

FINDING NEW LIFE in the Spirit

A guidebook for the Life in the Spirit Seminars

Week 2

I hope you got on well for week one. If you missed some days prayer don't worry just begin again. Hope you were able to get the two study chapters done. The first Chapter of St John's gospel and the first chapter of St Paul's letter to the Colossians.

I would like to recommend a very good new Translation of the New Testament. It is by Nicholas King a Jesuit Priest. It was recommended to me by my cousin Archbishop Patrick Kelly retired from Liverpool diocese. I was able to buy my copy second-hand (in perfect condition) from Amazon for £3. He has included his own commentary which really helps your understanding of the Scriptures.

SALVATION

'He has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him we gain our freedom; the forgiveness of our sins.'

(Col.1:13-14)

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

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

The question is often asked: "Have you been saved?" implying, "Are you going to heaven?" The answer is not found in a simple one-time 'yes' or acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord and Saviour. It is important to decide for Christ daily, but from a Catholic perspective, we answer 'Yes' many times. Salvation is not just for the future. We can begin Heaven on Earth (the indwelling presence of God). God wants give us salvation at every moment of every day. At Baptism, we literally tap into God's saving power and we are freed from original sin, which separated us from God's life. Over and over again we are saved through repentance and on-going conversion. This is why Jesus instituted the sacrament of reconciliation. His priesthood has been

extended into time through Holy Orders. We need his Divine Mercy daily. Those who “endure to the end” (Revelation 2:26) will be saved. In Philippians 2:12, St. Paul says to “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” In 1 Peter 5:8, we read “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Salvation is a daily spiritual battle.

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

Words of Life

Day 1:

We find ourselves in a world that has something seriously wrong with it. Daily we read about wars, murders, poverty, racial conflict, exploitation. Daily we see in others and in ourselves loneliness, depression, anxiety, boredom, suspicion, mistrust, quarrelling, hatred. Yet God did not create the world to be this way, nor does he want it to be this way. He promised:

In the days to come the peoples will stream to the temple of the Lord, nations without number will come to it; and they will say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths...He will wield authority over many peoples and arbitrate for mighty nations; they will hammer their swords into plowshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war. That day – it is the Lord who speaks – I will finally gather in the lame and bring together those that have been led astray.'

(Mic.4: 1-6)

Day 2:

Many men offer to us plans for making the world a better place. Better education, more technical skills, new political programs, sociological wisdom, drugs, are all offered as solutions. Man-made religions (Buddhism, Bahai, Zen, Yoga and many others) are presented to us as the hope of the world. Some even tell us that a Christian moral code without Christ is the solution. But all these are human thoughts, man-made plans. The Lord says:

'Yes, the heavens are as high above the earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.' (Isa.55:9)

Day 3:

We need more than human ideas and human power. We need the wisdom and power of God. We are facing a power that is greater than human power. Behind the world's evils is an evil intelligence, a kingdom of evil spirits, something greater than we are. Each of us has sensed what Paul tells us:

'For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the Sovereignities and the Powers who originate the darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens.'

(Eph.6:12)

Day 4:

God's answer to the world's need is Jesus Christ. Jesus was sent into the world to save us, to free us from the power of Satan and of the world, so that we might live a new life now and forever more:

'Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even if he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'

(Jn.11:21-27)

Day 5:

Our freedom costs something. Jesus had to die so that we might live. But God loved us enough to send his son, who willingly died for us. As Paul says:

'It is not easy to die even for a good man – though of course for someone really worthy, a man might be prepared to die – but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.'

(Rom.5:6-8)

Day 6:

Jesus died and rose from the dead so that we might have new life. If he had not died, if he had not undergone the sufferings he did, we could not have been freed from sin and from the power of Satan. The prophet Isaiah spoke of Christ:

'Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours were the sorrows he carried. He was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking his own way, and the Lord burdened him with the sins of all of us.'

(Isa.53:4-8)

Day 7:

When Jesus rose from the dead, he had defeated the power of Satan. Now he can free you from the power of darkness and the hold of Satan's kingdom. He can give you a whole new life, if you are willing to leave the old:

'He has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins.'

(Col.1: 13-14)

STUDY

This week we will study the new life Jesus brings and the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes it possible:

St John's Gospel Chapter 3, Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2.