

St. Therese Catholic Church

Religion of the Day
Session VIII

May 21, 2024

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Overview

Religion of the Day	
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Session II	Twelve Aspects of Modern Religion (Points 1 - 6)
Session III	Twelve Aspects of Modern Religion (Points 7 - 12)
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Session VII	Conclusion: The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

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The Winning Stance

I. Stand Therefore

- The main encouragement Paul gives to his fellow Christians is not "Attack!"; not "Forward!"; not "Once more into the breach!"; but "Stand!" (118, c.f., Eph. 6:10-17).
- In the battle between light and darkness in which we have been implicated, God has been the aggressor. It was God the Father who started the assault on the demonic kingdom (118).

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The Winning Stance

I. Stand Therefore

- It was God the Son who invaded occupied territory in a kind of disguise, bringing the heavenly power to bear on a captive and fallen race setting a colony of heaven in the midst of occupied territory (118).
- Yet paradoxically, the spear point of his attack was his passion and death (119).
- Jesus' enemies threw everything at him, and he patiently endured the worst, not because he was compelled, but because he knew it was the winning strategy (110).

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The Winning Stance

I. Stand Therefore

- **Key:** Christ takes a stand on the truth of the Father, by refusing to give up even when he seemed to be defeated, Christ completely routed his demonic foes (119).
- St. Paul makes clear how the heavenly attack goes forward. Christians attack the evil of the world and challenge the supremacy of the prince of darkness by refusing to be moved off their ground, by staying in the fight no matter what, and by fearlessly speaking God's word of truth even in the face of persecution and death. They imitate Christ precisely by "standing" (119).

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The Winning Stance

II. The Resistance

- Between the first and second coming of Christ, the Church operates as a kind of resistant movement behind the lines of the demonic enemy (119).
- Christ in the Church continues his work of probing hearts, gaining new disciples, stirring up loyalty to the Father, getting in the way of the devil's dark plans, bringing the dead back to life, and teaching his disciples to despise and disobey their former captor (120).

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The Winning Stance

II. The Resistance

- The devil hates this heavenly society in his midst and launches desperate counter-attacks against it according to the measure of power allotted to him, but no matter what he does, he cannot snuff it out or stop its subversive activity (120).
- Christians always win when they stand in the truth of Christ, whatever the circumstances. Christ has arranged things for those who belong to him such that, so long as they do not give up, they *always win* (120).

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The Winning Stance

II. The Resistance

- The only way the devil can overcome Christians is to find a way to get them to abandon the truth or to lose hope and quit the fight, by somehow getting them off the secure rock upon which they are standing, the rock of Christ (120).
- Christians gain the kingdom according to the pattern of the Cross; not by wealth but by poverty; not by power but by humility; not by strength but in weakness; not by coercive force but in defenselessness; not by the world's wisdom but by the seeming foolishness of God (120).

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The Winning Stance

II. The Resistance

- Yet Christians find that at crucial times, despite all their best efforts, they seem to fail. They and their work are nailed to the Cross and crucified. It is just then that heaven's power is mysteriously released and that new life comes bursting from the grave.
- The Church is weakest and most vulnerable when it most relies on worldly categories of strength and success. It is strongest when it is most reliant on God and least wedded to the powers of the fallen world (121).

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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

- In our Christendom age, missionaries are sent off to unbelievers. In an apostolic age, unbelief is in the very atmosphere we breathe, and to conform our lives to Christ, even privately, is necessarily to bear witness to him. In a time like ours, there is, blessedly, no place to hide (121).
- The following list is not meant as either complete or final; it is rather an outline of certain important principles that invite further thought and elaboration (122).

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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

1. The centrality of the person of Christ

- We have no idea who we are, where we came from, what we are here for, or how we fit in to the world, and this has led to a profound sense of existential loneliness.
- The only answer to that identity crisis is found in coming to know Jesus Christ (122).

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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

1. The centrality of the person of Christ

- The Church's tapestry of doctrines, moral code, long and intricate history, tradition of prayer, song, liturgy, and art are centered on the great foundation: the person whose name is Jesus.
- Our time needs once again to be amazed and overwhelmed by Christ himself – not a system, or a theory, or a socio-political scheme, but by the Divine personality himself (123).

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III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

2. The importance of awakened minds

- An apostolic time demands of every Christian an instructed intellect. It is not enough to find in Jesus someone who comforts us and makes us feel confident about life.
- We also need to receive wise and vivid teaching from the One who is the very answer to every question, who stands at the back of every truth, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3).

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III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

3. The necessity of true narrative

- Saints Stephen, Peter, and Paul all shared a particular method of approach: they all began by telling the story of salvation history.
- They preached Christ, but they did so in the context of the overall narrative that made clear his significance (124).

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III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

3. The necessity of true narrative

- The story they told was not just compelling or interesting; it was true, grounded in genuine history and real events. It was the story that encompasses every story, the story in which God was both the author and the main actor (124-125).
- Our post-Christendom time has abandoned the Christian narrative and embrace narratives that propose who we are and leave God out of the picture.

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III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

4. The primacy of mystery and the invisible world

- The realities of the invisible world are mysterious: the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharistic presence of Christ, our human nature made up of both bodies and souls (125).
- While our proud age resists mystery, wanting to know everything, it is still starving for the mysterious and the invisible. Finding ways to call ourselves and our age back to the unseen and mysterious is an important task for our time (126).

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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

5. Making real what is notional

- Growing up in our age, we may have a lot of abstract knowledge about Bible stories and basic Christian doctrines.
- It does not become the kind of real, living truth that guides the inner person and points out the way forward in life (126).

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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

5. Making real what is notional

- In teaching the faith, it is critical to engage the imaginative faculties that drive home ideas to help them come alive. This is a key way by which notions become real.
- Jesus often taught in imaginatively powerful parables. He used images and metaphors that arrested attention and drove home powerful truths (126).

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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

5. Making real what is notional

- The story of the Prodigal Son finds its way into our living consciousness far more effectively than a simple statement concerning God's readiness to forgive (126).



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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

6. The proper context: true friendship in Christ

- We live in a time of increasing personal isolation, where superficial relationships are the order of the day, yet the human heart longs for genuine communion with others.
- Christ makes such communion possible; genuine friendship is a supernatural outgrowth of the life of Christ in us (127).

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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

6. The proper context: true friendship in Christ

- Christ unites us by his Spirit, and because his Spirit is one and the same everywhere, Christians are joined together to each other in ways that go beyond our natural abilities for union with each other.
- The most effective witness to the life of Christ will come communally (127).

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The Winning Stance

III. Presenting the Gospel in our Apostolic Age

6. The proper context: true friendship in Christ

- Others will be drawn to Christ by meeting a group of Christians friends, or by getting to know a Christian family, and by recognizing a deeply attractive quality among those they are getting to know.
- Thus, the inner life of the Christian faithful and the task to reach out to others run along similar lines. Each demands a depth of common life, to be lived and to draw others to Christ (127).

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Conclusion

The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

- In the Book of Revelation, John speaks about the correct posture about true worship and the tribulation that is unavoidable for victory.
- This posture is true for every age and every time, but especially comes to the fore in those times and places where the Christian Gospel is under intense attack – a time, increasingly, like ours (129).

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Conclusion

The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

- Christians must cultivate a vision of faith: a calm and zealous determination to obey God, to live for him, and to cooperate with his often-mysterious strategies as he builds his kingdom (129-130).
- Christians must not be deceived into the delusion that politics is the hope of the future, or that environmental awareness will save us, or that good economic practices are the key to happiness (130).

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Conclusion

The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

- We will not allow the habits of media consumption – the shadowy world of entertainment and breaking news – to blind us from the real world of God, the angels, and the immortal soul (130).
- When we encounter the sins of fellow Christians, face modern Judases within the Church, or when we encounter the Judas that dwells within our hearts, we will respond like Christ: not with anger, not with anxiety or discouragement, but impelled by divine charity, with calm zeal, ready to follow the way of Christ even to crucifixion (130).

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Conclusion

The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

- In our increasingly non-Christian culture, we will remember that there is always grace enough to deal with whatever comes our way, and we will resist all doomsaying and desperate attitudes (131).
- We will seek wisdom to understand how Christ is responding to our times, as the Gospel of the One who is “ever ancient and ever new” continues to reach out to save the lost (131).

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Conclusion

The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

- We will remember that the real strategic battle is the one we encounter morning by morning in our cooperation with the Holy Spirit as he engages and enlightens the darkness in our hearts and fans into flames the divine life planted in us.
- We will strive at all times to remember who we are: adopted and beloved sons and daughters of the King of Heaven, living a hidden and exiled life, battling against our ancient foe, but soon to be revealed as bearers of divine light to the joy and astonishment of all the inhabitants of heaven (131-132).

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Conclusion

- **John 16:33:** I have told you this so that you might have peace in me.
- In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.



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