

St. Therese Catholic Church

Religion of the Day
Session VII

May 7, 2024

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 **St. Therese Parish**

Overview

Religion of the Day	
Session I	Introduction and the Religion of the Day
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 V	Catching the Diseases of the World
Session VI	The Winning Stance
Session VII	Conclusion: The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

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The Battle Inside the Church

- Whatever might be happening in the Church, in the world, or in our own lives, we will want to remember that God is not worried, perplexed, or defeated (95).
- The world belongs to God, even it is in a state of rebellion. The Church even more so belongs to Christ as he inhabits it by the Holy Spirit (96).
- Christ is the Church's main actor, its grand strategist, its motive and attractive power, and the only reason it can exist at all. Our task, individually and communally, is to try to understand what God in Christ is doing and to cooperate with him as best we can (96).

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The Battle Inside the Church

- If we try to understand the way God is waging his warfare against darkness, we will not be surprised to find the Church in the midst of an internal battle (96).
- We will not be perplexed to find that some of its members, including some of its leaders, have followed the path of Judas and betrayed Christ. This has happened in past ages, and so it will happen in our own time (96).
- This is not to say we are to become complacent toward corruption within the Church, but rather to fight a zealous and determined battle for truth and goodness (96).

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The Battle Inside the Church

- We have looked at the first two battles the Church consistently faces: external battle and internal battle.
- Regarding the second or internal battle of bad behavior among leaders, Jesus taught his followers to honor their position but be careful not to imitate their behavior (97).
- His general direction was that the disciples should stay away from bad leaders and leave them to be dealt with by God (97).
- **Key:** We do not need to waste energy on matters for which we have been given no responsibility and that we can do very little to change (97).

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The Battle Inside the Church

- The third front of the spiritual battle and both the primary arena and the necessary condition for gaining victory in both the world and the Church, is the struggle demanded of each of us against the darkness in our own hearts and minds (97).
- God's kingdom is established on earth mainly by personal conversion and holiness: the saints are the true movers and shakers of history (97).
- **Key:** The grip of the devil on the world is weakened far more effectively by acts of self-denial, charity, and faith than by social and political action (98).

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The Battle Inside the Church

- In light of all we have discussed with neo-Gnostic Progressive religion, as well as the Church catching the diseases of the world and developing the antibodies for healing, the author provides a short list of suggested areas to examine our walk with Christ in what he calls an examination of vision and understanding (99).
- The examination serves somewhat like Global Positioning System (GPS) to help us navigate our way in Christ in our current cultural atmosphere.

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Examination of Vision

1. The Embrace of a Different Gospel

- Those who profess to be Christian but who have abandoned key doctrines of the faith and have embraced some form of the neo-Gnostic gospel of personal self-creation (98).
- They use Christian language, maintain membership with the Church, and even hold positions of responsibility in the Church (98-99).
- **Key:** We must be converted ourselves and develop apostolic strategies in our homes, schools, and parishes (100).

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Examination of Vision

2. The Temptation to Pride

- We moderns suffer from a kind of visionary schizophrenia. In our experience of ourselves we are among history's most fragile and unconfident humans, while in our approach to all things divine we are among the most prideful people the world has ever known (101).
- A key change for Christians is to stir up magnanimity, courage, confidence, and high ideals on the one hand, and on the other how to regain a humble and therefore true stance toward God (101).

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Examination of Vision

2. The Temptation to Pride

- Jesus was not angry, frustrated, or defiant at the fact of a fallen world. He was not in a state of rebellion against reality, which would have meant prideful resistance to the Father in his goodness (102).
- Jesus' acceptance of reality was emphatically not a stance of complacency or of cooperation with evil. He planned to utterly change and renew the world. But he knew that the only effective way to accomplish that purpose was to work within the Father's created order and according to the Father's will (102).

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Examination of Vision

3. Soft-Pedaling the Fall

- While the Christian faith is insistent on the fall and our need for redemption, in practice, there is a temptation to soft-pedal the fall by saying that while everyone has faults and weak points, people on the whole are decent and well-meaning, and it is just the few extreme cases who are really bad (103).
- When we fail to see the depth of individual human corruption, the Good News loses much of its potency and needs to be re-translated to keep our interest (104).

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Examination of Vision

3. Soft-Pedaling the Fall

- As our awareness of sin fades and the idea of universal salvation becomes an unconscious assumption in our minds, the awe-inspiring figure of Christ – Lord of the Universe, the divine warrior who battled the prince of darkness, and who by an act of unfathomable love and suffering brought to his followers forgiveness of sin, freedom from demonic slavery, and the gift of eternal life – gets lost in favor of a different Jesus: the nice guy, the non-threatening personal life-enhancer who offers his followers wealth, self-realization, and a therapeutic program for coping with personal challenges (104).

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Examination of Vision

4. Forgetfulness of the Cosmic Order

- Christians respect the divine order (natural law) that God has established with respect to our way of handling food, sex, and the natural world (105).
- We can fall into the temptation of the neo-Gnostic dogma that our fulfillment (or happiness) is found by constructing our own world of meaning. Progressive appeals to self-creation and self-definition can be seductive, especially if we lose sight of the God has created the world with a given order, and we find our happiness by striving to life in harmony with that order.

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Examination of Vision

5. The Myopia of Secularity

- Seen truly, our time on earth is something like the life of a baby in the womb. It is of great importance, but it is not an end in itself (107-108).
- Modern Progressive faiths limit their vision of the world to what can be seen (108).
- The art of visible distraction blurs our vision from an atmosphere of peace and silence, so necessary for an awareness of the unseen world (107).

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Examination of Vision

5. The Myopia of Secularity

- Early Christian believers were willing to face martyrdom with remarkable courage and calm and could not be bribed or bullied into trading away eternity with God for the comparative trifle of a few years of mortal life, often even singing as they went to their deaths (109).
- The treasury of those early Christians, along with their hearts, were where they belonged, in heaven. Could that claim about Christians still be made today? (108)

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Examination of Vision

6. The Utopian Drift

- A necessary result of the Progressive utopian vision is the conviction that political action is the primary means by which the world will arrive at its desired goal.
- For Progressive believers, politics is not a secondary, if important, realm of human activity where compromise is often demanded for the sake of the social concord. It is instead the central concern, the main arena of religious warfare, the key battleground for gaining control of the levers of power that will allow the implementation of proper knowledge for the saving of the planet (109).

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Examination of Vision

6. The Utopian Drift

- Christians understand that we will neither be saved nor finally defeated by political and social developments (110).
- Unfortunately, Christians can fall under the spell of utopian drift in that we can unconsciously come to believe that the moral problems of humanity are solvable by human effort.
- We can place our primary loyalty in a given political order and can invest the proximate realm of politics with ultimate significance (110).

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Examination of Vision

6. The Utopian Drift

- And when our vaguely utopian gaze shifts to the Church, we can come to expect that the Church will not be tainted by the world's ills, and we can grow demoralized by the sinfulness of many of its members (110).
- Christians will not become discouraged or confused when they encounter great evil in the world or find that things do not seem to be getting better. Our hope is in God (110-111).

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Examination of Vision

7. The Lure of the Silver Bullet

- Christian can fall prey to the idea that if we can just find the right program, if we can just figure out the effective formula, if we can only settle on the proper technique, we can deal with whatever challenges the Church is facing (111).
- We can forget that there is no sure-fire program to solve the human problem of evil – or rather, the one “program” that will accomplish this has been revealed by Christ and involves Baptism, mystical incorporation into the Church, and the long, slow battle for holiness (111).

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Examination of Vision

7. The Lure of the Silver Bullet

- We can try to find sound and effective means for advancing the gospel and should hold ourselves to high standards of competence (111).
- However, we must remember that there is no system that cannot be corrupted, no set of protocols that cannot be perverted to the devil’s use, and no simple remedy whose implementation will drive away human suffering, ensure social justice, convert the nations, or guarantee Christian holiness (112).

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Examination of Vision

8. Seeing the World with Dualistic Eyes

- Christians can fall pray to the Neo-Gnostic error of good people (those who embrace the Progressive dogma) and evil people (those who thwart progress) by “we good people” and “those bad ones” (112-113).
- We can become prey to conspiracy theories – a typical symptom of the Gnostic desire to gain control of the world by figuring everything out – and we can speak of the Church’s being “infiltrated” by bad people (113).
- **Key:** Like Daniel, we must pray for God’s unfaithful people.

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Examination of Vision

9. Using the Enemy’s Weaponry to Fight the Lord’s Battles

- Christians can be tempted to embrace the same tactics of the world in building the kingdom of God: guns, ad campaigns, political action, economic initiatives, stirring people’s passions, impressing people with talent, cleverness, and displays of intelligence (114).
- The kingdom of heaven does not fundamentally grow by money, influence, talent, political power, and intelligence. Instead, God uses supernatural means (114).
- This includes prayer, self-sacrifice, the sacraments, etc.

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Examination of Vision

9. Using the Enemy's Weaponry to Fight the Lord's Battles

- The Progressive evangelistic mindset appeals to the passions, whether the promise of physical pleasure, comfort, and wealth, or by disseminating anger and anxiety (115).
- Christ did not spread his Gospel by inflaming the passions of his hearers. He was not interested in getting his hearers anxious or angry (115).
- Our Lord focuses on conversion – the goal of repentance, a return to God, and then the exalted joy of a new life (115).

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Examination of Vision

9. Using the Enemy's Weaponry to Fight the Lord's Battles

- Our emotions are not meant to lead, but rather to follow the perception of truth and to support what truth and goodness demand (115).
- Our Lord often challenged people who followed him because of their emotions (saw his miracles). If anyone comes to me without hating father and mother and even your own life, cannot be my disciple (Lk 14:26). Jesus rebuked James and John who wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans (115-116). It is the love of Christ that controls us, not anger or anxiety.

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Examination of Vision

9. Using the Enemy's Weaponry to Fight the Lord's Battles

- Unlike Neo-Gnostic tendencies to unite around common hatred and therefore anger and other emotions, Christians must be united around charity and self-denial for the sake of the Gospel (116).
- One single heartfelt prayer or act of charity toward those we are called to love, will have more power in advancing the cause of Christ than months of angry listening to podcasts, or hours of sparring on social media, or years of stirring up those around us with the latest evil reports from news articles (116).

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Examination of Vision

9. Using the Enemy's Weaponry to Fight the Lord's Battles

- The devil is dismayed by humility, devastated by charity, and terrified by Christ. But when he sees Christians trying to press the works of the flesh – greed, anger, calumny, and power politics – into the service of the Spirit, he only laughs (116).



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The Winning Stance and Conclusion

- Read chapter VI
- The Winning Stance and Conclusion
- Pages 117 - 132

