

Michael E. Gaitley, MIC

Consoling the Heart of Jesus

Retreat Companion

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Retreat
Companion

Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC



2014

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS RETREAT COMPANION? *Consoling the Heart of Jesus* is a do-it-yourself retreat. So, everything you need to make the retreat is already in the book. That's it. Pretty simple.

For those who like the spirituality and want to carry it with them, I wrote a compact *Prayer Companion* that has all the main prayers, meditations, and a summary of the retreat. (Look at it as a kind of pocket-sized "Cliffs Notes.")

Alright, so if we have a retreat book that has all we need and a prayer book that summarizes everything, then why this *Retreat Companion*?

It has to do with groups.

CHJ GROUP RETREATS. Since writing *Consoling the Heart of Jesus (CHJ)*, I've been preaching a lot of group retreats (usually at parishes) based on the book. Because of my duties in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, I usually can only get away on the weekends, so the retreats have become known as "Consoling the Heart of Jesus Retreat Weekends."

During a retreat weekend, I usually will give 8-10 talks in less than 48 hours plus Masses and confessions. Needless to say, this is a pretty intense regimen both for me and for the groups. While the groups have been very happy with the retreats, I think the retreats themselves can be better. I also think that they can go deeper because there's really not enough time for discussion and for thoroughly digesting the material. It's also been a challenge to keep up with the increase of requests to give the retreat. So, I'm thinking there must be a better way to do the group retreats and to make the retreats available to more people.

THE ULTIMATE CHJ GROUP RETREAT. This *Retreat Companion* is part of a better way, a way I call "the ultimate CHJ group retreat." I say "ultimate," because the group will finally have time to digest the material over the course of many weeks rather than just a couple of days. I also say "ultimate" because it will finally give me a much-needed break from marathon retreat weekends!

The ultimate CHJ group retreat follows a pretty simple format. To remember it, you just need to remember the word **RAM**: **R** = Read, **A** = Answer, **M** = Meet. Here's a basic explanation:

1. **Read** the assigned sections of CHJ.
2. **Answer** the appropriate sections in this *CHJ Retreat Companion*.
3. **Meet** regularly to discuss the reading.

Let's now briefly unpack these three points.

READ. Before each group meeting, you'll have a reading assignment. Don't worry: Even if you meet once a week, it's not a burdensome amount of reading. We're talking an average of 15-20 pages between meetings, which isn't so bad. (It works out to about 3 pages a day.) Here's the breakdown of the reading for each week or "session":

- Session 1: Orientation and Introduction (no reading beforehand)
Session 2: Laying the Foundation (pages 17-22, 29-46)

- Session 3: Obstacle “0” (pages 46-59)
- Session 4: Obstacle 1 (pages 63-75)
- Session 5: Obstacle 2 (pages 75-93)
- Session 6: Obstacle 3 (pages 93-108)
- Session 7: Obstacle 4 (pages 108-127)
- Session 8: Obstacle 5 (Part 1) (pages 127-140)
- Session 9: Obstacle 5 (Part 2) (pages 140-167)
- Session 10: Conclusion (pages 169-195)

ANSWER. After you complete each week’s reading assignment, you’ll then answer questions from this *Retreat Companion*. The questions are meant to help you grasp the reading more fully, reflect on it more deeply, and make it practical. Look at the questions (and their accompanying commentary) as like having your own, personal retreat director. Of course, I won’t be able to listen, speak, and respond to you like a real, in-the-flesh retreat director, but your weekly meeting can provide some of that interaction.

In answering the questions, don’t worry about writing essays. Just write what you can — if it helps you delve deeper into the reading. There’s space provided to write after each question, but you don’t have to fill the entire space. If you want to write more, you can do so on a separate piece of paper or in a prayer journal. Also, if you want to answer more questions than those provided for each session, you might want to check out the bonus appendix.

The bonus appendix was included for all those who wish to go even deeper during this CHJ retreat or whenever they make the CHJ retreat again. It features all the questions you’ll encounter in your weekly answering (in the main section of the *Retreat Companion*), plus additional questions. Here are several different ways to use the Appendix:

1. Use the additional questions your first time through the CHJ group retreat.
2. After you’ve already made the CHJ group retreat once, repeat the retreat later by yourself, using some or all of the additional questions.
3. Repeat the CHJ retreat as a group, perhaps the following year, this time with the new questions. (You’ll have been living consoling spirituality for a while, and your group will be able to approach the retreat from a new perspective.)

Just remember that the Appendix questions are *optional*. You don’t have to do them. It’s up to each group member if he wants to do the extra questions. The weekly small-group session questions stay the same, so doing the extra questions won’t impact the small-group discussion.

MEET. In addition to your reading and answering, you’ll have regular meetings with your group. In the next section, I’m going to provide practical information about how often you should meet, what the roles are of the retreat coordinators and small-group leaders, and more of that sort of thing. Here, I’ll just say that the meetings are a privileged place to experience the fellowship of Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit, who always comes with power when people are gathered in the name of Jesus. For, in fact, we’re not

supposed to live out our faith as mere individuals but as the Body of Christ, and while we should go off to pray by ourselves, communal prayer and fellowship is an integral part of our life as Christians. The “ultimate CHJ group retreat” combines both individual and communal prayer.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS. Again, in the next section, I’ll offer some practical information for your retreat. Before then, let me just say that I hope you have a blessed, life-transforming retreat and that through it, you’ll come to know the peace and joy of Christ more deeply. Also, I’d like to thank Carol Younger, Ed.D and Sarah Chichester who supported me in writing this retreat companion with their extensive comments and suggestions. In particular, Carol added to many of my original questions, making them much better. I’m also grateful to Kelly Wahlquist for compiling the DVD Notes.

God bless,

Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC
Memorial of St. Faustina
October 5, 2012

PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR GROUP RETREATS

1. The Retreat Coordinator

RETREAT COORDINATOR'S ROLE. Retreat Coordinators are the people who coordinate different aspects of the Retreat. For example, they may manage announcements and publicity, schedule and prepare room locations, and select and train the Small-group Leaders before the beginning of the retreat. All this involves working with many key people at the parish, in addition to the participants making the retreat. There are many tips and timelines, descriptions of events, sample announcements, and other support materials on the website www.AllHeartsAfire.org.

The Retreat Coordinator for the Hearts Afire Consoling the Heart of Jesus Group Retreat should be thoroughly familiar with the *CHJ Retreat Coordinator's Guide* available on the HAPP website, www.AllHeartsAfire.org, and in the CHJ Coordinator's Kits. There, he or she will find exercises for each level of group building and much more to support small-group sharing. The details of the HAPP program and the structure of the retreats are also in the *Guide*, along with tips on how to share information and answers in a supportive manner. Links to reference material are also available on the website.

RETREAT COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES. For details on the retreat coordinator's responsibilities, see the *CHJ Retreat Coordinators' Guide*. Here's an overview of some of the information provided in the *Guide*:

- Materials needed
- Overview of the 10 weeks
- Ways to get the word out about the Hearts Afire small-group retreat
- Weekly session format
- Overview of the orientation and first small-group meeting
- Small-group dynamics
 - The silent participant
 - The talkative participant
 - The sometimes-absent participant
- Small-group Leader's role
- Tips for answering questions

2. The Small-group Leader

Each small group will need a Small-group Leader. This leader is the responsible, dedicated person in a small group who works with the Retreat Coordinator by guiding the conversation within the small group, encouraging others to share, and even calling and e-mailing the members of the small group. At each weekly gathering, the Small-group Leaders arrive early, greet the members of their groups, know who's going to be absent and why, encourage prayer for one another, model answers and sharing, and help make the retreat a reality week after week. The Small-group Leader guides the group through the weekly small-group session outline, which is at the end of each week's questions. They begin with "prayer," direct the discussion of the "personal response," and lead the "closing prayer."

You will also want to register as a Small-group Leader on the website, so you can make the most of your small-group experience.

3. Retreat Materials Needed

The Retreat Coordinator will need the **Consoling the Heart of Jesus Coordinator Kit**, which includes the following:

- *Consoling the Heart of Jesus Retreat Talks* (DVD set)
- *Consoling the Heart of Jesus Retreat Coordinator's Guide*
- A Participant Packet, which is already included in their Coordinator Kit.
(See below for the details of the Participant Packet.)

We do recommended getting the *Consoling the Heart of Jesus Prayer Companion*, the Bible, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

While not essential, it's very beneficial for the Retreat Coordinator and the Small-group Leaders to have internet access so they can visit www.AllHeartsAfire.org for the *CHJ Retreat Coordinator's Guide*, helpful videos, support materials, and blogs.

Each participant will need a **Consoling the Heart of Jesus Participant Packet**, which includes the following:

- *Consoling the Heart of Jesus: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat Inspired by the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (If participants already have this retreat book, they can order the Participant Packet without it.)
- *Consoling the Heart of Jesus Retreat Companion*
- *Consoler's Morning Offering* Prayercard
- 8"x10" Divine Mercy Image
- *Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena* Pamphlet
- 8 ½" x 11" full-color Consoler's Principle and Foundation Certificate
- *Divine Mercy Explained* Booklet
- *Way of the Cross* Pamphlet
- Rosary (colors will vary)

4. Frequency of Meetings

Just like the 33 Days to Morning Glory Group Retreat, the participants of the Consoling the Heart of Jesus Group Retreat should meet *once a week*.

5. The Meeting Format

As you can see on the next page, the CHJ Retreat format differs slightly from that of the 33 Days to Morning Glory Retreat. Instead of having the discussion prior to watching the DVD talk, in the CHJ Retreat, the discussion follows the DVD talk. This is because the intention of the DVD talk for CHJ is to unpack the reading material and aid the discussion, while the intention of the DVD talk for 33 Days to Morning Glory was simply to help the retreatants apply the material to their lives.

General Overview:

- About 90 minutes (1.5 hours) total time:
 - 5-minute Large-group Opening for prayer and announcements
 - 35-minute Large-group DVD Viewing (watching the talks on DVD)
 - 45-minute Small-group Sharing (drawing from the weekly reflections in the *Retreat Companion* and the DVD talk)
 - 5-min Large-group Closing for prayer and announcements

Large-group — Opening

(5 Minutes)

You'll begin each session by coming together in a large group. Within that large group, you'll begin with a prayer, and the Retreat Coordinator will make any necessary announcements.

[IMPORTANT: The Retreat Coordinator distributes the materials to the group members during the very first Large-group Opening. This *Retreat Companion* contains "DVD Notes" pages for members to write on during the DVD talks. The group members will need the materials before they watch the Session 1 DVD talk.]

Large-group — DVD Viewing

(35 Minutes)

Following the prayer and any necessary announcements, the Retreat Coordinator will play the DVD talk for the group to watch. In this *Retreat Companion*, we've provided a "DVD Notes" section in each week, so you have a place to jot down your ideas or impressions during the talk.

Small-group — Sharing

(45 Minutes)

Small groups (about 6-12 people, depending on your group and available space) meet for a 45-minute discussion time that follows the guidelines laid out in the *Retreat Companion*. The small-group dynamic is an important aspect of the retreat, because it fosters a true spirit of fellowship and friendship in Christ. By friendship in Christ, the members of his Mystical Body are connected in holiness to Christ and to one another in prayer and so are able to better receive his divine power (see Mt 18:20). The friendships that you discover and nourish in your small group are important sources of support and encouragement on your journey to a deeper relationship with Christ.

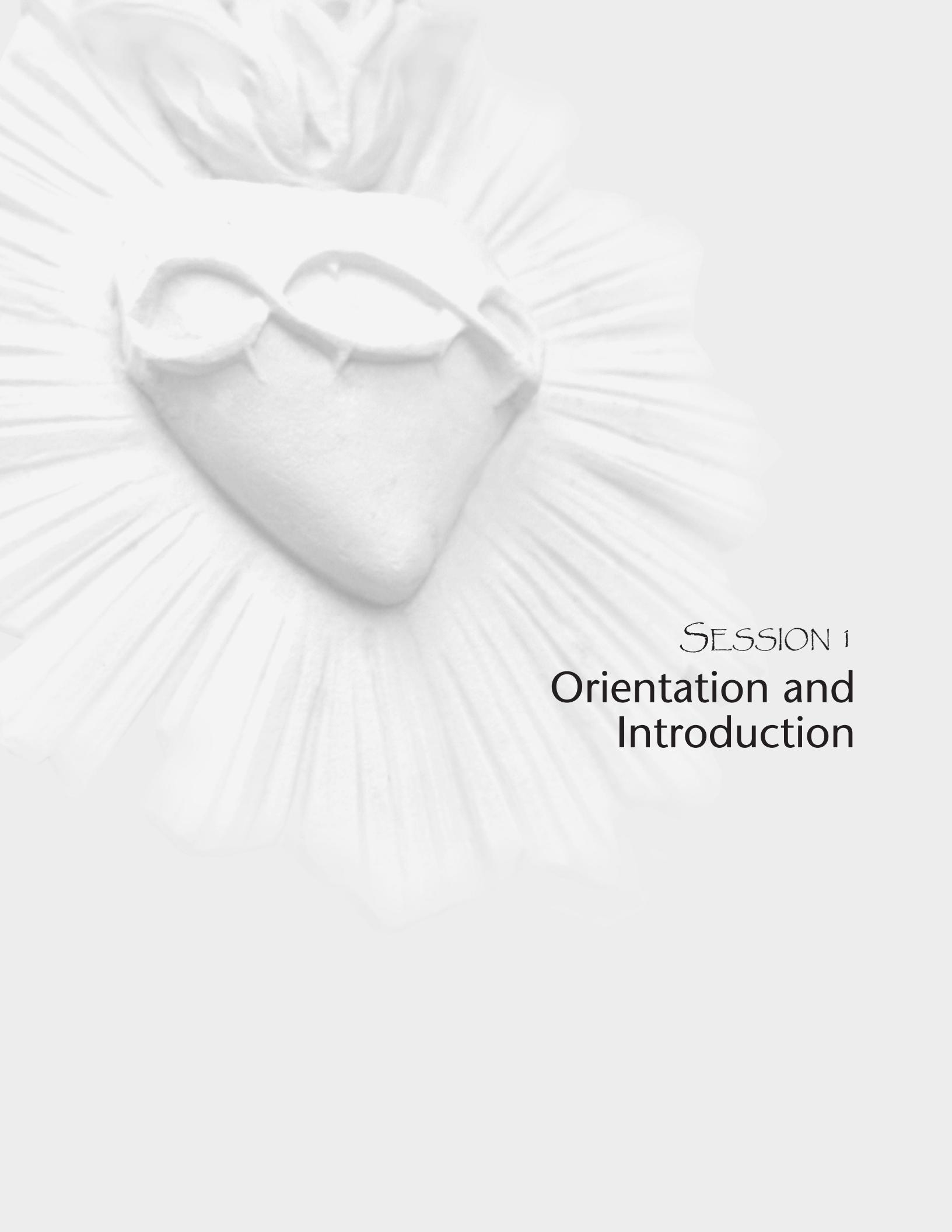
Small-group Leaders: Be sure to read the Small-group Session Outline at the end of each week in this *Retreat Companion* before each gathering. The Small-group Session Outline lists the questions for each week and outlines the small-group format, which is summarized as follows:

- A. PRAYER: This is the Our Father; Hail Mary; Come, Holy Spirit; or other brief prayer.
- B. PERSONAL RESPONSE: Particular questions selected from the week will be used for small-group sharing.
- C. PETITION: The group closes by praying the Glory Be or some other suitable prayer.

Large-group — Closing

(5 Minutes)

You'll end each session by coming back together in a large group. Together, you'll conclude with a prayer and the Retreat Coordinator will make any necessary announcements.



SESSION 1

Orientation and Introduction

SESSION 1

Orientation and Introduction

[No Reading]

Before the small-group session each week, you'll have done some reading and answered questions ... except this week. This first week is the exception because you may not yet even have your retreat materials. So, prior to watching the DVD talk, which is both an Orientation and Introduction, you'll receive your materials and be able to take notes in the space provided on the "DVD Notes" page. After watching the DVD talk, you'll break into your small group and take some time for prayer and discussion about the talk. For the discussion, follow the Small-group Session Outline on page 16.

~ DVD Notes ~

(Session 1: Orientation and Introduction)

Fr. Pio Bruni Lanteri's Secret Weapons

1.

2.

Divine Mercy 101

1. Divine Mercy is God's love as it meets us in our poverty, brokenness, weakness, and sin.

2. Mercy is the heart of the Gospel.

3. In a time of great evil, God wants to give even greater graces. We tap into the great graces of our day by remembering F-I-N-C-H:

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 1: Orientation and Introduction)

A. Prayer

[Make sign of Cross: +]

Our Father ...

Leader: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

Response: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you.

[Make sign of Cross: +]

B. Small-group Leader Greeting

The small-group leader greets everyone and introduces himself and explains briefly why he agreed to lead this Consoling the Heart of Jesus Small-Group Retreat. Then, the small-group leader invites the group members to introduce themselves as well and share why they joined the retreat.

C. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the following questions during your discussion.]

What experiences have you had with the message of Divine Mercy, if any?

Why did you decide to make this retreat?

What aspect of the Divine Mercy devotion (F – I – N – C – H) most appeals to you? Why?

What does it mean to you that we are living during a time of extraordinary mercy?

If you are comfortable doing so, tell of any experience of God's mercy in your life or in the life of a family member or friend. How did this experience of God's mercy lead you to want to learn more about the Divine Mercy message?

Which aspect of the Divine Mercy message is the most attractive to you and why? And in your opinion, which aspect seems to be the most challenging to modern Catholics in the pew? Why do you think this is so?

What aspects of modern society reveal to you the importance of imploring God's mercy in our troubled times? What does it mean to you personally to be able to avail yourself of Divine Mercy in today's world?

D. Closing Prayer

[Make sign of Cross: +]

Glory Be ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you.

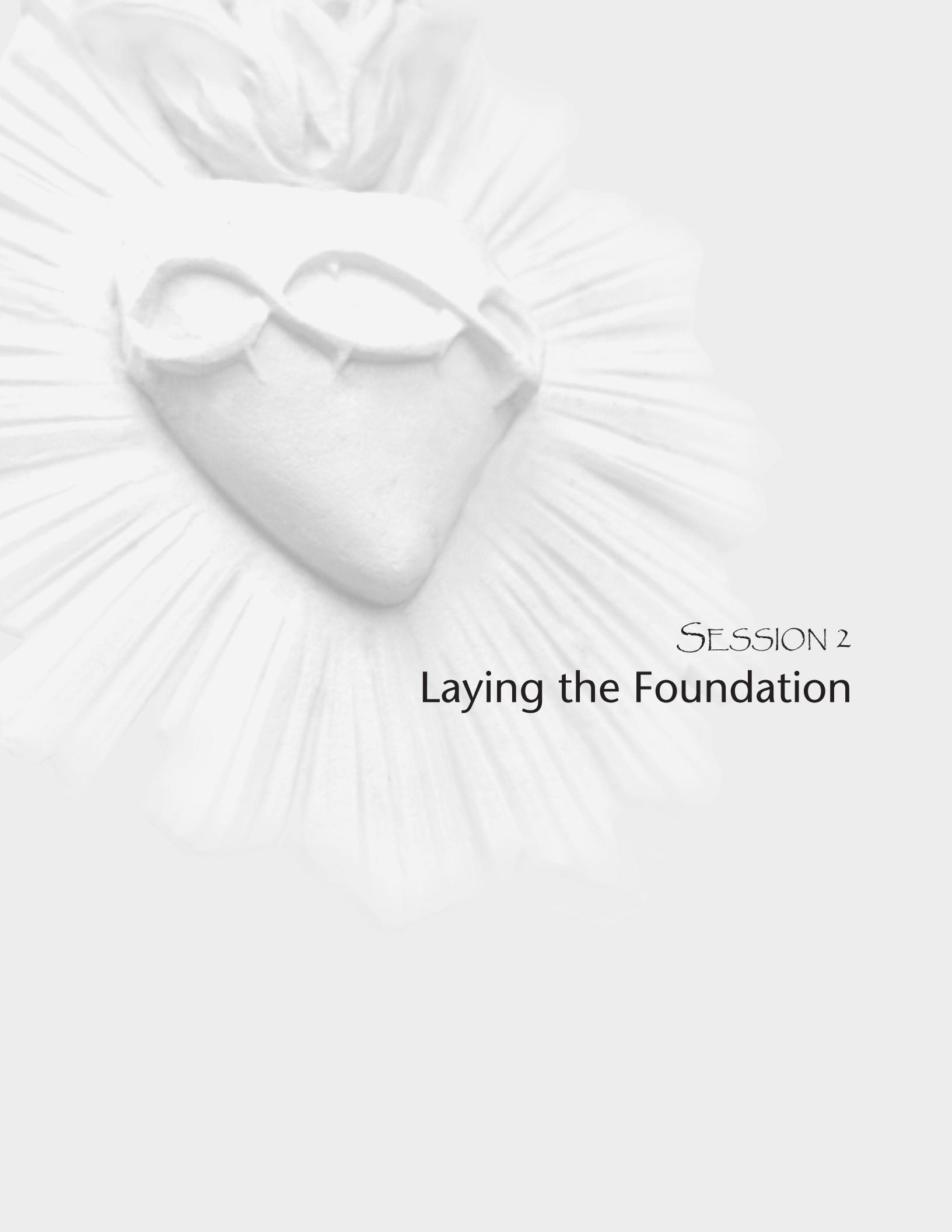
[Make sign of Cross: +]

~ Notes ~

(Session 1: Orientation and Introduction)

~ Notes ~

(Session 1: Orientation and Introduction)



SESSION 2

Laying the Foundation

SESSION 2

Laying the Foundation

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 17-22; 29-46; don't begin reading "One Difficulty," which starts on page 46. That's for next time.]

While this section is called "Laying the Foundation," we still had additional "catch up" reading: the Introduction. Therefore, some of the questions below will reflect that introductory reading as well.

In the introductory reading (pages 17-22), we learned that this retreat is easy to make, comes with a bold claim, and is for little souls.

In "Laying the Foundation" (pages 29-46), we learned about several things: the dispositions we should have in making this retreat, St. Ignatius's First Principle and Foundation, the 30-day retreat, and we were introduced to our own "30-day-retreat-sized principle and foundation" in one shot, namely, Jesus' words to St. Margaret Mary, "Behold this Heart which loves so much yet is so little loved." Regarding this last point, we learned that our goal is twofold: 1. to become aware of Jesus' suffering and 2. to strive to alleviate it. In short, we learned that the goal of the retreat is to console the Heart of Jesus.

Now, if you've finished reading the Introduction and "Laying the Foundation," I invite you to answer the following questions, beginning with the preparatory prayer. (Each question and answer section should begin with a preparatory prayer.)

Preparatory Prayer

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.
Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

INTRODUCTION

1. Being a "little soul" in light of Christ

We need to avoid two extremes: a) Thinking there's nothing wrong with us, b) Thinking everything's wrong with us.

On the one hand, do we think we're without sin? It's amazing how many people say, "I'm a good person" and are unable to think of even one sin after months and even years of not going to confession. This is not sanctity but spiritual blindness. All the saints recognized their sinfulness and had great sorrow for their sins. In fact, the closer we come to the light of Christ, the more easily we see the darkness of our sinfulness, weaknesses, and attachments. Reading the lives of the saints or their writings can help cure us of this spiritual blindness. I recommend reading the *Diary of St. Faustina Kowalska*, which helps people to discover so many "hidden sins" such as ingratitude to God, lack of prayerfulness, and lack of zeal for the kingdom. Remember, we are commanded to love God with our whole heart,

mind, and soul and to not put anything before him. In itself, this is a challenging examination of conscience.

Now, on the other hand, do you say, “I’m such a sinner there’s no way I can become a saint!” Don’t worry. As Jesus told St. Faustina, “**The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy**” (*Diary*, n. 423). Ponder this idea: *God doesn’t love us because we’re so good but because we need his love.*

Part of being a little soul means that we clearly recognize our weakness but also find hope in the mercy of God, which especially seeks out sinners.

Recognizing our own sins can be a difficult exercise. Sometimes we’re in denial of our sins, while at other times we don’t recognize God’s goodness and mercy. Which is your tendency? What moves you to have mercy on others, to forgive them? Do you forgive them because you see or sense their fear? Or do you forgive them because you remember the mercy you received in your daily life or in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (The answers to these questions may help you and others in the group see mercy from another perspective than one’s own.)

Laying the Foundation

2. Discovering the goal of my life

The genius of St. Ignatius of Loyola is how he directs us to the goal. How much we in modern society need to have a spiritual goal! This was the secret of the Jesuits. If you were to have asked one of those early Jesuits, “What’s the goal of life?” He would have immediately answered, “To give great glory to God.” If someone were to look back over the events and people in your life for the last decade, perhaps with an insight into your desires and struggles, what would *they* say was the goal of your life? As you look back into that same decade, where would you find your spiritual goals? Is it a surprise to you to hear these answers in your head and heart? You’re on the road to holiness, beginning with this retreat!

3. The invitation to become a Saint.

Describe your desire to become holy. (You do have a desire to become holy — after all, that's probably part of why you're on this retreat!) Describe God's desire for you to be holy. As you understand it right now, what is God's invitation to you? What draws you toward this saintly life, this friendship with God, this love of God?

Bonus Question! Consoling Jesus

Pay attention to your feelings and thoughts as you read. The Lord is speaking to *you*. Are there any questions that arise? Is there any fear about making this commitment? Any excitement about starting a journey to a life focused on consoling Jesus? What changes would take place in your *daily life* if your love of Jesus, your response to his appeal for mercy and consolation, were to be your first principle and foundation? Would people around you see any changes in you? What would they see?

Consoler's Challenge:

Read about each aspect of F-I-N-C-H¹ as it's presented in Appendix Two of *Consoling the Heart of Jesus*. (See pages numbers below.)

Which of these aspects would you choose first as an avenue in your journey as a little soul?

F = Feast of Mercy or Divine Mercy Sunday

Read pages 300-301.

I = Image of Divine Mercy

Read page 324.

N = Novena to Divine Mercy

Read pages 334-340.

C = Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Read pages 257-261.

H = Hour of Great Mercy

Read page 374.

¹ I was taught the “FINCH” acronym by a priest in my community, Fr. Daniel Cambra, MIC.

~ DVD Notes ~
(Session 2: Laying the Foundation)

Laying the Foundation

Having a “First Principle and Foundation” is like a soldier keeping a photograph of his family with him in battle.

History Lesson

Because of original sin we now have a disordered image of God.

Jansenism – A heresy from 17th century France that basically holds that we have to earn God’s love and be perfect before we can go to him.

In the Sacred Heart revelation, we have a 30-day-retreat-sized principle and foundation in one shot:

- To console the Heart of Jesus.
 - To return love for love.
 - To have mercy on Jesus.
-
-

St. Margaret Mary:

“Behold, this heart which loves so much, yet which so little loved.”

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 2: Laying the Foundation)

A. Prayer

+ Jesus, we thirst for you. Help us to thirst for you more. Use us, Jesus. Form us into saints. Make up for all our faults. We trust in you. With Mary's help, we give you our yes.

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Don't worry about getting to all the questions in your small-group discussion — let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation. It's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What struck you most while watching the DVD and why?

What do you think now about being a little soul in light of Christ?

What have you discovered about your goal of life this week? Is it the goal that Jesus wants for you?

What was your response to the invitation to become a saint? What will you need from Jesus to do it? What will you give him out of your love for him?

How will giving consolation to the Heart of Jesus change you? How will it make Jesus happy?

How does this retreat propose to make us into saints?

What are you expecting to learn from this retreat that will help you become a saint? Are your expectations the same as others in the group? What does this retreat offer that is different from how you thought sainthood was achieved?

How did your heart respond to the anguish in the Lord's Heart when he appeared to St. Margaret Mary?

D. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

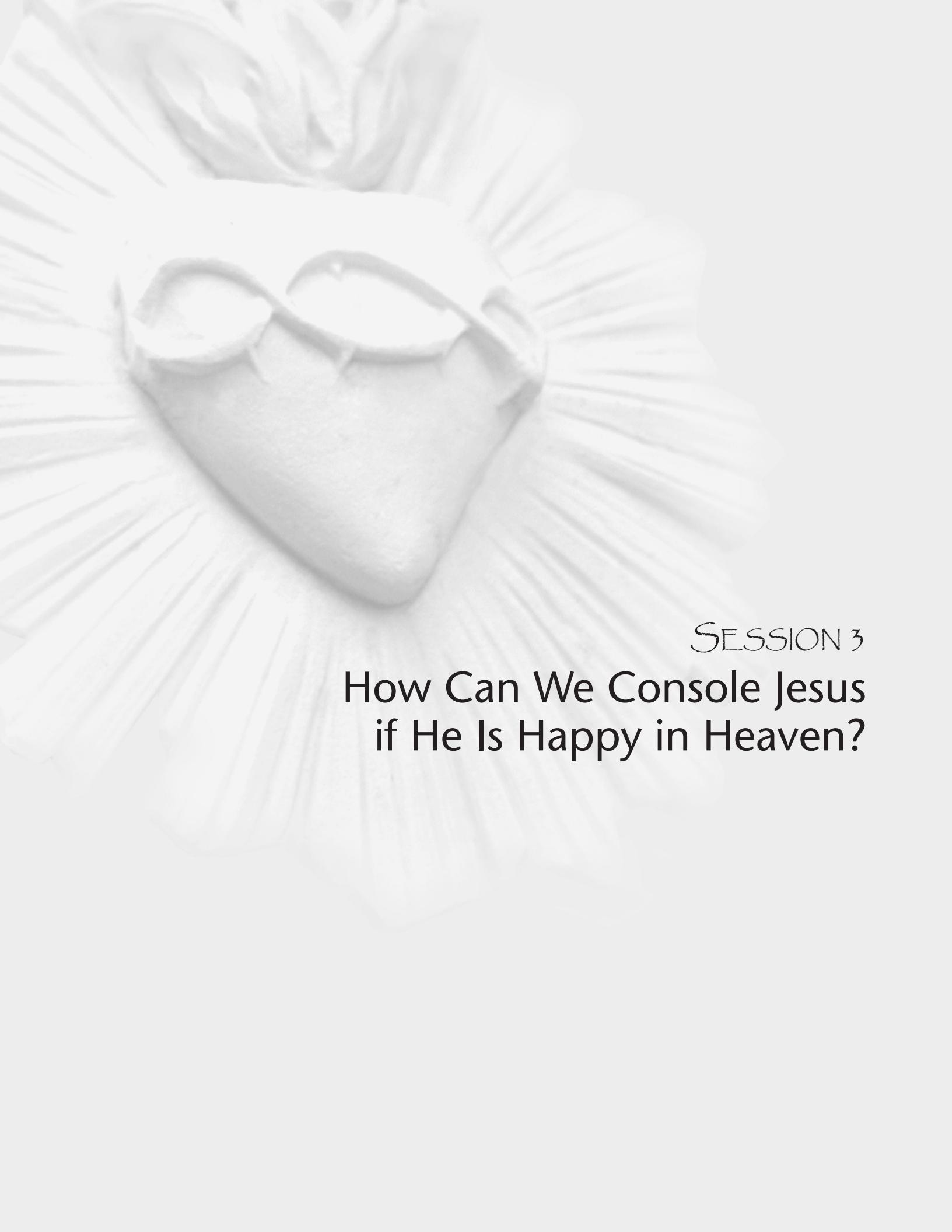
L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~
(Session 2: Laying the Foundation)

~ Notes ~
(Session 2: Laying the Foundation)



SESSION 3

How Can We Console Jesus if He Is Happy in Heaven?

SESSION 3

Obstacle “0”: How Can We Console Jesus if He Is Happy in Heaven?

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 46-59]

Of course, in the book, I don't call this “Obstacle 0,” but for many people, it really is an obstacle to living the principle and foundation. Even if it's not an obstacle for you, it's still worth looking at, because it can teach us a lot about consoling Jesus.

While the assigned reading for this week is short compared to the other reading assignments, it does involve the deepest (and most difficult) theology of the retreat. So, this week, we'll spend less time reading and more time trying to dive deeply into a challenging theological subject. Don't be afraid. We'll go through this section slowly, one small step at a time.

Preparatory Prayer

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.
Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1. The Son of God loved *me* during his Passion and Death.

Ponder the following passage from the *Catechism* (n. 478):

Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony, and his Passion and gave himself up for each one of us: “The Son of God … loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Do you believe that Jesus could know and love you while he was alive on earth, you who live nearly 2,000 years after his death? If you answer “yes,” explain what this means in your *heart*.

2. In himself, God doesn't need us. But he chooses to. How does Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, choose to need *you*? How do you want to respond to that need of Jesus' Heart?

One passage that sheds much light on consoling spirituality comes from Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter *Dives in Misericordia*. Prayerfully read the citation in *CHJ* at the top of page 398. Record any thoughts you have about it here:

3. What does friendship have to do with consoling spirituality? How does what you've learned in this section affect your intimacy with Christ? He wants you to be his friend, and he chooses to need you. Are you ready to respond as *his friend*?

Genuine friendship requires a kind of equality; it's a two-way street. But if God doesn't need us, then how can we be his true friends? In light of the passage we read from the previous question, how does Christ's need for our love create a true friendship with him?

Consoler's Challenge:

Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy each day this week during the Hour of Mercy (3-4 p.m.).

~ DVD Notes ~

(Session 3: Obstacle “0”: How Can We Console Jesus if He Is Happy in Heaven?)

Consoling the members of the Body of Christ

Consoling Jesus Himself, the Head of the Body

Consoling Jesus as having to do with the mystery of time and eternity
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1085)

Consoling Jesus as having to do with the knowledge of Jesus
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #478)

Three Points

1. Divine Mercy is God’s love as it meets us in our poverty, brokenness, weakness, and sin.

2. The Incarnation

3. Friendship

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 3: Obstacle “0”: How Can We Console Jesus if He Is Happy in Heaven?)

A. Prayer

+ Jesus, help us to grasp the mystery of your love for us. Come, Holy Spirit, help us to know Christ and the mystery of our relationship with him. Help us to understand the mystery of Christ, “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8).

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What struck you most while watching the DVD and why?

Do you believe that Jesus could know and love you while he was alive on earth, you who live nearly 2,000 years after his death?

In himself, God doesn't need us. However, does Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, need you? How do you want to respond to that need?

What does friendship have to do with consoling spirituality? How does what you've learned in this section affect your relationship with Christ? Are you ready to be his friend?

Do you see any challenge or difficulty to consoling Jesus? Is there an obstacle or any difficulty you should be aware of as you begin?

How does *your* giving consolation to Jesus relate to the mystery of time and eternity?

How does the knowledge of Christ help us understand how we can console him?

C. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~

(Session 3: Obstacle “0”: How Can We Console Jesus if He Is Happy in Heaven?)

~ Notes ~

(Session 3: Obstacle “0”: How Can We Console Jesus if He Is Happy in Heaven?)



SESSION 4

Fear of Suffering

SESSION 4

Obstacle 1: Fear of Suffering

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 63-75]

Our principle and foundation is to console the Heart of Jesus, which is so sorrowful. But isn't this idea of consoling the Heart of Jesus the same as making reparation to his Sacred Heart? And isn't reparation full of painful penances and difficult spiritual disciplines? Well, then, this idea of bearing extra suffering for Christ may begin to pull us away from the idea of consoling Jesus.

Don't worry. We'll overcome this obstacle by coming to know the Lord's gentleness and by coming to know the true meaning of suffering.

Preparatory Prayer

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1. When in your life have you experienced suffering?

Because of sin, suffering is part of life. Everyone suffers. Suffering takes on all kinds of shapes and sizes. For instance, there's physical suffering (toothaches), mental suffering (stress and worry), and even spiritual suffering (dryness in prayer, lack of meaning). Sometimes suffering ebbs and flows according to different periods of our lives. What was the worst time of suffering in your life? What kind of suffering was it? What kind of suffering do you bear now? Even if you've thought about this before, you may be at a different crossroads now. Or perhaps the Lord may have revealed something new about your experience of suffering. Answer these questions as if you were speaking to the Lord about them, telling him what they mean to you.

2. Will you give Jesus permission to take control of the suffering in your life?

How might your life change if you did so? Does this frighten you? What will you say to the Lord about your fears?

In *CHJ*, I say that there seem to be at least two different Christian approaches to suffering. The first approach tends to be very active. The second approach is more passive. Living a complete Christian life should include both approaches. For instance, regarding the active approach, we should mortify ourselves in those areas of our lives where we have disordered attachments. So, if we waste too much time surfing the web, we should choose the suffering of spending less time on the computer.

In the text, I emphasize making the passive approach *intentional*. In other words, I recommend that we ask Jesus to allow us to bear the crosses that will really help us grow in holiness. Does this seem frightening? Don't worry. The Lord knows what we can take. He always gives us the grace we need to bear our crosses, and we can even ask him to be gentle! (Important point: Jesus himself doesn't cause the suffering. In other words, by "sending us crosses," he *allows* us to suffer, but he himself doesn't cause it.)

Speak to the Lord about suffering, and if you feel so moved, ask him to pick just the right crosses — not too heavy, not too light — that will help you grow in holiness. You can write such prayers here:

3. Might things change for you if you were to shift your focus from your own suffering to that of the Lord?

First, notice from the story that the Lord helped Joe to shift his focus from his own suffering to that of the Lord. In other words, he helped Joe take his eyes off the "second thing" (suffering) and put them on the "first thing" (the Lord). When Joe did that, everything changed. Might we also benefit from such a shift of focus? Might things change in our lives if we were to shift our focus from our own suffering to that of the Lord? Reflect on this point, and write down your thoughts here.

Consoler's Challenge:

Read John Paul II's masterpiece on suffering, the apostolic letter *Salvifici Dolores* (*On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*). It's short but power-packed, and you can find it on the Internet for free. Just do a web-search for "Salvifici Dolores."

~ DVD Notes ~

(Session 4: Obstacle 1: Fear of Suffering)

The heart of the Sacred Heart devotion: going to Jesus.

We overcome the fear of suffering by coming to know the gentleness of the Lord.

Three Points

1. Penance.

2. Don't waste it.

3. Be Bold.

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 4: Obstacle 1: Fear of Suffering)

A. Prayer

+ Jesus, help us to overcome our fear of suffering by teaching us about your gentleness and the Christian meaning of human suffering.

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What struck you most while watching the video and why?

Where in your life have you experienced suffering?

How will you and your goal in life be different if you give the Lord permission to take control of your suffering?

What things will change? Your thoughts? Your actions? Your prayer?

How might you increase your boldness in prayer? Will you pray with greater confidence and trust? What will change if you increase your boldness in prayer?

For whom or for what will you offer your suffering? And why?

How have you thanked God for changing your suffering into a gift of love? When have you done this? Who have you shared it with?

C. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

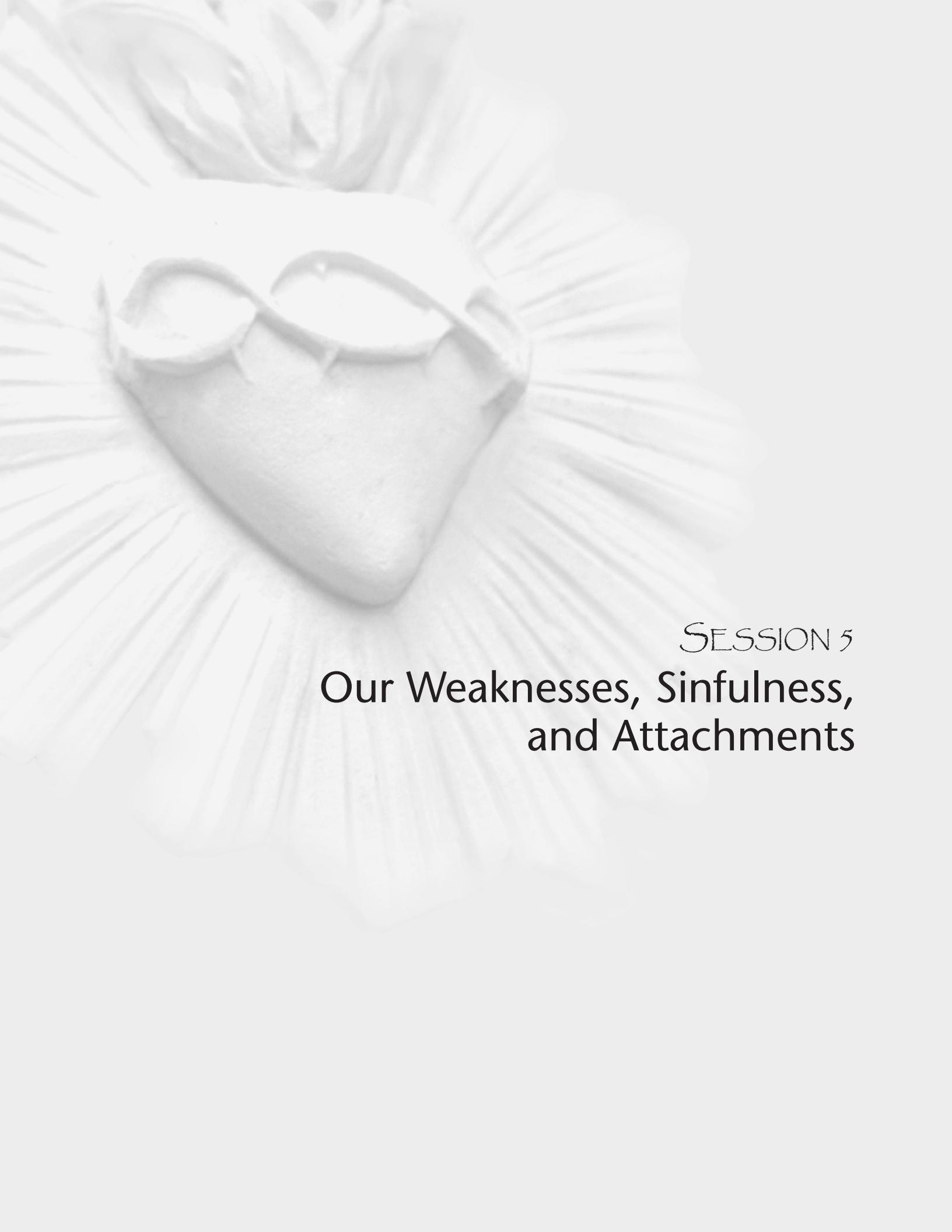
L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~

(Session 4: Obstacle 1: Fear of Suffering)



SESSION 5

Our Weaknesses, Sinfulness, and Attachments

SESSION 5

Obstacle 2: Our Weaknesses, Sinfulness, and Attachments

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 75-93]

Our weaknesses, sinfulness, and attachments can make us afraid to go to the Lord. We may think, "I can't go to Jesus because I'm such a spiritual mess." This is a lie. Jesus' merciful Heart is most attracted to weak, sinful souls, and he raises them up if only they'll let him. Now let's consider how our weaknesses, sinfulness, and attachments can be seen not as obstacles to holiness but as ways that lead us to greater reliance on the Lord and his mercy.

Preparatory Prayer

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1. Building spiritual virtues

Where do you need the most spiritual help to combat your weaknesses? Choose the virtue you see the least of in your actions and reactions. What virtue or virtues are you trying to build?

An important part of the Little Way that's described in this section is the hope that Jesus will raise us to the heights of holiness despite our weaknesses. Yet we also have to keep striving to grow in virtue and holiness. So, what virtues are you trying to build? According to St. Ignatius of Loyola, we need to be wise in our efforts to grow in holiness. For instance, we should strive to grow in the virtue that goes against our main vice. Here's a list to help us identify the virtues that combat our vices:

VICE	OPPOSING VIRTUE
Pride	Humility
Avarice (Greed)	Liberality, Generosity, Mercy
Envy	Love of Neighbor
Wrath	Patience, Meekness
Lust	Chastity
Gluttony	Temperance
Sloth	Fortitude, Courage

So, what virtue or virtues are you trying to build? If you struggle with pride, then focus on building humility. For instance, you can plan on taking the last seat at the dinner table, and let others sit first. Or, you can let others decide which dessert everyone will have, or let others decide other things that you usually control. These are concrete steps toward building humility. What concrete steps can you suggest for building temperance, or love of neighbor, or courage? It might be simpler than you think.

2. Attachments

Is there anything in your life, other than God, that you feel you cannot live without? Okay, maybe you could live without it, but is there something that you know if you had to give it up, it would cause you great distress? Is there something that weighs you down because you “need” it and you don’t have the freedom to let it go? What is it? If you don’t want to write it down here, then at least call it to mind, or write it down as a code word. For instance, if it’s doughnuts, you might write a capital letter “O” (which kind of resembles a doughnut).

Remember, just writing the attachment or weakness, even in code, is an aid to overcoming it. It’s a concrete step toward developing the opposite virtue.

3. Look at Jesus instead of at your sins and yourself. Do you see how he looks at you? Do you see how he looks at you with love?

Don't worry, I'm not going to now say, "Alright, you must get rid of that thing you're attached to!" No, sometimes we're not ready for that. The important thing is that we're honest with the Lord. In other words, just as we hide from the Lord because of our sins, so we also like to hide from the Lord the things that cause us to sin. We're afraid to bring them to light, and sometimes we never even face our own attachments and addictions (which is denial). But healing can't begin until we bring them to the light.

I hope that in the last question, you brought some things to the light. But now, here, I don't want you to focus on them. Rather, focus on the Lord. Come before his gaze of love for a moment. Stop looking at the thing in your hands that you are clutching. Instead, look at Jesus. Come as you are with all your attachments. Do you see how he looks at you with love? Remember his words from the Mother Teresa letter. He thirsts for you. Do you thirst for him? Sit with these questions for a few minutes, and then, write what's in your heart.

More specifically, sit quietly in a comfortable position. Then, close your eyes and simply look at Jesus. Or, look at a picture of him, perhaps the Image of Divine Mercy. Let Jesus sit near you and look at you. Let the friendship you are beginning to build with Jesus just rest in this moment or two of silent, prayerful regard. Then, write what your heart sees and hears from Jesus. Write also what you want to say to Jesus about the time he has just spent with you.

Consoler's Challenge:

This week, spend some extra quiet time before the Lord in prayer, before the image of Divine Mercy. Think of his rays of mercy that always go forth from his Heart and how he delights in you as you are. Think of how he looks at you with love and how he comes to you, walking toward you.

~ DVD Notes ~

(Session 5: Obstacle 2: Our Weaknesses, Sinfulness, and Attachments)

1. Sinfulness

2. Attachments

3. Weaknesses

The Little Way of St. Therese of Lisieux

Keep striving for holiness.

Trust that God will satisfy your desires for holiness.

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 5: Obstacle 2: Our Weaknesses, Sinfulness, and Attachments)

A. Prayer

+ Jesus, Divine Mercy Incarnate, help us to come to you always, especially in our weaknesses, sinfulness, and attachments.

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What had the greatest impact on you while watching the DVD talk and why?

What virtue or virtues are you trying to build? Where do you need the most spiritual help to combat your weaknesses?

Your attachments and weaknesses: It's not necessary to bare your soul to the group here. This is not a "true confessions" moment. Choose one attachment and a successful moment you have had combating it this week. Your success encourages the group members to continue their struggle toward holiness.

Look at Jesus instead of at yourself. Do you see how he looks at you? Do you see how he looks at you with love? What was it like to spend this special time with your Lord, your Friend, the One whom you want to console?

While he is looking at you, what will you ask of Jesus? What is Jesus' response? What do you think Jesus is asking of you?

When have you experienced God's mercy in your life? When have you experienced God's mercy during this retreat? Has this convinced you that God's mercy is for you? If not, what will it take to convince you?

C. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~

(Session 5: Obstacle 2: Our Weaknesses, Sinfulness, and Attachments)



SESSION 6
Fear of Suffering,
Again

SESSION 6

Obstacle 3: Fear of Suffering, Again

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 93-108]

As our love for Jesus grows, we'll want to console him more and more, even in the best possible way. However, a fear may accompany these desires, namely, the fear that consoling Jesus in the "best possible way" will lead to lots of suffering. Don't worry. Remember that the Lord is very gentle with little souls, and the best possible way to console him is not so difficult after all.

Preparatory Prayer

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1. “Jesus, I trust in you.” Do you really trust the Lord?

What does distrust look like? It means to lose our peace in the face of adversity, to doubt that the Lord will care for us, to have fear for the future as if the Lord will not be there for us, to give in to useless anxiety. Distrust also comes in the form of avoiding the Lord because of our weakness, sinfulness, and attachments, which we learned about last week. Do you sometimes not trust the Lord? What do you worry about? Is there anything weighing on your heart now that you should hand over to the Lord? After last week, are you still hesitant to go to Jesus?

2. How does your lack of trust hurt Jesus?

We can read that distrust hurts the Lord's heart most deeply, but does it really? Yes, it does. I think the best way to understand it is to reflect on the love that parents have for their children. Imagine you have a child who needs your help. Of course, you really want to give

him help, yet he refuses to receive it. This would break your heart. Well, Jesus wants to help us with our problems and difficulties; he wants to forgive us our sins and give us his healing love, but when we don't trust him, in a certain sense, it ties his hands. Sure, he's God and can still find ways to help us, but trust is truly a way whereby we open our lives to his loving care.

To come to a better understanding of how distrust wounds the Lord's Heart, and as an aid for us to grow in trust, read *CHJ* pages 268-270, which fall under the heading "Distrust." After you prayerfully read those pages, ask yourself if you believe that distrust really wounds the Lord's heart so much. Then, tell the Lord of a time when a friend distrusted you and how it hurt you. Reassure the Lord that you will trust him, that he is your Friend. Ask him to help you to trust him more because you love him.

3. Was there ever a period in your life when you had to live by trust in Jesus?
What happened?

When we live with great trust in God and strive to please him and console him, he is especially able to work miracles in our lives. For example, he can form us into saints. In other words, he can fill our hearts with his merciful love and make us great channels of his mercy to others. He just needs us to go to him. He will do the rest. And when we do go to him, we also console him.

Jesus is very simple. He simply wants love for love. When souls go to him with trust and receive his mercy, that's all he's really looking for. Even in the midst of an ocean of rejection, one soul who trusts in him can make up for all the rejection and be like a "mist" before his eyes. Such souls make Jesus say, "I wish I could suffer more." They can be a delight to the Heart of Jesus. Read *CHJ* pages 375-381. Pick which of the quotes resonates with you the most, and write it here. (You may also want to write it on an index card and repeat it every morning or evening of the retreat.)

Consoler's Challenge:

I once met a nun from Nigeria, and I asked her why it is that every Nigerian I've met seems to be so joyful? She said that it's because it's part of their culture to always praise and thank God. Then, she showed me a big set of beads she carried with her, and she said that those beads are her secret. She called them "Thank You, Jesus, Beads." She said that every day she would pray "Thank you, Jesus" 1,000 times on those beads.

We may not be able to give the Lord 1,000 "Thank you, Jesus," but why not take an ordinary set of rosary beads and for each bead say, "Thank you, Jesus"?

Anyway, I asked the nun about the big beads (you could use the Our Father beads of a rosary), and she said, "Oh, yeah, on those you still say, "Thank you, Jesus," but you savor it, saying, "Ooooooooooo, Thank you, Jesus!"

Give it a shot. And I recommend smiling as you pray it. She sure did.

~ DVD Notes ~

(Session 6: Obstacle 3: Fear of Suffering, Again)

The Best Way to Console Jesus is simple and easy

Trust is praise and thanksgiving.

Cultivate an attitude of gratitude (Examination of Conscience).

B =

A=

K=

E=

R=

The Best Way to Console Jesus is the Most Powerful.

1. It's about being with Jesus in his Passion.

2. One soul can make a huge difference.

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 6: Obstacle 3: Fear of Suffering, Again)

A. Prayer

+ Jesus, help us overcome our fear of suffering by strengthening our trust and by teaching us how to turn suffering into love.

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What resonated with you most while watching the DVD and why?

“Jesus, I trust in you.” Do you really trust the Lord?

How does your lack of trust hurt Jesus?

Was there ever a period or an event in your life when you had to live by trust in Jesus?

What happened?

Do your sins and weaknesses worry you?

As a little soul, what have you learned in this retreat that tells you your life will make a big difference?

It's difficult to let go of the fear of suffering. What tips, skills, or ideas have you learned or practiced in the past few weeks that you can share with your group about this?

C. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

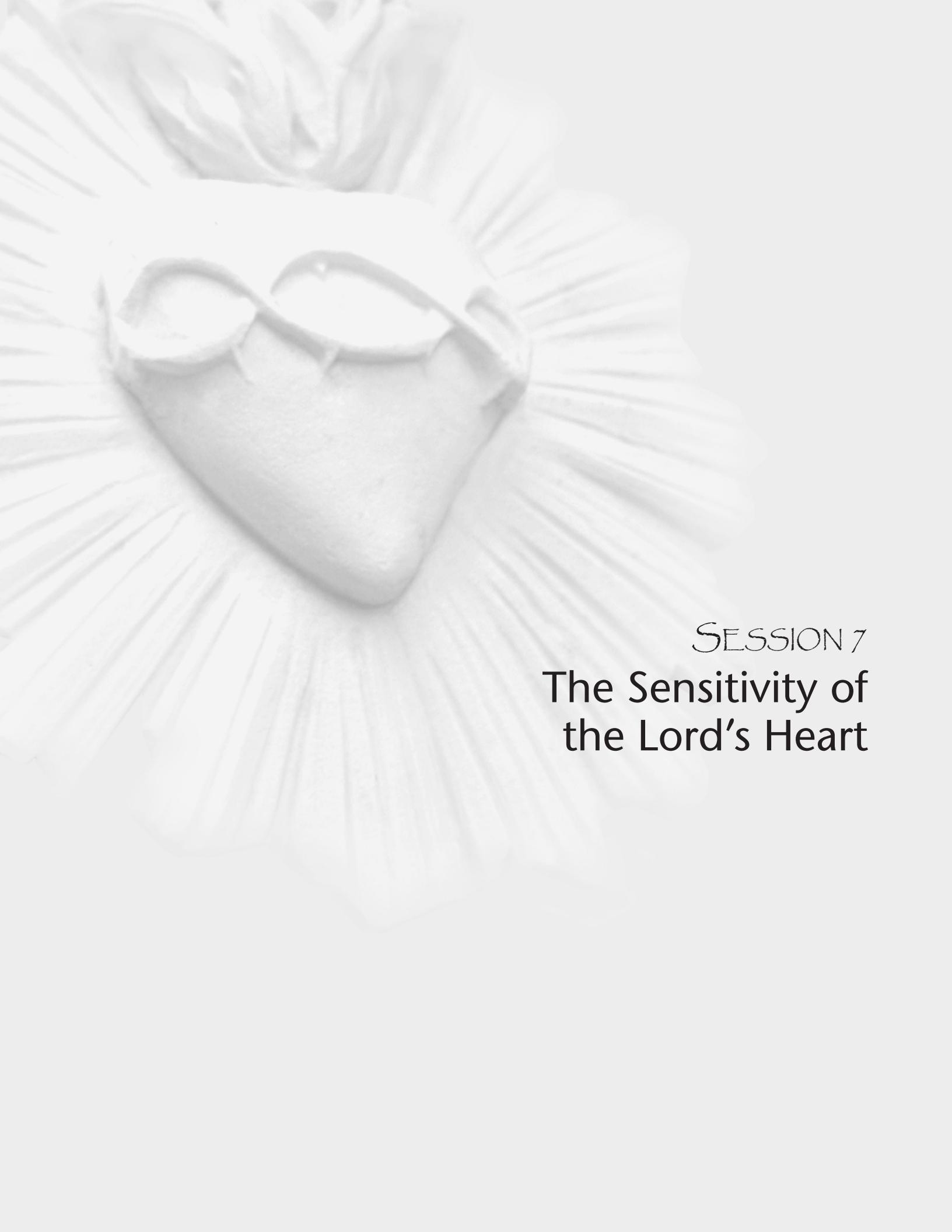
L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~

(Session 6: Obstacle 3: Fear of Suffering, Again)



SESSION 7

The Sensitivity of the Lord's Heart

SESSION 7

Obstacle 4: The Sensitivity of the Lord's Heart

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 108-127]

The Heart of Jesus is very sensitive, which makes for some good news and some bad news. The good news is that it's relatively easy to console the Lord's Heart in the best way: It simply takes our trust! The bad news is that it's also relatively easy to break the Lord's Heart in the worst way: It simply takes our lack of trust. For those whose principle and foundation is to console the Heart of Jesus, this bad news is deeply troubling. But thank goodness Jesus taught our friend Joe that there are two ways by which we can be assured that we won't deeply wound the Lord by our lack of trust: A Special Marian Consecration and a Spiritual Communion of Merciful Love.

Preparatory Prayer

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.
Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1. You are one of those souls *closest* to Jesus. Do you realize this?

You are making a retreat. Not a lot of people make retreats these days. You're taking time to pray and are striving to console the Lord's Heart. You are surely one of those who are closest to him!

You are also getting to know the Lord's merciful love more deeply. You're pondering the depths of his love. What do you want to say to him right now?

2. What does Marian consecration mean to you?

God is so good. He gives us little souls two special gifts that will help us not to hurt the Lord with our lack of trust. In other words, he gives us two special gifts that will help us live our principle and foundation.

The first of these ways is the Special Marian Consecration. Now, since you're doing this Hearts Afire Program, you've probably already done the group retreat for *33 Days to Morning Glory*. (If not, don't panic — you can still continue with this Consoling the Heart of Jesus retreat without having done the 33 Days to Morning Glory retreat. But I encourage you to do the 33 Days retreat if you haven't already.) So, you should be an expert in Marian Consecration by now, right? Well, don't worry if you're a little rusty. As you already read in the corresponding section of *CHJ*, I give a little summary of Marian consecration. Therefore, this question shouldn't come as a curve ball to you: What is Marian consecration? I don't ask for an academic answer but a personal one. What does Marian consecration mean to you? To help you answer this question, you may find it helpful to reflect on the following passage, which captures the essence of Marian consecration and has to do with entrusting ourselves to Mary:

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home (Jn 19:26-27).

3. How do the words *ecce*, *fiat*, and *magnificat* summarize the whole retreat?

Three words that summarize the whole retreat, the whole spirituality of consoling Jesus, the whole of trust ... what a gift! This was a long section to read, but in your own words, describe how these three words summarize everything we've covered.

Consoler's Challenge:

In this section, we've been learning about what an awesome gift the Offering to Merciful Love is. Why not give this gift to your family as well? Starting at the very bottom of page 408 in *CHJ*, I explain how whole families can make the Offering to Merciful Love. Why not make this offering with your family? And why not do the Divine Mercy enthronement as well?

~ DVD Notes ~

(Session 7: Obstacle 4: The Sensitivity of The Lord's Heart)

Marian Consecration

Offering to Merciful Love ...

Consoles Jesus.

Softens our hearts.

We need not fear purgatory.
(See CCC, nn. 1030-1032)

Breathing Prayer:

Ecce

Fiat

Magnificat

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 7: Obstacle 4: The Sensitivity of The Lord's Heart)

A. Prayer

+ Merciful Heart of Jesus, with the help of your tender mother, may we console and delight you with our love and trust.

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What touched you most while watching the DVD and why?

Do you realize that you're one of those who are closest to Jesus? What will you say to him about this tremendous gift of friendship and the invitation to be close to his Heart.

What does Marian consecration mean to you? How does Marian consecration help you console Jesus even more?

How do the words *ecce, fiat*, and *magnificat* summarize the whole retreat?

Look ahead to the upcoming week or month. Is there anything that you're worried about? What concrete acts of trust can you make as this event or situation nears? For instance, let's say you commute to work, and on your drive to work, you hit heavy traffic from time to time. What will you do the next time this happens? How will you overcome the stress, anxiety, impatience, and even anger that inevitably wells up? What will you say? What will you do?

What can you do to draw even closer to Jesus?

What words or actions of yours would console Jesus the most?

C. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~

(Session 7: Obstacle 4: The Sensitivity of The Lord's Heart)



SESSION 8

The Insensitivity of Our Hearts

(Part One)

SESSION 8

Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts (Part One)

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 127-140]

Hardness of heart is the opposite of mercy. It separates us from God, is the loss of our humanity, and causes so much suffering. To one degree or another, all of us have hardened hearts that need healing. Such is the sad effect of sin in our lives.

Up to this point, everything we've covered during the retreat has been about healing our hearts. In other words, it's been about making our hearts more compassionate to the suffering of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Now, while our focus still involves healing for our hardened hearts, we're going to try something new: We're going to home in on feeling compassion for the suffering of our neighbor. We're going to focus not so much on growing in compassion for the suffering of Jesus, the Head of the Mystical Body, but on growing in compassion for the suffering of the members of his Mystical Body.

Because mercy is a twofold movement of compassion and action, our treatment of this obstacle will be in two parts. In this first part, we'll deal with becoming more compassionate to the suffering of our neighbor. In the second part (next week), we'll deal with the action needed to alleviate this suffering.

Preparatory Prayer

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1-a. Mercy is love when it encounters suffering.

The first movement of mercy is compassion. When have you felt compassion for another? What were the circumstances?

1-b. The second movement of mercy is one of action.

When we see someone suffering, our compassion moves us to act, and we reach out to alleviate that person's suffering. When have you reached out to someone and aided him somehow? Did the experience change you in any way?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
2. Sometimes it is difficult or may even seem impossible to feel compassion for another. What is your prayer for healing of the hardness of heart that is responsible for this lack of feeling?

When I recognized the hardness of my own heart, I remembered Cardinal Schönborn's words, "Only the love of God that reaches as far as the Cross can open a breach in our hardened hearts," and I made a heartfelt prayer to the Lord for healing. Write your own prayer for healing here:

3. Why does the Passion of Christ have power to heal our hearts?

This whole CHJ retreat has been about healing our hardened hearts, because the whole retreat has had us focus on the Passion of Jesus, "Behold this Heart ..." and "I Thirst." Why does the Passion of Jesus have such power?

Consoler's Challenge:

Read Blessed John Paul II's beautiful encyclical letter *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*), which talks about the culture of death and the culture of life. It's available for free online. Just do a web-search for "*Gospel of Life*."

~ DVD Notes ~

(Session 8: Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts — Part One)

The whole CHJ retreat is about softening our hearts.

Two of the three ways our hearts are softened:

1. The Passion of Jesus

CEP = Compassion Evoking Power

The size of the suffering

The degree of the love

2 . Overcoming the sins that harden our hearts

Gossip and Envy

Lust and Greed

Judgmental Attitude

Unwillingness to Forgive

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 8: Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts — Part One)

A. Prayer

+ Wounded Heart of Jesus, heal our hardness of heart, and help us develop hearts full of compassion for our neighbor.

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What touched you most while watching the DVD and why?

Mercy is love when it encounters suffering. The first movement of mercy is compassion. When have you felt compassion for another? What were the circumstances?

Sometimes it is difficult or may even seem impossible to feel compassion for another. What is your prayer for healing of the hardness of heart that is responsible for this lack of feeling?

Why does the Passion of Christ have power to heal our hearts?

How does the culture of death tempt you away from mercy?

Where in your life do you experience or express to others the culture of life, especially as mercy to others?

What daily temptations do you struggle against that interfere with your merciful actions toward others?

C. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

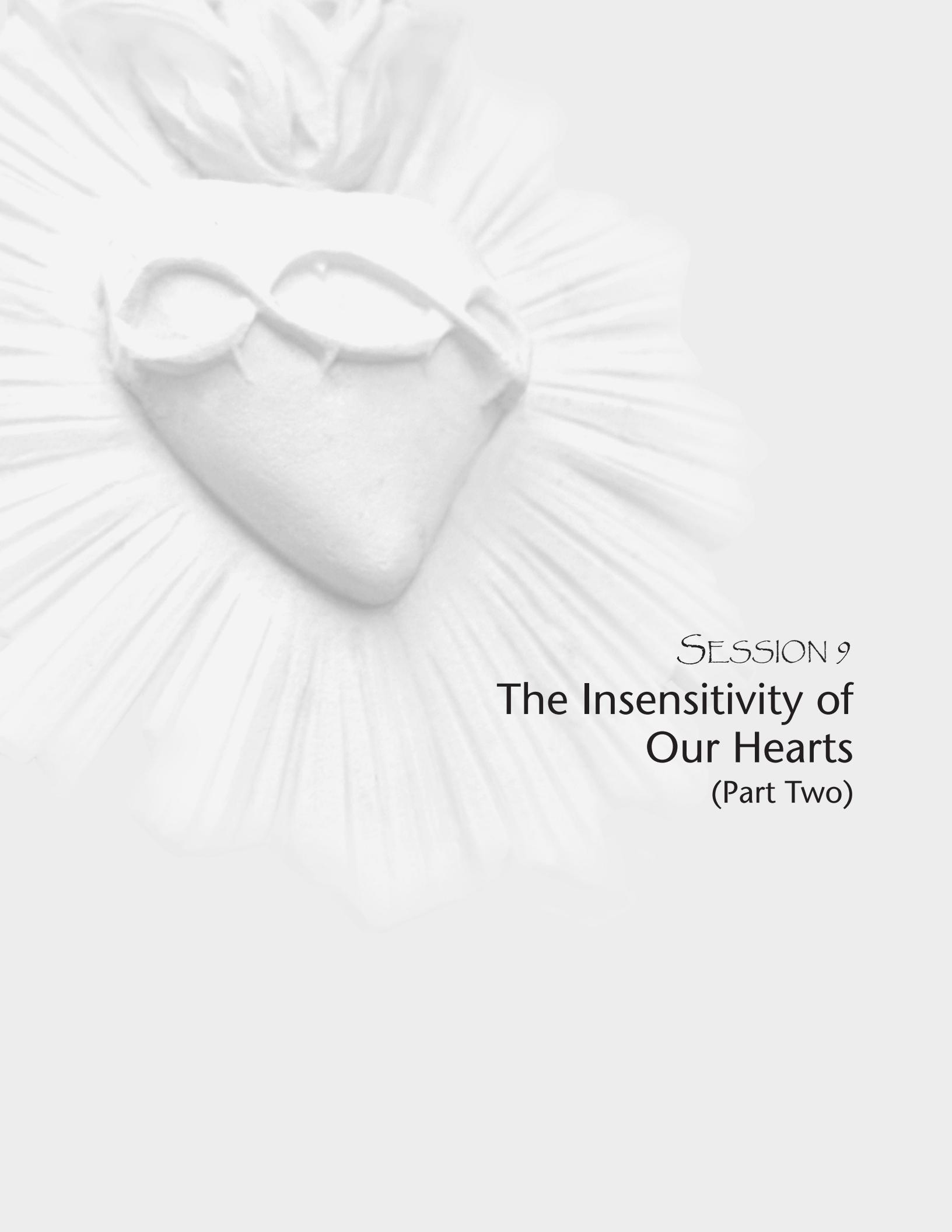
All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~

(Session 8: Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts — Part One)

~ Notes ~

(Session 8: Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts — Part One)



SESSION 9

The Insensitivity of Our Hearts

(Part Two)

SESSION 9

Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts (Part Two)

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 140-167]

Last week, we learned that mercy is a twofold movement of compassion and action and that we'd be treating this obstacle in two parts. In the first part (last week), we dealt with becoming more compassionate to the suffering of our neighbor. Here (the second part), we'll deal with the action needed to alleviate that suffering by putting mercy into action. Specifically, we'll be looking at how we can exercise mercy in deed, word, and prayer.

Preparatory Prayer

- + Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1. Jesus asks us first to show mercy in deed. One way we can do this is to delight in others. How do we delight in others when they don't seem delightful?

In the text, I give a lot of advice for how we can develop the merciful outlook. In one place, I describe the merciful outlook as an attitude that says, "I delight that you exist." However, sometimes it's not so easy to delight in another person, and it can take a lot of work. It takes "deep-sea diving," where we try to find the good in others. It takes prayer, in which we ask for the grace to love the other. It also takes imagination, because we need to try to see where the other person is suffering. Oftentimes, we can develop a love for someone who is not easy to love when we reflect on how they are suffering. Are we willing to do this work? If so, why not begin now? Think of the person in your life who is most difficult to love. Now, do some deep-sea diving and record the good things about them below. Next, pray for the grace to love that person. Finally, reflect on how that person may be suffering, even in a hidden way. Write down how he or she may be suffering below.

2-a. Mercy seeks to know the other person. It strives to understand and be with the other.
Do you ask people the merciful question that shows your real interest in them?

In conversation with others, do you do all the talking? Do you bother to ask people questions or are you just an answerer? Are you a good listener? Are you sincerely interested in what people are sharing? Reflect on these things, and write how you might improve in asking the merciful question and being a good listener.

2-b. Are you ready to share with others?

There are people who are experts at avoiding talking about themselves. They are the first to ask us questions about how we are doing, but they always change the subject when it comes to themselves. Are you one of them? Don't forget that mercy is a bilateral reality. You have a gift to offer to others, and you should also be ready to share with others. If you are one of the expert avoiders, ask yourself why you have a hard time to share. Perhaps you've been hurt in the past or have a difficult time trusting people. What's the problem? Write it down here, and then bring it to the Lord.

3. For whom do you or would you pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy?

St. Faustina liked to pray the chaplet especially for the conversion of sinners and for the dying. It's important to pray for the dying, because there are some people dying this very day who are rejecting God's mercy. Your prayers for them can help them to accept God's gift of salvation. Jesus said to St. Faustina, "**The grace of eternal salvation for certain souls depends on your prayer**" (*Diary*, n. 1777). Wow. What groups of people are particularly on your heart to pray for? What specific people are on your heart? If you so choose, write down the names of the people who are most deeply on your heart with regard to prayer.

Consoler's Challenge:

Make the “Breathing Prayer Deal” with Jesus (*CHJ*, p. 164), and the next time you’re in the car, at the bank, or in a grocery store, try “breathing” the prayer for the people around you.

~ DVD Notes ~

(Session 9: Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts — Part Two)

The third way our hearts are softened: putting mercy into action.

Exercise Mercy in Three Degrees:

1. Mercy in Deed

Existential loneliness

The Merciful Outlook

2. Mercy in Word: The Merciful Question

3. Prayers of Mercy

Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Modified Breathing Prayer

Mercy in action produces deeper compassion, which heals our hardened hearts.

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 9: Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts — Part Two)

A. Prayer

+ Wounded Heart of Jesus, heal our hardness of heart, and help us develop hearts full of compassion for our neighbor.

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What struck you most while watching the DVD and why?

Jesus first asks us to show mercy in deed. One way we can do this is to delight in others. How do we delight in others when they don't seem delightful?

Mercy seeks to know the other person. It seeks to understand and be with the other. Do you ask people the merciful question that shows your real interest in them?

For whom do you or would you pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy?

How will you encourage yourself to embrace the attitude of love you need to practice mercy in deed, word, and prayer?

Sometimes our merciful outlook becomes insincere. Do you ever fall into the patronizing outlook? What would help you to avoid this outlook?

What is your favorite description of the merciful outlook? (Check out the list beginning on page 413 of *CHJ* at the bottom.)

C. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~

(Session 9: Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts — Part Two)



SESSION 10
Conclusion

SESSION 10

Conclusion

[Reading: *CHJ*, Pages 169-195]

By now, we've covered all the main obstacles to living our principle and foundation of consoling the Heart of Jesus. Yet we're still not finished. While we may have everything we need to become great saints, this doesn't mean we already are. Before it can happen, each of us has to bring what we've learned into our daily lives. Not to worry. This conclusion is designed to help us keep the graces of the retreat in our hearts so they might transform us into great saints, that is, into people who give tremendous consolation to the Heart of Jesus. To help us reflect on the whole retreat, there are more questions than usual in this section.

Preparatory Prayer

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind, and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.
Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

- 1. I will live my principle and foundation of consoling Jesus, with Mary, by giving him my trust and acts of mercy.*

Beginning of Our Principle and Foundation

1. What will you do to remind yourself of your principle and foundation?

In my office, I have a beautiful crucifix with the words “I Thirst” under one of the arms of the Cross, just like the image on the inside front cover of *CHJ*. In my room, I have an image of Jesus, crowned with thorns and his Sacred Heart glowing in his chest, and I’ve written the words “Behold this heart...” below it. What will you do to remind yourself of your principle and foundation? (Note: It doesn’t have to be a big image, and don’t feel guilty if you choose to be discreet about it. In fact, some work environments don’t allow religious images. Well, you can always have an image of a heart in your office, and nobody will know what it means but you.)

Living the Foundation: Trust

2. What best summarizes trust for you and will help you live it out?

I just reread this section, “Living the Foundation: Trust,” and it’s not a bad summary of the basic attitude of trust we’re shooting for. Because this attitude is so central to our living out the spirituality, I’m going to ask you to do something I haven’t asked you to do yet: Prayerfully reread this whole section from pages 170-172. (Don’t worry, it’s less than two full pages long.) After you’re done reading it, write down any thoughts you may have about how you can put it into practice in your daily life. In other words, ask yourself, “What struck me most as a way of helping me remember and live out my basic spiritual attitude of trusting Jesus for the sake of consoling him?”

Living the Foundation: Acts of Mercy

3. Pop-Quiz! What's the merciful outlook?

Describe it in your own words here, and try to do so without looking back in the book.

Consoler Principle and Foundation

4. Where will you keep your Consoler Principle and Foundation?

It's may seem like a little thing, but if you're anything like me, you'll be surprised how easily you'll misplace you're hand-written copy of the Consoler Principle and Foundation

(or the beautiful printed one that you sign and that comes with the program). Of course, you can always refer back to it in the book, but it's nice to have your signed copy for the monthly review/renewal. So, where will you keep it? And, as a bonus question, how will you remind yourself to do it on your monthly birthday day?

2. I will keep to a simple schedule of daily prayer.

Morning Offering; Three O'clock Hour; Examination of Conscience: B-A-K-E-R

5. Which one of these three do you see as easily becoming part of your daily routine?
Which one will be the hardest for you to do daily?

Is it praying the morning offering, because you're not a morning person? Remembering the Three O'clock Hour? Finding time to do the Examination of Conscience before bed? Pick the one that will be the hardest for you to do daily, and then write down a strategy for helping you to do it. If it's the Morning Offering that gives you the trouble, maybe you can tape a copy to your desk at work, so it will always be there, reminding you. If it's the Three O'clock Hour, maybe you can set your phone alarm to go off at 3:00 p.m. each day. If it's the Examination of Conscience, maybe you can do it after dinner, when you're not as sleepy or while you're brushing your teeth before bed. Whatever the problem is, come up with a strategy so you can do it, and briefly write that strategy here:

*3. I will frequent the Sacraments and take time for spiritual reading.***Frequent the Sacraments****6. Can you go the extra mile?**

For “frequent the Sacraments,” weekly Sunday Mass and yearly confession are givens because they’re obligations. But what about going the extra mile? Is there a way for you to get to Mass at least one other day during the week? Or why not daily Mass? And what about visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Is there a parish nearby that keeps its doors open into the evening? Better yet, is there an adoration chapel near you? Why not treat yourself by making a weekly holy hour? Or even daily? If you can’t, why not try visiting Jesus in the tabernacle of your heart? (Read the instructions on how to visit Jesus in the tabernacle of your heart in *CHJ* on pages 424-426, starting on page 424 with the words “**Page 185.**”) Finally, why not go to confession more frequently? Confession is such a gift! (Bonus: Read *CHJ* pages 261-262 on “Confession.”) Now, below, write why you can or cannot go the extra mile, and be honest!

Meditation: The Two Movements of the Divine Mercy Image**7. Do you have an image of Divine Mercy?**

Of course, you do. One came with the program. It’s called the Vilnius Image, and it’s the one that St. Faustina herself had painted. It took the artist more than 12 tries before Faustina was somewhat satisfied. Every image of Divine Mercy is a blessing, but this one is particularly special. Spend time with the image, and contemplate it. The meditation from the book is just one example of the grace of the image. Spend time with the image, especially if you can’t get to the church. Now, read page 324 in *CHJ* to hear what Jesus himself says about the image. Then, write any thoughts you may have below:

Spiritual Reading

8. When will you do spiritual reading?

Spiritual reading is very important for spiritual growth. So, when are you going to do it? Do you waste time in the evenings? Many of us watch TV, surf the Internet, or go on Facebook. A lot of this activity is just a waste of time. Why not put a good spiritual book in the place where you're tempted to waste time? That way, when you're wasting time, the book will be there looking at you, reminding you of a better choice. Where are you going to put that book?

Book Recommendations

9. Which book will lure you away from the temptation?

To put a book in those places where you're tempted to waste time, you'll obviously first need a good spiritual book. So, which book will it be? In order for it to draw you from the temptations, though, it needs to be something you will enjoy. I give some recommendations in the text, but you're obviously not limited to those. I invite you to treat yourself by going to your favorite search engine and typing in "Amazon Best Sellers Catholic," and you'll see a list of the best sellers among Catholic books. There you'll have lots of stuff to choose from. Better yet, pay a visit to your local Catholic bookstore where you can browse through lots of good books. So, when will you treat yourself? Or which book that you already have will you put next to the computer, the TV, or the remote?

Closing Meditation: A Contemplation to Attain Divine Love

10. After prayerfully reading the closing meditation, do any thoughts come to mind?
Write them down here:

Consoler's Challenge:

Actually, this is the Consoler's SUPER challenge: The next time you make this retreat, try to answer all 10 questions for each week — this week was the only one that had 10 within the text. The “extended version” of the retreat, which is found in the Appendix (see following pages), has 10 questions for *every* week of the retreat.

~ DVD Notes ~
(Session 10: Conclusion)

The Consoler's Three Promises

1. I will live my principle and foundation of consoling Jesus, with Mary, by giving him my trust and by doing acts of mercy according to the following three degrees:

Deed

Word

Prayer

2. I will keep to a simple schedule of daily prayer:

Morning Offering

Three O'clock Hour

Examination of Conscience

3. I will frequent the Sacraments and take time for spiritual reading.

~ Small-group Session Outline ~

(Session 10: Conclusion)

A. Prayer

+ Merciful Jesus, seeing how gentle and sorrowful you are, help us to love you, trust you, and console you throughout our lives.

Hail Mary ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

B. Personal Response

[Remember, it's alright if your group only gets through a few of the questions during your discussion.]

What did you find most helpful while watching the DVD and why?

What best summarizes trust in Jesus for you, and what will help you to live it out?

What help will you need to have a compassionate response to others and act mercifully toward them?

What changes in prayers and sacramental practice are first on your list of consoler actions?

When will you *first* return to re-read the *CHJ* book and *Retreat Companion*?

After you set your cell phone alarm for the 3 o'clock hour, what might stop you from taking the time to turn to Jesus' mercy every day at that moment? What will you do to remove that obstacle?

How has your heart moved closer to Jesus in mercy and trust during this retreat? What do you think will preserve this closeness to Jesus after the retreat?

C. Closing Prayer

+ Glory Be ...

L: Sacred Heart of Jesus ...

R: Have mercy on us.

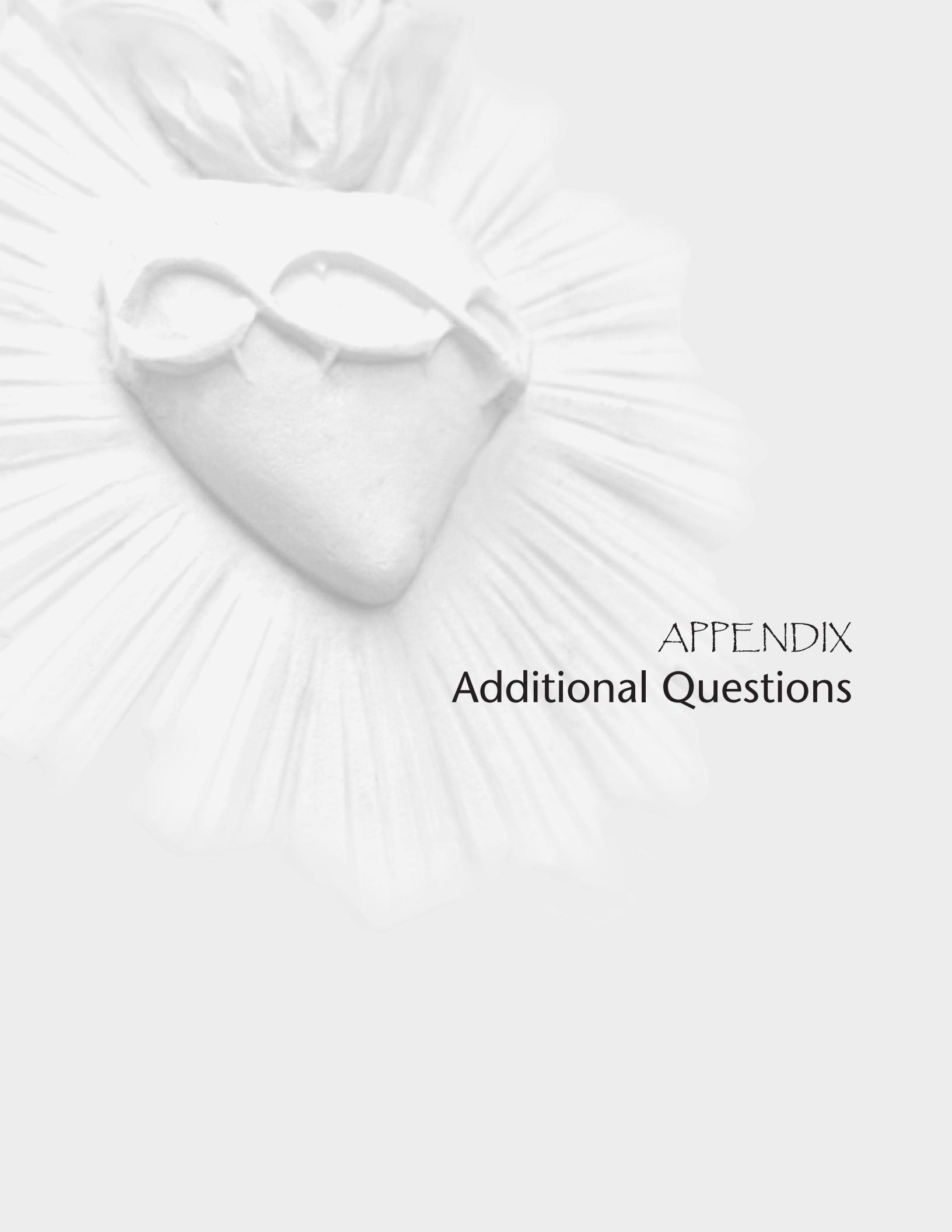
All: Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Notes ~

(Session 10: Conclusion)

~ Notes ~

(Session 10: Conclusion)



APPENDIX Additional Questions

As I mentioned in the Introduction, this Appendix was included for all those who wish to go deeper into the CHJ retreat. It features all the questions you'll encounter in your weekly answering (in the main section of the *Retreat Companion*), plus additional questions.

OPTIONS FOR USING THIS APPENDIX:

1. Use the additional questions on your first time through the CHJ group retreat.
2. After you've already made the CHJ group retreat once, repeat the retreat later by yourself, using some or all of the questions in the Appendix.
3. Repeat the retreat as a group, perhaps the following year, this time with the new questions. (You'll have been living consoling spirituality for a while, and your group will be able to approach the retreat from a new perspective.)

Just remember that the Appendix questions are *optional*. You don't have to do them at all! It's up to each group member if he wants to do the extra questions. The weekly small-group session questions stay the same, so doing the additional questions won't impact the small-group discussion. In other words, if some group members decide to use the additional questions from the Appendix while others in the group don't, that's okay. When the small group gets together every week, they'll still answer the same Personal Response Questions.

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SESSION 1: (This week is the exception. There are no questions to answer. See p. 15 for a further explanation. Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline are also on p. 15.)

SESSION 2

Laying the Foundation

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.
Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

INTRODUCTION

A retreat that's easy to make

1. Do you want to go deeper?

In other words, do you want to draw closer to Jesus? Well, Jesus lives in the souls of the others in your group. So, “going deeper” not only means drawing closer to Jesus in daily prayer but also drawing closer to the others in your group by praying with them and for them. As you read and answer the questions, reflect with Jesus on the needs of the others in your group who also want to console Jesus.

Now, *Consoling the Heart of Jesus* is easy to make as an individual retreat, but now you’re making it with a group, with a selected group of the Lord’s friends. Is it still easy? Yes it is! Nevertheless, it does require a bit of extra work. For instance, you’ll need to read and answer the questions, make the effort to attend the meetings, and pray for the others in your group. But wait until you see the graces the Lord has in store for you and your group! That little bit of extra effort will be completely worth it. It not only helps you get to know the Lord more deeply, but it benefits the group. In fact, your faithfulness to the retreat is a sign of love for the others, because it prepares you to go deeper and draw closer to the Lord *with your group*. I invite you to commit yourself right now to giving yourself to this group retreat. Give your yes. Ask for the grace to make the retreat well. Ask Jesus to help you overcome whatever hinders you in your yes. Record your thoughts and prayers here.

A retreat with a bold claim

2. We can become saints, great saints, and quickly! Does this sound too good to be true?

Here's the bold claim: This retreat will help give us everything we need to become "saints, great saints, and quickly." Come on, now. This has got to be too good to be true, right? Not according to Fr. Lanteri. Along with living a sacramental life, Lanteri's "secret weapons" of mercy and Mary give a huge boost to growing in holiness, especially when we consider that there are even greater insights into his secret weapons, making them even more powerful in our day. If it's true that our modern day devotion to mercy and Mary make it, in a sense, easier than ever before to become saints, then this is a very big deal! But is it really true? Are we really living in a time of such great grace? Is it really "easier than ever" to become a saint? To find an answer to this important question, consider the following:

- Over time, the Church goes more and more deeply into the mysteries of the truth of Christ. Read about this idea in the amazing citation from the Second Vatican Council in *CHJ* on page 386. Because so many holy men and women have gone before us, we do indeed live in a privileged time. After all, we get to benefit from the growing body of their Spirit-filled wisdom!
- One of the gifts of our time is Fr. Lanteri's secret weapon of Marian consecration, one of the "quickest, easiest, and surest" aids to growing in holiness. Read the amazing quotes on page 387, beginning with "**Page 20:** 'De Montfort predicted...' and ending on page 388 with the citation before "**Page 22:** ... our time truly can be called ..." .
- The other of Fr. Lanteri's secret weapons is Divine Mercy. Consider the idea that where sin and evil seem to prevail, God sends his grace in ever greater abundance (see Rom 5:20). Then, read the excerpt from the homily of Blessed John Paul II in *CHJ* on page 389.

After these considerations, what do you think? Are we living in an extraordinary time of grace? If so, what is the best possible response to that grace? What response do you want to give at this special time of God's mercy? You are being invited receive and share the mercy that God wants to give the world: How do you want to respond? Record a thought or ask for Jesus' help here:

A retreat for little souls

3. Being a “little soul” in light of Christ

We need to avoid two extremes: a) thinking there’s nothing wrong with us, b) thinking everything’s wrong with us.

On the one hand, do we think we’re without sin? It’s amazing how many people say, “I’m a good person” and are unable to think of even one sin after months and even years of not going to confession. This is not sanctity but spiritual blindness. All the saints recognized their sinfulness and had great sorrow for their sins. In fact, the closer we come to the light of Christ, the more easily we see the darkness of our sinfulness, weaknesses, and attachments. Reading the lives of the saints or their writings can help cure us of this spiritual blindness. I recommend reading the *Diary of St. Faustina Kowalska*, which helps people to discover so many “hidden sins” such as ingratitude to God, lack of prayerfulness, and lack of zeal for the kingdom. Remember, we are commanded to love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul and to not put anything before him. In itself, this is a challenging examination of conscience.

Now, on the other hand, do you say, “I’m such a sinner there’s no way I can become a saint!” Don’t worry. As Jesus told St. Faustina, “**The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy**” (*Diary*, n. 423). Ponder this idea: *God doesn’t love us because we’re so good but because we need his love.*

Part of being a little soul means that we clearly recognize our weakness but also find hope in the mercy of God, which especially seeks out sinners.

Recognizing our own sins can be a difficult exercise. Sometimes we’re in denial of our sins, while at other times we don’t recognize God’s goodness and mercy. Which is your tendency? What moves you to have mercy on others, to forgiving them? Do you forgive them because you see or sense their fear? Or do you forgive them because you remember the mercy you received in your daily life or in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (The answers to these questions may help you and others in the group see mercy from another perspective than one’s own.)

Laying the Foundation

Beginning with Desire

4. Discovering the goal of my life

The genius of St. Ignatius of Loyola is how he directs us to the goal. How much we in modern society need to have a spiritual goal! This was the secret of the Jesuits. If you were to have asked one of those early Jesuits, “What’s the goal of life?” He would have immediately answered, “To give great glory to God.” If someone were to look back over the events and people in your life for the last decade, perhaps with an insight into your desires and struggles, what would they say was the goal of your life? As you look back into that same decade, where would you find your spiritual goals? Is it a surprise to you to hear these answers in your head and heart? You’re on the road to holiness, beginning with this retreat!

5. Will you join the team?

You can become a saint. You really can! Will you say yes to the process? How much the world needs saints! There’s such a battle going on right now, and Jesus and Mary want so much to rely on you and to use you to help others. Will you say yes? Why not? Come and join the team of little souls striving to become saints. We’re a very imperfect bunch, but don’t worry. Don’t be afraid to ask the Lord to be gentle. The Church needs you. Do you say yes? If so, write it down here. Also, if there’s any obstacle or hesitation, take it to Jesus, and trust in his mercy. Ask for the grace to get past it, overcome it, and grow closer to his Heart. Write that request here, so it can become a visible reminder as you pray throughout this retreat:

6. The invitation to become a Saint.

Describe your desire to become holy. (You do have a desire to become holy — after all, that's probably part of why you're on this retreat!) Describe God's desire for you to be holy. As you understand it right now, what is God's invitation to you? What draws you toward this saintly life, this friendship with God, this love of God?

The Great Principle of the Spiritual Exercises**7. The biggest “second things” in our lives**

The more the “first thing” (God) captures our hearts and minds, the more second things fall into place. Are there “second things” in your life that have too much of a grip on your heart? In other words, are there any secondary things that are taking the place of the first thing? If our mind and heart isn’t captivated by God, what has captivated us? In other words, what preoccupies our hearts and minds? What do we spend most of our free time thinking about? Is it a person? A job? A goal?

8. Have you let Jansenistic ideas creep into your heart?

We read about Jansenism, that horrible heresy that breaks the Lord’s heart, because it tells people that they can’t come to Jesus unless they’re perfect. Do we give in to Jansenistic thoughts? In other words, do we sometimes believe that God doesn’t love us? Think of a

time when you let your sins keep you from Jesus. Now promise him that you will try to go to him right away and seek forgiveness, even if your sins seem too unforgivable or chronic. Write that prayer here:

9. Consoling Jesus

Pay attention to your feelings and thoughts as you read. The Lord is speaking to *you*. Are there any questions that arise? Is there any fear about making this commitment? Any excitement about starting a journey to a life focused on consoling Jesus? What changes would take place in your *daily life* if your love of Jesus, your response to his appeal for mercy and consolation, were to be your first principle and foundation? Would people around you see any changes in you? What would they see?

10. Do you want to quench the thirst of Jesus?

Blessed Mother Teresa was formed by Ignatian spirituality. She knew how important it is to have a principle and foundation for the spiritual life. Her principle and foundation was basically the same as “to console the Heart of Jesus,” although she put it in different terms. She preferred to summarize it with the words, “I Thirst.” (I encourage you to read her letter in *CHJ* on pages 417-419.) Now, which expression of the principle and foundation moves you more: the revelation of the Sacred Heart, “Behold this heart ...,” or Jesus’ words from the cross, “I Thirst”? How does your heart want to respond to his Heart?

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 25.]

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SESSION 3**Obstacle “0”: How Can We Console Jesus if He Is Happy in Heaven?**

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~**The Difficulty****1. The Difficulty in Consoling Jesus**

So, here's the objection: "Jesus is in heaven. People in heaven are happy — they don't suffer. Therefore, Jesus is happy, and he doesn't need anyone to console him, because only people who are suffering need to be consoled."

The typical response to this objection goes something like this, "That's right. Jesus is happy in heaven, so he doesn't need us to console him. Thus, the only way we can "console Jesus" is by consoling the members of his Mystical Body. For example, we console Jesus when we alleviate the suffering of the poor, the sick, and the lonely, for they are Christ to us."

Why is this response inadequate? Do your best to answer in your own words. If you can't come up with something, don't worry. This isn't easy stuff! Moreover, some things that we understand with our hearts are difficult to express in words. Still, trying to put them into one's own words can be a valuable exercise.

Retroactive Consolation

2. The Son of God loved *me* during his Passion and Death.

Ponder the following passage from the *Catechism* (n. 478):

Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony, and his Passion and gave himself up for each one of us: “The Son of God … loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Do you believe that Jesus could know and love you while he was alive on earth, you who live nearly 2,000 years after his death? If you answer “yes,” explain what this means in your *heart*.

3. Retroactive Consolation

How does my compassionate love for Jesus reach Jesus way back in Gethsemane and at Calvary? How are we “connected” when such a long period of time seems to separate us? If someone were to ask you, “How can you console Jesus if he’s happy in heaven?” How would you explain it to them in your own words and in light of what you learned about “retroactive consolation”?

4. When did you particularly console Jesus?

There's a beautiful description of retroactive consolation by Dr. Timothy O'Donnell that begins at the bottom of page 49 in *CHJ*. In his description, O'Donnell speaks of how Jesus saw all people of all time in one sweeping vision, an "everlasting now," and that seeing our good actions, he was consoled by them.

O'Donnell also explains that artists have depicted this reality in art by drawing various saints throughout history standing at the foot of the Cross.

On the lines below, draw a simple picture of Jesus on the Cross. And then, around the Cross, write down certain moments of your life when you believe your actions particularly consoled Jesus. For instance, next to the Cross, you might write, "the day of my first communion," "the time I served the poor," "the times I've gone to Adoration at the Parish."

5. How does Consoling Jesus relate to the mystery of time and eternity?

A kind of alternative, though complimentary approach to "retroactive consolation" appears in the References and Notes section of *CHJ*. This approach has to do not so much with the knowledge of Christ but with the mystery of time and eternity. It's very deep, challenging reading but worth the effort.

Start reading on page 395, beginning with the words, "**Page 50:** '...we can still console him.'" Reflect on the passage from the *Catechism*, which I count as one of the most profound of the entire *Catechism*. Then, ponder Fr. James's remarkable reflection from his liturgy class. Finally, conclude by reflecting on the words of John Paul's apostolic letter on the Rosary, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, which goes to the top of page 397. Write any thoughts or questions you may have here:

Happy In Heaven?

6. Is there a sense in which Jesus still “suffers,” even in heaven?

With this section, we come to the most speculative and mysterious part. We saw that Jesus suffered during his earthly life and that while he suffered, he saw us, knew us, and loved us. But is there a sense in which he knows us and suffers not just “back then” but “now” in heaven? Dealing with the mystery of time and eternity is not easy to grasp, but it’s worth considering. Is there a sense in which Christ still suffers in heaven “now”? What light do the citations given by Pope Benedict XVI shed on all this? (see *CHJ*, pages 55-56). What about the testimony of St. Faustina regarding Mary? (see *CHJ*, page 57). How does this inspire your commitment to console Jesus?

Conclusion: Clearing Up Any Lingering Difficulties

7. God loves us, but in himself, he doesn't *need* us.

Read the following passage from the Old Testament:

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13-14).

How might this response help explain why God doesn't need us? What does it mean that God reveals himself as "I AM"? Why would it be totally absurd for one of us to say, "I AM"?

8. In himself, God doesn't need us. But he chooses to. How does Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, choose to need *you*? How do you want to respond to that need of Jesus' Heart?

One passage that sheds much light on consoling spirituality comes from Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter *Dives in Misericordia*. Prayerfully read the citation in *CHJ* at the top of page 398. Record any thoughts you have about it here:

9. What does friendship have to do with consoling spirituality? How does what you've learned in this section affect your intimacy with Christ? He wants you to be his friend, and he chooses to need you. Are you ready to respond as *his friend*?

Genuine friendship requires a kind of equality; it's a two-way street. But if God doesn't need us, then how can we be his true friends? In light of the passage we read from the previous question, how does Christ's need for our love create a true friendship with him?

10. Jesus Christ, My Friend

How does what you've learned in this section affect your relationship with Jesus Christ? Are you ready to be his friend? Are you willing to ask him for help in being a good friend to him? ("O Lord, I am ready. ... Help my "unreadiness"!) How will this friendship look in your day-to-day life? What will change?

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 33.]

SESSION 4**Obstacle 1: Fear of Suffering**

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~**Joe's Story****1. What effect did Joe's story have on you?**

What did you relate to? What did you not relate to? How did the story affect you? Are you finding it hard to trust the Lord during this retreat? Or is it easy to trust the Lord? Are you afraid of suffering? Even though this is a relatively easy retreat to make, these are not easy questions. These are questions for those who want to draw closer to Jesus, who want to probe more deeply into the mystery of following him along the way of his Passion as they console him and praise and thank him. Take your time with these questions. Pray over them, and then answer.

Deflating the “Second Thing”**2. When in your life have you experienced suffering?**

Because of sin, suffering is part of life. Everyone suffers. Suffering takes on all kinds of shapes and sizes. For instance, there's physical suffering (toothaches), mental suffering (stress and worry), and even spiritual suffering (dryness in prayer, lack of meaning). Sometimes suffering ebbs and flows according to different periods of our lives. What was the worst time of suffering in your life? What kind of suffering was it? What kind of suffering do you bear now? Even if you've thought about this before, you may be at a different crossroads now. Or perhaps the Lord may have revealed something new about your

experience of suffering. Answer these questions as if you were speaking to the Lord about them, telling him what they mean to you.

3. Your Attitude toward Suffering

In St. Faustina's *Diary*, we find the following vision that relates to suffering:

Then I saw the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross. When he had hung on it for a while, I saw a multitude of souls crucified like Him. Then I saw a second multitude of souls, and a third. The second multitude were not nailed to [their] crosses, but were holding them firmly in their hands. The third were neither nailed to [their] crosses nor holding them firmly in their hands, but were dragging [their] crosses behind them and were discontent (n. 446).

What is our attitude toward our own suffering? Do we accept it with love, as Jesus did? Do we somewhat accept it with love but also complain and resist (holding the cross in our hands but not nailed to it)? Or do we barely accept it, that is, with bitterness, complaints, and endless pity parties (dragging it behind ourselves with discontent)?

4. Will you give Jesus permission to take control of the suffering in your life?

How might your life change if you did so? Does this frighten you? What will you say to the Lord about your fears?

In *CHJ*, I say that there seem to be at least two different Christian approaches to

suffering. The first approach tends to be very active. The second approach is more passive. Living a complete Christian life should include both approaches. For instance, regarding the active approach, we should mortify ourselves in those areas of our lives where we have disordered attachments. So, if we waste too much time surfing the web, we should choose the suffering of spending less time on the computer.

In the text, I emphasize making the passive approach *intentional*. In other words, I recommend that we ask Jesus to allow us to bear the crosses that will really help us grow in holiness. Does this seem frightening? Don't worry. The Lord knows what we can take. He always gives us the grace we need to bear our crosses, and we can even ask him to be gentle! (Important point: Jesus himself doesn't cause the suffering. In other words, by "sending us crosses," he *allows* us to suffer, but he himself doesn't cause it.)

Speak to the Lord about suffering, and if you feel so moved, ask him to pick just the right crosses — not too heavy, not too light — that will help you grow in holiness. You can write such prayers here:

Our Friend Joe, Again

Let's look at two lessons from the story of how our friend Joe entered into the "Third Week" of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (the week of the Passion).

5. Might things change for you if you were to shift your focus from your own suffering to that of the Lord?

First, notice from the story that the Lord helped Joe to shift his focus from his own suffering to that of the Lord. In other words, he helped Joe take his eyes off the "second thing" (suffering) and put them on the "first thing" (the Lord). When Joe did that, everything changed. Might we also benefit from such a shift of focus? Might things change in our lives if we were to shift our focus from our own suffering to that of the Lord? Reflect on this point, and write down your thoughts here:

6. “Being with the Lord” during his Passion and suffering.

Second, notice that the main thing the Lord wanted from Joe was not that Joe suffer but simply that he be with him in his suffering. This reminds us of the Lord's words to Joe at the end of the retreat: "All I want is for you to be my friend. All I want is for you not to be afraid of me and to come to me." When Joe simply followed the Lord, it was enough. In other words, the Lord doesn't necessarily want from us great suffering but great love. Do we see the tremendous value there is to simply being with the Lord? In our daily lives, how can we "be with the Lord" as Joe was during the Third Week? How can you "be with the Lord" this week?

Lessons from Faustina's Story

7. Learning Boldness in Prayer

Sometimes we may not be as bold in our prayers as we could be simply because we know that souls are bought only at the price of suffering (see *Diary*, n. 324). Therefore, since our suffering or willingness to sacrifice may be limited, we don't ask for huge graces. Deep down, we might be afraid of what such huge graces might cost us, but who are we fooling? How much suffering would we have to undergo to merit the salvation of even one soul? On our own, we can merit nothing. If, however, with confident love, we unite our own little sufferings to Jesus' Passion (through praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet, for instance), they take on infinite merit! So, what are we waiting for? Let's boldly ask for conversions, graces, and all that is truly good, knowing that such prayer brings delight to the Lord. Talk with the Lord about this now, and if you want, write down your reflections here:

8. Boldness requires Trust: “Jesus, I Trust in You.”

Maybe it's not a fear of suffering that keeps us from being bold in our prayers. Maybe we simply haven't fully realized that we should be bold in our prayers. Well, then, let's reflect on this idea here, beginning with some of Jesus' words to St. Faustina, where he's encouraging her to be bold in prayer through her trust:

The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much. On the other hand, I am sad when souls ask for little, when they narrow their hearts (*Diary*, n. 1578).

But Jesus also wants us to be bold and trusting in what we ask for for others. Let's now read the section in Appendix Two called “Prayer — Bold/Powerful” on pages 347-349 of *CHJ*. Then, ask yourself, “What's keeping me from being bold in my prayer? Is it lack of trust in the power of prayer? Why don't I have the same fervor and bold confidence in my prayers as St. Faustina did? Why not ask God for the gift of this bold confidence?” Write any thoughts or prayers on this matter here:

Redemptive Suffering

9. Union with Jesus on the Cross

What upcoming suffering will you unite to Jesus on the Cross? Through your intention, even something small can be offered up and united to Jesus on the Cross.

People sometimes get angry with God because of suffering in their lives. But we need

to remember that Jesus didn't come to earth to take away suffering. Rather, he came to transform it. The biggest evil in the world is not suffering but lack of love. And Jesus came to transform suffering into a vehicle for love. How? *By his death on the Cross.*

Remember the talk I gave about how we touch Jesus in his mysteries through faith and charity? Well, when we suffer and turn our hearts and minds to Jesus in the mystery of his Passion and death, we touch him on the Cross, and the power of his love enters into us. He strengthens us and transforms our suffering into love. That's what it means to "offer up" our suffering: It means giving it to Jesus on the Cross for the life of the world.

Think about some suffering that may be coming into your life soon: an upcoming test, a project, or difficult person at work or at home. How will you unite that suffering to Jesus?

10. For whom or for what will you offer your suffering?

Suffering born with love has great power for souls. We know this from St. Paul, who wrote, “In my own flesh I make up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ” (Col 1:24). As we learned from the book, there’s nothing lacking to the suffering of Jesus *objectively*. However, there is something “lacking” in the sense that not everyone subjectively receives Jesus’ love from the Cross. So, that’s where our prayer comes in. We pray for them. In our own suffering, we look to Jesus on the Cross, and we pray for others. For whom will you offer the graces of your suffering? If you want, you can write their names down here. Or you can simply offer the grace of your suffering to Mary, who augments it and gives it to those who need it most. (Of course, even when we’re consecrated to Mary, we can still pray for our loved ones, as we learned during the 33 Days to Morning Glory Group Retreat.)

Bonus Question! Thanking God for transforming our suffering into love

When was the last time you thanked God for transforming suffering into a gift of love? One definition of Divine Mercy is that it's the power of God's love to bring good out of evil. One of the great gifts of God's mercy is that he has taken an evil (suffering) and transformed it into something good (love). Think about what this means. All of us suffer. Yet, now, suffering has value! It's not meaningless! By our suffering, united to Jesus with love, we can help God save souls. So, when we're sick, weak, and broken, and when, in the eyes of the world, we seem worthless, that's when our lives are potentially the most meaningful, provided we unite our suffering to Jesus. This is a great gift and glorious privilege that God gives us. When was the last time you thanked God for transforming suffering into a gift of love? Why not spend some time thanking him now? You can write your prayer here. Your prayers and reflections here are part of consoling Jesus and part of turning your suffering into love.

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 42.]

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SESSION 5

Obstacle 2: Our Weaknesses, Sinfulness, and Attachments

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

Weaknesses

1. Building spiritual virtues

Where do you need the most spiritual help to combat your weaknesses? Choose the virtue you see the least of in your actions and reactions. What virtue or virtues are you trying to build?

An important part of the Little Way that's described in this section is the hope that Jesus will raise us to the heights of holiness despite our weaknesses. Yet we also have to keep striving to grow in virtue and holiness. So, what virtues are you trying to build? According to St. Ignatius of Loyola, we need to be wise in our efforts to grow in holiness. For instance, we should strive to grow in the virtue that goes against our main vice. Here's a list to help us identify the virtues that combat our vices:

VICE	OPPOSING VIRTUE
Pride	Humility
Avarice (Greed)	Liberality, Generosity, Mercy
Envy	Love of Neighbor
Wrath	Patience, Meekness
Lust	Chastity
Gluttony	Temperance
Sloth	Fortitude, Courage

So, what virtue or virtues are you trying to build? If you struggle with pride then focus on building humility. For instance, you can plan on taking the last seat at the dinner table, and let others sit first. Or, you can let others decide which dessert everyone will have, or let others decide other things that you usually control. These are concrete steps toward building humility. What concrete steps can you suggest for building temperance, or love of neighbor, or courage? It might be simpler than you think.

2. What are your weaknesses?

If you don't want to list them here, then you can at least call them to mind. A helpful way to reflect on our weaknesses is to call to mind the seven capital sins or vices, which are as follows:

Pride, avarice (greed), envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth (acedia).

So, which vice or vices do you most tend toward? Which is your dominant (most repeated) vice?

3. What's keeping us from putting our total confidence in Jesus' promise of mercy?

The Little Way of St. Thérèse of Lisieux is very good news. It says that little, imperfect souls — souls like you and me — really and truly can become saints! And it's very simple. We just need to do two things: 1. make an earnest effort and 2. believe in God's promise of mercy to little souls.

Regarding effort, we covered that in the last question. So, we're going to keep striving for holiness. Right? *Right*. But what if we keep falling on our faces? What if we keep having to go to confession for the same sin? Well, if we're making a sincere effort to improve, there's no need to become disturbed. Why don't we need to be disturbed? Because of the promise of mercy that God makes to little souls.

Here's the promise God makes through the testimony of St. Thérèse, Doctor of the Church: God will satisfy your desires for holiness. Do you want to be a saint? Do you want your life to bear abundant fruit for God? Do you want to glorify God with you whole

heart, mind, and soul? Then you will ... provided you keep striving to grow in holiness and do not give in to discouragement or despair if you see yourself falling on your face.

If you don't believe me, prayerfully read St. Thérèse's marvelous "Letter 197" one more time (*CHJ*, page 82). It's all there. We must have a "blind hope" in God's mercy and remember that it is "confidence and nothing but confidence" that will lead us to love. If this isn't completely clear yet, it will become clearer when you watch the DVD talk that goes with this week of the retreat.

So, what's stopping us from giving our complete confidence to God? Why do we get discouraged when we encounter our weakness? Let's give Jesus our complete confidence in his promise of mercy, his promise that he will raise us to the heights of holiness despite ourselves. What's keeping us from trusting in him? If you feel you already fully believe in his promise of mercy, tell the Lord below. If you're struggling with this, write to the Lord about the things you're struggling with.

Sinfulness

4. Sinfulness and fear cause us to hide from the Heart of Jesus. How often do I avoid Jesus because of my sins or a false fear?

How often do I avoid Jesus because of my sins or out of fear? According to the *Catechism* (n. 399), we all have a distorted understanding of God. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we run and hide from God after we sin. We're afraid of him. In fact, many people go through their whole lives avoiding God, because they think he doesn't love them because of their sins. How often do you avoid the Lord because of your sins? Are you the kind of person who will draw close to Jesus when you feel "holy" but avoid him when you feel that you're a horrible sinner? Think about this one: Avoiding God because of our sins is a danger for all of us, and sometimes it shows up in subtle ways. For example, do you skip your prayer times, especially after you've sinned, rather than talk to the Lord?

5. Are we truly convinced that God is mercy?

Think about this: God's ways are not our ways. He doesn't love us because we're so good but because we need his love. He is mercy, and mercy is a particular kind of love when it encounters poverty, brokenness, and sin. It's a love that goes after the lost sheep. Understand that God loves you most when you need him the most! Realize that you need him the most when you're full of sin. Read through some passages from the *Diary of St. Faustina* in *CHJ* that give testimony to God's mercy for us sinners. (Read pages 288-293 in Appendix Two, "Divine Mercy — For Sinners.") Now, write your reflections on these readings below:

6. God's mercy can even bring good out of evil.

This is an amazing thought. Mercy is not only love when it encounters poverty, brokenness, and sin, but Divine Mercy is the power of God's love to bring not only good out of evil but an even greater good out of evil! God wants to bring good out of evil. But for the power of his merciful love to take greater effect in our lives, we need to give him our trust. Have you ever given in to deep discouragement or despair because of something you said or did? If so, you were not fully convinced of the power of God's mercy. Read once more the prayer in *CHJ* at the top of page 88, and then tell the Lord, in your own words below, that you will do your best to trust in the power of his mercy the next time you face disappointment and temptations to discouragement and despair.

Attachments

7. Attachments

Is there anything in your life, other than God, that you feel you cannot live without? Okay, maybe you could live without it, but is there something that you know if you had to give it up, it would cause you great distress? Is there something that weighs you down because you “need” it and you don’t have the freedom to let it go? What is it? If you don’t want to write it down here, then at least call it to mind, or write it down as a code word. For instance, if it’s doughnuts, you might write a capital letter “O” (which kind of resembles a doughnut).

Remember, just writing the attachment or weakness, even in code, is an aid to overcoming it. It’s a concrete step toward developing the opposite virtue.

8. Look at Jesus instead of at your sins and yourself. Do you see how he looks at you? Do you see how he looks at you with love?

Don’t worry, I’m not going to now say, “Alright, you must get rid of that thing you’re attached to!” No, sometimes we’re not ready for that. The important thing is that we’re honest with the Lord. In other words, just as we hide from the Lord because of our sins, so we also like to hide from the Lord the things that cause us to sin. We’re afraid to bring them to light, and sometimes we never even face our own attachments and addictions (which is denial). But healing can’t begin until we bring them to the light.

I hope that in the last question, you brought some things to the light. But now, here, I don’t want you to focus on them. Rather, focus on the Lord. Come before his gaze of love for a moment. Stop looking at the thing in your hands that you are clutching. Instead, look at Jesus. Come as you are with all your attachments. Do you see how he looks at you with love? Remember his words from the Mother Teresa letter. He thirsts for you. Do you thirst for him? Sit with these questions for a few minutes, and then, write what’s in your heart.

More specifically, sit quietly in a comfortable position. Then, close your eyes and

simply look at Jesus. Or, look at a picture of him, perhaps the Image of Divine Mercy. Let Jesus sit near you and look at you. Let the friendship you are beginning to build with Jesus just rest in this moment or two of silent, prayerful regard. Then, write what your heart sees and hears from Jesus. Write also what you want to say to Jesus about the time he has just spent with you.

9. Ask for the grace of detachment

Now that you've spent some time in the presence of the Lord, go back to his presence and, while still under his gaze of love, speak to him about what you're attached to. If it's clear that you really should give this thing up, then ask him for the grace to do so, and write down what concrete, daily steps you can take to let go of it. If it's not clear that you should give it up, ask for clarity. If you should give it up but don't feel ready to do so, ask the Lord to change your desires for it. Write down that prayer here:

10. The moral of the story

In this section, we've looked at our weaknesses, sinfulness, and attachments. The moral of the story is that none of these should keep us from going to the Lord. Don't listen to the Jansenist lies! Don't wait to go to Jesus until you're perfect. Go to him now because you're imperfect and need his mercy. We need his power in our weakness. We need his love, healing, and forgiveness in the midst of our sinfulness. We need grace to break the bonds to creatures that keep us from the Lord. In any case, the answer is never to run from the Lord but, rather,

to go to him. He is our merciful Savior, who is always longing for us to come to him in our hearts. Did we learn the lesson? What do you have to say to the Lord now?

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 50.]

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SESSION 6

Obstacle 3: Fear of Suffering, Again

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~*1. The Best Way is the Simplest and Easiest.***What's the Best Way to Console Jesus?****1. “Jesus, I trust in you.” Do you really trust the Lord?**

What does distrust look like? It means to lose our peace in the face of adversity, to doubt that the Lord will care for us, to have fear for the future as if the Lord will not be there for us, to give in to useless anxiety. Distrust also comes in the form of avoiding the Lord because of our weakness, sinfulness, and attachments, which we learned about last week. Do you sometimes not trust the Lord? What do you worry about? Is there anything weighing on your heart now that you should hand over to the Lord? After last week, are you still hesitant to go to Jesus?

2. How does your lack of trust hurt Jesus?

We can read that distrust hurts the Lord’s heart most deeply, but does it really? Yes, it does. I think the best way to understand it is to reflect on the love that parents have for their children. Imagine you have a child who needs your help. Of course, you really want to give him help, yet he refuses to receive it. This would break your heart. Well, Jesus wants to help us with our problems and difficulties; he wants to forgive us our sins and give us his healing love, but when we don’t trust him, in a certain sense, it ties his hands.

Sure, he's God and can still find ways to help us, but trust is truly a way whereby we open our lives to his loving care.

To come to a better understanding of how distrust wounds the Lord's Heart, and as an aid for us to grow in trust, read *CHJ* pages 268-270, which fall under the heading "Distrust." After you prayerfully read those pages, ask yourself if you believe that distrust really wounds the Lord's heart so much. Then, tell the Lord of a time when a friend distrusted you and how it hurt you. Reassure the Lord that you will trust him, that he is your Friend. Ask him to help you to trust him more because you love him.

3. Are Fr. Seraphim's words life-changing for you?

They were for me! Think of it for a moment: The best way to console Jesus is to trust in him, and in our concrete, daily lives that means praise and thanksgiving. It's so simple! Of course, this doesn't mean you have to burst out singing and dancing, but in our hearts, we can always be praising God and thanking him for the many gifts of his love. Are Fr. Seraphim's words about trust — that it's "praise and thanksgiving" — life-transforming for you? And what about the idea that this is one of the best ways to console Jesus? What daily activities will change because of this teaching? How will you approach adversities and challenges in a new way? What extra efforts will you make each day? What little blessings might you be more aware of now?

How to Live Joyful, Trustful Acceptance

4. Is it really so simple and easy? Yes!

Often, it's easy to praise and thank God, because there's so much that God gives us: our life, our faith, family, friends, food, and shelter. But sometimes it's not so easy to praise and thank God, especially when we bear crosses. Foiled plans, headaches, bad news — that's when praise and thanks is usually the last thing on our minds. Yet an attitude of gratitude is a beautiful thing, and it's an easier form of penance to practice than a lot of other things I can think of.

During my time in the seminary, there was a seminarian from Nigeria who had an inspiring and deep faith. He had come to the United States after winning a visa lottery, and his friends and family were happy for him because it seemed that, living in America, he would have it made.

In fact, he got a great job and was “all set.” Then, he shocked his friends and family by entering the seminary, which wasn’t an easy decision. While we were in the seminary together, it seemed a constant and steady flow of bad news from back home threatened to derail his vocation or at least to send him into discouragement. But he never gave into discouragement, at least not that I could see. He always had a smile on his face and praised and thanked God for everything, and I believe his attitude was very pleasing to God.

God is our Father. He loves us, and he sends us things that make it easy to praise and thank him. He also allows us to carry our crosses, which is a privilege and a blessing. Praising and thanking God for suffering and trials is definitely not natural for us, but as we develop an “attitude of gratitude,” it becomes easier to carry the cross.

Ask God to help you develop this attitude of gratitude and to recognize his love in everything, even in our crosses. Write your prayer or resolutions here:

A Meditation for Consoling Jesus in the Best Way

5. What did this meditation mean to you?

What did you think of this meditation? I think it provides a fuller answer to the last question: Is this way really so simple and easy? It truly is when we reflect on all that Jesus went through out of love for us. What are our sufferings compared to his? My friend from Nigeria was

mindful of the suffering of others, because he had seen the poverty that so many experienced in his home country. And, in fact, being mindful of the suffering of others has a way of taking us out of our own suffering, and it can even make us grateful for our small sharing in the Cross, seeing that so many others bear heavier crosses, and we are then in solidarity with them. Of course, nobody has a cross as big as the one our Lord carried for us, and in this meditation, we see how beautiful it can be when we are present to him as he's hanging on the Cross. Because this meditation really is so central to the whole retreat (it inspired the choice of the cover), I'd like to ask you: What did it mean to you? What moved your heart? Was there a recognition of the meaning of suffering in it for you? If so, what was it?

2. This Simple and Easy Way is Powerful.

6. Are you ever tempted to think your life doesn't really make a difference?

One big temptation that little souls often face is that our lives are meaningless. Of course, we know that Jesus loves us and died for us. But a sad melancholy visits many people, saying to them, “You are insignificant. Your life doesn’t really make a difference. You will make no lasting impression here.” Have you ever been filled with such melancholy thoughts?

7. Do you realize your life can actually make a huge difference?

The fact of the matter is this: You are called to be a saint, and you can be a saint. I invite you to read again the words at the very beginning of the book that come from St. Faustina. Yes, you can be a saint. Do you *want* to be a saint?

Think of those words of St. Faustina, “As long as one is alive, each one can become a great saint.” As long as we are alive — I don’t mean to be morbid, but we won’t be here long. Our days pass quickly. The Lord gives us this one life, and how we live it will be our shame or glory for all eternity. As long as we’re alive, it’s not too late to change. Do you believe you can become a saint by the grace and mercy of God? Do you realize that God wants to use you to give him great glory? Do you realize our time is limited? What are your main thoughts as you reflect on these things?

8. Are you worried that you are a weak, sinful soul?

All of us are weak, sinful souls. Recall those startling words that Jesus speaks to St. Faustina, which we read in this section:

You see what you are of yourself, but do not be frightened at this. If I were to reveal to you the whole misery that you are, you would die of terror. ... [B]e aware of what you are (*Diary*, n. 718).

These words may seem harsh, but it’s the reality of our fallen condition. Although we are created good, even the best of us fall into selfishness, inattention, ingratitude, and misery. But be not afraid! Jesus offers us deeply consoling words:

Because you are such great misery, I have revealed to you the whole ocean of My mercy. I seek and desire souls like you, but they are few. Your great trust in Me forces Me to continuously grant you graces. You have great and incomprehensible rights over My Heart, for you are a daughter of complete trust (*Diary*, n. 718).

Two things to always keep together: our misery and God’s mercy. Again, he loves us so much not because we’re so good but because we need his love.

One key to becoming a saint is to trust in God’s mercy, to receive his mercy. And

saints are few not because people are so weak and sinful but because few have great trust. Do you realize your weakness? Do you realize God's mercy? Do you trust in God's mercy? Do you want to have great trust as you strive to overcome sin in your life?

9. Was there ever a period in your life when you had to live by trust in Jesus?
What happened?

When we live with great trust in God and strive to please him and console him, he is especially able to work miracles in our lives. For example, he can form us into saints. In other words, he can fill our hearts with his merciful love and make us great channels of his mercy to others. He just needs us to go to him. He will do the rest. And when we do go to him, we also console him.

Jesus is very simple. He simply wants love for love. When souls go to him with trust and receive his mercy, that's all he's really looking for. Even in the midst of an ocean of rejection, one soul who trusts in him can make up for all the rejection and be like a "mist" before his eyes. Such souls make Jesus say, "I wish I could suffer more." They can be a delight to the Heart of Jesus. Read *CHJ* pages 375-381. Pick which of the quotes resonates with you the most, and write it here. (You may also want to write it on an index card and repeat it every morning or evening of the retreat.)

10. Jesus on the Cross

Look at the cover of the book. It says it all. Who is that on the Cross? What does he want? Who is that embracing Jesus? Why is it a child? What does it mean to be a child? Why do rays go forth from that embrace? How can we summarize all that we've learned in this very important chapter? Is that child you? Could that child be you? Do you find it difficult to embrace Jesus? What would make it easy, even irresistible, to embrace Jesus on his Cross?

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 58.]

SESSION 7**Obstacle 4: The Sensitivity of the Lord's Heart**

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1. *You* are one of those souls *closest* to Jesus. Do you realize this?

You are making a retreat. Not a lot of people make retreats these days. You're taking time to pray and are striving to console the Lord's Heart. You are surely one of those who are closest to him!

You are also getting to know the Lord's merciful love more deeply. You're pondering the depths of his love. What do you want to say to him right now?

1. A Special Marian Consecration**Marian Consecration**

2. What does Marian consecration mean to you?

God is so good. He gives us little souls two special gifts that will help us not to hurt the Lord with our lack of trust. In other words, he gives us two special gifts that will help us live our principle and foundation.

The first of these ways is the Special Marian Consecration. Now, since you're doing this Hearts Afire Program, you've probably already done the group retreat for *33 Days to Morning Glory*. (If not, don't panic — you can still continue with this Consoling the Heart of Jesus retreat without having done the *33 Days to Morning Glory* retreat. But I

encourage you to do the 33 Days retreat if you haven't already.) So, you should be an expert in Marian Consecration by now, right? Well, don't worry if you're a little rusty. As you already read in the corresponding section of *CHJ*, I give a little summary of Marian consecration. Therefore, this question shouldn't come as a curve ball to you: What is Marian consecration? I don't ask for an academic answer but a personal one. What does Marian consecration mean to you? To help you answer this question, you may find it helpful to reflect on the following passage, which captures the essence of Marian consecration, which has to do with entrusting ourselves to Mary:

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home (Jn 19:26-27).

Joe's Special Consecration to Mary

3. The great gift of Marian consecration

Do you realize the greatness of the gift? In the book, I write about how powerful Joe's special consecration to Mary is. I describe it as giving Mary permission to be with us in a special way in our mission of consoling Jesus. As Mother Theresa would say, it's asking Mary to "lend us her heart" as we love Jesus. Think about it. As Christians, we're called to love Jesus as perfectly as possible. Well, no other human being loved Jesus as much as Mary did, and she's more than willing to help us love him with her same intensity of love. But she also raises up our trust, which addresses this obstacle. In the text of *CHJ*, I highlight the gift that comes from consecrating ourselves to Mary with Joe's "special emphasis":

So, when we at least try to console Jesus with our trust (even if our whole bodies shake with anxiety), when we at least try to be full of praise and thanks (even if we look gloomy and sad), and when we at least try to remain with our friend (even if our minds are distracted by 1,000 different things), then we don't need to fear hurting our Lord. He sees that we want to console him, and because his mother makes up for what we lack (if we're consecrated to her), we always do console him as long as we keep trying. We ought to ponder this reality, for it's a truly great gift.

Notice a theme here that we saw earlier: effort and trust. We give Jesus and Mary our best effort, and even if we fail in trusting perfectly, they take care of the rest. We can trust that they will. Do we realize what a gift this is? Ponder this reality as described in the above paragraph I just quoted. Think about the people you allow to guide you: your friends, your spouse, your boss, even public figures you admire. As you write your reactions and thoughts here, give a personal reason for having Mary as your special influence, your special friend who inspires you to love Jesus as she loves him. Write your thoughts here:

4. An invitation to Marian consecration

I invite you to make Joe's Special Consecration to Mary. Will you do it? You can either use the prayer as it appears in the text (page 114) or write your own, here:

2. Spiritual Communion of Merciful Love

The Offering to Merciful Love

5. What is the Offering to Merciful Love?

Now we come to the second special gift that will help us to live our principle and foundation: the "Offering to Merciful Love." This offering goes to the heights of St. Thérèse of Lisieux's Little Way, and as her sister said, "Her whole life revolved around it." Based on your reading

of this section, how would you describe the Offering to Merciful Love to someone else? (This is a good practice. I say this because the Offering to Merciful Love is so awesome that you'll surely want to tell others about it.)

6. Ready to go deeper?

To get an even better grasp of the Offering to Merciful Love, I encourage you to read the full text in *CHJ* on pages 405-407 (beginning at the bottom of page 405). Also, the idea of the Offering to Merciful Love isn't limited to St. Therese. Jesus spoke to St. Faustina in terms very much related to the Offering to Merciful Love. Read *CHJ* pages 340-342. Record any thoughts you have here:

7. What's the catch?

The Offering to Merciful Love seems great, but what's the catch? After all, there was a big catch with the offering to God's justice. Lots of suffering! What's the catch with the Offering to Merciful Love? (Hint: See the paragraphs at the bottom of *CHJ* on page 118 and the top of page 119, but also read the References and Notes section of *CHJ* on page 407 under the heading "Page 119".)

8. Why is the suffering of the Offering to Merciful Love not so scary?

Why is the suffering of the Offering to Merciful Love not so scary? This question is related to the last one, and maybe you've already answered it. But here are some more quotes that may help you with your answer ...

First, it's interesting to note the way that Thérèse asks to be God's victim of merciful love: "O, my Jesus, let me be this happy victim . . ." Victims of the offering to merciful love are not asking for the suffering that falls upon victims to God's justice. According to Thérèse's sister Céline (Sr. Genevieve of the Holy Face),

We must not confuse [Thérèse's desire to be a martyr to merciful love] with the martyrdom of victims of justice. Thérèse's heart was wounded, it is true, but here, love was answered by love . . . the wound of love! Indeed there is nothing that is sweeter, nor more terrible.²

It's "terrible" because we see more clearly the terrible suffering that Jesus endured out of love for us. Celine sheds even more light on the beauty of this offering, and why it's not something to be afraid of:

The soul which offers itself to love does not ask for suffering, but, in delivering itself up entirely to the designs of love, it accepts all that Providence permits for it of joys, labor, trials, and it counts on infinite mercy for everything.³

So, why is the Offering to Merciful Love not as scary as the offering to God's Justice? Why is it not so scary at all?

² Genevieve of the Holy Face (Céline Martin). *My Sister St. Thérèse*. tr. Carmelite Sisters of New York of Conseils et Souvenirs (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1997), 80.

³ Cited in *I Believe in Love: Retreat Conferences on the Interior Life* by Père Jean du Coeur de Jésus d'Elbée tr. M. Teichert and M. Stebbins (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1974), 144.

9. Would you like to make the Offering to Merciful Love?

What do you think? If you haven't made it yet, I recommend waiting until after you watch the DVD for this section, because I'll be saying more about this offering. But what are your thoughts now? Would you like to make the offering to Merciful Love? Is your answer a big YES! A small yes? A no? Give your answer and a reason why:

The Offering to Merciful Love

10. How do the words *ecce, fiat, and magnificat* summarize the whole retreat?

Three words that summarize the whole retreat, the whole spirituality of consoling Jesus, the whole of trust ... what a gift! This was a long section to read, but in your own words, describe how these three words summarize everything we've covered.

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 66.]

SESSION 8**Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts (Part One)**

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1-a. Mercy is love when it encounters suffering.

The first movement of mercy is compassion. When have you felt compassion for another? What were the circumstances?

1-b. The second movement of mercy is one of action.

When we see someone suffering, our compassion moves us to act, and we reach out to alleviate that person's suffering. When have you reached out to someone and aided him somehow? Did the experience change you in any way?

2. Sometimes it is difficult or may even seem impossible to feel compassion for another. What is your prayer for healing of the hardness of heart that is responsible for this lack of feeling?

When I recognized the hardness of my own heart, I remembered Cardinal Schönborn's words, "Only the love of God that reaches as far as the Cross can open a breach in our hardened hearts," and I made a heartfelt prayer to the Lord for healing. Write your own prayer for healing here:

A Brief Lesson on Mercy

3. Is there anything you can do?

Mercy is love when it encounters suffering. More specifically, it's two movements that take place within us when we see someone (or something) suffer. The first is an emotional movement, a movement of compassion that we feel in our hearts or even, when the suffering of the other is particularly intense, deep in our guts. The second is a movement of action. In other words, as we see someone suffering and feel compassion for him, we soon find ourselves reaching out to alleviate his suffering. In sum: Mercy is love that feels compassion for those who suffer (heart) and reaches out to help them (arm).

In the last question, you looked at where you might have hardness of heart, which prevents or hinders the first movement of mercy, compassion. Now we'll focus on things that prevent the second movement, action. So, where are you failing to put mercy into action? In other words, is there anyone in your life who is suffering, and is there something you're doing about it? If not, why not? Is there something you can do for them? Write your answers here:

1. Becoming Sensitive to the Suffering of Our Neighbor

4. How does the culture of death tempt you?

According to Blessed John Paul II, in some ways, our culture is a culture of death, and one of the things it threatens to kill is our hearts, by hardening them. The central message of the culture of death is selfishness. In other words, the culture of death appeals to our selfishness, and the more we give in, the more our hearts become hardened. (The culture of life, on the other hand, has as its basic attitude not selfishness but self-giving love.) In what ways does the culture of death tempt you to selfishness?

5. Where do you see the influence of the culture of life?

Our culture is not completely corrupt. There are many signs that a culture of life is alive and well. Where do you see the culture of life in your life? In other words, what people, organizations, literature, entertainment, and other influences inspire you to give yourself in self-giving love?

6. Why does the Passion of Christ have power to heal our hearts?

This whole CHJ retreat has been about healing our hardened hearts, because the whole retreat has had us focus on the Passion of Jesus, “Behold this Heart ...” and “I Thirst.” Why does the Passion of Jesus have such power?

Gossip and Envy

7. Where in your life are you tempted to gossip or to envy others?

If you struggle with gossip or envy, talk to the Lord about it now. Ask for the grace to overcome these sins, and write down any concrete resolutions you may have:

Lust and Greed

8. Where in your life are you tempted with lust or greed?

If you struggle with lust or greed, talk to the Lord about it now. Ask for the grace to overcome these sins, and write down any concrete resolutions you may have:

Judgmental Attitude

9. Where in your life are you tempted to a judgmental attitude?

If you struggle with a judgmental attitude, talk to the Lord about it now. Ask for the grace to overcome this sinful attitude, and write down any concrete resolutions you may have:

Unwillingness to Forgive

10. Where in your life are you tempted to be unforgiving?

If you struggle with being unforgiving, talk to the Lord about it now. Ask for the grace to overcome this sin, and write down any concrete resolutions you may have:

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 73.]

SESSION 9**Obstacle 5: The Insensitivity of Our Hearts (Part Two)**

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.
Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~**2. Reaching Out to Our Neighbor to Help Alleviate His Suffering****Mercy in Deed: The Merciful Outlook****1. Do you ever fall into the patronizing outlook?**

In his encyclical letter *Dives in Misericordia (Rich in Mercy)*, Blessed John Paul II says something astonishing about mercy that's worth reading again:

We must also continually purify all our actions and all our intentions in which mercy is understood and practiced in a unilateral way, as a good done to others. As act of merciful love is only really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same time receiving mercy from the people who are accepting it from us. If this bilateral and reciprocal quality is absent, our actions are not yet true acts of mercy, nor has there yet been fully completed in us that conversion to which Christ has shown us the way by His words and example, even to the cross, nor are we yet sharing fully in the magnificent source of merciful love that has been revealed to us by Him (n. 14).

Wow. So, have you ever had the patronizing outlook? In other words, have you ever done a deed of mercy as if it were a “one-way street”? For example, have you ever helped someone and felt as if the person was in no way helping you? Actually, that’s a trick question. You’ve never performed such an act of mercy, because — as Blessed John Paul points out — it’s not truly a deed of mercy! With whom are you tempted to take a patronizing outlook? How are we blessed when we do a true deed of mercy?

2. Have you felt existential loneliness?

Of course, you've felt it. We all have. Saint Augustine expresses it in terms of a "restless heart." Blaise Pascal simply calls it our "unhappiness," because nothing in this world fully satisfies our thirst. Others simply call it being thoroughly "bored." So, when do you feel this thirst? How are you tempted to distract yourself from it?

3. Will you embrace the attitude of love?

Deep down, we're all thirsting for love. In his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Hominis*, Blessed John Paul II writes,

“Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it” (n. 10).

We all need love. What do you think of the definition of love, given in *CHJ*, as an attitude that says, “I delight that you exist”? This attitude is the merciful outlook. Is it already your attitude and outlook? Are there people in your life with whom it will be difficult to have this attitude? Speak to the Lord about this, and write your thoughts below.

4. Jesus asks us first to show mercy in deed. One way we can do this is to delight in others.
How do we delight in others when they don't seem delightful?

In the text, I give a lot of advice for how we can develop the merciful outlook. In one place, I describe the merciful outlook as an attitude that says, "I delight that you exist." However, sometimes it's not so easy to delight in another person, and it can take a lot of work. It takes "deep-sea diving," where we try to find the good in others. It takes prayer, in which we ask for the grace to love the other. It also takes imagination, because we need to try to see where the other person is suffering. Oftentimes, we can develop a love for someone who is not easy to love when we reflect on how they are suffering. Are we willing to do this work? If so, why not begin now? Think of the person in your life who is most difficult to love. Now, do some deep-sea diving and record the good things about them below. Next, pray for the grace to love that person. Finally, reflect on how that person may be suffering, even in a hidden way. Write down how he or she may be suffering below.

5. What is your favorite part about the merciful outlook?

Beginning on the bottom of page 413, I summarize the merciful outlook in 10 mini-descriptions. Read over those descriptions, pick the top three that speak to your heart, and write them below.

Word: The Merciful Question

6-a. Mercy seeks to know the other person. It seeks out the understanding and being with the other. Do you ask people the merciful question in a way that shows your real interest in them?

In conversation with others, do you do all the talking? Do you bother to ask people questions or are you just an answerer? Are you a good listener? Are you sincerely interested in what people are sharing? Reflect on these things, and write how you might improve in asking the merciful question and being a good listener.

6-b. Are you ready to share with others?

There are people who are experts at avoiding talking about themselves. They are the first to ask us questions about how we are doing, but they always change the subject when it comes to themselves. Are you one of them? Don't forget that mercy is a bilateral reality. You have a gift to offer to others, and you should also be ready to share with others. If you are one of the expert avoiders, ask yourself why you have a hard time to share. Perhaps you've been hurt in the past or have a difficult time trusting people. What's the problem? Write it down here, and bring it to the Lord.

Prayer: The Prayers of Mercy

7. Do you pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy?

As you learned from the reading, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy is a very powerful prayer. To better appreciate it, I invite you to read *CHJ* on pages 257-261. After reading these pages, ask yourself, “Do I pray the chaplet?” If you already do, can you pray it better? In other words, might you pray it with more fervor and boldness? If you don’t pray the chaplet, might you start praying it? It only takes about seven minutes, and in those seven minutes, you can be doing so much good for the world. Few things take such little time and bring about so much good.

8. For whom do you or would you pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy?

St. Faustina liked to pray the chaplet of Divine Mercy especially for the conversion of sinners and for the dying. It’s important to pray for the dying, because there are some people dying this very day who are rejecting God’s mercy. Your prayers for them can help them to accept God’s gift of salvation. Jesus said to St. Faustina, “**The salvation of some souls depends on your prayers**” (n. 1777). Wow. What groups of people are particularly on your heart to pray for? What specific people are on your heart? If you so choose, write down the names of the people who are most deeply on your heart with regard to prayer.

9. Do you have the ‘O Blood and Water’ prayer memorized?

If not, why not? It's a very powerful prayer. Jesus said to St. Faustina, “**When you say this prayer, with a contrite heart and with faith on behalf of some sinner, I will give him the grace of conversion**” (n. 186). What a powerful promise! If you don’t have it memorized, I encourage you to memorize it. Can you think of someone for whom you’d like to pray it? Write that person’s name below, and then, looking at the name, pray the prayer with contrition — sorrow for the person’s sins and your own sins. Here is the prayer: “O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You.” Of course, the person is free to reject the grace, but at least you’re trying. Maybe this time he or she will accept it.

10. Did you make the breathing prayer “deal” with the Lord?

If you haven't made "the deal," I encourage you to do so now. (See *CHJ*, page 164.) Once you've made it, when will you practice the breathing prayer? List the places where you think you'll do this breathing prayer the most frequently. (For example, at the store, at the office, etc.)

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 82.]

SESSION 10

Conclusion

+ Come, Holy Spirit, come. Enlighten my mind and move my heart as I read and answer the following questions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.
Jesus, I trust in you. +

~ Questions ~

1. I will live my principle and foundation of consoling Jesus, with Mary, by giving him my trust and acts of mercy.

Beginning of Our Principle and Foundation

1. What will you do to remind yourself of your principle and foundation?

In my office, I have a beautiful crucifix with the words “I Thirst” under one of the arms of the Cross, just like the image on the inside front cover of *CHJ*. In my room, I have an image of Jesus, crowned with thorns and his Sacred Heart glowing in his chest, and I’ve written the words “Behold this heart...” below it. What will you do to remind yourself of your principle and foundation? (Note: It doesn’t have to be a big image, and don’t feel guilty if you choose to be discreet about it. In fact, some work environments don’t allow religious images. Well, you can always have an image of a heart in your office, and nobody will know what it means but you.)

Living the Foundation: Trust

2. What best summarizes trust for you and will help you live it out?

I just reread this section, “Living the Foundation: Trust,” and it’s not a bad summary of the basic attitude of trust we’re shooting for. Because this attitude is so central to our living out the spirituality, I’m going to ask you to do something I haven’t asked you to do

yet: Prayerfully reread this whole section from pages 170-172. (Don't worry, it's less than two full pages long.) After you're done reading it, write down any thoughts you may have about how you can put it into practice in your daily life. In other words, ask yourself, "What struck me most as a way of helping me remember and live out my basic spiritual attitude of trusting Jesus for the sake of consoling him?"

Living the Foundation: Acts of Mercy

3. Pop-Quiz! What's the merciful outlook?

Describe it in your own words here, and try to do so without looking back in the book.

Consoler Principle and Foundation

4. Where will you keep your Consoler Principal and Foundation?

It's may seem like a little thing, but if you're anything like me, you'll be surprised how easily you'll misplace you're hand-written copy of the Consoler Principle and Foundation (or the beautiful printed one that you sign and that comes with the program). Of course, you can always refer back to it in the book, but it's nice to have your signed copy for the monthly review/renewal. So, where will you keep it? And, as a bonus question, how will you remind yourself to do it on your birthday day?

2. I will keep to a simple schedule of daily prayer

Morning Offering; Three O'clock Hour; Examination of Conscience: B-A-K-E-R

5. Which one of these three do you see as easily becoming part of your daily routine?
Which one will be the hardest for you to do daily?

Is it praying the morning offering, because you're not a morning person? Remembering the Three O'clock Hour? Finding time to do the Examination of Conscience before bed? Pick the one that will be the hardest for you to do daily, and then write down a strategy for helping you to do it. If it's the Morning Offering that gives you the trouble, maybe you can tape a copy to your desk at work so it will always be there, reminding you. If it's the Three O'clock Hour, maybe you can set your phone alarm to go off at 3:00 PM each day. If it's the Examination of Conscience, maybe you can do it after dinner, when you're not as sleepy or while you're brushing your teeth before bed. Whatever the problem is, come up with a strategy so you can do it, and briefly write that strategy here:

3. I will frequent the sacraments and take time for spiritual reading

Frequent the Sacraments

- #### 6. Can you go the extra mile?

For “frequent the sacraments,” weekly Sunday Mass and yearly confession are givens because they’re obligations. But what about going the extra mile? Is there a way for you to get to Mass at least one other day during the week? Or why not daily Mass? And what about visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Is there a parish nearby that keeps its doors

open into the evening? Better yet, is there an adoration chapel near you? Why not treat yourself by making a weekly holy hour? Or even daily? If you can't, why not try visiting Jesus in the tabernacle of your heart? (Read the instruction on how to visit Jesus in the tabernacle of your heart in *CHJ* pages 424-426, starting on page 424 with the words "**Page 185.**") Finally, why not go to confession more frequently? Confession is such a gift! (Bonus: Read *CHJ* pages 261-262 on "Confession.") Now, below, write why you can or cannot go the extra mile, and be honest!

Meditation: The Two Movements of the Divine Mercy Image

7. Do you have an image of Divine Mercy?

Of course you do. One came with the program! It's called the Vilnius Image, and it's the one that St. Faustina herself had painted. It took the artist more than 12 tries before Faustina was somewhat satisfied. Every image of Divine Mercy is a blessing, but this one is particularly special. Spend time with the image, and contemplate it. The meditation from the book is just one example of the grace of the image. Spend time with the image, especially if you can't get to a church. Now, read *CHJ* page 324 to hear what Jesus himself says about the image. Then, write any thoughts you may have below:

Spiritual Reading

8. When will you do spiritual reading?

Spiritual reading is very important for spiritual growth. So, when are you going to do it? Do you waste time in the evenings? Many of us watch TV, surf the internet, go on Facebook, etc. A lot of this activity is just a waste of time. Why not put a good spiritual book in the place where you're tempted to waste time. That way, when you're wasting time, the book will be there looking at you, reminding you of a better choice. Where are you going to put that book?

Book Recommendations

9. Which book will lure you away from the temptation?

To put a book in those places where you're tempted to waste time, you'll obviously first need a good spiritual book. So, which book will it be? In order for it to draw you from the temptations, though, it needs to be something you will enjoy. I give some recommendations in the text, but you're obviously not limited to those. I invite you to treat yourself by going to your favorite search engine and type in "Amazon Best Sellers Catholic," and you'll see a list of the best sellers among Catholic books. There you'll have lots of stuff to choose from. Better yet, pay a visit to your local Catholic bookstore where you can browse through lots of good books. So, when will you treat yourself? Or which book that you already have will you put next to the computer, the TV, or the remote?

Closing Meditation: A Contemplation to Attain Divine Love

10. After prayerfully reading the closing meditation, any thoughts come to mind write them down here:

[NOTE: Your DVD Notes and Small-group Session Outline for this week start on p. 93.]

FOR YOUR CONSOLER CELEBRATION DAY

There are many ways to celebrate your Consoler Celebration Day. You can purchase a rosary or chaplet, present roses to Jesus (before an image of the Divine Mercy or the Sacred Heart), or have cake and refreshments. You can also order more certificates. (Some people like to have two: one for yearly renewal and another to hang on the wall.) However you decide to make your Celebration Day memorable, may it be truly blessed. And let us know what your group did to celebrate — we'd appreciate hearing from you!



Consoler's Principle and Foundation Certificate
CERTCHJ



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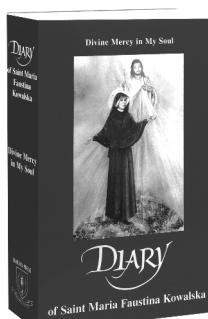
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Setting Hearts on Fire and Transforming Parishes

This has been a deep spiritual awakening for the people in our group. Together, we're looking for and seeing Jesus in other people. It changes your life.

— JACKIE K.

I think this is what [our parish has] been waiting for to help us draw deeper into our faith. For me, after reading *Consoling the Heart of Jesus*, I spent hours before the Blessed Sacrament thanking him.

— ROMANA G.

Consoling the Heart of Jesus has reinvigorated and focused my spiritual life, deepened my appreciation for Jesus and Mary, and called me to daily works of mercy.

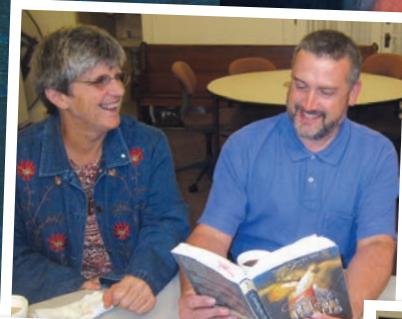
— THOMAS S.

I believe that the book and study materials really prepared me for some difficult news I received. I feel so blessed to have been reminded of the importance of the grace available at the 3 o'clock hour, to meditate on the Passion, and to continue to hold Mary's hand on the path to Jesus and to peace. Thank you to all those who made this material available.

— MARIA S.

After completing the Consoling the Heart of Jesus experience, I can truly say that I've advanced a bit closer to the Holy Trinity through the passionate Heart of Jesus. I am so glad this opportunity was offered me.

— BILL R.



Fr. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC, is a member of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception and author of the bestselling books *33 Days to Morning Glory*, 'You Did It to Me,' and *The 'One Thing' Is Three*. When he is not traveling, Fr. Michael lives and works on Eden Hill in Stockbridge, Mass., home of the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy.



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