

NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Lent 2010

Healing Mass in Camas, WA.



St Thomas Aquinas Church interior

On Friday February 12, we celebrated a healing Mass at St Thomas Aquinas Catholic church in Camas, Washington. The presider and preacher was Fr Justus Kiiza from Uganda in Africa. Fr Justus had previously stayed at the parish while he was studying at the University of Portland. The Mass was organized by the local charismatic prayer group at the parish, and by Claudia Heathcock in particular. I was able to concelebrate with Fr Justus.

The Mass began at 7.00pm and after the final blessing we began to pray with those who sought prayer. Over 200 people attend. They were a mix of parishioners and people from the area, and charismatics from far and wide. The music was provided by the music ministry from the local prayer group. Fr Justus preached an inspiring homily in which he encouraged us to have faith

and trust in Jesus and all that the Lord has for us. We had a brief period of praise and worship after communion, and then we concluded Mass.

After this Fr Justus invited those seeking prayer for healing to come forward. Fr Justus and I prayed with people. Each of us was assisted by two members of the local prayer group. The prayer for healing went on for an hour and a half. It was a profoundly moving experience to see the faith with which some people came forward, and also to listen to how much suffering some people have endured in their lives.

We don't have much immediate feedback from the prayer, but as soon as we hear from the folks in Camas, we will start publishing the reports here. I have heard of one instance where someone came with severe back pain, and as he was being prayed with, the pain disappeared, like a light switch being switched off. Praise God!

It was close to 10.00pm when the last of us left the church. It was a blessed and inspiring event. Our thanks to Fr Justus Kiiza who was willing to come and preside. Our thanks also to Claudia Heathcock and the Camas prayer group. And finally, our thanks to Fr Peter Gillette, the pastor of St Thomas Aquinas church for graciously allowing the Mass to be held there.

As a teaser for all of you, we are planning another healing Mass in July with an out of town priest, someone who is well known in the Catholic charismatic renewal. Details are still being worked out so please keep this in your prayers.

Fr Peter

“Dear brothers and sisters, let us indeed invoke at the beginning of this year the Holy Spirit, eternal youth of the Church: May he make each one of us feel the urgency of giving a consistent and courageous witness of the Gospel, so that saints will never be lacking, who make the Church shine as a Bride always pure and beautiful, without stain and without wrinkle, able to attract the world irresistibly to Christ, to his salvation.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Lenten Practices: Prayer

The three traditional practices for Christians during Lent have been prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Jesus mentions these in the Gospels, the New Testament writers mention them, and they are very present in the writings of the early Church Fathers. In this piece we are going to look at prayer. At the school Mass in my parish on Ash Wednesday, I asked the students what it

took to become friends with someone. My purpose was to develop a notion of friendship with God and prayer. Joe, the young man who gave the first answer was just outstanding. He said you become friends by “hanging out with each other.” That’s a great description of prayer and friendship with God.

In that light, we have a brief summary from parts of Ralph Marin’s book, *Hungry for God*, which has recently been reprinted. This is a classic on prayer and charismatic prayer. It sets our prayer life in the context of our friendship with God and being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Read, reflect, and enjoy.

Encounter with Jesus

Who is God? He is the one who makes himself known in the majesty of his creation. He spoke to a nomad named Abram, renamed him Abraham, and called him on a journey of faith. God gathered Abraham’s descendants, the children of Israel, and led them to the Promised Land. Finally, God definitively revealed himself in the person of his Son, the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Our encounter with Jesus is all important, to personal prayer and to our whole lives. “Much of what happens in prayer is a result of what has happened on the level of our fundamental...attitude to Jesus...The more total we see the self-giving of God in Christ to be, the more total becomes the possibility of our response to him.” Jesus, who is God, pours himself out to us and wants us to give ourselves completely to him.

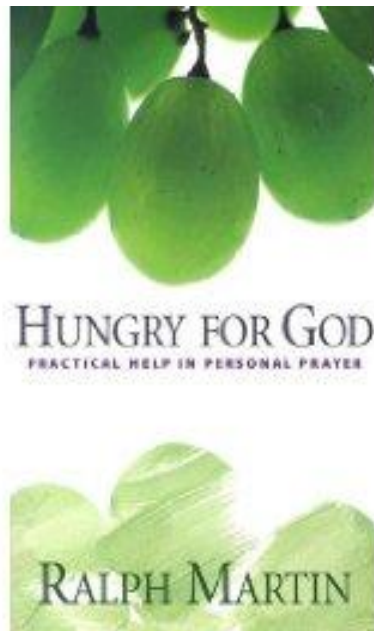
Show Us the Father

When Jesus pours himself out to us, prayer becomes possible. However, “prayer is difficult for many because they have never appropriated the truth of God’s fatherhood.” If God seems far away or hard to understand, it is difficult to have any relationship at all with him, much less the kind of relationship Jesus had. But Jesus came to show us the Father, and to help us become the Father’s children. When we experience the intimate love of the Father, we can pray to him with trust. “Genuine Christian prayer begins with the realization of...being reborn into the family of God...brothers and sisters of Jesus indwelt by God’s own Spirit.”

Gift of the Spirit

In the beginning, the Spirit hovered over the waters of creation. All through the Old Testament, the Spirit rested on the judges and prophets, who hungered for the Spirit to rest on all God’s people. In the New Testament, Jesus is introduced as the one who baptizes in the Spirit (Mt 3:11, Lk 3:16) and who teaches about the connection between Father, Son, and Spirit (Jn 7:37-39, Lk 11:13). The gifts of the Spirit are to be considered a normal part of the Christian journey. Yet there are obstacles which can block receiving the Spirit. Faith which operates only on the intellectual level, vague faith based on a cloudy notion of God, problems with sin or guilt, feelings of not being “good enough”—these things and more can hold us back from receiving the promised Spirit.

The gift of tongues has been particularly controversial. Is it a gift of prayer, or overemotionalism? Ralph comments: "Modern men and women have developed a fear and resistance to religious emotion. Speaking in tongues is...a concrete step into a relationship with God characterized by the Spirit's freedom to act in us." Resistance to the gift of tongues might indicate hesitation to surrender to God's work in the heart.



"There are three false fears that keep us away from God: (1) We want to be saved, but not from our sins. (2) We want to be saved, but not at too great a cost. (3) We want to be saved in our way, not his"

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, Peace of Soul.

Testimonies: Challenged to Love

How can we love others as Jesus loved us? We can help out even when it is not convenient. We can devote our talents, time and resources to others. We can devote more energy to the welfare of others, especially our families. We can absorb hurt from others without complaining or

fighting back. Is this hard to do? Absolutely! But by the power of the Holy Spirit we can overcome our own selfishness, distractions and pleasures to love as Jesus loves. It is our calling to do so!

Greg describes how he was challenged to do this. He says, “One day it hit me like a ton of bricks. My wife reminded me of several home projects that had been neglected. Why had I neglected them? Well, I'd rather do most anything than home projects. Frankly, I'd rather play golf-and lots of it! In fact, for some time golf had been taking on the status of an obsession.”

Greg reflects that, “the problem was that this obsession got right in the way of my ability and capacity to love. I can demonstrate better love for my wife and family by not being so distracted by a mere game and cheerfully and generously spending more time at home. I can be more attuned to their needs by being present and involved in their lives instead of constantly pursuing my own pleasures. The love of Christ in us means sacrificing for the good of others.”

Praise God for the wonderful wisdom and conviction of the Holy Spirit in our lives! We are called to live the Gospel and we are empowered to do so by the gift of the Holy Spirit. May we come to love and serve as Christ does more and more through this Lent.



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