



Putting the pieces
of our faith together

Corpus Christi David parish mission
Lent 2011

The Four Basic Questions



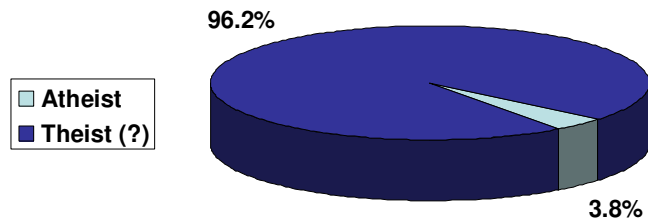
- Who is God?
- If God is good, why is there evil in the world?
- If God is good and there is evil in the world, what has God done about it?
- If God is good and there is evil in the world and God is doing something about it, how do we get with the program?



Basic Question #1: Who is God?

Sunday evening

Our Thirst for God



An amazing statistic:

- According to a 1995 survey by Encyclopaedia Britannica, only 3.8% of the world claims to be atheist
- i.e. 96.2% of people are at least open to the possibility of God and the supernatural

Our Questing Hearts



“Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men:

- What is man?
- What is the meaning, the aim of our life?
- What is moral good, what is sin?
- Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve?
- Which is the road to true happiness?
- What are death, judgment and retribution after death?
- What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?”

Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 1

At the Heart of the Quest



“From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives **with a profound religious sense.**”

Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2

We know God through the beauty of creation



“Question the beauty of the earth,
question the beauty of the sea,
question the beauty of the air
distending and diffusing itself...
question all these realities.
All respond: ***See, we are beautiful.***
Their beauty is a profession.

These beauties are subject to change.

Who made them if not the Beautiful One
who is not subject to change?”

- St. Augustine

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his
handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

yet their voice goes out through all the
earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

- Psalm 19: 1-4

We know God through the truth of conscience



“In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths.”

- Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 16

We know God in the goodness of life



“God created man for incorruption,
and made him in the image of his own eternity.”

- Wisdom 2:23

“It is in the face of death that the riddle of human existence grows most acute. Not only is man tormented by pain and by the advancing deterioration of his body, but even more so by a dread of perpetual extinction. He rightly follows the intuition of his heart when he abhors and repudiates the utter ruin and total disappearance of his own person. He rebels against death because he bears in himself an eternal seed which cannot be reduced to sheer matter.”

- Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 18

The universal truths about God



“The holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one, true, living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will, and in every perfection; who, although He is one, singular, altogether simple and unchangeable spiritual substance, must be proclaimed distinct in reality and essence from the world; most blessed in Himself and of Himself, and ineffably most high above all things which are or can be conceived outside Himself.”

Vatican I, Dei Filius, chapter 1

What Christianity brings as a special revelation about God



Christianity professes two special truths
about God:

“God is love.” (1 John 4: 8b)

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28: 19b)



Why is the Trinity important?

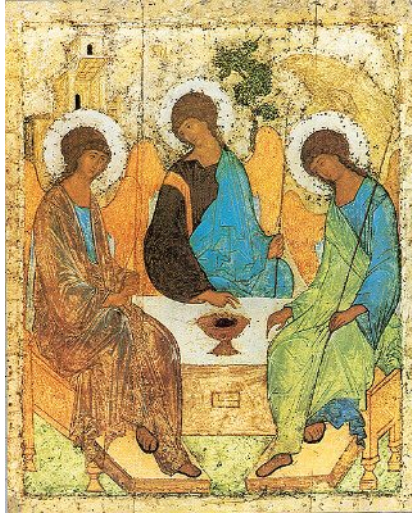
The analogy of the music player

Love is God's nature



- Not just that love is “in” God’s nature...
- Not just that God is loving...
- God’s very substance is Love!
- The Trinity is not just a communion of Persons, but of loving Persons
- It is love that binds the Trinity into a perfect Unity, while the nature of God as love flows naturally into a Trinity

What this means for us



“And the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, ‘My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.’”

- Genesis 18: 1-3

The meaning of life



Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So **God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.** And God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.**" And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

- Genesis 1: 26-31a

The destiny of Creation



Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." ...And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it."

- Revelation 21: 1-6a; 22-24

Our deepest spiritual aspirations



- Truth
- Goodness
- Beauty
- ...Golf?





Next evening:
**If God is good, why is there
evil in the world?**

Monday, 7:00 p.m.



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**Basic Question #2:
If God is good, why is there
evil in the world?**

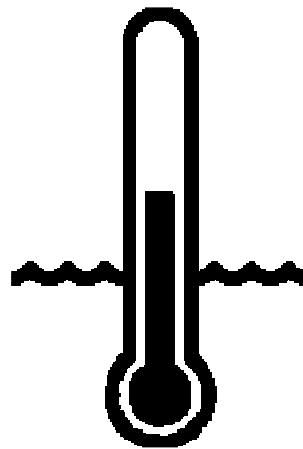
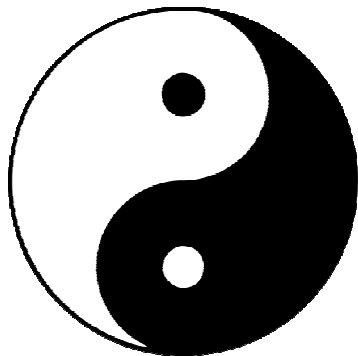
Monday evening

The short answer...



SIN

What is evil?



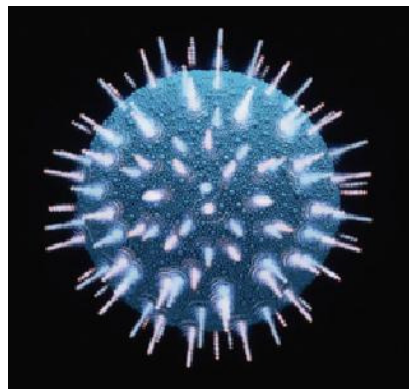
God did not make evil!



And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

-Genesis 1: 31

Where does evil come from?



Examples of physical evil

The finitude of creation



Moral evil



311 Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned. Thus has *moral evil*, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil, entered the world. God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 311

Sin of angels



Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world -- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

- Revelation 12: 7-9

We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- Ephesians 6: 12

Original sin



The analogy of the power cords, part 1

What if our first parents had never sinned?



- Every human being would have been immaculately conceived
- All persons would have received a special protection against attacks of the Evil One
- Direct conversation with the Holy Spirit, as well as the angels and saints
- Human beings would have been “high priests” of creation with a power of initiative within nature
- All would have been preserved from death (assumption, transfiguration, or dormition)

Immediate consequences of original sin



399 Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness. They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image - that of a God jealous of his prerogatives.

400 The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject "to its bondage to decay". Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will "return to the ground", for out of it he was taken. *Death makes its entrance into human history.*

- Catechism of the Catholic Church

Eventual consequences of original sin



The weakening of our
love for God:

“But miserable, with their hopes set on dead things, are the men who give the name ‘gods’ to the works of men’s hands, gold and silver fashioned with skill, and likenesses of animals, or a useless stone, the work of an ancient hand.”

- Wisdom 13: 10

The weakening of our
love for neighbour:

“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

- Genesis 6: 5

Why doesn’t God just wipe out evil?



Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

- Matthew 13: 24-30

What's taking God so long?



Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- 2 Peter 3: 8-13

So what shall we do?



REPENT!

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

- Mark 1: 14



Next evening:
**If God is good, and there is evil
in the world, what has God
done about it?**

Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.



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Basic Question #3:
If God is good and there is
evil in the world, what has God
done about it?
Tuesday evening

Quick recap



- God created the world out of love
- God created the world with internal harmony
- Sin has weakened that harmony, leading to evil and suffering
- But it is still God's plan to dwell in his creation as in a temple – he has not abandoned it!
- He has inaugurated a new “creation within creation” – the Kingdom of God, which is both coming but is already present

Key concept: proportionality



- Proportionality relates to the capacity of interaction (e.g. ear to sound, eye to light)
- Recall: our first parents were “proportioned” to receive the Word of God without flaw
- Recall: through original sin, this capacity to receive God's revelation is now subject to lots of earthly distractions
- God's mode of self-revelation therefore must now begin slowly, according to our proportional capacity to receive it, and increasing as we grow in that proportionality (whether as individuals or as a culture)

Human pre-history



- Even after the Fall, our first parents still had faith, thanks to the memory of the experience of knowing God personally
- The members of the first human family were thus “well proportioned” to receiving God’s revelation
- This personal memory eventually became a cultural one, and so a shift took place: from very early on human beings “called upon the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4: 26b)
- As the generations passed, paganism set in – a confusion between the beautiful works God created, and the God who created them (Wisdom 13: 1-9)
- Paganism eventually led to idolatry, wherein the experience of artistic beauty leads to the worship of idols (Wisdom 13:10 – 14:31)
- All this movement, particularly idolatry & sorcery, becomes easily manipulated into bondage to the Evil One (1 Corinthians 10: 20-21)
- Typical proto-religion: a belief in spirits, in powerful cosmic forces capable of good or evil, a sense that such forces should have been controllable, in the need for worship and sacrifice, etc.

The earliest human civilization



- The Sumerian civilization arose around 4000 – 3500 B.C.
- The historical period begins with the invention of writing in clay tablets (cuneiform)
- A true civilization, with organized government, religion, education, etc.
- A key city of this civilization was Ur
- And the most famous citizen of Ur was...

Abraham



- According to the Bible, Abraham's father was Terah, who was a polytheist (Joshua 24: 2)
- The Bible also states that Terah and his family was originally from "Ur of the Chaldees" (Genesis 11: 28)
- Abraham, Terah's son, had a unique combination of personal and cultural gifts that meant he was "proportioned" to receive a proposal from God – to be the founder of a new people, in a new land (Genesis 12+)
- Abraham worships only God, and teaches his family to do the same
- A mysterious figure in the story of Abraham: Melchizedek (Genesis 14: 18-20)

Ishmael and Isaac



- According to the Bible, Abraham had two sons, Ishmael (by Hagar) and Isaac (by Sarah) – see Genesis 16 & 21
- The covenant with God was passed through Isaac, but Ishmael was promised to become a "great nation" as well (Genesis 17: 20)
- According to St. Jerome, the 12 tribes of Ishmael lived in Arabia –their descendents are therefore called "Arabs"
- According to an ancient Arab oral tradition, Ishmael eventually settled in a town called Mecca, where he built the foundations of a temple dedicated to the One God

Jacob/Israel and his 12 sons



- Isaac had a son, Jacob, who later received the name Israel
- Jacob had 12 sons, one of whom (Joseph) ended up in Egypt – first as a slave, then as a magistrate (Genesis 37-50)
- Through Joseph, Jacob and his family were welcomed into Goshen (Egypt), where over several generations they became very numerous (Genesis 47:4; Exodus 1: 7)

Moses the law-giver



- The episode of Moses is the next great phase in the “proportioning” of the world
- The covenant with Abraham, an individual, has now become a covenant with a people – but one that is disorganized
- The persecution by the Egyptians builds in the Hebrews a sense of belonging to one people, despite the 12 tribes
- Moses is sent to this people to lead them to worship God and to amplify the covenant between them and God
- The people are saved from Egypt in the event of Passover
- The people pledge loyalty to God; they receive the Law, and promise to keep it
- This combination of worship and law gives the people their first real social tools to be a “nation”
- A mystery: the promise of another prophet “like Moses” (Deuteronomy 18: 15)

A new concept: Judgement



- After Moses and Joshua the people are living in the Promised Land, but they often participate in the idolatry of the local inhabitants
- This division within the people leads to their oppression by the Philistines
- The Judges were charismatic leaders who interpreted the Law for the people; they also rescued the people from oppression
- The Biblical concept of “Judgement” is therefore fundamentally positive – it is a call to repentance but also a promise of rescue from oppression

David, the Messiah



- The third great phase in the “proportioning” of the people came with King David, who acted as a central point of reference for the people
- Tired of the era of Judges, the people eventually clamour for a more stable system, and ask for a King
- Hebrew kings were anointed, to show that their authority came from another
- To David, the second king, God promised a dynasty that would last forever
- The Hebrew word for “anointed one”? *Messiah*, or in Greek, *Christ*.

Solomon – glory and tragedy



- David's son Solomon built a great Temple in honour of God in Jerusalem – a wonder of the world
- But Solomon also engaged in idolatry
- As a consequence, the kingdom was divided: Israel in the north (capital: Samaria) and Judah in the south (capital: Jerusalem)
- The northern kingdom rejects the Temple in Jerusalem, and sets up other places of worship – quickly leading to idolatry

The Exile and after: a period of consolidation



- The Northern Kingdom is eventually conquered and scattered – the people are absorbed into the surrounding social fabric
- The Southern Kingdom is later conquered as well, and the people exiled to Babylon
- This Exile become a time of decision for the people – and they choose to remain faithful
- The people become extremely zealous for the Law, and base their identity around it (idols begone!)
- The understanding of the Kingdom of God also emerges as not just an earthly kingdom, but one that would come through a great “day of judgement”
- The mysterious figure of the “son of man” (Daniel 7: 13)

Issues in the time of Jesus



- Does the Kingdom of God involve an earthly king and kingdom, or a heavenly one?
- What is the relation of the People of God to the Gentiles?
- Is the Second Temple legitimate, or is some other worship and law needed?
- How are the sayings of the Prophets to be read and interpreted?

The Word made flesh



- The greatest “phase” in the reception of the revelation of God by man is in the coming of that revelation as a man: Jesus, the Word made flesh
- Taking the Jewish worship of Passover, he universalizes it with the gestures of Melchizedek – a priest outside of Hebrew tradition
- As successor of David, Jesus is the King of the Jews, but one who opens up “citizenship” in the People of God to all who place their faith in him
- Jesus universalizes the Mosaic Law by particularizing it with the gift of the Holy Spirit
- Jesus seals all these actions by his death and resurrection, thereby ransoming for himself a new people from the dominion of the Evil One – a process which continues today
- "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2: 38)

The Church



- Jesus founded the Church upon the 12 Apostles, representing the 12 tribes of Israel; of them, he named Simon as “the Rock”
- At Pentecost, he poured out the Holy Spirit on the 120 gathered together – the birth of a new humanity
- Christianity spread quickly throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, but despite bitter persecutions it continued to grow
- While Jesus and his Gospel constitute the fullness of God’s revelation, the Church continued to grow in its understanding and living of it
- The history of the Church needs to be read in this light: that while it shows much human imperfection, what is even more amazing is that it has also shown forth much holiness and goodness
- Catholic Christianity: All Christians have Christ, and with that much that is good, but only Catholicism has such doctrinal clarity, national universality, and the ministry of Peter – giving Catholics a special responsibility

Waiting in Joyful Hope



- While the Kingdom of God continues to grow in the world, we still await the final messianic triumph when the universe will be transfigured in the glory of God
- In Jesus, the new Adam, we have the opportunity to live in a renewed world of grace
- It is said that much of the world will continue to live as part of the first Adam
- The mission of the Church: to bring the opportunity to join this new humanity to the world, and to follow God according to this new worship and law of love
- The final agony: in the final days of our current phase of history, the People of God will be persecuted for its message, worship, and acts of charity, but this period of great witness will be the final proportioning of the world to receive its full communion with God

History, summarized



For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has destroyed every sovereignty and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death, for "he subjected everything under his feet." But when it says that everything has been subjected, it is clear that it excludes the one who subjected everything to him. When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will (also) be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

- 1 Corinthians 15: 21-28

Where do we fit in?



- To REPENT means, fundamentally, to declare our love and loyalty for Christ, the new Adam, who would rather see his coming judgement as one of salvation than condemnation
- To be BAPTIZED means, fundamentally, to ask God to pour forth his Holy Spirit into us, and to fully release the power of the Spirit in our lives
- To WORSHIP means, fundamentally, to engage in prayer to God within his new Temple, the Christian Church, around the table of the Lord's Supper, and to live that new covenant in the world in union with the Church's mission



Next evening:
**If God is good, and there is evil
in the world, and God has done
something about it, how do we
get with the program?**

Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.



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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

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.

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)
- 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

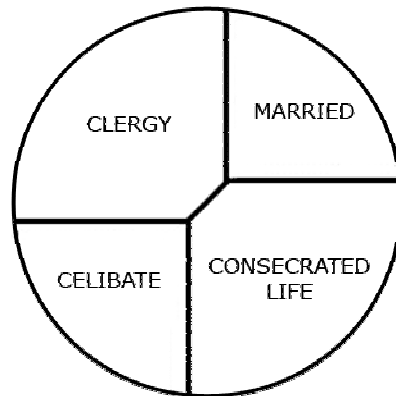
- Unity with the Church that has gone before us: knowing and living our Tradition
- Unity with the Church present: solidarity with our pastors and fellow Christians
- Unity with the Church that is to come: union of hearts with the saints

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)

“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



In the spirit of being thankful...

THANK YOU!

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