



## Week Leading up to 4.24.22: Sources of Divine Revelation

**\*{Start with reviewing the previous meeting's 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: Gospel: **Jn 20:19-31**; Additional reading **John 21: 25**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

*Heavenly Father, we praise You and thank You for revealing Yourself to us. We thank You for being a personal and loving God who desires relationships with us. May we have the strength and grace to allow You to love us. May we also respond to Your revelation with our own love and full selves. Amen.*

### **Reflection or Discussion Question:**

1. What do you think/feel the Lord is saying to you today through this reading? Does anything specific come to mind?

**YouTube Video:** Fr. Mike Schmitz—Why Catholics use Scripture & Tradition (12:09 min) - <https://youtu.be/mTBud-9Vlzo>

### **Reflection or Discussion Questions:**

2. Did any specific questions/conclusions or thoughts come to your mind as you watched this video?
3. Have you ever thought to yourself or heard people say the phrase, “Well, where is *that* in the Bible?” Do you remember what it was in reference to?
4. Fr. Mike mentions that as Catholics we believe that God reveals Himself not just through Scripture, but also through Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium (teaching office of the Church aka -The Pope and Bishops in union with the Pope). Did you know this already? Does this information change anything about how you perceive God's revelation?
5. The video discusses that the Catholic Church relies on Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium to help clarify interpretations of scripture and how to apply scripture to modern day questions. What are your thoughts on this, and do you think/feel it is important for the Church to do so?
6. Fr. Mike mentions that Scripture itself does not claim to be the ONLY source of Divine Revelation. So, when Protestants or other Christians claim Scripture Alone (Sola Scriptura) they are refuting themselves. Have you ever considered this before? Why do you think this really matters?
7. What has been your experience with reading Scripture? Is it something you do on a regular basis? Have you ever done a Bible study? Do you find it difficult, confusing, inspiring, enlightening? Please elaborate.

### **Session Challenges:** {Choose one or both}

- Read for yourself Dei Verbum (the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation from Vatican II) It's very short and can be found here: [Dei Verbum](#)
- Consider starting Fr. Mike's Bible in a year podcast from Ascension Press if you haven't already. [Click here for a link](#). If you've already done the podcast, consider listening again to see what new revelations God has for you.

**Closing Prayer:** (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Lord Jesus, allow the richness of Sacred Tradition to give us a deeper understanding of who You are and how You wish us to live as people of faith. Strengthen our Magisterium to always follow Your will. Create in us a docility to support the Magisterium by living holy lives. Help us to be steeped in Your word, Your revelation. May we consume Your Living Word into our souls so that we may become spiritually healthy and thrive as You desire us to. We ask this in Jesus holy name. Amen.*

**{Optional additional Readings}** Sunday Reading 1: **Acts 5:12-16**; Reading 2: **Rev 1: 9-13, 17-19**



## Week Leading up to 5.1.22: The Power of Forgiveness

**\*{Start with reviewing the previous meeting's 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: **John 21:1-19**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

*Heavenly Father, You taught us to pray "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We beg You for the grace and strength to live up to those powerful words. Soften our hearts; may they beat with Your own divine heart to help us become people of mercy. Amen.*

### **Reflection or Discussion Question:**

1. Many scripture scholars have noted that it was around a charcoal fire that Peter denies Christ three times. In today's reading Peter and Jesus are around a charcoal fire when Christ extends forgiveness by asking Peter the question, "Do you love me?" three times. It's a powerful story with symmetry. Do you have any favorite scripture stories that reveal the power of forgiveness? Do you have any personal stories that remind you of the power of forgiveness?

**YouTube Video:** The Story of Jennifer Trapuzzano (6:53 min) - <https://youtu.be/UGrbtma7LgE>

### **Reflection or Discussion Questions:**

2. This is an intense and powerful video. What are some of your initial reactions/thoughts?
3. Do you think you would have the strength to forgive a person in a situation like Jennifer's? Why or why not?
4. Often when we are hurt, we want to hurt others in return. Ghandi is quoted as saying, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. What do you think of this quote? Have you seen or felt the effects of its sentiment in your own life?
5. Christ teaches us to love, pray for, and forgive our enemies. This is possibly one of the most difficult actions we are called to do as disciples. Why do you think God/Jesus made this teaching so essential for his followers?
6. Have you ever extended forgiveness to someone that isn't sorry or is there someone in your life Christ might be calling you to extend forgiveness to? Would you mind sharing a little about that or the process you went through to offer forgiveness?
7. Is there someone in your life from whom you should ask/seek forgiveness? Would you mind sharing a little about that?

### **Session Challenges:** {Choose one or both}

- Reflect: Is there someone in your life to whom you should extend forgiveness? Let that forgiveness begin in your desire, then in your prayer, then maybe express your forgiveness to that person.
- Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet each day, keeping in mind your personal request for God's mercy but also that you are to extend mercy in turn.

**Closing Prayer:** (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) We also recommend praying at least one decade of the Divine Mercy Chaplet to close the meeting. Instructions on how to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet can be found here: [Divine Mercy Chaplet PDF Instructions](#) or listen to this musical version: [1 Decade of Divine Mercy Chaplet with Matt Maher](#)

**{Optional additional Readings}** Sunday Reading 1: **Acts 5:27-32, 40-41** Reading 2: **Rev 5:11-14**



## Week Leading up to 5.8.22: Failure and Disappointment

**\*{Start with reviewing the previous meeting's 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: **Acts 13:14, 43-52**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit! Give us the grace to remain faithful when life seems disappointing or discouraging. Give us the zeal, enthusiasm, and persistence to keep inviting others into the happiness You offer through faith. Amen.*

### **Reflection or Discussion Question:**

1. In today's first reading the Jews in Antioch reject the saving message from Paul and Barnabas and even incite a mob to get them expelled from the city. Have you ever struggled with the frustration and disappointment of people rejecting an offer of love, truth, or goodness?

**YouTube Video:** Feel like You're Failing at Ministry? (6:49 min) - <https://youtu.be/V3xFIT-AipU>

### **Reflection or Discussion Questions:**

2. What are some of your initial thoughts from watching this video?
3. What do you think of the Mother Theresa quote, "God asks for our faithfulness, not our success?" Shouldn't faithfulness reap rewards of success?
4. Bobby mentions that "we are not entitled to see the fruit of our work." This can be difficult to hear and live without growing discouraged. What do you think of this notion?
5. They both note that even Jesus -God and savior- had people walk away from Him and His teaching. Does this change how you view "successes" and "failures" of your own ministry?
6. How do you think we can build and sustain a resilience to failure and disappointment? Is there something you do and find helpful with that?
7. What do you think God is calling you to be faithful to right now (regardless of success)?

### **Session Challenges:** {Choose one or both}

- Call to mind the people and situations when you have sought to be faithful, and it didn't yield the "success" you desired. Then pray and even consider a small sacrifice you can offer up for that person or past situation.
- Think about someone whose faithfulness made a difference in your life and may not know it. Reach out to share with them how the fruit of their work affected your life.

**Closing Prayer:** (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

*Lord Jesus, we hear You calling to us to be faithful. We ask that You plant the seeds of faith in our hearts and cover us with Your supernatural grace so that we may not become discouraged when we stumble and fail. May we take comfort in knowing that we may not see the fruits of our work but know that our sharing Your love is enough. Jesus Christ, You are our light and Savior! Amen.*

**{Optional additional Readings}** Sunday Reading 2: **Rev 7:9, 14-17**; Gospel: **Jn 10:27-30**



## Week Leading up to 5.15.22: Embracing Struggle

**\*(Start with reviewing the previous meeting's 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.

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Acts 14:21-27

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer: *Dear God, we hear how St. Paul and St. Barnabas went through many hardships in building Your church and spreading the Gospel. Increase our faith as You did with these two apostles so that we, too, may be willing to embrace our struggles with Your grace. It is only through Your power that we can accomplish the work You need us to do. We commend ourselves to you this evening and ask that You strengthen us to bear our crosses with gratitude. Amen.*

### Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading today we hear that St. Paul and Barnabas say that it is necessary for them to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. What kind of hardships do you think they had to endure?

**YouTube Video:** Struggle is necessary with Fr. Schmitz (7:55 min) [https://youtu.be/i\\_w7LUV0xaM](https://youtu.be/i_w7LUV0xaM)

### Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Fr. Schmitz talks about the man releasing the emperor moth too soon. Looking back, have you ever removed a struggle from someone else that maybe you shouldn't have?
3. Can you think of a time when you turned away from a struggle that you didn't want to deal with? What happens when we recoil from trials?
4. Fr. Schmitz talks about affliction producing strength. Have you gone through a struggle that made you stronger or strengthened you in unexpected ways? What did you do to lean into your struggle with God?
5. Are there specific characteristics or virtues that you have improved by going through struggles?
6. What do you feel/think about Fr. Schmitz explanation of God's perfect will and permissive will and God being able to do good even through permissive will? Does this help to understand suffering any better?
7. After watching this video, do you think/feel you will view struggles differently in the future? Would you be more willing to lean into difficulties as they arise?

### Session Challenges: {Choose one or both}

- Like St. Paul and Barnabas turned to fasting and prayer, this week fast and pray for another person in your life that is going through a trial. Consider praying with Romans 5:1-8 or the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary.
- Work on embracing your suffering. As each obstacle arises, embrace that cross as silently and selflessly as you can for someone else or some intention that could use God's grace.

**Closing Prayer:** (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear Jesus, You have taken our suffering upon Yourself. Only You know how our struggles can help to form us and those around us. We humbly ask for understanding of the struggles we are currently undergoing if it is Your will. Give us peace in our difficult times. Most of all, help us to lean into our trials with You by our side and recognize that our trials will help to strengthen us and mold us into the saints You know we can be. We pray now for those in our lives that have great suffering...{pause}...we ask that all these struggles and those left unsaid may be guided by Your loving embrace. In Your name, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**{Optional additional Readings}** Gospel: Jn 13:31-33a, 34-35 Reading 2: Rev 21:1-5a

**Additional Research on embracing suffering:** <https://catholic-link.org/how-embracing-suffering-saves-lives/>



## Week Leading up to 5.22.22: The Church & Teaching Authority

**\*{Start with reviewing the previous meeting's 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 distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is with us.

Read: 1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for establishing the Church. Through the Church, You continue to be with us and lead us. We also praise You and thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom You teach and govern Your people. Give us the grace and gift of obedience to do Your will as expressed through the Holy Spirit. We ask this in the holy name of Your son, Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**Reflection or Discussion Question:** (Leaders Note: consider reading these questions before doing the reading)

1. What word or phrase strikes you in today's reading?
2. What do you think/feel the Lord is saying to you today through this reading?

**YouTube Video:** Bishop Barron on Protestantism and Authority (8:19) - <https://youtu.be/RWYwBDqFsuE>

### Reflection or Discussion Questions:

3. For some people the theological conversation around Catholic versus Protestant can seem fussy and not practical, but the question of legitimate authority is truly of prime importance. As Bishop Barron says, "Who, finally, has the authority to interpret the Word of God?" Have you thought much about these questions before? Why or why not? (Leader note: A reference from *Dei Verbum a Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation from the Second Vatican Council* to support this quote, "But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. The teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divine revealed." DV 10)
4. Bishop Barron draws the analogy of a referee or umpire as crucial to the game in that their "living voice" allows the game to move forward and flourish. What do you think of this analogy when considering Church teaching and governance?
5. Another analogy which isn't perfect, but fitting is the role of good and loving parents. As we know, good and loving parents set guidelines, boundaries, and non-negotiables into their family/children's life. This positive parenting authority is at its best when it's expressed for the care and love of the children. How do you feel about this analogy and how it ties to the Church's teaching authority?
6. Why do you think so many people today fight or push against the Church's teaching authority? Is there any Church teaching you find confusing or difficult to understand/believe? (Leader note: be cautious of getting into a "preaching" or "teaching" mode. It's best to listen and guide people, if possible, toward truth and invite them to follow up with their question to Mike Chamberland if they wish.)

### Session Challenge:

- Spend some time researching the Church's teaching on some topics that you struggle with or find confusing. Start by referring to the Catechism of the Catholic Church sections 888-892 on The teaching office. Utilize the Index and Glossary to quickly find any topics and themes you want to research. {It is highly recommended that every Catholic household own a physical copy, or you can search online at: [USCCB CCC](https://www.usccb.org/cc/ccc/).}

**Closing Prayer:** (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) Lord God, all that is good is received from You as a gift. May we allow ourselves to be taught, governed, and loved by you through your Church. Amen.

{Optional additional Readings} Reading 2: Rev 21:10-14, 22-23; Gospel: John 14: 23-29

**Additional Reading on divine revelation and how it is handed on:** Dei Verbum (the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation from Vatican II)



## Week Leading up to 5.29.22: Is Jesus Gone?

**\*{Start with reviewing the previous meeting's 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: **Lk 24:46-53**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

*Jesus You are truly God and yet fully man. Through Your resurrection and ascension, heaven and earth are forever intertwined. You have fulfilled Your Father's will and offered us salvation and eternity in heaven. May we live in such a way that this hope is evident to others. We praise Your Name in great gratitude. Amen.*

### **Reflection or Discussion Question:**

1. Why do you think/feel that Jesus ascending to heaven is important?

**YouTube Video:** Bishop Barron on Why the Ascension of Jesus Matters (7:56 min)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxDTY\\_9w6ws](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxDTY_9w6ws)

### **Reflection or Discussion Questions:**

2. How do you view death? Do you find yourself looking up to heaven, longing to go to heaven?
3. Have you ever thought about Jesus' having a body and yet being in heaven?
4. What did you think/feel about Bishop Barron's explanation of heaven and earth interlacing with one another?
5. Do you think/feel that you have experienced heaven here on earth? How so?
6. Bishop Barron shares that Jesus Ascension into heaven is actually the transfiguration of earth. What do you think/feel he means by this?
7. Bishop Barron ends the video by saying that, "the Ascension is the commissioning of the church to do it's great work." Have you ever considered that your role is to bring heaven to earth before? How can we do this?

### **Session Challenges:** {Choose one or both}

- Do one thing each day to bring heaven to earth. Some examples are: be Jesus to someone by expressing hope in your language, perform one act of kindness or service for another, go to confession, participate at Mass fully and joyfully.
- Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1049-1050 and pray the Our Father out loud, slowly, and thoughtfully each day.

**Closing Prayer:** (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

*Lord, we are called to bring You into this dark world. We humbly acknowledge our need for Your guidance and grace to transform darkness into light. Work through us as we march forward. Fill us with courage and fortitude so that we serve You in all we do. Amen.*

**{Optional additional Readings}** Sunday Reading 1: **Acts 1:1-11**; Reading 2: **Eph 1:17-23**

**Additional reading:** <https://catholicgentleman.com/2014/04/st-maximilian-kolbe-on-how-to-have-heaven-on-earth/>



## Week Leading up to 6.5.22: Living Out Pentecost

**\*{Start with reviewing the previous meeting's 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: **Jn 20:19-23**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

*Thank You, Jesus, for sending the Holy Spirit to strengthen the apostles with courage and fortitude. Holy Spirit, we ask You to come into this space today. May we be docile to You in our minds, hearts, and speech. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

### **Reflection or Discussion Question:**

1. In the Gospel we hear that Jesus breathed on the apostles and said for them to receive the Holy Spirit. Why do you think he did this? For what purpose? *{Note: Breath brings life (Gen 2:7) CCC 703, Through Jesus' redemptive work, He now unites man with the divine Holy Spirit in a fuller way than in previous times. Being united with the Holy Spirit we bring God into the world through our actions.}*

**YouTube Video:** What Pentecost means for the Christian Life with Jackie and Bobby Angel (8:30 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBaYT5wrnTs&feature=youtu.be>

### **Reflection or Discussion Questions:**

2. Have you ever thought about establishing a relationship with the Holy Spirit? Do you pray specifically to the Holy Spirit, or have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to come into your life in a specific way?
3. Have you ever experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit? In what ways did it affect your faith or actions?
4. Have you ever been so excited about your faith that you couldn't help but share it with others?
5. Bobby and Jackie talked about conversions. What does this mean to you? Do you think that conversions only happen once in a person's life? Have you gone through a conversion you would like to share?
6. What talents/charisms do you think the Holy Spirit has given you to help renew the world and build the kingdom of God?
7. Are there ways that you can think of that would help to remain open to receiving more talents/charisms of the Holy Spirit?

**Session Challenges:** {Choose one or both}

- This week and especially at Mass, pray for a willingness to be docile to the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to deepen your relationship with Him and help guide you in specific ways to build the kingdom of God.
- Learn more about the Holy Spirit. This is a great article to start with: <https://mycatholic.life/the-my-catholic-life-series/my-catholic-faith/the-holy-spirit/>

**Closing Prayer:** (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

*Holy Spirit, help us to recognize Your presence and guidance in our daily lives. Ignite within us a genuine desire to utilize the holy gifts that You have given us so that we may do our part in building up the kingdom of God. Amen.*

**{Optional additional Readings}** Sunday Reading 1: **Acts 2:1-11**; Reading 2: **1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13**