



"A three-ply cord is not easily broken."Brothers better together

Playbook for Disciples

Series II

Life in the Spirit

The Holy Spirit

Living in the Spirit

Barriers to Living in the Spirit

Docility to the Holy Spirit

Fruits of the Holy Spirit

With video content provided by



Empowering men to become better disciples of Jesus Christ

Playbook for Disciples

Life in the Spirit



www.Live4More.us

Empowering men to become better disciples of Jesus Christ

Playbook for Disciples

This book is dedicated to all of the men who will use it together with their brothers in Christ. May our exploration of the Catholic faith empower us to become better disciples of Jesus Christ!

This book was developed in the power of the Holy Spirit through the efforts of the following contributors (listed in alphabetical order):

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To God be the glory!! Jesus we trust in You!

Live4More Men's Discipleship Ministry

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Empowering men to become better disciples of Jesus Christ

Table of Contents

Live4More Introduction.....	ii
A Guide for Using the Playbook for Disciples.....	iii
Accessing the Videos.....	v
Discipleship Group Meeting Format.....	vi
The Holy Spirit.....	1
Who is the Holy Spirit?.....	1
The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.....	3
Leading of the Holy Spirit.....	5
Living in the Spirit.....	7
Our Power.....	7
Walking in the Spirit.....	9
Receiving More of the Holy Spirit.....	11
Barriers to Living in the Spirit.....	13
Weapons of the Enemy.....	13
The Seven Deadly Sins.....	15
Docility to the Holy Spirit.....	23
Becoming Docile to the Holy Spirit.....	23
Mary as Our Model.....	27
Fruits of the Holy Spirit.....	29
Types of Fruit.....	29
What is Necessary to Bear Fruit?.....	33
Differences between Gifts and Fruit.....	37

Live4More Introduction

“Where one alone may be overcome, two together can resist. A three-ply cord is not easily broken.”
~ Ecclesiastes 4:12

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” ~ Proverbs 27:17

Live4More is a non-profit ministry with the mission to promote the development of small groups where men can comfortably discuss and grow in their faith within Catholic parish life.

The goal is to encourage men to form small groups to study the faith, learn from each other and help hold each other accountable in their faith journey so they can go out to their family, friends, parish, workplace and community living out their Catholic faith as it is intended to be lived.

At Live4More, we believe that we, as men, are simply better disciples when we are walking our spiritual journeys together as a band of brothers growing and sharing in faith together. Iron cannot sharpen iron if iron doesn't repeatedly touch iron and a three ply cord cannot be formed with only one single strand. We need to meet together regularly to grow and share in our faith together so that we are fully empowered to go forth and live out our faith in every aspect of our lives. We were made for relationship. We were made for greatness. We need each other! Brothers are better together!

“We should not stay away from our assembly, as is the custom of some, but encourage one another, and this all the more as you see the day drawing near.” ~ Hebrews 10:25

A Guide for Using the Playbook for Disciples

The Playbook for Disciples is designed to be a directed study of intentional Christian Discipleship for use by men's small groups. Of course it can be used by anyone individually or in any type of group, but we believe its greatest impact occurs through men's small groups. This section provides a few useful tips on how this book is intended to be used.

The ideas presented in this brief guide are intended as guidelines to help lead you on your journey as a group and not as hard and fast rules. Every group is unique and has its own special character. Think of these ideas as the guardrails on a bridge. They are here to keep you from falling over the side so that you stay on the road moving forward, but you get to choose which lane to drive in.

Playbook Format

- *Life in the Spirit* is presented in five "Skill Levels" with multiple topics for each skill level.
- Each topic can be covered in one gathering or in multiple gatherings of the group. There is no rush to "finish the book". Take your time and explore the scriptures and questions as a group. If you spend an entire group gathering discussing only one question, no problem. Simply pick up with the next question at the next gathering.
- Each topic has an associated video component which is an episode of the Crossing The Goal TV show produced by EWTN as a ministry to men. These videos can be viewed for free by streaming them live from the [Crossing The Goal website](#) by simply following the links provided in the **Watch Video** section for each topic.
- If you do not have internet access where you meet, there are a few alternatives you can consider.
 - Each man in the group can view the associated episode at home prior to the group gathering.
 - You can purchase the appropriate DVD(s) via the [Crossing The Goal website](#) and watch them as a group during your gathering, if you have access to a TV and DVD player.
 - You could simply not use the videos. The Playbook is still quite effective even without use of the CTG episodes. They are a great feature but not absolutely required.
- See the Accessing the Videos section of this Introduction and Guide for more detailed information about finding and using the CTG video content.

Group Gatherings (Meetings)

- We recommend a weekly group gathering, however bi-weekly also works for many groups.
- We have found that it works best when the gatherings are about 90 minutes long. However, 60 minutes can also work well. It just takes a little longer to complete the Playbook, but as noted above, there is no rush to finish the book. See our suggested Meeting Format in the next few pages.
- Each man should make a commitment to make his attendance at each gathering a priority in his life. Of course, on occasion a man might not be able to attend, but it should not be because he would rather watch the game!

Playbook for Disciples – Life in the Spirit

- It is important that each gathering be a safe environment where each man can share his thoughts freely and confidentially. What is shared in group gatherings stays in the group!
- Select a quiet place to gather so that you will not be disturbed.
 - Turn off or silence your phones.... and better yet, just leave them in the car!
 - Each man should keep an open mind and heart to grow in faith in the Lord.
- Select a leader (or facilitator) for each group gathering.
 - Rotate the role among multiple men in the group.
 - Select the facilitator for each gathering in advance of the gathering, preferably before concluding the current gathering.
- Be respectful of each other's time and schedule by starting and ending on time.
 - Always begin and end with prayer. You may want to consider including a worship song or two but keep it simple. Worship helps to open our hearts for listening and sharing.
 - Remember, there is no rush! You can continue the discussion at the next gathering.
 - This is about spending time together learning and sharing our faith and having a little fellowship too!
- Each man should have a Bible and bring it with him to each gathering of the group.
 - Take turns doing the scripture readings.
 - Share your thoughts on the questions. There may be different views and some may be strongly felt.
 - Listen to your brothers and embrace different viewpoints. God loves the discussion and we all grow when we share our faith with each other.
- Relax and enjoy each other. Lean on the Holy Spirit for guidance!

Action Plan

- Always complete this activity near the end of every gathering, even if you don't finish all the other sections.
- Take a few minutes for each man to make an action plan to work on between now and the next group gathering. Write it down.
 - Use the actions suggested or make your own plan.
 - You can make individual plans or the entire group could decide to take on one common challenge.
- At the beginning of the next gathering, each man should have an opportunity to share on how he is doing with his action plan and how things are going in his life.
 - Celebrate together when things go well.
 - Support one another when progress is slow.

Accessing the Videos

The Playbook for Disciples was created in conjunction with video material from the [Crossing The Goal](#) TV show produced by EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network).

The video component which is associated with each topic is an episode of [Crossing The Goal](#) (CTG) and can be viewed for free by streaming them live from the CTG website at crossingthegoal.com. Many of the episodes can also be found through YouTube. The various topical series CTG DVD's can be purchased through the [Crossing The Goal](#) website.

We wish to note that the Playbook for Disciples was originally developed by the men of [Live4More](#) for use by [Crossing The Goal](#) and was subsequently made available on the [Crossing The Goal](#) website. [Live4More](#) has since updated the content of the Playbook for Disciples, but has not changed the video components used with each topic. We believe our updated version is an improvement you will enjoy using in your group.

To access the appropriate video, simply follow the link provided in this document in the **Watch Video** section for each topic. Use **Ctrl-Left Click** to follow the link.

There are two alternate paths you can also choose to follow in order to access the videos, both of which lead to the same place on the [Crossing The Goal website](#).

1. Use the link provided on our website at Live4More.us. Once you are on the home page:
 - Click on **Resources** at the top of the page. This will take you to the Resources page.
 - Select **Playbook for Disciples**. Then select **Playbook Videos** in the lower center of the page. This will bring you to a page on the Crossing The Goal website with the title “*Super Bowl Playbook for Disciples*” at the top.
 - Select the appropriate **Skill Level** that you are currently discussing in your group from Part 2 in the center of the page.
 - This will bring you to a page with all of the videos for that particular skill level from which you can select the appropriate video.
2. Go directly to the [Crossing The Goal website](#). Once you are on the home page:
 - Click on **Spiritual Fitness Groups** at the top of the page. This will produce a drop-down menu.
 - Select **Super Bowl**. This will bring you to a page with the title “*Super Bowl Playbook for Disciples*” at the top.
 - Select the appropriate **Skill Level** that you are currently discussing in your group from Part 2 in the center of the page.
 - This will bring you to a page with all of the videos for that particular skill level from which you can select the appropriate video.

Please [contact us](#) with any questions regarding access of the videos. We are glad to assist you so you can begin to experience all that God has planned for you with this group!

Video content provided by



Discipleship Group Meeting Format (4-12 Members)

Live4More generally recommends that a typical Men’s Discipleship Group consists of about 4 to 12 men who meet every week or at least twice monthly.

Why do we gather regularly? - 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 “Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown but we an imperishable one.”

Step 1 – Gathering, Worship and Prayer (About 20 minutes)

- Worship - Beginning with a worship song which is easy for men to sing is *highly recommended* but optional. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.”
- Prayer - Spend a few minutes in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide the group through the discussion of the topic of this gathering. Including a brief time for intercessory prayer is suggested for established groups.
- Life Sharing - Group members are encouraged to share how things went personally and spiritually since the previous gathering with a **focus** on their personal action item from the previous gathering.

Step 2 - Discussion and/or View Video (About 60 minutes)

- Introduction - One group member reads the introductory material for the selected topic in the Playbook and the group discusses any thoughts or impressions they have.
- Discovering - The group discusses each question in the **Discovering** section; taking turns reading the questions and associated scripture and catechism passages.
- Watch Video - The group watches the designated CTG episode and discusses their impressions.
- Responding to – The group discusses each question in the **Responding to** section; taking turns reading the questions and associated scripture and catechism passages.
- Summary – One group member reads the **Summary** section and the group discusses any thoughts or impressions they have.

Step 3 - Action item/Prayer (About 10 minutes)

- Each group member takes a couple of minutes to silently write down one personal action item he would like to accomplish before the next gathering.
- Make any needed announcements. Keep it *brief*!
- All the men sing together a worship song (Optional). Keep it simple!
- Close the meeting with a brief time of prayer led by one group member and concluding with all the men reciting together a common prayer such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be or Saint Michael the Archangel prayer.

Total Time – 90 minutes

Skill Level 1: The Holy Spirit

As Catholic Christians our experience of the Holy Spirit takes place in a tangible way at Baptism and Confirmation. This is a tremendous gift: The Third Person of the Trinity alive within us. One of our responsibilities is to stir up the Holy Spirit. This is true when we receive the Eucharist, read scripture, pray, are active in service and in every thought, word and action we take if we are to offer our life as a sacrifice to God.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is fully God. He is an actual Person that completes the Trinity with the Father and the Son. In the Scriptures, He is typically symbolized by a Dove, a Cloud or even Fire revealing Purity and Light. In the Creed He is referred to as the Lord and Giver of Life. The Holy Spirit can also be referred to as the bond of love between the Father and the Son. See John 16:12-15; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and Matthew 3:16.

Discovering Who is the Holy Spirit

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) further clarifies for us that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity and as such works in perfect unison with Jesus the second person of the Holy Trinity to reveal God’s love for us to the world.

CCC 685 To believe in the Holy Spirit is to profess that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and the Son: “with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.” For this reason, the divine mystery of the Holy Spirit was already treated in the context of Trinitarian “theology.” Here, however, we have to do with the Holy Spirit only in the divine “economy.”

CCC 689 The One whom the Father has sent into our hearts, the Spirit of his Son, is truly God. Consubstantial with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is inseparable from them, in both the inner life of the Trinity and his gift of love for the world. In adoring the Holy Trinity, life-giving, consubstantial, and indivisible, the Church’s faith also professes the distinction of persons. When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure, it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him.

1. How do you describe the Holy Spirit?

John 14:26 _____

John 15:26-27 _____

Genesis 1:1-2 _____

2. How does Scripture describe the work of the Spirit?

Acts 1:5 _____

Acts 13:1-3 _____

Acts 16:6-10 _____

Responding to Who is the Holy Spirit

After Jesus ascended into heaven, He fulfilled His promise to the Apostles and to us by sending the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, to be with us always here on earth to lead and guide us to all truth.

CCC 731 On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter had come to an end, Christ's Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance.

3. How can we encounter the Spirit? Where can the Spirit be found?

Psalm 139:7-10 _____

4. How do you respond when the Holy Spirit challenges your thinking?

Romans 12:1-3 _____

Summary

The Holy Spirit, who is love, seeks to draw you to Himself so that you might be in relationship with Him all the way to everlasting life. This act of drawing often includes conviction about the way we live and the choices we make. As our faith grows, so does our trust in God's love and mercy. We then begin to experience the peace of God that passes all understanding.

Action Plan

Seek to become more familiar with God's Holy Spirit through daily prayer and seek to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Memorize: John 14:26

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

When we think about relationship we tend to think about the external. Relationship with God is unique. God is nearer than the very air we breathe and longs to dwell in us so that we might fully participate in His grace.

Discovering the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Being filled with the Holy Spirit requires that we are choosing to yield to that same Spirit. Our choices ought to be informed by our growing sensitivity to the work of the Holy Spirit not only within us but around us.

We first encounter the Holy Spirit at our Baptism when we are filled with the divine presence and given all we need to live a life of holiness.

CCC 1266 The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;
- giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.

Thus the whole of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.

1. How do you relate to the concept of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

Ephesians 5:15-20 _____

2. What does it mean to be a temple of the Holy Spirit? How do you see yourself in this way?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 _____

Watch Video: [The Spirit in Us](#) (*Power of the Spirit: Salvation through the Spirit*)

Responding to the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Through our Baptism and Confirmation we are filled with the Holy Spirit and enabled to live the abundant life that God has in mind for us. In Baptism we are freed from the bonds of original sin and resorted to the divine likeness God desires for us.

CCC 733 “God is Love” and love is his first gift, containing all others. “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

CCC 734 Because we are dead or at least wounded through sin, the first effect of the gift of love is the forgiveness of our sins. The communion of the Holy Spirit in the Church restores to the baptized the divine likeness lost through sin.

CCC 735 He, then, gives us the “pledge” or “first fruits” of our inheritance: the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as “God [has] loved us.” This love (the “charity” of 1 Cor 13) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received “power” from the Holy Spirit.

3. How should we view our conscience and its relationship to the Holy Spirit?

Romans 2:14-16 _____

4. How does the Holy Spirit communicate God’s love to us?

Romans 5:3-5 _____

Summary

God longs to be in relationship with us on a continual basis through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, thereby maintaining our souls in a state of Grace. Eternal life can be ours now as we seek personal holiness always open to genuine spiritual growth. We begin our spiritual lives in Baptism where we encounter an indwelling Holy Spirit who strengthens the grace of Baptism at our Confirmation. The Spirit longs to lead us but, we must respond to the love of God by seeking to be filled with that same Spirit through participation in the Eucharist, the reading of Scripture and Prayer.

Action Plan

Grow in love for the Eucharist by attending Mass more intentionally every week. Be more attentive to the readings and every facet of the Liturgy seeking the presence and filling of the Holy Spirit.

Memorize: 1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Leading of the Holy Spirit

Believing the Spirit dwells in us also inspires us to be open to His leading in our lives. This is not meant to be a casual leading, but something that ought to be increasingly experienced from day to day and even moment to moment.

Discovering the Leading of the Holy Spirit

We can begin to open ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit when we believe that He is the source of our holiness. It is He who guides and leads The Church, the Body of Christ of which each one of us is a vital member.

CCC 749 The article concerning the Church also depends entirely on the article about the Holy Spirit, which immediately precedes it. “Indeed, having shown that the Spirit is the source and giver of all holiness, we now confess that it is he who has endowed the Church with holiness.” The Church is, in a phrase used by the Father, the place “where the Spirit flourishes.”

1. If God is Love, why do we fear His leading?

Romans 8:12-17 _____

2. How can we know that the Holy Spirit is truly leading us?

1 John 4:1-3 _____

Watch Video: [Following the Spirit](#) (*Power of the Spirit: Spirit of Truth*)

Responding to the Leading of the Holy Spirit

When we use our God-given gift of free will to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in an effort for continual daily conversion toward greater holiness, God answers our prayers and we are transformed through this spiritual growth of which the Holy Spirit is the source.

CCC 1742 *Freedom and grace.* The grace of Christ is not in the slightest way a rival of our freedom when this freedom accords with the sense of the true and the good that God has put in the human heart. On the contrary, as Christian experience attests especially in prayer, the more docile we are to the promptings of grace, the more we grow in inner freedom and confidence during trials, such as those we face in the pressures and constraints of the outer world. By the working of grace the Holy Spirit educates us in spiritual freedom in order to make us free collaborators in his work in the Church and in the world:

Almighty and merciful God, graciously keep us from all adversity, so that, unhindered in mind and body alike, we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are yours.

3. How confident are you that the Spirit seeks to lead you into all truth?

John 16:13-14 _____

4. Prayer is our way of communicating with God. How do we know that prayer is effective?

Romans 8:26-27 _____

Summary

We need to experience God’s love if we are to be fully alive. We best experience this Love through the ministry of the Holy Spirit beginning with the sacraments and continually affirmed through Scripture, Prayer and Fellowship in the Body of Christ.

Action Plan

Begin reading a section of the Gospel for at least 10 minutes three times this week.

Memorize: Romans 5:5

And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Skill Level 2: Living in the Spirit

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells the woman caught in adultery “Go and sin no more.” (John 8:11). Likewise, He commands all of us to “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mat 5:48). To our human minds this seems like a bad joke; like Jesus is setting us up for an exercise in frustration. However, Jesus is the way the truth and the life and He would not do this. He is actually calling us to perfection. How can we possibly become perfect? Certainly we cannot obtain perfection on our own. The key is to live in the power of the Spirit.

Our Power

Acts 1:8 says “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth.” Literally billions of people have received this power in Baptism and Confirmation yet in many it is dormant, so many are unaware of the power that is within them. Now is the time to awaken the Power of the Spirit in us.

Discovering Our Power

CCC 1304 Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an *indelible spiritual mark*, the “character,” which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness.

CCC 1305 This “character” perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in Baptism, and “the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially (quasi ex officio).”

1. What is your experience with the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Luke 24:49 _____

2. How are you doing with wearing the whole armor of God?

Ephesians 6:10-18a _____

Watch Video: [Our Power in the Spirit](#) (*Power of the Spirit: Spirit of the Living God*)

Responding to Our Power

CCC 739 Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ, who as the head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members to nourish, heal and organize them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world. Through the Church’s sacraments, Christ communicates his holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body.

3. How do you stir up the Holy Spirit in your life?

Psalm 46:10 _____

Ephesians 5:18-20 _____

4. What can the Holy Spirit do in your life?

1 Samuel 10:6 _____

Galatians 5:18-26 _____

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 _____

Summary

God has called us to amazing things: to be perfect, to pray constantly, to love our enemy, to rejoice in all circumstances, to lay down our lives. On our own this is a pipe dream, but if we surrender to the Holy Spirit all things are possible.

Action Plan

Before you start a new task, activity, etc. ask the Holy Spirit to lead and empower your efforts.

Memorize: Luke 24:49

And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Walking in the Spirit

Romans 7:14-15 states “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” Whether we like it or not this is our condition. All of us tend to our own way. It is only by surrendering our will to God and walking in the Holy Spirit that we can overcome our selfish desires.

Discovering Walking in the Spirit

We can learn some important lessons from the apostle Peter regarding the challenge of walking in the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus instructs Peter regarding fishing, he begrudgingly follows Jesus’ instructions and is rewarded with a boat full of fish. Peter recognizes that Jesus is someone close to God and falls to his knees admitting that he is an unworthy sinner.

When Jesus approaches the apostles’ boat walking on the water, Peter has the faith to step out of the boat but his faith falters and Jesus needs to rescue him. When Jesus asks the apostles who He is, Peter is inspired by the Spirit to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, but shortly after tries to tell Jesus how to be the Christ.

Then Peter denies Jesus three times and flees in fear and remorse, when Jesus addresses this thrice denial, Peter is sorrowful and humbled.

The result of these encounters prepared Peter to receive and be led by the Holy Spirit. Led by the Spirit Peter boldly proclaimed the Gospel to those who crucified Jesus and guided the Church through an era of persecution and Peter eventually gave his life for Jesus.

1. How has God worked in your life to prepare you to walk in His Spirit?

2. What is the difference between living in the flesh and living in the Spirit?

Romans 8:1-8

3. How can you transition from living in the flesh to walking in the Spirit?

Ephesians 4:22-24

Watch Video: [Walking in the Spirit](#) (*Marks of a True Christian: On Fire with the Spirit*)

Responding to Walking in the Spirit

CCC 740 These “mighty works of God,” offered to believers in the sacraments of the Church, bear their fruit in the new life in Christ, according to the Spirit.

CCC 741 “The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with sighs too deep for words.” The Holy Spirit, the artisan of God’s works, is the master of prayer.

4. Jesus proclaims that He is the fulfillment of this scripture from Isaiah. How can we fulfill the promises of scripture? Be specific.

Luke 4:18-21 _____

5. What will it take for us to overcome spiritual sloth?

John 2:17 _____

1 Corinthians 14:1 _____

Summary

Walking in the Spirit is a never ending struggle. If we are not zealous and unflagging in our commitment to walk in the Spirit, we will fall under the Spirit of the Devil. If we are zealous and surrender our will to the Lord the Spirit of God will use us powerfully in ways we never thought possible.

Action Plan

Chose an area you are struggling with and call on the power of the Spirit to develop the opposite virtue.

Memorize: Ephesians 3:20

Now to Him by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think...

Receiving More of the Holy Spirit

We have seen in this section how much we need the Holy Spirit. Most of us however are tentative to ask for or call on the Holy Spirit. Asking for more of the Holy Spirit and calling on the Holy Spirit is a practice we need to implement in our daily lives.

Discovering More of the Holy Spirit

CCC 2652 The Holy Spirit is the living water “welling up to eternal life” in the heart that prays. It is he who teaches us to accept it at its source: Christ. Indeed in the Christian life there are several wellsprings where Christ awaits us to enable us to drink of the Holy Spirit.

1. How much does God want to give us His Spirit?

Luke 11:13 _____

2. How do we ask for the Spirit and how do we know we have received the Spirit?

Acts 2:1-4 _____

Acts 4:29-31 _____

Watch Video: [Receiving the Holy Spirit](#) (*Power of the Spirit: Come Holy Spirit*)

Responding to More of the Holy Spirit

CCC 2659 We learn to pray at certain moments by hearing the Word of the Lord and sharing in his Paschal mystery, but his Spirit is offered us at all times, in the events of each day, to make prayer spring up from us. Jesus’ teaching about praying to our Father is in the same vein as his teaching about providence: time is in the Father’s hands; it is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday nor tomorrow, but today: “O that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts.”

3. God wants us to be free from fear and operate in the power of the Spirit. How can we overcome our fears and doubts?

2 Timothy 1:7-8 _____

1 John 4:18 _____

4. What is the relationship between the power of the Spirit, the gift of faith and the ability to love and experience the fullness of God?

Ephesians 3:14-21 _____

Summary

God is a loving Father He knows what we need and will give us His Spirit whenever we ask Him for it. Our job is to ask for more of His Spirit and to call on the Spirit throughout each day.

Action Plan

Take time to pray with one another to be more alive in the Spirit and commit to asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout each day.

Memorize: Luke 11:13

If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

Skill Level 3: Barriers to Living in the Spirit

In his book *The Everlasting Man*, G. K. Chesterton states that “A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it.” As we are called to continual spiritual growth and understanding in our faith journey, we will face many obstacles. We can be assured that Satan will do anything and everything within his power to cause us to stumble and take our eye off the ball. He knows that his greatest enemy is our spiritual maturity. Hebrews 12:1 states “...let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us”. In order to continue in spiritual growth, we must identify the obstacles and barriers that Satan has placed in our path that impede such growth.

Weapons of the Enemy

Satan manipulates our thoughts and desires to tempt and distract us, in the extreme case with “idols” - anything or anyone who takes God’s place as our first love. Satan can also tempt and distract us in less pervasive ways to undermine our effectiveness as God’s disciples. These obstacles serve to hinder or even halt our spiritual growth and keep us from spiritual maturity. We may even feel that our cause is noble and yet we can fail to see the truth that stares straight back at us.

Discovering Weapons of the Enemy

Two of the leading weapons that Satan uses against us as obstacles to our spiritual growth are worldliness and distraction, but they are not the only ones. Our enemy the devil can resort to bringing against us such things as indifference, ignorance, discouragement, our mindset, our attachments and sometimes even our own poor planning. Let us take some time to discern what areas of our life obstruct our relationship with God and our relationships with those whom He has placed in our lives.

Let’s start with the leading two obstacles of worldliness and distraction.

1. In what ways and by what means do I allow the ways of the world to affect me?

Matthew 13:18-22 _____

1 John 2:15-17 _____

2. How am I distracted in my spiritual life?

Luke 9:57-62 _____

Luke 10:38-42 _____

Indifference is characterized by spiritual lethargy. It is a failure to care and an acceptance of the status quo. It goes to the heart of how we view the world.

3. Am I comfortable with any indifference in my life?

Revelation 3:15-16 _____

James 1:22-25 _____

Ignorance often flows from indifference. We don't learn and grow because we simply don't care or are too distracted to care. We are ignorant when we choose to only abide by our own compass. Our attachments and poor planning can also keep us from growing spiritually.

4. How can I seek knowledge and wisdom?

Proverbs 2:1-17 _____

Acts 17:30-31 _____

5. What is or has been the cost of discipleship in my life?

Luke 14:26-33 _____

Watch Video: [Weapons of the Enemy](#) (*Spiritual Combat: The World*)

Responding to Weapons of the Enemy

The good news is that even with all these weapons which Satan brings against us, Jesus is always with us to aid us in defeating Satan through building a life of Christian virtue. The virtues are our defense against the weapons of the enemy. He is no match for our Savior, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As we remain in Him, He remains in us and we find victory.

6. How can we grow in virtue and defeat the weapons of the enemy?

Psalm 37:4 _____

Romans 12:1-2 _____

1 Corinthians 10:13 _____

Galatians 6:9-10 _____

Ephesians 4:25-32 _____

Ephesians 6:10-18 _____

Hebrews 12:1-4 _____

Summary

God has a plan for us to overcome obstacles to spiritual maturity. He wants us to renounce distractions and yield our hearts and minds to the joy that comes through a relationship with The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit as we persevere in the pursuit of virtues.

Action Plan

Identify one barrier to living in the Spirit. Renounce it asking for God's grace to persevere in the pursuit of the opposite virtue.

Memorize: Romans 8:5

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on things of the Spirit.

The Seven Deadly Sins

No examination of barriers to Living in the Spirit would be complete without discussing The Seven Deadly Sins of Pride, Envy, Lust, Gluttony, Anger, Greed and Sloth. These sinful patterns go beyond being barriers to the Spirit. They each have the potential to bring about the eternal death of our soul.

Discovering Pride

Pride is defined as “an inordinate self-esteem or self-love, which seeks attention and honor and sets oneself in competition with God.” It is inordinate because it is contrary to the truth. It is essentially an act or disposition of the will desiring to be considered better than a person really is. (Catholic Dictionary from CatholicCulture.org)

CCC 2094 One can sin against God’s love in various ways: ... - hatred of God comes from pride. It is contrary to love of God, whose goodness it denies and who it presumes to curse as the one who forbids sins and inflicts punishments.

1. What are some of the various forms of pride and what must we do to overcome them?

Philippians 2:1-11 _____

Proverbs 11:2 _____

Watch Video: [Pride and Humility](#) (*Deadly Sins: Pride and Humility*)

Responding to Pride

The response to pride is the development of the virtue humility which is the mother of all the virtues. Development of humility requires intentional effort on our part beginning with prayer.

“Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance.” ~ St. Augustine.

CCC 2559 “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or “out of the depths” of a humble and contrite heart? He who humbles himself will be exalted; humility is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that “we do not know how to pray as we ought,” are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. “Man is a beggar before God.”

2. What does it mean to be humble? What can we do to develop humility in our heart?

James 4:6-10 _____

Romans 5:3-5 _____

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less.” ~ C.S. Lewis

Discovering Envy

Envy is being sad over another’s good fortune or being glad over another’s misfortune.

CCC 413 “God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living.... It was through the devil’s envy that death entered the world” [*Wis* 1:13; 2:24].

CCC 2539 Envy is a capital sin. It refers to the sadness at the sight of another’s goods and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself, even unjustly. When it wishes grave harm to a neighbor it is a mortal sin:

St. Augustine saw envy as “the diabolical sin.” “From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by his prosperity.”

3. What is envy? What are some ways that we can overcome envy?

Proverbs 14:30 _____

Psalms 37:1-3 _____

James 3:14-16 _____

Watch Video: [Envy and Gratitude](#) (*Deadly Sins: Envy and Gratitude*)

Responding to Envy

Our best defenses against envy are humility and gratitude. We must trust in God and be grateful for all that He has given to us, fully believing that He loves us and has our best interest in mind in all that He does. When we truly believe this, then we can truly “mourn when others mourn and rejoice when others rejoice.”

CCC 2540 Envy represents a form of sadness and therefore a refusal of charity; the baptized person should struggle against it by exercising good will. Envy often comes from pride; the baptized person should train himself to live in humility: Would you like to see God glorified by you? Then rejoice in your brother’s progress and you will immediately give glory to God. Because his servant could conquer envy by rejoicing in the merits of others, God will be praised.

4. How can I overcome envy and grow in gratitude?

Philippians 4:4-7 _____

Colossians 3:17 _____

Psalms 107:8-9 _____

Discovering Lust

“Lust is about the greatest of pleasures and these absorb the mind more than anything.”

~ Saint Thomas Aquinas

CCC 2514 St. John distinguishes three kinds of covetousness or concupiscence: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life. In the Catholic catechetical tradition, the ninth commandment forbids carnal concupiscence; the tenth forbids coveting another’s goods.

CCC 2351 *Lust* is disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.

5. How do you deal with the temptation of lust?

Proverbs 6:27-33 _____

Proverbs 13:19 _____

Psalms 37:4 _____

Matthew 5:27-30 _____

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 _____

Watch Video: [Lust and Fidelity](#) (*Deadly Sins: Lust and Fidelity*)

Responding to Lust

Lust is disordered love. Those who lust are simply looking for love in the wrong places. It is tempting to think that we cannot be victorious over lust but this is just another lie of the enemy. In Christ, we have the power through His grace to be victorious and when we are defeated, we always have the grace of His inexhaustible mercy!

CCC 2530 The struggle against carnal lust involves purifying the heart and practicing temperance.

CCC 2532 Purification of the heart demands prayer, the practice of chastity, purity of intention and of vision.

6. How can we be victorious over the temptations of lust?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 _____

Romans 8:12-13 _____

Romans 12:1-2 _____

Matthew 5:29-30 _____

Pornography will do to your soul, what drugs will do to your body. Run brothers! Take the advice of Jesus in Matthew 5:29-30. Run from pornography as fast and as far as you can and seek the help of the Lord in prayer and in confession. Then seek the help of a brother or brothers you can trust.

Discovering Gluttony

Gluttony is the over-indulgence or over-consumption of food, drink, wealth or other items to the point of extravagance or waste. The word gluttony is derived from the Latin *gluttire*; meaning to gulp down or swallow. Gluttony is an inordinate desire for more of something (created goods) – anything – good or bad. We become attached and our focus is on the thing we desire and not on God. Overeating is only one of the many forms of gluttony.

CCC 2535 The sensitive appetite leads us to desire pleasant things we do not have, e.g. – the desire to eat when we are hungry or to warm ourselves when we are cold. These desires are good in themselves; but often they exceed the limits of reason and drive us to covet unjustly what is not ours and belongs to another or is owed to him.

7. When does a behavior become glutinous? Identify the various forms of gluttony and consider if any of them impact you.

Proverbs 23:19-21 _____

Amos 6:4-7 _____

Watch Video: [Gluttony and Moderation](#) (*Deadly Sins: Gluttony and Moderation*)

Responding to Gluttony

The antidote to Gluttony is the virtue of Temperance or moderation. Temperance is knowing when enough is enough. Temperance is the practice of balance. Temperance is self-control.

CCC 1809 *Temperance* is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion: "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart." Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites." In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety". We ought "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world." ...

CCC 2548 Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. "The promise [of seeing God] surpasses all beatitude. . . . In Scripture, to see is to possess. . . . Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive."

8. How can we find balance in our lives? What are some ways we can use moderation to counteract gluttony?

Matthew 6:16-18 _____

Matthew 6:25-34 _____

Titus 2:11-12 _____

1 Peter 5:8-9 _____

2 Peter 1:5-6 _____

Discovering Anger

Anger is a natural God-given emotion and is part of who we are. Emotions have no morality. They are not right or wrong. How we handle our anger is what is right or wrong. We can use our anger for good, or we can sin. Anger can help us to overcome and correct evil. It can help set things right. This rational or righteous anger is constructive. However, irrational, out of control anger is destructive and sinful. This anger which can lead us to resentment and bitterness is not only destructive for us but for others we encounter.

CCC 2259 In the account of Abel’s murder by his brother Cain, Scripture reveals the presence of anger and envy in man, consequences of original sin, from the beginning of human history. Man has become the enemy of his fellow man. God declares the wickedness of this fratricide: “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.”

CCC 2302 By recalling the commandment, “You shall not kill,” our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral.

Anger is a desire for revenge. “To desire vengeance in order to do evil to someone who should be punished is illicit,” but it is praiseworthy to impose restitution “to correct vices and maintain justice.” If anger reaches the point of a deliberate desire to kill or seriously wound a neighbor, it is gravely against charity; it is a mortal sin. The Lord says, “Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgement.”

9. What is the difference between righteous and unrighteous anger? How have you dealt with anger in healthy ways?

Matthew 5:21-22 _____

Ephesians 4:26-27, 30-31 _____

Watch Video: [Anger and Meekness](#) (*Deadly Sins: Anger and Meekness*)

Responding to Anger

The antidotes to anger are love, forgiveness, meekness (strength under control) and self-control. The Lord is slow to anger and rich in mercy and we are to follow Him and become more like Him. Consider the meekness and self-control of Jesus during His Passion and crucifixion.

10. As Christians, how are we to react to others when they are angry with us? Share about an experience when you chose to love and forgive and how that made a difference.

Psalms 103:8-13 _____

Hosea 11:8-9 _____

Matthew 5:23-26 _____

Ephesians 4:32 _____

Discovering Greed

Greed, also known as avarice, is the inordinate desire to possess wealth, goods or objects of abstract value with the intention to keep them for one's self, far beyond the dictates of basic survival and comfort. Greed is an excessive desire for and the pursuit of wealth, status and power. Greed comes from a preoccupation with self.

"Greed is a sin against God, just as all mortal sins, in as much as man condemns things eternal for the sake of temporal things." ~ St. Thomas Aquinas

CCC 2536 The tenth commandment forbids *greed* and the desire to amass earthly goods without limit. It forbids *avarice* arising from a passion for riches and their attendant power. It also forbids the desire to commit injustice by harming our neighbor in his temporal goods:

When the Law says, "You shall not covet," these words mean that we should banish our desires for whatever does not belong to us. Our thirst for another's goods is immense, infinite, never quenched. Thus it is written: "He who loves money never has money enough."

11. What areas in your life lead you to place yourself before others?

Proverbs 28:22, 25 _____

Luke 12:13-21 _____

1 Timothy 6:9-10 _____

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 _____

Watch Video: [Greed and Generosity](#) (*Deadly Sins: Greed and Generosity*)

Responding to Greed

The antidotes to greed are contentment and generosity. As Christians, we are called to a spirit of detachment from material goods and riches. They only distract us from our relationship with God and with each other. Fasting and prayer help us to learn to be satisfied with what we have and content in all circumstances.

CCC 2541 The economy of law and grace turns men's hearts away from avarice and envy. It initiates them into desire for the Sovereign Good; it instructs them in the desires of the Holy Spirit who satisfies man's heart.

The God of the promises always warned man against seduction by what from the beginning has seemed "good for food ... a delight to the eyes ... to be desired to make one wise."

12. In what ways, in addition to donating money, can we be generous with others?

1 Timothy 6:6-8; 17-19 _____

Tobit 12:8-9 _____

Hebrews 13:5 _____

Philippians 4:12-13 _____

Discovering Sloth

Sloth (*Acedia*) is a *spiritual laziness* which involves a lack of physical or spiritual effort that can lead one to actually refuse the joy that comes from God. Sloth is a lukewarm attitude towards divine goodness and spiritual practices such as prayer and receiving the Sacraments. Indifference, lukewarmness and boredom are by-products of sloth.

CCC 2094 One can sin against God’s love in various ways:

- *indifference* neglects or refuses to reflect on divine charity; it fails to consider its prevenient goodness and denies its power. ...
- *lukewarmness* is hesitation or negligence in responding to divine love; it can imply refusal to give oneself over to the prompting of charity.
- *acedia* or spiritual sloth goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God and to be repelled by divine goodness. ...

CCC 2733 Another temptation, to which presumption opens the gate, is *acedia*. The spiritual writers understand by this a form of depression due to lax ascetical practice, decreasing vigilance, carelessness of heart. “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The greater the height, the harder the fall. Painful as discouragement is, it is the reverse of presumption. The humble are not surprised by their distress; it leads them to trust more, to hold fast in constancy.

13. In what areas in my life should I apply greater attentiveness and discipline?

2 Thessalonians 3:10-13 _____

Proverbs 21:25-26 _____

Luke 19:20-27 _____

Watch Video: [Sloth and Fortitude](#) (*Deadly Sins: Sloth and Fortitude*)

Responding to Sloth

Our response to sloth is to develop the virtue of fortitude. Fortitude is like courage. It is the ability to do what needs to be done for the greater good no matter the cost to one’s self.

CCC 1808 *Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. “The Lord is my strength and my song.” “In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

14. How can we find the courage to do the right thing no matter the cost?

Psalm 27:13-14 _____

Proverbs 13:4 _____

Luke 12:35-38 _____

John 16:32-33 _____

Summary

Through our original parents, Adam and Eve, we were to be created without any obstacles or barriers to the love of God. By their disobedience through the gift granted of free will we have all inherited this ancestral sin that must be overcome through baptism. While this baptism washes away the stain of original sin, the lingering effect of concupiscence still remains. By our own free will, tempted by Satan, we can still reject God's love for us by allowing barriers that block our growth in the spirit. As we grow in the spirit we will become more aware of the times where we've fallen short of becoming our best self. Each obstacle has the effect of creating an opportunity for us to turn back to the love of God.

Action Plan

Do an examination of conscience.

Do an inventory of the obstacles and barriers that I've allowed to take hold in my life.

Make a goal to go to reconciliation and if needed find a spiritual director or an accountability partner.

Memorize: Romans 8:12-13

Consequently, brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Skill Level 4: Docility to the Holy Spirit

Docility to the Holy Spirit is our cooperation with the Holy Spirit. One of the many paradoxes of the Christian faith is that in order for us to be victorious we must first surrender. We must surrender our own personal will to the will of God who loves us beyond our imagining. When we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, our will and the Father's will become one. The Holy Spirit helps us to say 'yes' to the Father.

Becoming Docile to the Holy Spirit

We are the temple of God. Each of us is a "living stone" in the building of the kingdom of God. Jesus lives in us through the Holy Spirit and empowers us to do all that the Father wills for us to do. We have everything we need by virtue of our baptism and confirmation in order to do His will for us. We only need to cultivate our gifts and be attentive to the call of our Lord. When we hear His call, we are to trust in Him, get our own will out of the way and let Him accomplish His work through us.

Discovering Becoming Docile to the Holy Spirit

Among other things, the Holy Spirit is the voice of our conscience. He speaks to us in various ways. For example, He is the one who nudges us to help a friend or stranger, to say an encouraging word to someone who is struggling or even simply to smile at someone passing by. He also is the one who encourages us to take on a new role at work or in ministry that we know is going to stretch us beyond our comfort zone.

Docility to the Holy Spirit is saying 'yes' to this voice and acting upon what we are hearing. It is essentially our willingness to obey and follow the instructions of our Lord. Many times when we are led to do something we are not given the entire task all at the same time. Often we must respond in faith to the first step before we are given further instructions. If we have patience and trust in our Lord then He can do great things through even our smallest efforts!

1. **How does the Spirit speak to Philip? Does Philip get all of his instructions at one time? What extraordinary things is Philip able to do through the power of the Spirit?**

Acts 8:26-40 _____

2. **How does the Spirit direct the travels of the disciples? What did they do in their lives in order to be open to these leadings of the Spirit?**

Acts 16:6-10 _____

"Sometimes the Holy Spirit prompts us to do bold things, such as driving Philip to go and baptize or how he pushed Peter to go and baptize Cornelius. Other times, the Holy Spirit leads us gently and the virtue is in allowing ourselves to be carried by the Holy Spirit, in not resisting the Holy Spirit, in being docile to the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit works in the Church today, is acting in our lives today. Some of you may say: 'I have never seen Him!' But pay attention to what is happening, to what comes to your mind, to what comes in your heart. Good things? It is the Spirit that invites you to take that path. It takes docility! Docility to the Holy Spirit." ~ Pope Francis, Daily Mass homily of May 13, 2014

Watch Video: [Becoming Docile](#) (*Power of the Spirit: Cooperate with the Spirit*)

Responding to Becoming Docile to the Holy Spirit

“Without the Spirit we can neither love God nor keep His commandments.” ~ St. Augustine

Life in the Spirit means a whole new way of life. When we open our lives to the Holy Spirit, things happen and we are changed. We are freed from personal habits of sin which have plagued and enslaved us. Our minds are renewed and we learn a new capacity to no longer be “conformed to this world”. The Holy Spirit instills in us a desire to fulfill both the Great Commandment to love God and others and the Great Commission to go and make disciples. We discover a greater knowledge of God’s love for us and seek a closer relationship with Jesus with a growing desire for prayer and reading scripture. We find a greater desire to engage in Jesus’ mission and a new zeal for the salvation of souls.

Cooperation with the Holy Spirit requires prayer and humility in a continual commitment to spiritual renewal, including repentance, confession, surrender and trust in God. The Holy Spirit works through these activities to transform us. The Holy Spirit is our personal spiritual trainer and makes us strong, loving and wise.

CCC 2716 Contemplative prayer is *hearing* the Word of God. Far from being passive, such attentiveness is the obedience of faith, the unconditional acceptance of a servant, and the loving commitment of a child. It participates in the “Yes” of the Song become servant and the *Fiat* of God’s lowly handmaid.

3. How do we prepare ourselves to clearly hear and obey the will of God?

Romans 8:5-6 _____

Romans 12:1-8 _____

1 Corinthians 6:17-20 _____

Psalm 46:10 _____

4. How can we be docile to the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Titus 2:11-12 _____

Galatians 5:25 _____

Summary

Freedom from self-reliance is one key to docility to the Holy Spirit. When we cease to rely on ourselves and rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit then we know that we are on the right track. Surrendering our will is a second key. We literally need to abandon our will and seek God’s will. This means letting go of all of our will, not just part of it, or not just setting it aside to come back to it later. It is a complete and permanent surrender.

Action Plan

Spend time in quiet prayer each day this week invoking the Holy Spirit to guide you to what God is calling you to do. Write down what you hear no matter how simple it may be and then do it.

Obtain a copy of the St. Michael the Archangel prayer to carry with you wherever you go and begin to learn it by praying it each day.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,

And do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God,

Cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits

who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen!

Mary as Our Model

Our Blessed Mother Mary is the most perfect example of what it is to be a Christian. She said “Yes” to God over and over again. Through her ‘yes’, Jesus came into the world and the entire world was brought life, salvation and love. On the cross, Jesus gave us His mother Mary to be our spiritual mother. We can turn to her not only as an example, but also for her help by asking her to intercede on our behalf by praying for us and with us.

Discovering Mary as Our Model

Mary is the only human person who witnessed the entire life of Jesus. She gave birth to Him and raised Him along with Saint Joseph, but he died before Jesus’ public ministry began. Mary travelled with Jesus in His ministry and she watched Him die upon the cross. She saw Him after the resurrection and she was present when He sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Mary knows Jesus better than any other human. Therefore we should follow her example and listen to what she has to say to us. Her advice to all of us is “Do whatever He tells you.” (John 2:5).

1. **How was Mary able to say ‘yes’ to God through the angel? What must we do to be prepared to say ‘yes’ to God when He calls on us?**

Luke 1:26-38 _____

2. **Mary placed her complete trust in Jesus. What was the result? What do you expect when you place your complete trust in Jesus? Why?**

John 2:1-11 _____

Watch Video: [Thy Will Be Done](#) (*Our Father: Thy Will Be Done*)

Responding to Mary as Our Model

The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was conceived without original sin (The Immaculate Conception) and that during all of these things that happened to her throughout her life, she never sinned. She always said “yes” to God. She always aligned her will with His will. This is evident in the words the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, “Hail Mary, full of grace.”

Mary said ‘yes’ to becoming an unwed mother in a world in which it would cost her life. She said ‘yes’ to giving birth alone in a stable in the company of only her husband and some animals. She said ‘yes’ to fleeing to a foreign land to avoid persecution. She said ‘yes’ to watching her son die the most horrific death any person ever suffered. Through all of this she kept her faith and trust in God and when her time on earth was completed she was taken directly up to heaven in body and soul (the Assumption). When we are not sure what to do, we can look to our Blessed Mother and remember her perfect advice...”Do whatever He tells you”.

“So the Church looks to Mary. Mary is all-holy. ... The earthly life of the Mother of God is characterized by perfect harmony with the person of her Son and by her total dedication to the

redeeming work He accomplished. ... On this journey of trusting abandonment to the Lord, the Virgin goes before the disciples, adhering to the divine Word with an increasing intensity that embraces all the stages of her life and spreads to the very mission of the Church. Her example encourages the People of God to practice their faith and to study and develop its content, by keeping [it] in their heart and meditating on the events of salvation.” ~ Pope St. John Paul II, General Audience of September 3, 1997

3. What can we do in our lives to best position ourselves to follow Mary’s example and keep our faith and trust in God?

CCC 148 The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that “with God nothing will be impossible” and so giving her assent: “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word.” Elizabeth greeted her: “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed.

CCC 149 Throughout her life and until her last ordeal when Jesus her son died on the cross, Mary’s faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfillment of God’s word. And so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith.

4. What is God’s will for us? How can we accomplish this? Who can help us?

1 Thessalonians 4:3 _____

Romans 8:1-13 _____

John 19:26-27 _____

Summary

God wants us to do His will out of our own desire to love and please Him just as Mary did. What pleases Him is our holiness. He shared His own mother with us so that she could help us find our way to Him. Our quest for holiness leads us to want to do His will, to hunger along with Him for the salvation of souls. His will is for all souls to be saved and spend eternity with Him. He has tasked us, the Church militant, His body here on the earth, to work with Him to build up the Kingdom of God. When we say ‘yes’ to God, He equips us to complete this mission.

Action Plan

During prayer this week, invoke the intercession of our Blessed Mother, asking her to pray for us and with us that we may accomplish the will of God.

Pray the Rosary.

Give a rosary to a brother who is struggling and encourage him to pray it. Teach him if he doesn’t know how.

Skill Level 5: Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The *Fruits of the Holy Spirit* are the observable behaviors of those people who have allowed the grace of the Holy Spirit to be truly effective in them. We bear fruit when we abide in Christ and learn to live a life of docility to the Holy Spirit. We learn to follow the guiding of the Holy Spirit and thus we are transformed so that we can “bear much fruit”.

Types of Fruit

Catholic tradition lists 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit. They are charity (love), joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity. St. Paul writes about nine of these behaviors or attributes of a true Christian life in his letter to the Galatians in chapter 5 verses 22-23.

Discovering the Fruits of the Holy Spirit

CCC 1832 The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: “charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity.”

1. **How are spiritual fruit different from natural human traits given at birth or from learned character traits?**

John 15:5 _____

2. **What are the implications of the branches that do not bear fruit?**

John 15:1-8 _____

3. **How do I abide in Jesus?**

John 15:10 _____

John 6:55-57 _____

1 John 4:15 _____

4. **Why does God desire that we produce fruit?**

John 15:8-11 _____

Watch Video: [Fruits of the Spirit](#) (*The Shocking Claims of Jesus: The Sword*)

Responding to the Fruits of the Holy Spirit

It is the essence of the Christian life to bear fruit. Ephesians 2:10 says, "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*" The fruit of salvation is good works. St. James explains the close relationship between faith and works, "*So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*" (James 2:17). If saving faith is legitimate, it produces fruit.

5. Practically, what does it mean to live out the fruit of Love in your life?

Galatians 5:22-23 _____

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 _____

Matthew 25:34-36 _____

6. What does walking in the Spirit mean?

Romans 12:2 _____

2 Timothy 1:7-8 _____

7. The fruit of the Spirit is not intended as a "to-do list" or a list of resolutions, but as a description of Christ-like character. How do we grow in Christ-like character?

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 _____

Summary

Jesus said in Matthew 7:16-17 "*You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from the thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit.*" Jesus' illustration would make no sense if every Christian did not bear at least some fruit.

Action Plan

Let us take time this week to look at each of the fruits of the Holy Spirit and ask some diagnostic questions to see just how healthy we are.

1. Charity (Love) - This word for love doesn't refer to warm feelings but to a deliberate attitude of good will and devotion to others.

Question: *Am I motivated to do for others as Christ has done for me, or am I giving in order to receive something in return?*

My Answer: _____

2. Joy - Unlike happiness, joy is gladness that is completely independent of the good or bad things that happen in my life.

Question: *Am I experiencing a joy of life on a regular basis, or is my happiness dependent on things going smoothly in my day?*

My Answer: _____

3. Peace - It's not the absence of turmoil, but the presence of tranquility even while in a place of chaos.

Question: *Do I find myself frazzled by the events in my life, or am I experiencing "peace that surpasses all understanding"?*

My Answer: _____

4. Patience - It is the ability to endure ill treatment from life or at the hands of others without lashing out or paying back.

Question: *Am I easily set off when things go wrong or people irritate me, or am I able to keep a godly perspective in the face of life's irritations?*

My Answer: _____

5. Kindness - It is moral goodness that overflows. It's also the absence of malice.

Question: *Is it my goal to serve others with kindness, or am I too focused on my own needs, desires or problems to let the goodness of God overflow to others?*

My Answer: _____

6. Goodness - While kindness is the soft side of good, goodness reflects the character of God.

Question: *Does my life reflect the holiness of God, and do I desire to see others experience God at a deep level in their own lives?*

My Answer: _____

7. Faithfulness - A faithful person is one with real integrity. He is loyal and trustworthy toward God and others.

Question: *Are there areas of hypocrisy and indifference toward others in my life, or is my life characterized by faith in Christ and faithfulness to those around me?*

My Answer: _____

8. Gentleness - Meekness is not weakness. Gentleness is not without power, it just chooses to defer to others. It forgives others, corrects with kindness, and lives in tranquility.

Question: *Do I come across to others as brash and headstrong, or am I allowing the grace of God to flow through me to others?*

My Answer: _____

9. Self-Control - Scripture tells us that our fleshly desires are continually at odds with God’s Spirit and they always want to be in charge. Self-control is literally releasing our grip on the fleshly desires, choosing instead to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Question: *Are my fleshly desires controlling my life, or am I allowing the Holy Spirit to direct me to the things that please God and serve others?*

My Answer: _____

What is Necessary to Bear Fruit?

When Jesus promised that He came so that we might "*have life, and have it abundantly*" (John 10:10), He was not speaking simply of living eternally after death. He also was holding forth the promise that we could experience new life — that is, a new quality of life — here and now.

Today, God's children can be set free from the enslaving habits of the flesh. God has promised that our lives should be and can be marked by new qualities and characteristics — the result of the supernatural, indwelling, and distinctive work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's work in us bears the fruit which is the transformation and reshaping of our character.

Discovering the Necessities

We can bear fruit only when we abide in Christ. Without Him we can do nothing, but with Him we can do anything. Jesus tells us that we give glory to God when we bear much fruit and become His disciples (John 15:8).

1. **What does Jesus say we must do to remain in His love? What does He promise us if we remain in His love?**

John 15:7-11 _____

2. **How can we learn from the Holy Spirit to abide in Christ so that we bear fruit in our lives?**

Romans 12:1-2 _____

3. **What affects our ability to stay close to God and bear spiritual fruit?**

Isaiah 59:1-2 _____

4. **The prophet Jeremiah describes two kinds of people and the inevitable consequences they experience as a result of their choices. Take a look at this analogy in Jeremiah 17:5-14.**

(a) **What images does Jeremiah use to describe these two types of people?**

(b) **According to Jeremiah, what is the key attribute of the person who bears fruit?**

(c) **What do the terms "trust in the Lord" and "trust in man" mean to you?**

Watch Video: [The Necessities](#) (Godly Man: The Godly Man is Joyful)

Responding to the Necessities

Jesus asks us to bear much fruit and become His disciples and He also tells us that we can only do it through the power invested in us through the Holy Spirit. Thus, what is needed to bear much fruit is an intimate relationship with Jesus in which we deny ourselves and remain docile to the Holy Spirit.

CCC 736 By this power of the Spirit, God’s children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear “the fruit of the Spirit: ...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” “We live by the Spirit”, the more we renounce ourselves, the more we “walk by the Spirit.”

5. In what areas of my life am I damaging my relationship with God and therefore failing to bear fruit?

James 2:14 _____

Matthew 7:1-2 _____

6. How have I experienced suffering through pruning and discipline and the peace that flows from it?

Hebrews 12:11 _____

7. What most motivates me to live my life in a way that bears fruit? Why?

John 15:1-16 _____

8. Since abiding in Christ is the key to bearing fruit in our lives, practically speaking, what does "abide in Christ" mean to me?

John 6:35 _____

1 John 4:12-15 _____

Revelation 3:20 _____

Summary

“Let us not think that these Gifts of the Spirit are proper only to souls that have reached certain heights on the road to perfection; let us not believe that only the saints possess the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. All of us possess them. It is sufficient to have the grace of God in our souls in order to receive them. On the day of our baptism we received the Gifts of the Holy Spirit together with the virtues and graces.”

~ Archbishop Luis M. Martinez

Action Plan

Use the following list, found in Galatians 5:19-23, to evaluate whether these works of the flesh are present in any way in your life. Do this evaluation in private, and then discuss whatever you feel comfortable sharing with your group. Make the same evaluation for the fruits of the Spirit. Indicate whether each characteristic is:

(1) Frequently Present

(3) Seldom Present

(2) Occasionally Present

(4) Never Present

The Works of the Flesh

- Fornication
- Impurity
- Licentiousness [unrestrained by law or morality]
- Idolatry (worshiping things, money, or people)
- Sorcery [witchcraft; in the ancient world, the use of drugs]
- Enmities [hatred, hostility]
- Strife [bitter conflict or rivalry]
- Jealousy
- Anger [uncontrolled bursts of temper]
- Quarrels
- Dissensions [partisan or contentious divisions]
- Factions [contentious minority within a larger group]
- Envy
- Drunkenness
- Carousing

The Fruits of the Spirit

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness [meekness]
- Self-control [temperance]
- Modesty
- Chastity
- Generosity

Difference between Gifts and Fruit

It is essential to clearly understand the fundamental difference between the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

‘Gifts’ are usually found in a completed condition even though their use can be made more perfect through the recipient in the course of time. In comparison, ‘Fruit’ is the natural result of an inner principle of life brought forth by the Holy Spirit through a process of constant growth.

‘**Gifts**’ come all at once from an outer source, whereas, ‘**Fruit**’ comes gradually from the inside.

Discovering Gifts and Fruit

Each one of us has been uniquely gifted by God to carry out the purpose He has set forth for us.

CCC 798 The Holy Spirit is ‘the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body.’ He works in many ways to build up the Body in charity; ...by the many special graces (called ‘charisms’), by which he makes the faithful ‘fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.’

1. What are the different types of spiritual gifts? What gift or gifts do you possess?

1 Corinthians 12:4-10 _____

Romans 12:3-8 _____

Ephesians 4:11 _____

2. Can spiritual gifts be acquired or is it something that is given?

1 Corinthians 12:11 _____

Ephesians 4:7 _____

3. What is the primary purpose for these gifts?

1 Corinthians 14:26 _____

1 Peter 4:10-11 _____

Watch Video: [Gifts and Fruit](#) (*Power of the Spirit: Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit*)

Responding to Gifts and Fruit

So we each have gifts which are given to us for the purpose of building up and serving others. The Church sometimes refers to these spiritual gifts as ‘charisms’.

CCC 799 Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.

CCC 800 Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.

CCC 951 *Communion of charisms.* Within the communion of the church, the Holy Spirit “distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank” for the building up of the Church. Now, “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

4. Are we judged by our spiritual gifts or by the fruit we produce? Or both?

Matthew 7:16 _____

Matthew 25:26-30 _____

5. How am I using my spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ?

Ephesians 4:11-14 _____

Summary

The difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit:

The fruit of the Spirit is always the same - The Holy Spirit desires to develop in each Christian a character that is like Christ's. When that character is developed, it will include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, which are the fruit of the Spirit.

The gifts of the Spirit are almost always different - The Holy Spirit equips each Christian with a unique set of gifts and talents. There may be similarities in the gifts and talents different Christians have, but God never makes an exact copy or replica of a person.

The fruit of the Spirit is the goal - The fruit of the Spirit is the goal of the Christian journey. Developing a Christ-like journey is a life-long goal.

The gifts of the Spirit are the way of achieving the goal - The gifts of the Spirit are given to help us and others toward the goal of a Christ-like character.

The fruit of the Spirit is about who we are becoming - The fruit of the Spirit defines what a Christian is, or is at least becoming. It is about the kind of person God wants us to be for eternity.

The gifts of the Spirit are about how we serve God - This side of eternity. Some gifts, such as teaching and preaching are only temporary gifts, because they will not be needed in heaven.

Action Plan

Write down at least one of your gifts along with a couple of ways in which you can use your gifts for the benefit of others?

Use your gifts this week to build up the body of Christ – His Church.