

THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Sir 15:15-20; Ps 119:1-2,4-5,17-18,33-34; 1 Cor 2:6-10;

Mt 5:20-22,27-28,33-34,37 (Short Form)

STUDY: THE SECOND SIGN OF A DYNAMIC CATHOLIC

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun

Saturday, February 11, 2017, 5:00 p.m. Mass

Sunday, February 12, 2017, 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Masses

Ignite Your Faith is the name of our spiritual campaign.

This spiritual initiative is for **two years**.

Ignite Your Faith is divided into **four parts**

which correspond to ***The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic***.

Let's review the **four signs**:

prayer, study, generosity, and evangelization.

Study is our new point of emphasis.

This does not mean that we should cut back or stop our prayer.

Whatever improvements that we may have experienced in our prayer life,

we need to keep praying because Dynamic Catholics pray every day.

But, we are going to **shift the focus and concentrate on study.**

Matthew Kelly lays out his reasons for why study is important in **Chapter Three**.

It's **not too long**, pages 75 to 104, just 29 pages, and it is a quick read.

Study is a **big challenge** for us Catholics.

How big?

Matthew Kelly's research revealed a couple of **disappointing facts**:

93 percent of Catholics do **little or no spiritual, theological, or religious reading**;

and **99 percent** of Catholics have **not read a spiritual book** in the **past year** (*FSDC*, 100).

If you have not been studying your faith very much,

you are pretty much like most other Catholics.

Except, there is **small segment** of Catholics, **7 percent**,

that report that they **study and read** about their Catholic faith **regularly**,

and they find that **their faith** has become far **more alive and active** (*FSDC*, 92).

Study turns them into **Dynamic Catholics**.

When **our parish** did the **self-assessment** at the very beginning,

as a whole, we **rated itself fairly low** when it comes to **study**.

We are **pretty normal** when compared to Catholics across our country.

The **silver lining** is that we have **lots of room for improvement**.

In general, we are **not** all that **well-informed** about **our faith**.

We have **lots of questions**, and often we don't have very many answers,

but the **answers are out there** if we are willing to **pursue them** (*FSDC*, 88,89,91).

To **set the table**, **Matthew Kelly** begins with a discussion of **how we see the world**.
Our world view, our lens with how we see and understand things, **tends to be narrow**,
formed by our **experience** and our **education** (*FSDC*, 76).
Our **experiences**, unique as they may be, are **limited**,
and our **education** may cover a lot of information,
but much of our education is **not grounded in truth and wisdom**
and it **does not delve** into the **deeper meaning** of life and the **purpose** of life.
How we see things runs the danger of being **narrow** and **superficial**.

Our **secular culture** does not help us very much. Actually, it is a hindrance.
What is the purpose of your life, your marriage, your family, your job? (*FSDC*, 77,81).
Secular culture views people as **consumers** or **producers**.
People make stuff, do stuff, and buy stuff.
It is a **world view** governed by the **economy** and **standard of living**.
You and I, we are **immersed** in this worldly culture,
and we are **deeply influenced** by it (*FSDC*, 81).

The way that we Catholics see and understand things **cannot be through the world's lens**.
When **Jesus** came, he gave us a **new way to see and understand things** (*FSDC*, 76).
Our purpose in life is **not our level of our education**,
how well our job pays, or the **kind of house** that we live in.
Jesus calls us to **holiness**, to a **good life** (*FSDC*, 77,78).
a life dedicated to **truth, goodness, virtue, service, kindness, compassion**.
The secular world does not hold these things up as values.
When is the last time you saw a TV commercial
urging us to seek and uphold the truth?
When is the last time you saw a TV commercial about loving your spouse,
and being faithful to your spouse alone, and about giving your life as gift to your spouse?
Commercials are about **buying** the best **cars** and best **beer**,
and saving 15 percent on your car insurance (*FSDC*, 81).
Jesus wants us to **grow in holiness** (*FSDC*, 77,78).,
to be the **best possible people** that we can be (*FSDC*, 78).
to **go beyond** where we are now, to undergo a **transformation** (*FSDC*, 79).
If we are going to be **formed by Jesus** rather than our secular culture,
we have to **know all about Jesus**, and **truth** and **wisdom**, and that requires **study** (*FSDC*, 81).
Nobody is going to give to us; we have to go get it.

In addition to the world's view about **consumerism**,
Matthew Kelly wants to **warn** us about one other thing
that is **dangerous, toxic**, to followers of Jesus,
an operative philosophy in today's world called **relativism** (*FSDC*, 82-86).
Jesus embodies **truth**.
Jesus is the way, the **truth**, and the life (Jn 14:6).
The **more truthful** we are, the **more** that we are **like Jesus**.
But, the more we **stray** from the truth, **stretch** the truth, **distort** the truth,
the **less** we are **like Jesus**.

A **good Catholic** is **governed** by **truth** and **wisdom** (Sir 15:18).

Wisdom is about **knowing** the **difference** between:

right and **wrong**, good and bad, moral and immoral (Sir 15:15; 1 Cor 2:6-7; *FSDC*, 84, 85).

In a **sound philosophy**, it is possible to **know** the **truth** and what is **right**.

But in **relativism**, there is **no absolute truth** (*FSDC*, 82).

Relativism says, "What is true for you may not be true for me."

"You have your 'truth,' and I have my 'truth,' and even if these truths are contradictory, you have to respect my truth, and if you don't, you are intolerant" (*FSDC*, 82,83).

Let's take an **example** that is **dividing America**.

Let's look at an objective, knowable truth.

All **human life** has **value**.

All human life should be **protected** and **nurtured**.

Thou shalt **not kill** (Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17; Mt 5:21).

The Gospel of Life is an **absolute truth**.

There is a **right** and **wrong** here: to safeguard life is right, to kill someone is wrong (Sir 15:17).

The abortionist says, "You can have your truth, but I have my truth,

and in my case, my truth is right for me, and you have to respect my truth,

and if you don't respect my truth, you are intolerant, ignorant, and narrow-minded."

Relativism allows people to **do whatever** they want whether it is **right or wrong** (*FSDC*, 82).

Relativism is a deeply **flawed philosophy**

that is **running rampant** in **Western culture** (i.e., Europe and the U.S.) (*FSDC*, 82,83,84).

Relativism is not governed by objective truth,

between the difference between right and wrong, and upholding what is right,

but by **following one's own personal wishes and desires**. **Anything goes** (*FSDC*, 82).

Relativism is **pervasive** on our **college campuses**,

and our **young people** are being **indoctrinated, brainwashed**, with relativism (*FSDC*, 83, 84).

Relativists say that **Christians** must **not impose** their **religious beliefs** on others (*FSDC*, 83).

This is not about religious beliefs.

Wisdom is **about right** and **wrong**, and the ability to know the **difference** (*FSDC*, 84,85).

and to **insist** on what is **right** and **good**,

because right and good is **not only for Catholics** but for the **wellbeing of everyone**.

If the **truth** can be **known**,

and if by **wisdom**, we can learn the **difference** between **right** and **wrong**,

it means that we must **learn** as much as we can **about the truth**.

It is **imperative** that we **study**.

Who has the truth? What should we study?

Jesus has the truth. We should **study** his **gospel** (*FSDC*, 91).

We believe that the **Catholic Church** has the **truth** (*FSDC*, 89).

Yes, the Church has made its mistakes, but it still has the truth.

Over 2000 years some of the **brightest minds** in all of history,

intellectual giants, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, the Church Councils,
incredible theologians, brilliant philosophers,

have developed **Church teachings** to **guide** us in the **ways of truth** (*FSDC*, 89,91).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* summarizes all of our **main teachings, all truth**.

Most Catholics don't read or study much about their faith,
and they don't know their faith very well.
Most Catholics are filled with unanswered questions.
Matthew Kelly's research shows that **the more that people study** their faith,
the more alive and dynamic their faith becomes.

If we want to be good Catholics, we have to pray.
If we want to be good Catholics, we have to study.

If we are going to pray, we have to make it a priority and reserve a time and place.
If we are going to study, we have to make it a priority,
we have to set aside some time, and we have to have something good to read.

The **first essential** is "The Good Book," The **Bible**.

We have to go to the source, Jesus himself.

If you don't have a Bible, please, get one!

The other important book is the *Catechism*,
because it has all the main things that the Church teaches.

Next, please keep reading Matthew Kelly,
and *The Four Signs of the Dynamic Catholic*.

There is an **insert** in the **parish bulletin** this week with **recommended books**,
the **top choices** of Fr. Steve LaCanne, Fr. Michael Reding, and yours truly.

When Matthew Kelly's research team asked **dynamic Catholics how they study**,
they reported three main ways:

reading **books** and magazines,

listening to **CDs**,

and watching **religious programming** on a channel like EWTN (*FSDC*, 92).

They also added some **other helpful ways** to study:

Bible study, guest speakers, adult education programs, retreats, and pilgrimages (*FSDC*, 92).

So here we are at the **beginning** of the **second phase** of *Ignite Your Faith*.

Study is our new focus.

Matthew Kelly observes, and very correctly,
that **getting started is the hardest thing** (*FSDC*, 97).

I would like to ask you to make a **conscious decision** to **get started**.

Just like you set aside at least a few minutes each day for prayer,
set aside at least a few minutes for study.

Matthew Kelly suggests going small, so the plan is achievable, doable.

Kelly recommends **five pages a day** (*FSDC*, 103).

I'd be happy with **one or two** because the **most important** thing is to **get started**.

Study is the **path to truth**.

Study will further **shape how we see our world**

and **guide us** to **live according** to the **Master Teacher**, our Lord Jesus.