

January 2014 Meeting

Ten Commandments

The Fifth Commandment

Opening Prayer

Lord teach us to pray:
Our Father...

The Reading

(to be read by the Leader)

“You shall not kill”

It may seem relatively easy to overlook this commandment because we don't think it could ever really apply to us. Who me? I would not kill anyone, but perhaps we need to take a closer look at this, because there is a reasonable chance we may have had a hand or a tongue in killing or injuring someone's reputation through our words or our actions. In the area of ethical practices and principals this is referred to as the “slippery slope.” If you have ever started a toboggan down a slippery hill, it is pretty difficult to stop it, without some drastic actions.

So why is it not permissible to take one's own life or the lives of others? “God alone is Lord over life and death. Except in the case of legitimate self-defence of oneself or another, no one may kill another human being, (Youcat 378).” Human life is sacred; it is in fact a gift from God. So to attack another life is a sacrilege against God. God is the giver of life, of all that is good. It is therefore only God who can take back the life that He has given. So what sort of attacks on human life are forbidden by the Fifth Commandment? The list is as follows: Killing unarmed civilians during a war, the abortion of a human being from the moment of conception on, Suicide, self-mutilation, self-destructive behavior. Euthanasia, killing the handicapped, the sick and the dying is also forbidden. The Church is perfectly clear on the question of abortion and euthanasia. “Whoever participates in an abortion, forces a woman to undergo an abortion, or merely advises her to do so is automatically excommunicated, just as with other crimes against human life. In other words, life is a wonderful and serious gift from God. So is our responsibility for safeguarding it at all times. If a psychologically ill person commits suicide, responsibility for the act of killing is often diminished and many cases completely annulled, (Youcat 379).”

The Reflection

(to be read by the leader)

We might ask the question; is a person responsible for everything he/she does? “No one can be held (fully) responsible for something they did under coercion, out of fear, ignorance, under the influence of drugs or the power of bad habits. The more a person knows about the good and practices the good, the more he moves away from the slavery of sin, (Rom. 6, 17). God desires that such free persons should (be able to) take responsibility for themselves, for their environment and for the whole earth. But all of God's merciful love is also for those who are not free; every day he offers them an opportunity to allow themselves to be set free for freedom, (Youcat 288)”

Brothers, life is a gift from God, your life, my life, the lives of others. We never have the right to decide who lives and who does not. “Naked I came forth from my mother's womb, and naked I go back again. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord, (Job 1, 21-22).” What we have received from the Lord, particularly life itself must be respected and valued. If we do not respect and honor the very basic gift of life itself, it will be difficult for us to see and value the many other blessings on our lives that God bestows upon us, purely because of his love for us.

Meditation Period

(The leader now invites the members to spend a few moments in silent reflection, as the above text is not meant to be a ready-made answer but a starter for personal reflection on the theme.)

Fraternal Sharing

(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)

Closing Prayer

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen

February 2014 Meeting

Ten Commandments

The Sixth Commandment

Opening Prayer

Lord teach us to pray:
Our Father...

The Reading

(to be read by the Leader)

“You shall not commit adultery.”

“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him”,...Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two become one body (Gen. 2, 18, 24).”

Brothers, it is apparent that from the beginning of time, it has always been God’s will that man and woman are meant to be together. Together in an intimate bond of love that is reserved only for one another. A bond so intense that the fruit of the expression of this love may result in children. A very profound gift of God’s love for us, that in the expression of our intimate love for our spouses it, may in fact result in new life. “Just as God is creative in His love, so too man can be creative in love and give life to children, (Youcat 400)”

For the sake of clarity, let us look at a couple of definitions.

What is adultery? “Adultery is committed when two people, at least one of whom is married to someone else, have sexual relations. Adultery is the fundamental betrayal of love, the violation of a covenant that was made in God’s sight. Jesus Himself explicitly declared the indissolubility of marriage.” What therefore God has joined together let no one divide, (Mk. 10, 9) (Youcat 424).

What is Fornication? “Today, the term fornication generally refers to consensual sexual relations between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, (Youcat 410).” Sexual relations, between a man and a woman outside the sacred bond of the sacrament of marriage.

So, adultery occurs when sexual relations occur between a man and a woman, at least one of whom is married. Fornication occurs between a man and a woman when neither of the individuals is married. Is one worse than the other? In a word yes, adultery is, it made God’s top ten list, but they are both very wrong. “Fornication is often based on seduction, lies, violence, dependency and abuse. Fornication is therefore a serious offence against charity. It harms the dignity of the person and fails to recognize the meaning of human sexuality, (Youcat 410).” Regardless of the degree of gravity, both these acts are a turning away from God’s love and from the primary purpose for our sexuality.

The Reflection

(to be read by the leader)

Why did adultery make God’s top ten list? Because man and woman were created as a result of the Trinitarian love that exists with our Triune God. We, (you and I) are the expression of perfect divine love. This is the reason that marriage is considered a covenant relationship. The union of man and woman was created by God in His

sight, which is why the Church states that a marriage is only sacramental in nature when it occurs in a church in the presence of a priest. God gave us this gift. When we enter into it we must do so in His divine presence. The sacrament of marriage is not about two people finding one another solely because of their good management. It is about God blessing two individuals with the total gift of one another, as an expression of His love for them. The covenant relationship that is entered into within the sacrament of marriage must be given total and absolute respect. This is not a covenant of love simply between a man and a woman, but it is a three way covenant which includes God who has blessed them with the love they share.

Note that in Genesis when God created woman He said “I will make a suitable partner for him, partner being the key word. “God created man in His image: in the divine image He created him; male and female he created them.” In the wonder of God’s magnificent creation the union of man and woman in the sacrament of marriage, the love expressed emotionally, spiritually and sexually is meant to mirror the divine love, of which we are expressions.

Finally from a common sense perspective, the sacrament of marriage in order to be a sacrament must be procreative (open to life) and unitive. It is to be indissoluble; “until death do us part.” And it is a commitment to our spouse’s welfare. In fact brothers, your primary and ultimate role within your marriage is to help your spouse get to heaven. And guess what brothers; the primary role of your spouse is to help you get to heaven. In all seriousness, our goal in life is to end up in heaven for eternity with our God and our loved ones. Marriage is the perfect vehicle for helping us accomplish our primary purpose and reason for existence in the world. It allows us to more fully live out the command to love God and to love one another.

Meditation Period

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Fraternal Sharing

(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)

Closing Prayer

(Recited by all)

Let us pray;

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what You command and to desire what You promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen

March 2014 Meeting

Ten Commandments

The Seventh Commandment

Opening Prayer

Lord teach us to pray:
Our Father...

The Reading

(to be read by the Leader)

“You Shall Not Steal”

“The seventh commandment not only forbids taking something away from another person, but it requires the just management and distribution of the earth’s goods. It also addresses the human endeavor to make just, social arrangements in the world and to plan for its beneficial development. The Seventh Commandment says that we are obliged in faith to advocate the protection of the environment as part of creation and to conserve the earth’s natural resources, (Youcat 426).” Brothers, it appears that there is much more to this commandment than the admonition that we can’t take a candy bar from the store without paying for it. This is the understanding that many of us grew up with, but not taking that candy bar is really just the tip of the iceberg.

There is no absolute but only a relative right to private property because God created the earth and its goods for all humanity, (CCC 2402-2406).” A healthy way to view this statement is to understand that we are in fact stewards of the gifts of this world that we have been blessed with. “A steward is a servant entrusted for a time with the goods of the Master. The steward uses but does not own these goods and must eventually give an account to the Master for the way in which they have been cared for and made fruitful. Each of us spends a brief time in this life preparing for our eternal life with God. While we are here, we receive everything from God, even life itself, and are asked to make good use of what God has entrusted to us, (Thomas Christopher Collins, Stewardship: Well done good and faithful servant, p. 1).” Bottom line, all we have, all we possess are gifts from God, entrusted to us to care for. This includes our families, our work and our creation. We all are aware that taking something that does not belong to us is wrong. Remember the candy bar.

The Seventh Commandment goes far deeper in its interpretation, and here are a few areas that may affect our daily lives. “The theft of intellectual property is theft, (CCC 2408-09).” This includes copying the work of others in our studies (plagiarism). It includes the unauthorized making of copies from the internet and/or pirating of music and movies where there is an obligation to make some form of payment to the individual who owns the rights or the property. “Is it permissible to use tax dodges? Inventiveness in dealing with complex systems of taxation is morally unobjectionable. It is immoral to evade taxes or to commit tax fraud, in other words to falsify, fail to report, or conceal facts so as to prevent a correct assessment of taxes due, (Youcat 431).”

What about the stock market. “A Christian can speculate in the stock market as long as he does so within the parameters for normal business practices. Prudently investing one’s own or someone else’s money does not break any commandment, (Youcat 432).” “Vandalism and

deliberately damaging public facilities and common property are forms of theft and restitution must be made, (Youcat 433).” May a Christian make bets and play games of chance? “Betting and gambling are immoral and dangerous when the gambler risks his livelihood. It is worse if he risks the livelihood of others, especially those entrusted to his care, (Youcat 434). Translation, go ahead and buy your lottery ticket on Friday afternoon, but it would not be prudent to invest your whole paycheck just because the jackpot is fifty million.

The Reflection

(to be read by the leader)

In some ways we can see the Seventh Commandment paradoxically. The baseline is that we are not to take what is not rightfully and justly ours. But the Church takes this a step further when viewed in the context of the poor. “Love for the poor must be in every age the distinguishing mark of Christians. The poor deserve not just a few alms; they have a claim for justice. For Christians there is a special obligation to share their goods. Our example in love for the poor is Christ, (Youcat 449).” So not only is it wrong to take that which is not rightfully ours, but it is wrong for us to keep that which so many lack. We need to do our share with what we have been blessed to receive.

Brothers this may sound a bit heavy but when we view all that we have and all that we are as gift from God, our gratitude for these gifts should lead us to an “Attitude of Gratitude.” When our hearts are grateful we have a need to share our blessings with those who are in need. As Cardinal Thomas Collins states in his book on Stewardship: “We are servants of the Lord, stewards who will be called to account when He returns. Each of us wants to hear the Lord say at that moment: Well done good and faithful servant, (Mt. 25, 28).” So although the Seventh Commandments says thou shall not steal...it is really an invitation to share with others from the bountiful gifts our Lord has entrusted us to care for, until He comes again. (864)

Meditation Period

(The leader now invites the members to spend a few moments in silent reflection, as the above text is not meant to be a ready-made answer but a starter for personal reflection on the theme.)

Fraternal Sharing

(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)

Closing Prayer

(Recited by all)

Let us pray;

O God who willed that your Only Begotten Son should undergo the Cross to save the human race, grant, we pray that we, who have known this mystery on earth, may merit the grace of his redemption in heaven. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen

April 2014 Meeting

Ten Commandments

The Eighth Commandment

Opening Prayer

Lord teach us to pray:
Our Father...

The Reading

(to be read by the Leader)

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

“The Eighth Commandment teaches us not to lie. Lying means consciously and intentionally speaking or acting against the truth. Someone who lies deceives himself and misleads others who have a right to know the full truth of a matter. Every lie is an offense against justice and charity. Lying is a form of violence; it introduces the seed of division into a community and undermines the trust on which every human community is based” (Youcat 452). For most of us, we may well admit that at times we have gossiped. We have spoken about another individual, not present, with information that may or may not be true. The reality of gossip is that though most folks would confess they have been guilty of it, it can have very significant consequences.

Once upon a time I was present with then Archbishop Thomas Collins in a Grade VI classroom where the students were preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation. It came time for question period and one student asked His Grace what the worst sin is. I was surprised with the response. In Cardinal Collin’s mind gossip ranked very high on the list. He said once you say something about someone, once it leaves your tongue you cannot take it back. It is simply out there for anyone and everyone to speak about, distort, add to, and there is not a thing one can do about it. Not unlike our superstars who do something less than honorable and the next thing you know, it is on the internet and there is no stopping it. His comment rang very true for me as one who certainly has wagged his tongue when it would be of no benefit for me or anyone else.

The Reflection

(to be read by the leader)

There are in the world, considered to be three transcendentals, that is, things which do not change. Beauty, the Good and the True. These three elements are considered to be absolute from a philosophical viewpoint. For you and I as Catholic Christians, living in respect for the truth means not only being true to oneself, but more precisely it means being truthful, being true to God, for He is the source of all truth” (Youcat 453). We see this in the person of Jesus Christ, who is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14, 6). One of the graces of speaking the truth at all times, always with charity, is that we never have to second-guess ourselves. What did I say to this person? What did I say to that person? We know what we said because we spoke the truth. The key with truthfulness is that it must always be spoken with love, in other words for the benefit and well-being of others. Truth can at times be damaging to others. So then, we should not lie, but are we

always required to speak the truth even if it may cause harm or defamation of character?

The philosopher Socrates used a method called the “three sieves.” “Is it true? Is it kind? Is it helpful?” You may have heard this wise adage. Everything we say must be true, but we need not say everything that is true. St. Augustine of Hippo, one of the great theologians in the history of the Church, is quoted as having said, “In the important things unity, in the unimportant things diversity, but in all things charity.” Mom was quite right when she told you, “If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything.”

It is important that we ask ourselves why we feel compelled to share information, true or false about our neighbor. If we are honest with ourselves we may have to admit that when I can make someone else look a little smaller, in some twisted way I am making myself a little bigger, because I know something about someone else. Charity is about the other, but specifically it is about the good of the other.

A word on the confessional. How confidential is the seal of the confessional? “The secret of the sacrament of Reconciliation is sacred and cannot be violated under any pretext. The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore it is a crime for a confessor in any way to betray a penitent by word or in any other manner or for any reason” (CCC 2490). Suffice to say, that for a priest who violates the seal of the confessional, being stripped of his priesthood would only be the beginning of his problems. I understand the sacred seal of the confessional to be a condition that my own salvation hinges upon.

Finally brothers, “Every Christian must give testimony to the truth and thereby follow after Christ, who before Pilate said, “For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth” (Jn. 18, 37), (Youcat 454). As disciples of Jesus Christ and as those men they call Knights, we have a moral obligation to testify to the truth of Jesus Christ in our word and in our actions. St. Francis of Assisi is credited with saying, “Preach the Gospel at all times....and if necessary use words.” (870)

Meditation Period

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Fraternal Sharing

(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)

Closing Prayer

(Recited by all)

Let us pray;

Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

May 2014 Meeting

Ten Commandments

The Ninth Commandment

Opening Prayer

Lord teach us to pray:
“Our Father...”

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

Brothers, the ninth commandment does not forbid desires, but rather, it forbids disordered desires. “The ‘covetousness’ against which Sacred Scripture warns is the rule of impulses over the mind, the dominion of urges over the whole person, and the sinfulness that this causes, (Youcat 462).” What does this phrase mean when translated into English? The attraction between men and women has been created by God and therefore it is a good thing. Erotic attraction is part of our human sexuality and our biological makeup. This God-given attraction between men and women ensures the desire of man and woman to unite with one another in intimate love. The fruit of this love may very well result with the gift of new life in the world. The fruitful love between husband and wife enriches the human race as well as God’s church here in the world, and this is an essential component of our humanity and our society.

The family of course is the bedrock foundation of the society in which we are all part of. In fact, the family is the cornerstone of God’s creation that He has blessed us to care for until He comes again, and He will. So when we consider the critical nature and importance of the family unit, which is defined as the marriage of one man to one woman, the ninth commandment exists to safeguard the cornerstone of God’s creation, to keep order and to continue to build up the world and God’s church. Our sexual energy like any form of energy must be used in a controlled environment which, from a sexual perspective must be maintained within the covenantal married relationship between a man and a woman.

The Reflection

(To be read by the leader)

What does this require from you and me in order that we may live our lives faithfully and with purity of heart? “The purity of heart required for love is achieved in the first place through union with God in prayer. When God’s grace touches us, this also produces a path to pure, undivided human love, (CCC 2520).” Brothers, when our hearts are pure, when we turn to God with sincere intentions, He transforms our hearts. God gives us the strength to follow His will and the strength to reject impure thoughts, fantasies and desires. To view another man’s wife or any other woman with less than the dignity

that is inherently theirs as children of God is wrong. Further, it demeans the beauty of our own marital relationships with our spouses. When we covet someone, it demeans their dignity, our spouse’s dignity and our own dignity. It is a selfish act that we allowed to come about because we are unable or unwilling to control our own human sexuality.

Brothers, we are not bullet-proof, but awareness of the pitfalls that will come from not maintaining appropriate custody of our eyes and our minds will assist us in our journeys through this life. A beautiful woman is indeed another wonderful sign of God’s magnificent creation. Let us appreciate this beauty, let us give God the credit that is His due for this beauty that is such an integral part of His creation, and then brothers, let us give thanks for the wonderful gifts of our wives/girlfriends that our Lord has blessed us with. My experience has been that when we bring God into the conversation, the tendency for lustful and covetous thoughts is dramatically minimized.

Remember the three transcendentals, (those things which do not change), the Good, the Beauty and the Truth. My brothers in Christ, we need to be grateful for the truth, for beauty and for the good. These are gifts of God’s creation to us. At the same time we need to be mindful that these gifts are from God and they are for our appreciation and enjoyment. They are God’s gifts and we are to be faithful stewards of all that He has entrusted to us. At a time unknown to us, He will come again. At this point He will ask us for a final accounting of our stewardship and care of these gifts. The Golden Rule holds as true as ever here. We expect to be treated with dignity. We must strive to always treat others with the same dignity that is our inherent right as children of God.

Meditation Period

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Fraternal Sharing

(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)

Closing Prayer

(Recited by all)

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen”.

June 2014 Meeting

Ten Commandments

The Tenth Commandment

Opening Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray:
“Our Father...”

The Reading *(To be read by the Leader)*

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.”

Brothers, for the most part, we have all we need and much more. The challenge or tension that we face is that our needs do not often match up with our wants. “A Christian must learn to distinguish reasonable desires from those that are unreasonable and unjust and to acquire an interior attitude of respect for other people’s property, (Youcat 465).” I have a roof over my head, plenty to eat, a good job, a family who loves me and one whom I love. I know that our Lord loves me and that I love Him. Why do I worry about what Joe down the street has and why do I allow this to affect my worldview? Our inability to trust in God’s providence for us and our families can lead us down that insecure path where we are lulled into the trap of wanting more and more. Yet when we look at what we have, we have much. If we agree that God is looking after us and our family very well, it does not make sense that we concern ourselves with wanting what Joe down the street has.

In Cardinal Thomas Collins’ reflections on being a good steward, he makes some very good observations about our role in the grand scheme of creation. He notes, “A steward is a servant entrusted for a time with the goods of the Master. The steward uses but does not own these goods and must eventually give an account to the Master for the way which they have been cared for and made fruitful, (Stewardship p. 1).” We know from Genesis that God our creator has given us dominion over all of His creation. Dominion does not mean unlimited access or rights. It means caring in a loving way for all that has been entrusted to us. Suffice to say it does not mean that we are to care for all that has been entrusted to Joe down the street. That is his role to fulfill.

Covetousness of what others have is unhealthy because it “leads to greed, avarice, theft, robbery and fraud, violence and injustice, envy and immoderate desires to own what belongs to others (Youcat 465).” True wealth, true possession comes to us from being in a good and healthy relationship with God our creator. This relationship allows us to know that we are loved, that as God’s children, He will provide for us that which we need. In this form of trusting relationship we come to a place of gratitude. From a stewardship perspective we refer to this as “an attitude of gratitude.” We come to an appreciation that indeed we and our families are blessed because of God’s love for us. This place of gratitude allows us to focus our attention more acutely on the giver of all that is

good, our Lord and Savior. What Joe down the street possesses, then becomes much less of a distraction to us. It is a question that we may ask ourselves on occasion to help us maintain a healthy and holy perspective. What do I possess and what possesses me?

The Reflection *(To be read by the leader)*

The reality of our Christianity is that the only thing that is truly important in our lives is our relationship with God. Why? It is the relationship that will ultimately result in eternal life. This is our reason for existence here in the world. To live our lives as good stewards of what our Lord has entrusted to us, coupled with a sincere “attitude of gratitude,” in order that we may attain eternal life. My dad, a brother knight, has a couple of great expressions that put things in perspective for me. (1.) “You can’t pull a U-Haul trailer behind the hearse.” and (2.) “Jim, your mother and I are spending you children’s inheritance. If there is anything left over, it is due to a miscalculation.” These simple maxims help me keep an eye on what is truly important.

Brothers, for the most part we are all doing pretty well. Our relationship with our Lord is the only thing we truly can possess. Everything else in this world is fleeting and temporal. Everything else that we have in this world is simply on loan to us to care for until the master returns. At that time we all hope to hear these words. “Well done good and faithful servant, (Mt. 25, 21).” Being grateful for what God has blessed us with, focusing our energy on relationship with the giver of all that is good, and this attitude of gratitude is a wonderful perspective to view the world that our God has entrusted to us, His faithful servants.

Meditation Period
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Fraternal Sharing
(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)

Closing Prayer *(Recited by all)*

Let us pray:
“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen”.

September 2014 Meeting

The Sacraments

Opening Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray:
“Our Father...”

The Reading (To be read by the Leader)

The Sacraments – Part I

My Worthy Brothers in Christ,

In last year's formation program we took a tour through the Ten Commandments. This year my goal is to walk us through the graces that will assist us more than anything else in living out the Commandments, specifically loving God and loving one another. The graces I refer to come to us from the seven sacraments. The seven sacraments are: Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders and the Sacrament of the Sick. Most of us have participated in at least five of these sacraments at different points in our lives. In fact as Knights of Columbus, Catholic men whose lives revolve in a very real way around the life of the Church, some of these sacraments, specifically Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist are a very regular part of our lives. So what is a sacrament?

“Seated at the right hand of the Father and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments He instituted to communicate His grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature.” (CCC 1084) Yes, that is a mouthful. In the fifth century St. Augustine defined sacraments in this way. “A sacrament is a visible sign of invisible grace.” Interestingly enough one thousand years later at the Council of Trent, sacraments were reaffirmed to be “outward signs instituted by Christ to give grace.” It is clear to me why we continue to base so much of our theology on the thought and teaching of St. Augustine. He was able to put very complex thoughts into a language that is manageable for us mere mortals.

So if a sacrament is a visible sign of invisible grace, what is grace? “Grace is favour, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to His call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.” (CCC 1996) The Vatican II document, *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

sums up the relationship between the sacraments and grace very well. “The sacraments by God's favour make present to our lives all the mysteries of faith, and confer upon us the saving fruits of these mysteries. The ability to live the Christian life, keeping faithfully the Ten Commandments and the commandments of love, is the fruit of grace. Prayer too is the work of grace, for it is only in the Spirit that we can pray fruitfully, (Rom. 8, 26-27). Moreover, only grace makes it possible for one to live the excellent and demanding ways of Christ, and to find this not burdensome but light and easy, (Mt. 11, 28-30).”

The Reflection (To be read by the Leader)

Brothers, God's grace is the essence; it is the lifeblood of which we need to live our lives as practical (and I might add holy) Catholic gentlemen. The Sacraments are the most profound source of this necessary grace that we can ever avail ourselves of. We can go to India and join Blessed Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity and spend our lives helping the dying in the streets of Calcutta, but we will never receive the grace we need in our lives more richly or profoundly than when we receive the Holy Eucharist or absolution in the sacrament of Reconciliation. The sacraments are the primary source of the grace we need to be holy Catholic men. This is why we need to spend time understanding them to the best of our ability. (587)

Meditation Period

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Fraternal Sharing

(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)

Closing Prayer (Recited by all)

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.”

October 2014 Meeting

The Sacraments

Opening Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray:
“Our Father...”

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

The Sacraments – Part II

Worthy Brothers in Christ,

Last month we established the absolutely essential nature of the seven sacraments with regard to living grace-filled lives as Catholic men. In fact, the sacraments are the primary source of the grace we need to be happy in this world and ultimately arrive with our loved ones to the heavenly kingdom in the next. The grace we receive in the sacraments is the freely given gift of God’s love to us that enables us to be His love for others here in the world. So we have established what grace is, and we defined the sacraments as “visible signs of invisible grace”.

Practically speaking, what does a sacrament consist of? We know that there are seven specific sacraments within the life of the Church. They are Baptism, Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders and the Sacrament of the Sick. All of the sacraments are profoundly important in our lives, with Baptism, I would say, being named as the essential sacrament, because without the sacrament of Baptism we cannot validly participate in any of the other sacraments. Baptism is the entry or gateway into the life of grace that we are called to as children of God.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is He who baptises, He who acts in the sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies.” (CCC 1127) As stated, St. Augustine of Hippo did most of the heavy lifting to give us an understanding of what the sacraments are. He did this using Greek philosophy. He applied this premise to the sacraments concluding that a sacred sign must lead one to a sacred or religious reality.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

In any sacrament there must be two necessary ingredients: matter and form. The matter is what is seen and felt. The form (or formula) is the words spoken. An example: simply pouring water over an individual’s head is meaningless as a sign,

but when the words “I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” are spoken, they give direction and meaning to, they “inform” the matter. Make no mistake here. The sacraments are not magic; they are a primary source of grace because it is our Lord Himself who is at work within the sacrament. Simply put brothers, it is the grace of God at work. I would say that most of us can attest to the grace of God at work in many ways in our lives. Perhaps a poignant example might be the first time we gazed into the eyes of our firstborn child. Generally speaking, it is truly a God-moment for most.

In addition to the matter and form, every sacrament must also have a **minister** and a **subject**, one who is to give the sign and one who receives. For each of these there is a basic requirement. The individual subject must be properly disposed, and the minister must intend to do what the Church wants done. The subject and the minister will perform both of their parts imperfectly. It is reasonable to say that no person could be ever perfectly disposed to receive and then to become the Body of Christ in the reception of the Holy Eucharist. It is also reasonable to say that no priest is ever fully properly disposed to pray the words of consecration perfectly, but our Lord knows the heart of the subject and of the minister. In fact, the Church has made it a doctrine that the worthiness or unworthiness of the minister is not a factor in the dispensing or the efficacy of the sacraments. Remember it is the Lord Himself who administers the sacraments, and the clergy or minister is simply a subordinate doing the best that he is able. Next month, Baptism. (657)

Meditation Period

(The Leader now invites the members to spend a few moments in silent reflection, as the above text is not meant to be a ready-made answer but a starter for personal reflection on the theme.)

Fraternal Sharing

(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)

Closing Prayer

(Recited by all)

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.”

November 2014 Meeting

The Sacraments

Opening Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray: *“Our Father...”*

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

The Sacrament of Baptism – Part III

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Mt. 28, 19) Baptism is the first and foundational sacrament of initiation into the Christian community and the prerequisite for all other sacraments. You could say that the sacrament of Baptism is essential in order to play on team Jesus. “It unites us with Jesus Christ, incorporates us into his redemptive death on the cross, thereby freeing us from the power of Original Sin and all personal sins. Since Baptism is a covenant with God, the individual must say ‘Yes’ to it. In the baptism of children, the parents confess the faith on behalf of their children.” (Youcat 194) How is the sacrament of Baptism administered? The classic form of baptism is the three-fold immersion of the candidate under the water (the matter) while the minister speaks the words, “I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (the form or formula). Today, most often rather than immersion, water is poured three times over the head of the candidate accompanied by the Trinitarian formula. So, for baptism the matter is the water and the form is the Trinitarian blessing of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As in any sacrament both the form and the matter are essential to the validity of the sacrament.

Who can be baptised and what is required of the candidate? Baptism can only be administered once. Any person who is not yet baptised can be baptised. “The only prerequisite for Baptism is faith, which must be professed publicly at the Baptism.” (Youcat 196)

Why does the Church practice infant baptism? There is only one reason for this practice Brothers. Before we chose God, He chose us. Baptism therefore is a grace, an undeserved gift from God who loves us unconditionally. Believing parents who naturally love their children want what is best for them. Therefore they want their children baptised and freed from the influence of original sin. Infant baptism presupposes that Christian parents will raise the baptised child in the faith. Just as we are born with the ability to speak, we all must learn a language, so too every person is born with the capacity to believe but must become acquainted with and learn about the faith. It is the duty of parents, godparents and those who love the child to ensure that they become acquainted with and come to know who God is in their lives.

Who is the normal minister of the sacrament? Normally a bishop, a priest or a deacon administers the sacrament. In an emergency, any Christian, indeed anyone, can baptise by using the proper matter and form, water and the Trinitarian blessing, provided the intent of baptism is present. There are three types of baptism: (1) The most common mode being that of using water and the Trinitarian blessing, (2) Baptism by fire. “The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received baptism are baptised by their death, for and with Christ.” (CCC 1258) Many of the martyrs of the early Church were still catechumens, (not yet baptised) when they died for the faith and (3) Baptism of desire. In the case of a child who dies before baptism the Church entrusts them to the mercy of God as she does in her funeral rites for them. Our Lord knows the hearts of the parents better than they themselves know their hearts and if the parents would have baptised the child, had they the opportunity. Therefore, a child who dies before baptism is considered to have received the baptism of desire.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

Brothers, Jesus Himself chose to be baptised by John at the Jordan River and it certainly was not a baptism of repentance, as we know that Jesus was sinless. He showed through this action to all of humanity the importance of baptism as the first and primary sacrament of initiation into the Christian community. “If we live, we live to the Lord, if we die we die to the Lord; so then whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord’s.” (Rom 14, 8) Brothers, we are the Lord’s and baptism is the door that we all entered in order to become members of the Body of Christ. (717)

Meditation Period

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Fraternal Sharing

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Closing Prayer

(Recited by all)

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.”

December 2014 Meeting

The Sacraments

Opening Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray: *“Our Father...”*

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

The Sacrament of Confirmation – Part IV

What is Confirmation? “Confirmation is the sacrament that completes Baptism; in it the gift of the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon us. Anyone who freely decides to live a life as God’s child and asks for God’s Spirit, under the signs of the imposition of hands and anointing with Chrism, receives the strength to witness to God’s love and might in word and deed. He/She is now a full-fledged, responsible member of the Catholic Church.” (Youcat 203) In Confirmation the soul of a baptised Christian is imprinted with a permanent seal that can be received only once and marks this individual forever as a Christian. In a way, one might say that Confirmation is like a booster shot for our Baptism. We receive a good solid dose of the Holy Spirit which allows us to live our faith as witnesses of Jesus Christ. This is not to say that once we are confirmed our challenges are over with, but it does mean that if we sincerely desire to follow the Lord, we will receive the grace we need to do exactly that. In both the sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation we are marked on our heads with the sacred Chrism. The Church teaches that this is an indelible (permanent) mark that cannot be removed. In essence, Confirmation is the fullness and completeness of our initiation into the Catholic Church that began on the day of our Baptism.

What is the matter and form used in the sacrament of Confirmation? The essential matter is anointing the forehead of the baptised with sacred Chrism together with the laying on of hands. The form or formula while the anointing is taking place is, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC 1320) This matter and form is somewhat specific to the Roman Catholic rite. For those of the Byzantine (Eastern) rite, very often the sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation are administered at the same time. In fact in the Eastern Catholic Church, Confirmation is administered immediately after Baptism and is followed by participation in the Holy Eucharist. “This Eastern tradition highlights the unity of the three sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist.” (CCC 1318)

Who can be confirmed and what is required of a candidate for Confirmation? “A candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs, (in the world).” (CCC1319) For information purposes, “state of grace” means not to have committed any unconfessed serious (mortal) sin.

Who may confirm? The sacrament of Confirmation is normally administered by the bishop and gives us an indication of the magnitude and weight of the sacrament. For pastoral reasons when necessary, the bishop can also delegate a priest to confirm. In danger of death, any priest can administer Confirmation. “Confirmation like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian’s soul; for this reason one can receive this sacrament only once in one’s life.” (CCC 1317)

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

“We receive a good solid dose of the Holy Spirit which allows us to live our faith as witnesses of Jesus Christ. This is not to say that once we are confirmed our challenges are over with, but it does mean that if we sincerely desire to follow the Lord, we will receive the grace we need to do exactly that.” *What are the challenges you need to ask the Holy Spirit to help you face and to overcome so that you can better witness to God’s love in word and deed?* (535)

Meditation Period

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