

SEMINAR 7 Journey to the Flame



THE DEVOUT LIFE

Seeking Personal Holiness

1. At Baptism, God gave you a divine life, with your own personal, spiritual identity – what He wanted you to become!
2. This spiritual identity is inner, the beauty of God’s grace that should grow to full stature.
3. The saints call this full stature “perfection” and they have left a roadmap to perfection. (This is fully explained in the Devout Life Teachings that follow these seminars).
4. By seeking and gaining personal holiness, you become the person whom God intended you to be. This is your only important task on earth. You will fulfill God’s many purposes for your life only if you walk this road.

The Greatest Goal

5. In human life, people seek all kinds of goals. Many have very good goals, like building a career, growing a family, or even doing good for the world.
6. However, the greatest and the highest possible goal is to have a devout life. The goal of the Flame of Love is for you to lead a devout life and become a holy, close friend of Jesus and Mary.
7. St. Francis de Sales wrote a classic book entitled “Introduction to The Devout Life”, which invited people (in every walk of life), to follow God’s call to holiness.

Hearing the Call

8. The apostles heard this call. When Jesus came to them, He invited them to a full life of holiness.
9. Jesus told them, “You are to be perfect, like your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)
10. After seeing Jesus, St. Paul realized that he had to strive for holiness “Lest while preaching to others, I myself could be lost.”

The Saints

11. All the saints experienced the same invitation. Their call to holiness came in different ways and at different stages in life.
12. Some were children when they sensed God inviting them. Others were young adults and some were even quite advanced in years.
13. We come now to the main purpose of these seminars. During these weeks, your eyes have focused on Jesus and Mary. They beckon to you. They speak to your heart, "Come, we invite you to come close to us and to live a devout life."
14. The Early Christians lived this Devout Life and displayed great fervor. "Every day, they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple and to breaking bread in their homes. (Acts 2:42) They had big meetings in the temple and smaller communities in their homes.
15. Their fervor even led to a sharing of goods. "The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. They had everything in common." (Acts 4:32) Their fervor led to growth. "The Church walked in the fear of the Lord and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers." (Acts 9:31)
16. Those 3 quotes are the early stories, the holy beginnings. However, the fires of the early church cooled down. People grew slack. There was no devout life.
17. To change the whole Church, God raised up St. Anthony (250 – 356, 106 years!) who started out as a hermit. However, he was joined by thousands of others and became the father of Monasticism. After that, when people wanted to lead a devout life, they would enter a monastery or a convent.
18. Then St. Francis founded the Franciscans and St. Dominic, the Dominicans. Monks were no longer just in monasteries.
19. The final gift came from St. Francis de Sales, who wrote the classic book "Introduction to the Devout Life." He says that people from any walk of life should lead a devout life. "It is a heresy to wish to exclude the exercise of devotion from any state of life." Devotion will not ruin their career or their family but make it better.

Mental Prayer

20. The essential element on this road to perfection (leading to a devout life) is to practice mental prayer every day.
21. Vocal prayer uses a set formula (like Our Father) which the person says aloud or interiorly. Mental prayer engages all the person's faculties – imagination, feelings, memory, intellect and will.

22. By using all their faculties in prayer, a person can make progress. God will lift them to higher and higher states of prayer.
23. A final image. Vocal prayer is like a person who cannot swim. They can certainly walk into the ocean but only up to their head. Mental prayer is like a swimmer who can go anywhere. God is a gigantic ocean and, by mental prayer we gain access to all His mysteries.
24. All the teachings on the devout life will be given each week in the prayer cenacle.

The Blind Man of Jericho

25. For many years, a blind man named Bartimaeus sat begging by the wayside near Jericho. One day, Jesus walked by. The blind man saw his one chance. He only had a short time because Jesus was leaving Jericho to go to Jerusalem. He cried out so loudly that Jesus said to the crowd "call him". The crowd said, "Take courage, He is calling you."
26. Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus answered that question easily, "Lord, that I may see." Jesus quickly gave the gift and Bartimaeus saw immediately. (Like receiving the Flame of Love).
27. What did he do then? Did he go home? Not at all. He "followed Jesus on the way". (Mk 10:52) He chose the road to perfection, accompanying Jesus to Jerusalem.
28. You are just like Bartimeus. You have received the Flame. Do you go home? No, you follow Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. This is your "devout life".

Many Questions and Doubts

29. Thinking about following Jesus to Jerusalem makes us a little uncomfortable. If we take this road to holiness, what will God ask of us? What does it mean "to be perfect" as Jesus commanded us? What is involved in following the road of the saints?
30. Many feelings fill our hearts. We have found the great treasure of the Flame of Love but are we ready to follow Jesus? Where will He take us?

Setting Out

31. However, we have only one life. We must spend our days on some goal. Certainly, Jesus invites us. Certainly, Mary will be at our side. Certainly, our guardian angel and patron saints will pray for us. Certainly all of heaven awaits our decision.
32. Why not set out on this Devout Life? This is the great enterprise, the full gift of our Baptism. By gaining our own holiness, won't many other souls also be saved because we said yes to Jesus' call?

33. We cannot just wait around. If we do not set out, we can never arrive. Are we not safe with Jesus? Will not Mary smooth out the road? Come, let us begin our devout life by joining each week with others who are taking the same road to perfection.

Questions:

1. Do you see that the Flame of Love is a great invitation?
2. Do you realize that Jesus is calling you?
3. Are you willing to set out on the road (even though you do not know exactly what is asked)?
4. Do you see the need for others to accompany you?
5. Are you willing to move ahead and learn the many teachings on the Devout Life?

You have now come to the end of the Flame of Love Seminars. Be faithful to the weekly Cenacle where you will receive the Devout Life teachings. Having finished these seminars, the following questions will help you to preserve these gifts.

Final Questions

1. What have you received in these 7 weeks?
2. Can you recall your feelings when you first began?
3. Which week was most special – the “turning point” so to speak?
4. What have been your experiences since receiving the Flame of Love?
5. Will you be faithful to the final two aspects – to participate in a Flame of Love cenacle and to seek a devout life?

DAILY BIBLE READING

During the week, please read the themes of the following texts that explain this seminar.

Day 1 In His eight beatitudes, Jesus sets high goals for His disciples.
(Matthew 5:1-12)

Day 2 Jesus wants His disciples to be perfect by forgiving others and loving their enemies.
(Matthew 5:38-48)

Day 3 Paul describes his own conversion to holiness.
(Acts 22:1-16)

Day 4 The gospel of Luke pictures Jesus at prayer.

- a. After His Baptism 3:21
- b. Praying Frequently 5:16
- c. In the Garden 22:39-46

Day 5 Jesus taught His disciples how to pray.
(Matthew 6:5-14)

Day 6 Bartimaeus set right out on this road of perfection – following Jesus to Jerusalem.
(Mark 10:46-52)

Day 7 Zaccheus makes great sacrifices to be perfect. (Luke 19:1-10)

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