drawn to God.



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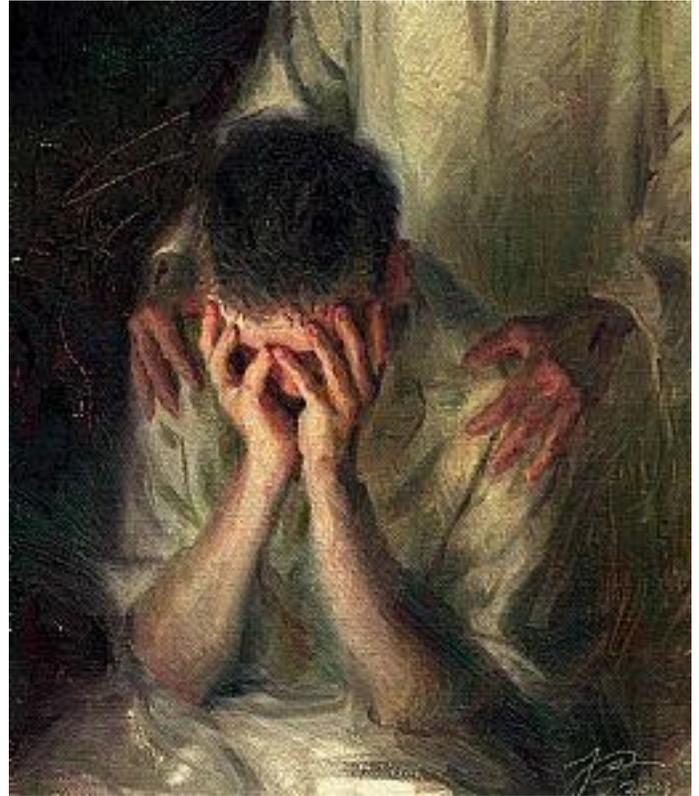
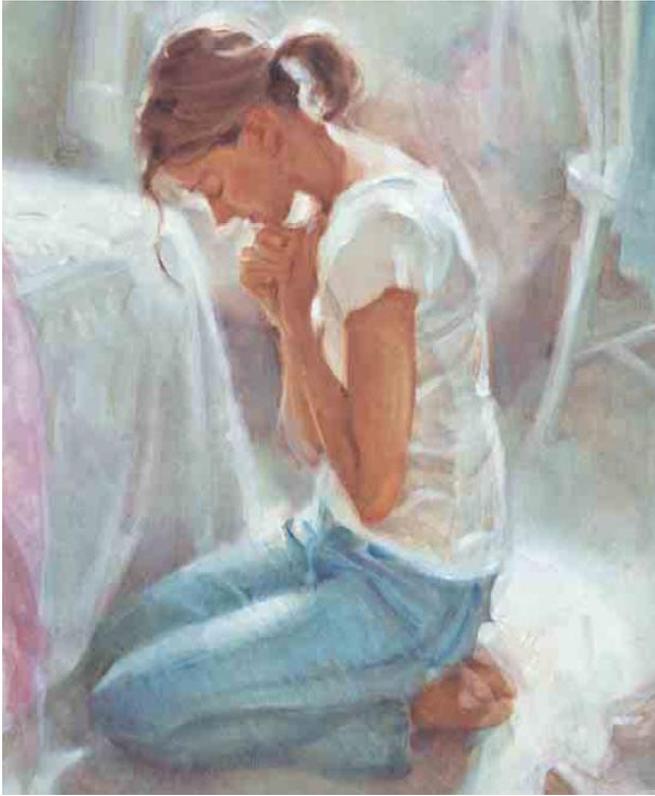
**Session 9: March 5, 2023 Chapter 9**

- We have two conversations with Jesus and two miracles which have interesting connections.
- Jairus, a synagogue official, comes to Jesus asking Him to save his twelve-year-old daughter, who is dying.
- On the way to Jairus' house, a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years comes to Jesus for help. She knows that if she just “touches the hem of His garment” she will be made whole.

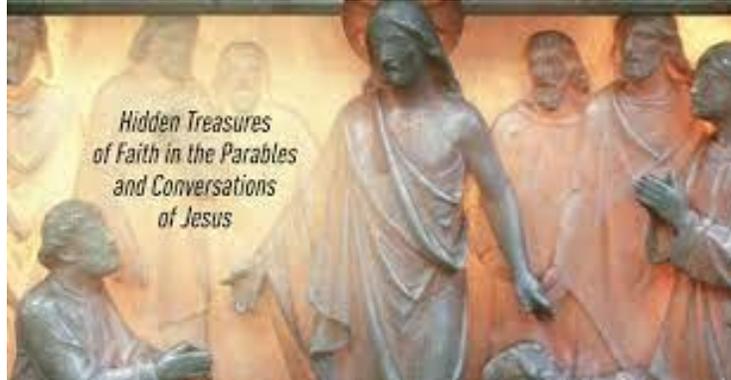


- Notice the number “twelve” in both encounters with Jesus. Twelve is the number of the tribes of Israel; the number of the Apostles; and it is made up of four (Earth) and three (Heaven).
  - In both miracles, one who is “unclean” is healed by Jesus, the Divine Physician.
  - The woman who had suffered for twelve years was extremely courageous. She ought not to have been in a crowd; yet when Jesus asked “Who touched Me?” she came forward. Her faith was audacious; she did not dare to ask Jesus for help, but her faith drew His help to her.
  - Jesus raised her from the ground and praised her faith.
- He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead: “Talitha khoum,” that is, “Little girl, get up.”
- Jesus calls the woman with the hemorrhage “daughter” while He is on the way to raise Jairus' daughter from the dead.

- Do you “touch” Jesus with great faith, trusting that with Him, everything is possible?
- Do you come to Jesus first, or is He a last resort? (\*\*SIGH\*\* “All we can do is pray.”)
- Do you pray fervently, pouring out your heart, and leaving the result in His Hands?



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**Session 10: March 12, 2023 Chapter 10**

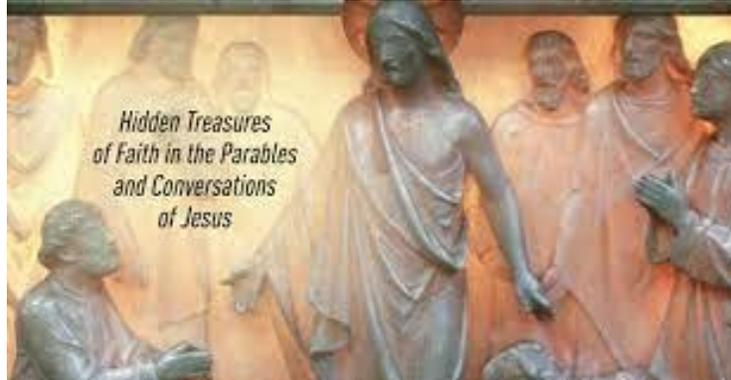
- “Well done, good and faithful servant! Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.” Which one of us would not want to hear these joyful words from Christ?
- “To everyone who has, more will be given...from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” What does this phrase mean to you?
- “Throw this useless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”
  - ❖ Wailing is seen as self-pity
  - ❖ Gnashing of teeth is seen as mortal anger, vengeance, anger, and/or envy
- Looking frankly and intently into your conscience, what do you expect to hear from Jesus as you lay upon your deathbed? At the Second Coming?
- God entrusts us with gifts and responsibilities according to our ability, and our response to Him will shape other gifts and responsibilities He entrusts to us. Are you growing in your spiritual life (more will be given)? Or are you slouching in your spiritual life (even what he has will be taken away)?
- This parable showcases the four characteristics of the virtuous life: one who does the good consistently, easily, promptly, and joyfully.



- Spiritual goods increase the more they are shared. Spiritual goods are the “common good” in the sense that they can be enjoyed by all without diminishment: love, joy, faith, knowledge are all examples of common goods. Particular or individual goods can be enjoyed only by one without diminishment: if I am eating a slice of cake and share it with you, my slice is smaller.
- Do you “see” God as He really is? Or have you fashioned for yourself a God? If so, what kind of god have you fashioned?
- Do you consider the laziness of the servant who buried the talent to be “wicked”? If so, have you examined your conscience? Have you, too, been guilty of sloth – the aversion to do good?
- “Success” in God’s eyes is our faithfulness to His Word. We do as we are bid: “Love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:12) Success does not mean that everything we set out to do, even in evangelization or the mission field, turns out as we expect. Success is fidelity to God’s Word.



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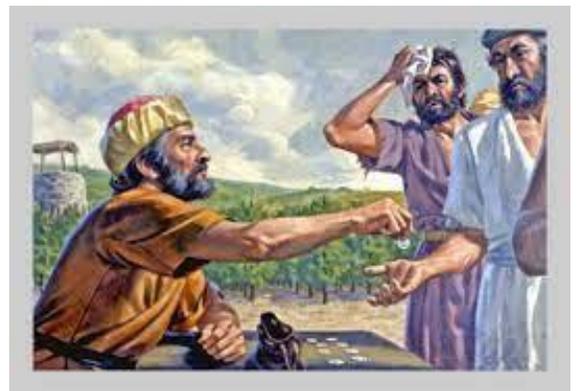


**Session 11: March 19, 2023 Chapter 11**



- The serpent hinted that God had been holding back on Adam and Eve; that the fruit they were forbidden to eat was, in fact, Divine. The serpent in effect told them that God is not fair. Have you ever experienced God as unfair to your disadvantage? Has He ever “cheated” in your favor?
- How would you have felt if you’d been working since 9 AM and were paid last, after those who’d come in to work at 6 PM?

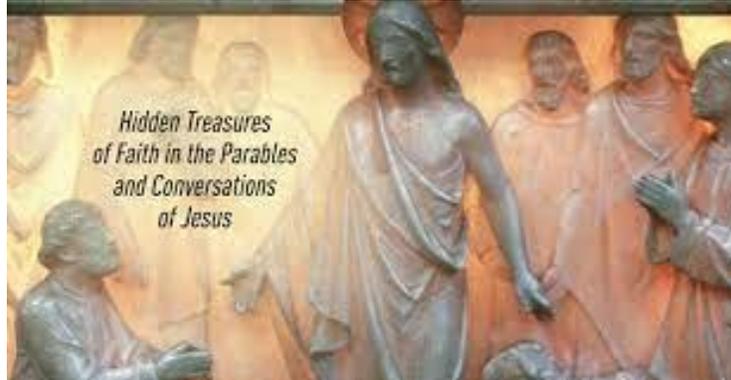
- What would your reaction have been to the owner of the vineyard when he said, “Am I not free to do with my own what I will? Are you **envious** because I am generous?”?
- Fr. Walshe ties this parable to His teaching that the “little children” should come to Him, and after the rich young man went away sad “because he had many possessions.” What lesson is Jesus teaching in these two conversations and then this parable?
- Might you be tempted to **envy** in Jesus’ teaching that the “first shall be last”?
  - ❖ Through the Devil’s envy, death entered the world
  - ❖ Envy is contrary to the common good and to our individual good
  - ❖ Envy is contrary to love of God and true humility. We don’t appreciate God’s goodness and don’t appreciate the He knows best. We forget that He is the Creator and that we are the created.



- Might you be tempted to a sense of injustice in Jesus' teaching that the "first shall be last"?
  - ❖ Perceived injustice is often a spur to envy
  - ❖ God's ways are not our ways, and we don't see ourselves as God sees us
  - ❖ We do not measure justice and injustice as well as God does
  - ❖ What is the ultimate reward? Eternal beatitude in Heaven. How does that measure up against any earthly good?
- Might you be tempted to judge others harshly in Jesus' teaching that the "first shall be last"?
  - ❖ One who loves much, receives a great reward
  - ❖ One who forgives much, receives a great reward
  - ❖ One who is perfectly contrite receives a great reward. Perfect contrition is being sorry for your sins because you've injured your relationship with God.
  - ❖ "The measure which you measure out shall be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38)
- The usual daily wage is eternal beatitude, which God offers to all – whether or not we've believed in Him all of our lives or came to know and love Him late in life. "There is more joy in Heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance." (Luke 15:7)
- God seeks us constantly to offer us salvation: this is the landowner going out several times during the day to bring laborers *into His vineyard*. Don't we want to be brought into Heaven?
- The grace of God is a participation in His Divine Life and is shown by:
  - ❖ Divine Revelation in Scripture and Tradition
  - ❖ The Sacraments
  - ❖ The Catholic Church
  - ❖ The many gifts, talents, and inspirations we receive from the Holy Spirit
- Did any of us **earn** Divine Grace?
- Do any of us **deserve** Divine Grace?
- We cannot be jealous when God gives His grace to someone, because they are no more nor less deserving than we are. Let's appreciate God and His great kindness and mercy.



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**Session 12: March 26, 2023 Chapter 12**

- With whom do you identify in this parable? Does it change over time?
- The younger son evinced egregious ingratitude toward his father: “you’re worth more to me dead than alive.” While this is a tremendous amount of ingratitude, do you examine your conscience for ingratitude toward God and your neighbor?
- The older son was embittered by the work he did with and for his father. Are you bitter at your lot in life? Do you not see that God is with you always?
- The father embodies astounding love, mercy, and humility.
  - ❖ He gave his ungrateful son what he asked for
  - ❖ He never gave up on this son
  - ❖ He “watched” for the return of this son and ran to greet him
  - ❖ He immediately welcomed his repentant son back into the family – not as a servant, but as a son
  - ❖ He gently schooled the older son: “You are with me always, and all I have is yours.”
- Have you been “lost” spiritually? How did you find your way back to the Church? Did you rejoice when you found your Faith again?
- Can you embrace the Father’s love, or do you feel unworthy? He sees you as good, beautiful, and worth saving. Think of the fearful price He paid for our salvation.

- Our Father provides us with good things which we might abuse:
  - ❖ Our bodies – do we dress modestly and act chastely, or are we uncovering those parts of our bodies which ought to be reserved for the gaze of our spouse? Do we nourish our bodies or eat junk food? Do we smoke? Do we take illegal drugs? Do we exercise? Do we rest enough?
  - ❖ Our gifts and talents: Example: if you are gifted with musical talent, do you rap with blasphemous curses, or do you participate in the church choir?
  - ❖ Our time – do we use it in service of our neighbor, or do we waste it?
  - ❖ Our capacity to love, which we can either increase or diminish through the choices we make in our lives
  - ❖ The gift of language – do we use our tongues to praise and thank God, or are we rough, uncouth, and vulgar?

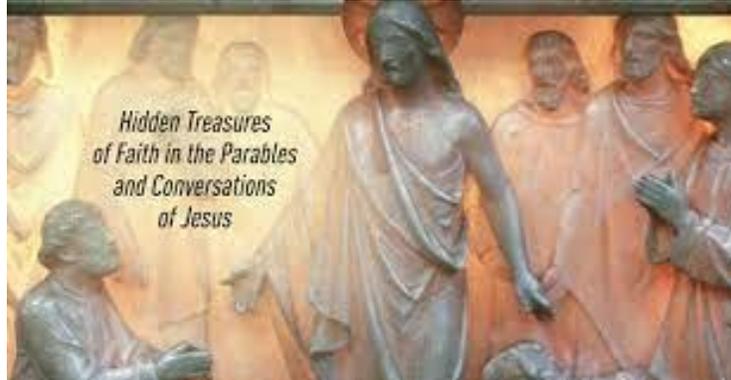


- When we see our children in need of the basic necessities of life, perhaps it's best if we don't question how they will use our help. God sees what we do and what they do; and He is the only qualified judge of our actions.
- Which virtues does the father display? Which virtues does the younger son lack? Which virtues does the older son lack?
- Although this father is goodness, kindness, and patience itself, both of his sons doubt these virtues of their father. How does the younger son exhibit his doubt? How does the older son exhibit his doubt?

- Do you find the attitude of the older son justifiable? Might you have felt the same?
- Can you discern between the Giver and the gift? Do you love the Giver more than the gift? Even if the gift is lost?
- Can you let go of created goods in order to cling more closely to God?
- What is your reaction to Fr. Walshe's Spiritual Sense of the parable?
- What is your reaction to Fr. Walshe's parallel of the parable to the narrative of Joseph, son of Jacob?

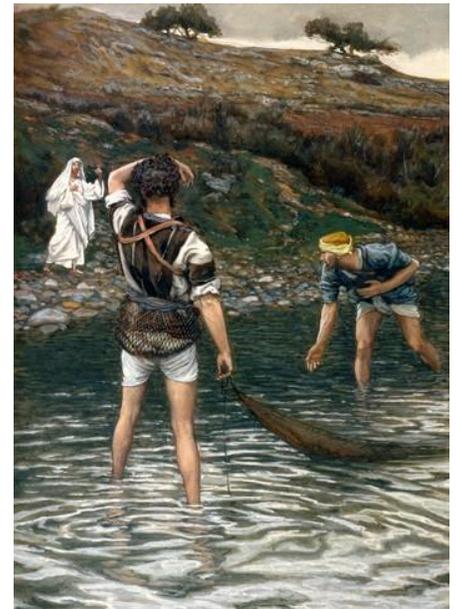


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**Session 13: April 12, 2023 Chapter 13**

- Jesus calls from the shore to the men at sea: “Children, have you caught anything?” Imagine being grown men and being called “children” by a 33-year-old man! Surely that caught their attention. How does God catch your attention?
- John, the Beloved Disciple, recognizes Jesus; it is Peter, the first Pope, who does not hesitate to dive into the water and swim to shore. Do you respond to the Master’s voice as readily as Peter did?
- Peter sees Jesus at a charcoal fire, ready to cook their breakfast. Once again, Jesus is a servant leader, and we are called to follow His example.
- Peter surely recalled the last charcoal fire around which he gathered: the night that he denied Jesus three times. Jesus asks Peter three times “Do you love Me?” In this gentle way, yet one which pierced Peter to the heart, Jesus allows the three avowals of love to blot out the three denials. How does Jesus allow you to blot out your sins? Do you recognize your “charcoal fire moments”?



- The Greek words used for love in the conversation between Jesus and Peter are different: “Agape” and “Philia.” The Greeks identified four types of love:
  - ❖ **Agape** is a “love feast” is an unconditional, all-consuming, supernatural love.
  - ❖ **Eros** is romantic love between one man and one woman.
  - ❖ **Philia** is a friendship love between two or more unrelated people. While *Eros* draws two people aside from others, and the two look at one another, *Philia* can bring many people with shared interests together; they look toward and work toward their goal together rather than looking at each other.
  - ❖ **Storge** is the natural affection and love between parents and their children. This can also be a casual friendship where a shared interest alone brings them together. *Storge* connotes a shallow love in the casual friendship sense and the natural and mutual “need love” in the parent-child sense. (CS Lewis, *The Four Loves*)
- What kinds of love do you experience in your life?
- Notice that the Apostles went back to fishing – they went back to what they knew. Even after the Resurrection, they did not know how to spread the Good News. They needed the Holy Spirit to enlighten, encourage, and embolden them to spread the Good News.

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful  
 And enkindle in them the fire of Your love.  
 Send forth Your Spirit, and we shall be created.  
 And You shall renew the face of the Earth.*

