



Week Leading up to 2.21.21: Spiritual Desolation and Purification

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: Mk 1:12-15

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Jesus, as we walk in the desert for the 40 days of Lent, we cry out to You to purify our hearts. Strengthen us in perseverance and protect us against temptation. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. Why do you think/feel Jesus went into the desert and allowed himself to be tempted?

YouTube Video: Finding God in Darkness with Fr. Schmitz (10:32) <https://youtu.be/wXfYjTqfo9o>

Reflection or Discussion Questions: {Leaders: This video has a lot to cover. No need to cover all of the questions as long as the discussion is fruitful. This is a template, so modify the questions as needed. }

2. Was there anything in particular that struck you from the video?
3. What are your thoughts on purgatory? Can you imagine what it is like?
4. Fr. Schmitz talked about three ways of the interior life: 1) Purgative way: purifies us, 2) Illuminative way; great consolation along with darkness/dryness or emptiness, 3) Unitive way; we experience a deep union with God. Have you heard of these before or experienced any of these?
5. Does Fr. Schmitz's description cause you to think differently about desolation and dryness we may encounter in our spiritual lives (e.g. should we fear spiritual desolation)? What benefit(s) could there be from experiencing spiritual desolation?
6. What do you think/feel it means to love God properly (e.g. for the sake of who He is and not for the sake of His gifts)? Do you think/feel that it is possible to do so while living on earth?
7. Fr. Schmitz says that the Lord will give us the strength to push the boat into the water. What are some specific ways that you think/feel we can cooperate with God that would help to strengthen us with perseverance needed to overcome spiritual desolation?

Session Challenges: {Choose one, two, three or all }

- Just as Jesus sacrificed in the desert, determine your Lenten sacrifices for prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; if you have not done so already.
- Sin can cause barriers in our life to God, consider going to reconciliation to create a clean slate and open the doors to spiritual consolation.
- Deepening our relationship with God can be a struggle at times and perseverance is needed. To build the virtue of perseverance, consider one area in your spiritual life where you have failed in the past. Make a commitment to re-implement this spiritual goal and rather than focusing on failure, try focusing on learning from the attempts and making needed adjustments to persevere.
- Take time in prayer and thank God for the times in the past when you may have felt spiritual desolation. Be bold and ask him for courage and strength to walk with Him as He wishes to continue the purification process. Be honest about your fears but let Him know that you trust Him to proceed gently and you wish to love Him for who He is and not the gifts He gives.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear Jesus, help us to see past our fears of darkness and spiritual desolation. Fill us with a genuine desire to know You when Your consolation is not present and to look deeply into Your loving gaze. We thank and praise You for who You are! Our Redeemer, King, Savior, and Friend. In Your name. Amen*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: [Gn 9:8-15](#) Sunday Reading 2: [1 Pt 3:18-22](#)

Additional Information: Video Link on Purgatory referenced in the video above:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnwDDsN6ZfM&list=PLeXS0cAkuTPpJ6j3eH59WudJhJ4q1tpwH>