

Aug. 03 POWER THROUGH SERVICE
(ZEAL AND BOLDNESS)

Let them bless me.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight o my God.

During the great depression, former mayor of New York, La Guardia was presiding as a judge. An unemployed man was brought before him for stealing bread to feed his family.

He told the man, "The law requires me to fine you \$10.00." After that he remitted the fine and instead gave the man \$10.00 from his own pocket. Then he went on to fine everyone in the courtroom 50 cents for living in a city where people have to steal in order to feed their family. The \$47,50 he collected was also given to the man and he was dismissed with enough money to feed his family for a while at least.

The title to tonight's teaching is, *more power through Service*. It is taken from the growth seminar book titled, There's always More; Expecting New Fire. By Sr. Nancy Keller. The objectives from this Power through Service chapter of the book form the subtitle: **Bearing Power-Fruit through Zeal, Boldness and Evangelism.**

It speaks of Power fruit! We know that in nature, the fruit of any vine or tree is not for the branches. Fruit is for seed and fruit is for the hungry. The Fruit of the Spirit, love, Joy, peace, patience, etc. are also for the hungry. They are sort of indirect gifts; more like rewards or results. They represent the contentment one receives from the Holy Spirit when he or she obeys God in fully using his gifts and charisms. There is **real power** for the Kingdom in this. This power, in turn, shows up in, zeal, boldness and Evangelism and we could add, commitment.. These are the cup running over we read of in the Psalms. These are also, incidentally, the three parts of this teaching; Holy Zeal, Holy Boldness, and Holy Evangelism, and we'll add a bit about Holy Commitment.

(show the 4 display cards.)

Holy Zeal:

Closely related to holy dynamism and spiritual energy, holy zeal is enthusiasm and Passion for the Gospel. Holy zeal is being alive in the Spirit. Holy Zeal is the foundation of effective church life. Our Spiritual growth and effectiveness all starts with Holy Zeal. The necessary commitment, boldness and evangelism are not likely to happen without zeal.

So, what happened to all the zeal in our prayer group? Your doctor cannot give you a “zelectomy,” so if we can’t find our zeal we must have lost it some other way.

Zeal is much more than just an emotional high. If it doesn’t carry boldness and commitment, the high soon vanishes and we are back to boring old ho hum as usual. When we come home from a retreat and fail to exercise boldness, the holy glow vanishes in a hurry.

Zeal is also both contagious and deadly. People who are open to the Holy Spirit catch it and those who are not so open are often turned off by it. This is the hard part. We still need to exercise our zeal , even when it’s not popular. It helps if we meditate on the zeal of the martyrs. Read about St. Stephen in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 7. The martyrs have the highest place in heaven. The martyrs, we are sure, are eternally grateful for the grace of Holy Zeal that holds out to the end. You will too.

We need to cultivate more and more zeal to truly be Jesus alive in our part of creation.

If you were to ask me what I consider the greatest failure in our prayer group, I would have to say the failure to maintain our holy zeal. Many of us have gotten lukewarm, and you know what Jesus says about yucky lukewarm.

If you asked about the biggest failure in our parish or in our American or European sections of the Catholic Church, I would say much the same thing. I mean this not only about the back pew people in our Church who leave early, but, more important, this failure is more about the people like those of us who have taken the Life in the Spirit Seminars. People of whom more is expected. Where is the holy zeal?

Surely American Catholics must be the laziest, most self-centered disciples ever re-designed by the devil. Many of us anyway. I sometimes wonder if

we are just role-playing nice Christian games and not even wanting to be truly dedicated disciples of Jesus at all. We so easily give ourselves over to a legalist minimalism that is so prevalent among us Catholics. How many of us are really ready to give unconditional commitment to Jesus alive in His Church? We ought to be, you know.

To have holy zeal is to be a fully alive part of the living Body of Christ. To be full of Holy Zeal is to be red hot for the gospel. None of this lukewarm stuff.

Many of us Catholics, even Charismatics, have become so inactive and minimalistic we are more like fat cells in the obese Body of Christ. For many of us our spiritual life consists mostly of a few self-serving petitions and maybe a little concern about getting ourselves to heaven. That's about it. Anyone who is a Christian just to squeak into heaven is a big fat minimalist slacker. We have adapted a self centered, individualistic American watered down Christianity.. We have lost our zeal for building the Body of Christ.

You know, I really dislike being the one to give holy admonishments all the time. What's especially difficult is to know that the Lord is speaking these harsh words to me first of all. The devil is calling me a hypocrite. I can identify with St. Paul in 1 Thes. 2;3 where he says, "*The exhortation we deliver does not spring from deceit or impure motives.*" It's a lot nicer to give more welcome prophecies, like, "My dear children, I am so pleased with you." To be sure, God does say such things most often. He is pleased when we get together for Prayer meetings, but that doesn't mean He is satisfied with our spiritual progress in general. The Christianity of Jesus demands holy zeal and total self-sacrifice. Total.

I sometimes think, if it were not for the guarantee of the Holy Spirit to preserve our Church until Jesus comes again, all traces of Christianity would have died out centuries ago. Thank You Holy Spirit! But now, Lord, please zap us with a double dose of Holy Zeal so we good Catholics can catch up to where we ought to be. To where you, dear Jesus, call us to be.

Now for a test of our zeal: Ask yourself, "do I strongly desire to be a living sacrifice; to burn up my life in the service of Jesus alive in His Church? Am I Martyr ready? Am I? If not, I'm a long way from where I should be. We may or may not be solidly on our way to the Kingdom. We depend on the

mercy of God for that, but there is so much more to the beautiful lifestyle Jesus invites us into. Our gift of earthly ministry is the beginning of our eternal calling. We cannot look at the person next to us in the pew to check our spiritual progress. No. We have to look to Jesus for that. Jesus is our model. If I do not have Holy Zeal, I am a drag to the Church

Well, now that we've caught on to holy zeal, it's time to move ahead and talk about holy boldness. Are you ready for this?

Holy Boldness:

Holy Christian Boldness is spirit filled fearlessness in holy ministry. It is fearless service to Jesus.

Holy boldness is largely the gift of rising above our ungodly fears.

You hear stories of a mother whose baby is taken by a bear. All fear is cast to the wind because of her love for her child. Love casts out fear. In like manner, in a more mature Christian life, holy boldness, which comes from love, drives away all fear. The Bible says the Holy Spirit does not bring a spirit of fear. Fear is the fruit of selfishness and the devil.

From the opening day of his papacy, the words, "Do not be afraid." Have been the theme of our pope, John Paul II. Do not be afraid. Logically, we Catholics should be the boldest of all peoples. We have history behind us. We have the fullness of truth backing us up. We have the pearl of great price as a gift for all people. Why should we be shy about it? Who do you suppose is orchestrating our fears?

Most of us, . . . practically all of us, have many ungodly fears that keep us from commitment and evangelism: Ungodly fears are custom designed for us by the master liar, the devil himself. . Let's look at a few of them:

1. Fear of what others may think;

2. Fear of failure; Jesus preached to thousands, yet only 120 were there at the birth of the Church. In His lifetime, in the eyes of the world, Jesus was a failure. The Lord doesn't ask us to be always successful. He only asks us to be boldly faithful.

3. Fear of inadequacy; We are afraid of doing something wrong or worse yet, of giving the wrong message. The solution is to learn what to do and get to know the true message. We Catholics especially, have gotten the dumb idea that we complete our religious education sometime in High School.

4. Fear of seeming elitist; False humility

5. Fear of commitment; loosing control of our lives; independence. We want to do our thing while our fulfillment requires us to do the God thing.

6. Fear of burn-out; Now this is a modern pop-psycho word the Saints never heard of. The idea of burn-out can be useful, but too often it is just an excuse for weak commitment. Note there is a big difference between burn-out and burn-up. In the Holy Spirit we may burn up our lives for the Lord, and that is what we should be doing. Good. But in the Holy Spirit there is never burn out. Burn-out comes when we try to do God's work by our own plan and power

7. Fear of fear:

8. Fear of the more educated; Fear of judgment by professionals; fear of experts. some college trained catechist, etc. have heterodox and even heretical training. They can be arrogant, yet wrong. There can occasionally be heretical or heterodox ideas fostered by people who are supposed to be experts. We sometimes need to face them or their followers with bold orthodoxy.

9. Fear of being in the public light;

10. Fear of criticism; The Book of Proverbs calls people who fear or reject criticism, fools. We should be glad to bear with Jesus in unjust criticism and we all should likewise welcome constructive criticism.

11. Fear of controversy; Jesus says, "I come to divide."

12. Fear of being politically incorrect; The whole Gospel is politically incorrect; counter-culture. Don't let the enemy pull your strings.

13. Fear of rejection; Jesus was rejected.

14. Fear of losing friends;

15. Fear of family members; Here we need courage and fortitude in quietly and lovingly standing up for what is true and moral and right. This is where Jesus says mother will oppose daughter and daughter mother etc.

16. Fear of neglecting family goals; In this prayer group we have a long standing wise saying about setting priorities; God first, next family and then Church and prayer group. There is wisdom in this but it must be properly understood. First of all, it's dangerous to ever separate God from Church. The Catholic Church is a divine institution and as such it IS the visible presence of Jesus ministering and saving us. When we separate Church from God we reduce Church to a human fellowship. As Catholics, we can't do that.

17. Fear of civil law; Fear of going to jail for protesting abortion. We cannot, of course, decide individually what laws we want to obey. But as a Christian Body there are moral exceptions. In the early Church Christianity was against the law, it's practice a capital crime. Even today, in China and Arabia, to be a practicing Catholic is criminal. The way things are going here in our country, we can expect any day to see priests and bishops arrested for openly opposing same sex marriage. Are you ready to stand up and be counted Catholic?

18. Fear of martyrdom; Martyrdom is the greatest gift God offers. A mature Christian should be joyfully martyr ready at all times. The greatest place in heaven is reserved for martyrs. It only hurts for a little while and it can be a sweet heart. We tend to think of martyrs as belonging to long ago and far away. Do you realize that in the 20th century just past, more Catholics were put to death for their faith, than in the previous 19 centuries put together? Many thousands of our fellow Catholics were martyred in places like Mexico, Hitler's Germany, Islam, during the Spanish revolution, in the Soviet block countries, and many other places. This goes on today in China, Ethiopia, Sudan, Indonesia, and other parts of the Arab world. We see signs the political correct people are setting things up in America too, The Catholic Church is the biggest obstacle to their re-written morality. When people stop believing in God they become open to believe and to justify anything. Without the rule of God there is really no rule at all. The

world-wide Catholic is their mortal enemy. Are you ready? Or are you just fearful? Come, Holy Spirit.

What other fears can you think of that keep us from being all God created us to be?

We've talked about Holy Zeal and Holy Boldness, and how they are needed for the Church and the Charismatic Renewal to exercise their divine power.

Next time we'll talk about Holy Evangelism. Of course, now with our new zeal and holy boldness we are ready for evangelism. If some of this is too hard for you, don't worry about it. Just keep it in your prayer.