



SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

NEXT STEPS FOR
PRIESTS · **PROPHETS** · **KINGS**

CL

The Roman numerals for "150."

C = 100

L = 50

This booklet uses CL for every variation of 150 –

150

150th

Sesquicentennial

150th anniversary

Etc.

Next Steps for St. Joseph's Priests, Prophets and Kings

October 25, 2015
St. Joseph Church

Dear Friends in Christ:

Jesus' very first public words refer to a "Jubilee Year."

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me ... to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." (Luke 4)

What did Jesus mean by a "year acceptable to the Lord?" He was quoting Isaiah 61, which in turn quotes Leviticus 25.

"You shall treat this fiftieth year as sacred . . . each of you shall return to your own land . . . This fiftieth year is your year of jubilee . . . It shall be sacred for you . . . each of you shall return to your land."

Today we enter our third "fiftieth year." And as our ancestors returned to their land, the symbol of their covenant with God, we return to the symbol of our covenant, our baptisms. A year of return to our baptisms is surely "a year acceptable to the Lord."

How do we "return to our baptisms?" We return by doing two simple things. First, we remember the promises made at our baptisms. Chief among them is the promise "to remain forever a member of Christ who is priest, prophet and king." Second, we recommit ourselves to fulfilling those remembered promises.

As priests we are people of prayer. As prophets we are people who serve by consoling and challenging others. As kings we are people who build the community. Our jubilee year is thus a year to recommit ourselves to our lives of prayer, service and community building. It is a year to take a next step in each domain.

This booklet, "Next steps for St. Joseph's Priests, Prophets and Kings" makes those steps easy. Part I focuses on next steps in prayer, Part II on service and Part III on community building. Each part clarifies two challenges and easy ways to satisfy them.

Next Steps for St. Joseph's Priests, Prophets and Kings

May the Spirit of the Lord descend mightily upon us. May our CL year be one of inspired next steps. May this year fill us with gratitude to God.

Fr. Hank

PART I: NEXT STEPS FOR PRIESTS

A) THE FIRST CL CHALLENGE: TAKE A NEXT STEP IN PRAYER

Each one of us has been anointed “to remain forever a member of Christ who is priest, prophet and king.” Hence, each of us belongs to “the priesthood of all the baptized.” Membership in that community means we are people of prayer. Each of us wants to speak to God and listen to God. And each of us can.

Every member of St. Joe's prays at Sunday Mass, the “source and summit” of our individual and communal prayer lives.

Outside of Sunday Mass, we pray in very different ways. Some people pray mostly on the move, talking to God and listening as the Spirit moves them. Others lean toward more formalized prayer times. Most mix both modes.

We also pray in a wide array of moods. We sometimes feel a little stuck in prayer, sensing that our words are more ritualistic than relational, wondering if our efforts to listen are more routine than robust. At other times we feel very revved up, “ambitious for the higher gifts,” confident that God wants to grant us an even stronger connection. Most of us move back and forth between moods.

Finally, we come to prayer from varied pasts. Some have been at it for decades. Others are at it again after a long break. Still others are relative novices.

Regardless of our modes of prayer, our moods in prayer, or our history of prayer, several methods of prayer help everyone. Sunday Mass is the first. Scriptural prayer and “The Examen” are two others. Mass, scripture prayer and the Examen form the core of the first CL challenge, the CL prayer challenge.

THE FIRST CL CHALLENGE: TAKE A NEXT STEP IN PRAYER

SPEND CL MINUTES EACH WEEK IN PRAYER AS FOLLOWS:

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1) Sunday Mass | 60 minutes |
| 2) Mon.-Sat. Scripture Prayer (10 minutes/day) | 60 minutes |
| 3) Mon.-Sat. Examen <u>(5 minutes/day)</u> | <u>30 minutes</u> |
| | CL minutes |

The following pages clarify these very user-friendly prayer methods.

B) Praying with Scripture

We can read scripture, study it or pray with it. Each approach is good and holy and each is an adventure of its own. What follows are some guidelines for praying with scripture. It is known in some circles as “The Seven-Ps” approach.

1) Prepare

Pick a passage from scripture. Have it marked and ready to go. Doing so prevents the distractions that come from fumbling around. (The next page suggests ways to pick your passages.)

2) Place

Find a spot where you are alone and uninhibited in your response to God's presence, where you can, if you wish, “speak to God and listen to the casual reply.”

3) Posture

Situate yourself so that you are relaxed and peaceful, but not so relaxed that you are likely to fall asleep.

4) Presence of God

Remember – God is attentive to you and is loving you. Your very desire to pray is itself a gift from our God who is beholding you.

5) Passage from Scripture

Read the passage very slowly, aloud if you can. Listen peacefully. When possible, “Apply the senses” – imagine how the scene looks, smells, feels, tastes and sounds. The Spirit makes great use of the sensory data.

6) Pause

When you feel attracted to a word, phrase or image, stay with it. That attraction is typically a signal from the Holy Spirit.

7) Proceed

When you start straining to focus, move gently ahead.

C) Scripture Resources

We enjoy three basic ways to select daily scripture readings.

1) The Lectionary

The lectionary is the book of readings we use at Mass. There are different readings for every day of the year. Weekday readings repeat every two years. Sunday readings repeat every three. The daily Mass readings supply terrific material for daily scripture prayer.

There are countless options for scripture in hard copy. Daily missals, available at Christian book stores, make life very easy. Make sure your missal is based on the New American Bible. You can also subscribe to the *Magnificat* or other publications that send pocket-sized monthly missals.

Online options are also plentiful. Nothing beats the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) website: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/>. The website can send daily readings to your computer or smart phone. *Magnificat*, <http://us.magnificat.net/home/online>, The Catholic Company, yourfriends@catholiccompany.com, and many others also email readings.

2) Prepared Guides

Amazon sells several books that provide one or more scripture passages for each day of the year. The offerings include: *The Catholic One Year Bible* (also available online), *How to Read the Bible Every Day: A Guide for Catholics*, and *My Daily Catholic Bible*. These and similar books are especially good for people who would like to read the entire bible. (You will need to tweak the books' game plans so that you are praying rather than simply reading the passages.)

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3) Book-at-a-time

Reading one book of the Bible at a time can also be a useful way to pray over the scriptures. When doing so, it can be very helpful to go very slowly, taking a few days to cover a chapter in any book. Praying through the gospels alone can easily take a year. It can be helpful to peruse a book before committing to praying it through.

D) The Examen

This priceless prayer focuses on God's love in your life. It takes five minutes and is best made just before bed. Pray it anywhere you can be internally quiet. The goal is to notice where you experienced *true* peace. Choices that lead to *true* peace are of God.

1) Ask for God's Help

Your Creator wants to help you do this. Trust Him. A Jesus prayer can be very helpful. You might try repeating quietly:

Lord Jesus Christ, Living Son of the Living God

Help me to see my day, And where You gave me Your peace.

2) Review your day in earthly terms

Recall the specifics of where you have been and what you have been doing for the last 24 hours. Apply the senses again as you remember – how the coffee smelled, how the highway sounded, how the classroom looked.

3) Review your day in spiritual terms

Review your day again, this time noticing where you felt *true* peace and where you did not. Notice which moments make you grateful and which stirred regret. Notice the gifts given and the gifts

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received, including your lifelong gifts and those of others. Also notice the missteps.

4) Talk to Jesus

After the review, tell Jesus what made you grateful and what stirred regret. Thank Him for the peaceful moments and ask Him to help you understand the moments you regret and how to avoid repeating them. Apologize to Jesus if appropriate and ask for wisdom to find true peace.

5) Close

After speaking casually with Jesus, it can be very helpful to close with a formulaic prayer (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, *Anima Christi*, etc.)

E) THE SECOND CL CHALLENGE: TAKE A NEXT STEP IN SPIRITUAL READING

Each of us enters the CL through a different door. A few of us come to the CL a little too weary to take next steps in prayer. Others feel they are hitting their perfect prayer strides and should not change anything. Jesus fully understands both of these situations and is probably not nudging these people to pray more or in new ways.

Those whom God is not nudging to take that next step in prayer (i.e., combine Sunday Mass with weekday scriptural prayer and the Examen) might consider the second CL challenge, the CL reading challenge. Those whom God is nudging toward a next step in prayer might also consider the reading challenge.

THE SECOND CL CHALLENGE: TAKE A NEXT STEP IN SPIRITUAL READING

READ CL PAGES OF SPIRITUAL READING EACH MONTH.

Spiritual reading can open our hearts and souls to glorious transformations. As the saints have always known and the psychologists have more recently verified, we become like the things we contemplate. If we contemplate injuries,

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we become injurious. If we contemplate scandal, we become scandalous. And if we contemplate holiness and peace, we become holy and peaceful. What we read has a big influence on what we contemplate and what we become. The right spiritual reading can lead to inspired contemplations and transformations.

What we call "spiritual reading" includes, among other topics, biographies of canonized and un-canonized saints, the illuminations and insights of holy people, the history of our church and the development of our collective wisdom. The list of topics is vast and includes anything that makes us wonder about God.

In preparation for the CL reading challenge, two great resources have been developed. First, the parish lending library has been renovated, organized, and moved into two bookcases in the gathering space. Each book case contains CL books. All parishioners are encouraged to peruse the offerings, borrow books, and donate books.

Second, an extremely generous volunteer has organized descriptions of CL books (and MOVIES) you can consider for spiritual reading. The compendium is available in the gathering space, on the parish website, and in the parish office. It provides some very surprising recommendations and many classics.

PART IV: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

We are able to celebrate our CL jubilee year because of those who have gone before us. Since the October after Grant and Lee met at Appomattox, since the decade when Pope Pius IX convened the first Vatican Council, clarified the idea of papal infallibility and surrendered the Papal States, since the time when New Jersey was home to fewer than one million people (vs. nine million today), St. Joe's parishioners have been praying, serving and building community.

Think for a moment of our parish's CC anniversary, and beyond that, its CCL and CCC. The people of those eras will, God willing, look back and bless what we are doing this year, the parish's CL, just as we look back with gratitude to those who gave us the gifts we enjoy today, to those who celebrated the parish's first Mass, to those who celebrated the L and the C and the CXV.

For our parish ancestors we can pray:

*Eternal rest grant unto them oh Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon them.
May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed,
Through the mercy of God, rest in Peace. Amen.*

For ourselves we can pray:

*Lord, teach us to be generous, to serve you as you deserve,
To give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to seek for reward,
Save that of knowing we are doing Your will.*

For those who will celebrate the next great milestones we can pray:

*Lord, please bless them and keep them,
Let Your face shine upon them and be gracious to them.
Look upon them kindly and give them peace.
And may we bequeath to them the parish community You desire for them.*

150 POINTS-OF-LIGHT PROPOSAL

Project Team Name _____

Project Team Coordinator _____

Coordinator's email _____

Coordinator's phone _____

Project Description:

** It is the responsibility of the project team coordinator to ensure that all local laws are adhered to and that the project is completed in a safe manner.

** Please email this form to 150pol@stjosephsparish.com, fax to 908 431 5252 or drop off in the Gathering Space in the 150 POL box.