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Schema for Using *Journeying in His Light* with *In His Light*

Journeying in His Light is a companion book to *In His Light*, the corresponding chapters and questions found in *In His Light* are listed below.

Journeying In His Light *In His Light*

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11. The Holy Spirit in Our Lives

IN HIS LIGHT CONNECTION: CHAPTER 4, ALL QUESTIONS

Introduction

Although there are many saintly people whose lives are officially recognized by the Church with the title "saint," only a few have received the title "Doctor of the Church," a title that refers to those saints whose writings have had a great influence on the spiritual and theological history of the Church. Among the Doctors of the Church is a remarkable woman known as Saint Teresa of Avila, who lived in Spain during the sixteenth century. She was a mystic, a foundress of seventeen convents, and the author of four books that share her deep mystical insights into God's love and concern for those who seek God.

Because of her keen mind and mystical experiences, Teresa was able to understand some of the most profound spiritual and theological writings of the day. She lived at a time when the Spanish Inquisition was active, and she herself had to endure a formal investigation from the Inquisition. She spoke of her prayer life as a time of conversation with God, whom she considered a close friend. A well-known story is told that captures her openness and ease in speaking with God: one day, her cart overturned, throwing her into the muddy waters. It is reported that she said aloud, "Lord, if this is the way you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few."

In Luke 4:14–24, we read that after his forty days in the desert, Jesus returned to his home town of Nazareth, where he went to the synagogue and read aloud: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me..." After this, Jesus sat down and boldly declared, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Although the people at first were pleased with his words, many would eventually come to reject him, which Jesus noted when he said: "no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." The Spirit of the Lord comes upon many people today, but like Teresa and Jesus, their words are often rejected by those around them.

Scripture Reflection

"The Proclamation of John the Baptist"

In His Light Connection

- We learn about the Holy Spirit through revelation found in Scripture.
- The Holy Spirit is mentioned often in relation to Jesus during his earthly life. The Holy Spirit worked in, with, and through Jesus during his public ministry.

Read: Mark 1:1–13

Reflect

In Jesus' day, a holy man would often warn the people about the wrath of God and challenge them to commit themselves to God anew. The external sign of this commitment would be to go down into the water and be baptized. This was not the Sacrament of Baptism as we know it today. John the Baptist was typical of preachers of his own day, men dedicated to God who spent a great deal of time living in the desert. But John's mission was more than simply preaching: he is to prepare the way of the Lord. Jesus comes to John to make a commitment to his mission. He accepts baptism by John, and we read that "the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness."

The passage from Mark speaks as though the Spirit who "drove" Jesus into the desert is actually possessing Jesus, and this indeed is the message the author wishes to convey. The Holy Spirit will guide Jesus throughout his life. Just as Jesus acted under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, so we do the same today. The Apostle Paul said that if we can say that Jesus is Lord with faith, then we have the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord is upon us and guides us in our mission as Christians.

Where can I see the Spirit guiding me in my life?

Scripture Reflection

"The Work of the Spirit"

In His Light Connection

- In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells his disciples that when he leaves them, he will send the Holy Spirit. The community understood the Spirit as being in Jesus while he lived on earth, and as being sent by him into the world after his glorification.
- The Old Testament does not speak of the Holy Spirit as a separate Person in God, although it does speak of the spirit of the Lord as though it were the action of God. It would speak of the breath or wind of God as the spirit of God.
- The Gospel of John speaks of the Holy Spirit as coming from the Father and the Son. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The use of the singular word 'name' shows that the three are united as one.
- In the early Church, this unity of three Persons in one God received the title of "Trinity." We would never have known about the Trinity unless God revealed Trinity to us.
- The use of the male terms, "Father" and "Son," reflects the patriarchal society in which Scripture was written. God is neither male nor female.
- Why God revealed the Trinity is a mystery, although it does underline the importance of unity in creation, despite the diversity of people and cultures.

Read: John 16:5-15

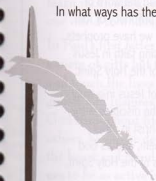
Reflect

Jesus tells his disciples that he must leave the world to allow the Spirit to become even more active in the world. The Spirit will prove the message of Jesus to be the true message of God, and the logic of worldly thinking will not be able to tolerate the reality of God's message. Although Jesus has spent his public life with his disciples, there are truths that they cannot even begin to understand without the help of the Spirit.

With the Spirit comes a new understanding of the message of Jesus.

Jesus uses the patriarchal language of the day in speaking about God, who is neither male nor female, and speaks of the Holy Spirit as coming from both the Father and the Son. The Spirit will speak only what the Spirit hears from God the Son, who in turn reflects God the Father. This is a great mystery that we would not know without God revealing it to us. There is one God, but three independent Persons. For us to accept this mystery in faith, we need the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is fitting that there are mysteries in God that we cannot understand, but it is also fitting that the Holy Spirit gives us the grace to accept this mystery in faith.

In what ways has the Holy Spirit helped me to know more about God?



Scripture Reflection

"The Coming of the Holy Spirit"

In His Light Connection

- Christ bestowed the Holy Spirit upon his disciples on the day of his Resurrection, when he said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:22-23).
- In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles at Pentecost.
- The Holy Spirit enables us to understand and witness to the message of Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit calls us to holiness and bestows different gifts upon the Church for the sake of ministry and the common good.

- The unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit is closing one's heart to the grace of God, thus refusing to accept God's grace.
- The Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church today.

Read: Acts 2:1–18

Reflect

Here we read about the effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Jesus, as the Spirit drives them out of the upper room to spread the word of God. Peter tells the people that the world has changed, that the prophecy of Joel (see 3:1–5) now takes effect. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have prophets, visionaries, dreamers, and a hope-filled group of people professing faith in Jesus Christ. The world will be a different place because of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel tells us that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples of Jesus in a truly miraculous manner, like tongues of fire. On that day, Peter and the disciples were immediately filled with courage and the ability to preach about Christ in other languages. The gifts of the Holy Spirit come to us as we need them, and as God decides to give them to us. As Paul tells us, there are many gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are given to each one for the common good.

Where do I experience the activity of the Holy Spirit in my life?





Saint Teresa of Avila was a mystic who spoke to God as a close and informal friend. In doing this, she was acting under the influence of the Spirit. Paul the Apostle tells us that no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Spirit. To believe that Jesus is Lord is not an act of genius but an act of faith, and faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When we seek to learn more about our faith, as Teresa did, it is the Holy Spirit who opens our mind to understand and believe what we are learning.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (see 12:4), we read that there are a variety of gifts but the same Spirit. These gifts come to us in many forms and touch the lives of all of us. The Holy Spirit enables us to know God, guides and inspires us in worship, protects us in temptation, and leads us to God throughout life. Whenever anyone shares the message of Christ with others, he or she depends on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to also touch the heart and mind of the person hearing the message. The Spirit continues to be as active in the world today as the Spirit was in the life of Jesus.

What is my understanding of the activity of the Spirit in the world, and how does this affect me?

For Further Reflection & Discussion

1. We learn that the Holy Spirit is active in the world today. What do you see as evidence of this?
2. We are temples of the Holy Spirit. How does this affect your view of yourself, as well as all of creation?
3. The Trinity is a mystery that reveals there are three Persons in one God. Why, in your estimation, did God reveal a mystery to us that we cannot understand?

Prayer

Lord, Giver of Life,
send the Spirit into our lives
that we may share our faith
with others
in wisdom and love.

Amen.



12. Sin and Life

IN HIS LIGHT CONNECTION: CHAPTER 5, ALL QUESTIONS

Introduction

One of the most beautiful parables told by Jesus is found in the Gospel of Luke (15:11–32), the Parable of The Prodigal Son. In this parable, the father, who represents God, gives his son his inheritance. In Jesus' day, a request for one's inheritance was seen as an act of cutting oneself off from the family. This son, having rejected his family, leaves, squanders his wealth on loose living, ends up in poverty, then decides to return home, where he is welcomed back by his father.

The father (God) does not reprimand the son, but orders the servants to bring him new clothing and sandals, and he orders the best calf prepared for a celebration of his son's return. This echoes God's reaction to a returning sinner. God loves the sinner so much that God rushes out to embrace the sinner and acts as though the sinner never cut himself or herself off from the family.

In God's mind, all sinful men and women still belong to the family. When God sees a sinner returning, God does not step back and wait, ready to reprimand and judge the returning sinner, but rushes out to greet him or her and immediately welcomes the sinner back. In God's eyes, all of us, saints and sinners alike, are brothers and sisters in God's family.

Scripture Reflection

"Cain Murders Abel"

In His Light Connection

- Sin, which is a weakening or breaking of a love relationship with God, occurs when we commit a wrongful action against God, our neighbor, or ourselves.
- Although we do not know exactly when sin came into the world, the second creation story in the Book of Genesis tells us that human beings are the cause of sin in the world and that evil gradually gained a grip on the lives of people.
- This grip of sin is called 'Original Sin,' since it stands at the origin and base of creation. When we speak of being born in Original Sin, we not only refer to the sinful attitudes of the world, but also to our own inability to confront sin and evil without the help of God.

Read: Genesis 4:1-16

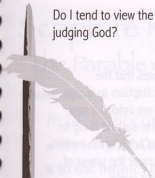
Reflect

The second sin recorded in the Bible is when Cain kills his brother Abel out of jealousy. Although no one saw Cain kill Abel, God does not need humans to speak of evil. The blood of Abel calls out to the Lord. As a result, Cain is punished and can no longer till the soil. He fears for his life, but God, out of compassion, offers to protect Cain.

From chapter two to chapter eleven in the Book of Genesis, we read of one sin after another. The stories in these chapters tell us that sin had its origin in human beings who disobeyed God. Human beings originally had a close, loving relationship with God, but sin, which is the weakening or breaking of this love relationship with God, soon intruded into creation.

To help the people of Israel identify their tendencies to sin, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The first three commandments concern our relationship with God, the Fourth Commandment concerns our relationship with our parents, the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Commandments concern our relationship in our actions toward others, and the Ninth and Tenth Commandments concern our relationship in our intentions toward others. These commandments were given to guide us in how to act as people who love God and one another.

Do I tend to view the commandments as signs of God's love or as signs of a judging God?



Scripture Reflection

"Dying and Rising with Christ"

In His Light Connection

- Actions against the Ten Commandments are examples of sins we can commit.
- Jesus gave a new law to his disciples, a law that guides our behavior toward God and others by a continual attitude of mind, rather than actions alone. This new law given by Jesus is contained in the Beatitudes.
- A serious or mortal sin is a fundamental option to seek one's own will and to reject a love relationship with God.
- A less serious, or venial, sin occurs when a person retains an attitude of loving God yet commits actions that weaken one's relationship with God.
- For an action to be a serious sin, it must in itself be a serious matter and the person must freely and consciously choose the action he or she knows to be sinful.
- Sins against groups within society or society itself are social sins.

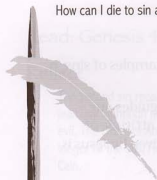
Read: Romans 6:1–14

Reflect

Paul often speaks of Christ's Resurrection in his writings, and notes that the Resurrection is a mystery that deeply affects our lives. He views Baptism as a sign that we have died to sin and risen to live a new life in Christ. We are indeed a new person. Through our Baptism, we should see ourselves as dead to sin and living for Christ in all that we do. Paul challenges us to live a life faithful to Christ, which means we should not let sin reign over us. If we love God, then we live under the power of grace, not under the law; if we love, we are living with Christ as our guide.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1—7:29), Jesus speaks of the attitudes behind our actions, our fundamental way of thinking. He calls us to have an attitude of being poor in spirit, recognizing that the goods of this world come from God. We should be willing to mourn with those who are afflicted in any manner; to live with true meekness in recognizing that we are in the world without grasping to control it; to long for justice and peace; to reach out to others with mercy; to see the hand of God in all of creation; to be peacemakers; and to be willing to suffer ridicule, pain, and death for a right relationship with God. In all that we do, we should act without seeking anything in return. In Jesus, we, like Paul, die to sin and rise with a Christ-like attitude.

How can I die to sin and rise with Christ in my manner of living?



Scripture Reflection

"The Parable of The Lost Sheep"

In His Light Connection

- Christ tells us that God has love for sinners.
- In the Infancy Narrative in Matthew's Gospel, we read that Jesus "will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).
- Jesus dined with sinners and forgave sinners.
- Jesus overcame the power of sin through his death and Resurrection.
- Grace is a special gift from God that deepens our relationship with God.
- Grace is freely given to us by God to help us to continue living close to God (sanctifying grace) or to inspire us to act in accordance with God's will (actual grace).
- Through the gift of grace, we offer to God prayers of adoration, praise, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and contrition (sorrow).

Read: Luke 15:1-10

Reflect

In Jesus' day, tax collectors and some common people were considered sinners, and they often gathered around Jesus when he preached. The Pharisees, who saw themselves as above these sinners, complained that Jesus was willing to welcome and eat with sinners, a sign that Jesus agreed with their form of life. Jesus responds to their complaints by teaching how important sinners are in God's eyes. He does not say that those who do good are not valuable or that God is not pleased with them, but stresses the joy in heaven over a sinner who is brought back to God.

One who weakens a relationship with God through a number of small actions runs the risk of one day finding that God is no longer important in his or her decisions about life. One's fundamental way of thinking can change to the point where a person no longer thinks of God, but only about seeking illicit pleasure, power, or dominance over others. At this point, the person has committed a serious, or mortal, sin. God still loves this person and will grant special graces to try to lure the

person away from sin. But this grace must be accepted. God never takes away a person's free will. Sin came into the world through the actions of human beings, but through Jesus Christ, the love of God overcomes the power of sin.

What does God's love and concern for sinners mean to me at this time in my life?





Paul realized the power of sin in the world, but he also recognized that grace, which comes through Jesus Christ, far surpasses the power of sinfulness. He wrote that if many died through the sin of one man, "much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many" (Romans 5:15). Sin teaches us about God's great love for us. No sinner can ever say that he or she has sinned so badly that God can never forgive him or her. Scripture continually proclaims the love of God for the sinner and God's strong desire for sinners to change their way of life, no matter how gravely they have sinned.

The Parable of The Prodigal Son cited at the beginning of this chapter shows us the drama that exists between good and evil. Many of us might not be like the prodigal son, who left his family and lived a depraved life, but we might be like the elder son, who obeyed the rules but looked down on his brother when he returned home. In God's eyes, the sinner is our brother and sister, and we should rejoice over any sinner who returns to God.

Am I as forgiving of others as God is toward my own sins?

For Further Reflection & Discussion

1. In the Book of Genesis, we read about the power of sin gaining a grip in this world. What are your thoughts about the power of sin in the world?
2. People sometimes say that they no longer know what is considered sinful today. What actions do you consider to be sinful?
3. Grace is a gift from God that prompts us to perform good deeds or to change our lives, if necessary. How has the grace of God affected your life?

Prayer

Lord, Giver of New Life,

you continually offer yourself

and your love to us

in spite of our sins.

Teach us to love as you love,

to forgive as you forgive,

and always to seek forgiveness.

Amen.