

SOLT Lay Formation Teaching Transcript

IMITATE MARY BECOME LIKE JESUS LIVE FOR THE TRIUNE GOD

IMAGE & LIKENESS

God's blessings. Our Lady, St. Joseph, the Holy Angels and Saints smile upon you. Welcome again to the Lay Formation Program of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. My name is Fr. Zachary of the Mother of God, the Priest Director of Lay Formation. We rejoice that you have responded to Our Lady's call to come and know that you are beloved by God, that almighty God has a purpose and plan for your life, that your life has meaning, significance, and that you have a destiny. You've learned how to pray so that you can respond to this plan faithfully, so that you can live a life of happiness, holiness, and God willing, reach heaven under Our Lady's mantle, as she holds you by the hand and guides you to the heart of the Most Holy Trinity.

We begin with the sign of our Faith.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, pray for us.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Image & Likeness

As we commence the third teaching in this first year of the Lay Formation Program of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. This teaching entitled, "The Image and Likeness of God." We recall that the first teaching was on the Purpose and Meaning of Life, the Plan of Communion in which we were created; for which we are destined. The second teaching was on Prayer. And now, we come to understanding the gift of our creation in God's Image and Likeness. God created us in His Image and Likeness so that we may have communion with Him, because you can only have communion with someone that has the same Image and Likeness.

Memory, Intellect & Will

God gave us a memory, an intellect, and a will to remember His goodness, to know Him and to love Him. We were created in love, for love. God gave us a free will, because love requires that one exercise their free will in a loving, sacrificial, total self-giving to the other as the beloved comes to union with the Lover. God loves us! He created us so we may enter into a union, a communion with God Himself; participate in God's life for all eternity.

Created in the Mind of God

Today, we continue to understand how Our Lady was created in the mind of God and the heart of God before all of creation, and how you and I were created in the mind of God and the heart of God before all creation; that is, we were known by God before we were born. At the appropriate time, God gave us the gift of a body and soul and a spirit and placed us in the family into whom we were born. He gifts us with His Life in Baptism. He's called us into his family into the Church. We'll be discussing more about these realities as we continue with the Lay Formation Program. Today, we come to understand how we are created in the Image and Likeness of God. This is very necessary because no one can go forward in this Formation Program unless they know that they are created in the Image and Likeness of God. Christian, know who you are; know your dignity.

7 Aspects of Being Created in the Image & Likeness of God (KCGLGDC)

Today we will discuss the seven aspects of the way in which we are created in the Image and Likeness of God. I will give you an overview. I like to use acronyms as I teach, they help remind me, acronyms at times help. The letters that represent the seven ways we are created in the Image and Likeness of God are KCGLGDC.

- K stands for to know yourself as God knows you.
- C stands for to communicate yourself as God communicates.
- G stands for goals. We must have goals in our life. That means we respond to God's goals for our life. Every thing starts with God. Knowing yourself, communicating as God communicates, having goals; that all starts from God.
- L stands for love. We are to make love visible, just as Jesus the invisible God came and assumed our human nature, and makes God visible. We're going to learn how to make God's love visible, drawing from God's infinite Love.
- G is gifts. To identify the gifts God has given us in abundance, good measure, pressed down and flowing over. These gifts are given to us to give to others. Too many people take the gifts to themselves, but God gave them to us to give to others. When you share it's amazing. Experience the blessing that comes from sharing the gift of yourself.
- D stands for destiny. We all have a destiny. We touched on that in the first teaching, the Purpose and Meaning of life, the plan of communion. That is our destiny, but we'll go more deeply in being created in the Image and Likeness of God in order to fulfill this destiny.
- C, last but not least, is community. We're all created for community, because God Himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, is a community a perfect communion, a community. We're created for community. That's why God placed us in a family when we were born, to learn how to live in a community.

We pray for holy families in this day and age. That will be one of the teachings we have in the second year of Lay Formation. How to live the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, that makes present the family of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity, one God, in whose Image and Likeness we are created.

Genesis – Let us make man in Our image and likeness...

Now you can go to the book of Genesis, the very first book of Sacred Scripture, Chapter one, Verse 26. God says, "Let us make man in our image and likeness." Let us, Father Son and Holy Spirit make man in our Image and Likeness, one of the most profound statements in all of Sacred Scriptures right from the very beginning. In order to understand the depths of this gift of God we enter more deeply into the understanding of why God created us in his Image and Likeness. Again, it's the plan of communion. God

is communion Himself; He wants us to have communion with Him. We are designed, “created” better said, to live with God eternally, to have communion with God.

We are to share God’s life by participation

We are to share God’s life by participation. When I taught Theology I remember in almost every class I had to state “by participation.” You know it’s not of our own essence that we will have the Life of God. We were created out of dust and ashes, created from nothing to be sons and daughters of God and to live with Him for eternity. God is God alone. That should be obvious. But He created us to participate in His light, that Light we received in Baptism, that Light we are nourished in the Most Holy Eucharist, that Light we are called to live for all eternity.

Our Lady’s role in Union

Our Blessed Mother responded perfectly to this plan, and thus she was assumed into heaven body and soul. We talked about that during the last teaching on the Rosary, remembering the fruit, the grace of that mystery of the Assumption is Union with God, the grace of happy death first, and then Union with God. That Union can begin now. Then the 20th decade of the Most Holy Rosary, Our Lady is crowned as Queen of Heaven and Earth. You focus your life on eternal life, eternal glory, eternal happiness, for which you were created. In this way you imitate Our Blessed Mother.

Remember, you are patterning her life. We are seeing how God worked in her life during this formation program. We learn from how she said ‘yes’ to the plan of God in every moment of her life, continues to say ‘yes’. We learn to say ‘yes’. We see our Blessed Mother crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth; she’s interceding for us right now. The fruit, the grace of that mystery is trust in Mary’s intercession. Go to your mother. Your mother is calling you. Come to her, run to her, ask her to teach you who you are as God sees you.

K – Know yourself

It says in Sacred Scripture in the first letter of St. John, “We are God’s children now, and indeed we are,” but when reach heaven [God willing], “we will know as we are known.” We’re mysteries to ourselves. This brings us right to the first aspect of being created in the Image and Likeness of God: to know yourself. Now this isn’t a self-centered knowledge. Too many of the so-called philosophers of this world spend too much time contemplating their own belly button. We are not focused on ourselves for ourselves. We are trying to come to understand how God sees us, why He created us in His Image and Likeness; His plan for our life. Prayer helps us find that. We want to be known as we are known by God. The Holy Spirit will reveal that to us. You see, we’re created in the Image and Likeness of God. God knows who He is. When Moses went up on the Holy Mountain, with bare feet because he stood on holy ground, God revealed His name to Moses. His name is, “I Am Who Am.” See, God knows who He is. He is all-powerful, all-mighty, all-knowing, all-loving, all-merciful, all-goodness, all-kindness, all-perfection. That is who God is, and that is in whose Image and Likeness we are created.

People are mysteries to be unfolded

Since God knows who He is, we are supposed to know who we are. We realize that we are mysteries. Now I find that exciting. Our lives are unfolding. People are mysteries. Help them unfold the mystery, finding themselves created in the Image and Likeness of God. Finding themselves in God’s plan of Divine Love. Coming to communion with God. People are not problems to be solved. Too many people go around the world, trying to ‘solve’ everybody else. They put them in boxes and compartments, and if somebody starts to come out of that box or compartment, they say, “Hey get back in there. Don’t you know I placed you in that box and that compartment?” That is **not** how we relate to people.

Our Lady's Society is all about relationships, Trinitarian-Marian relationships

Relationships are supposed to be centered in God. The spirituality of Our Lady's Society is all about relationships, Trinitarian-Marian relationships. Part of this Formation Program is to learn how to relate to other people. Wouldn't it be great if we related to people as Jesus and Mary related to people? What a beautiful world this would be. Part of the Formation is ridding the ways of the world and coming to the ways of God. What a blessing! The more that you know yourself as God knows you, the more you become like God. Be open to that reality. Now this is a life-long work. We must know God first, and then we come to know ourselves, and God will help us go beyond ourselves.

This is something Our Lady will help us do, because Our Lady was beyond herself at all times. Her whole life was centered in God and she was happy, and is happy. When we get beyond ourselves, our little selves, we're happy. If I look at myself too much, after a day or two I am bored. But when I see the mystery of everybody else that God has created in His goodness and His love, when I see the mystery of God unfolding in them, my life is rich. The unfolding of this mystery will never end, because God is infinite. This mystery will just keep unfolding and unfolding and unfolding, and you'll never be bored. You'll have an enthusiastic approach to life. You'll relate to people in wondrous ways. You'll be filled with awe and wonder and praise and glory of God for his goodness. Be open to this life-long work.

Knowledge of Self

We are a mystery even to ourselves. Some think they know themselves. But in reality, God continues to reveal who we are to ourselves. I can always know more about myself. Just when I think I know myself, God reveals more to me. I will always know more because I'm created in the Image and Likeness of God. Praise God! So we need to see ourselves as a mystery. Let the Mystery of God unfold in its fullness in the knowledge of self. This is the deepest reality of knowing yourself.

Be grateful to the Most Holy Trinity for revealing yourself to yourself. I thank the Trinity for revealing myself to myself. This is the foundation, the blueprint, of coming to communion with the Most Holy Trinity: to gain insights into yourself as God made you in His own Image and Likeness. Apply these insights to the experiences in your life. Ask yourself, who is Jesus for me? You see, Jesus reveals man to himself. Be devoted to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who live in you, who live in me. Let them flow out into everything you do and every aspect of your life. In the relationships in the Most Holy Trinity is where you'll find God's will. You will find His holy will in relationships, with the persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You must see each person of the Trinity as persons, Divine Persons.

Communicate

Let us move to communicate. How to communicate yourself as God communicates Himself. Remember when God created in the book of Genesis. God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. **When God communicates, He creates.** We are created in His Image and Likeness. When we communicate, we should create. We should help create other persons into the communion of the Trinity. By our words we should uplift, encourage, and edify. Yes, at times correct. Fraternal correction is called for, it's an act of love. Let us not rush to that, let us uplift each other.

Jesus – The Great Communicator

We can learn from our Lord Jesus Christ how to communicate. As you read the Gospels, look at the way that He relates to everyone, the way that He communicates; loving and lifting up. You see this in so many encounters in the Scriptures: the encounter with the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, with Zaccheus, so many. He takes them right to the goodness of the Father, He communicates the Father's goodness to them and they're created, renewed, and uplifted. That's what we are supposed to do.

Now the problem is that we also have the power to destroy when we speak, and I find that many people speak very destructive words. They hurt. As a priest I work with many people, I serve many people, and I find many wounds in this world inflicted through careless insensitive words; worse yet, vicious and cruel words.

Let us try to be like Our Lady, always considerate, always sensitive, always compassionate. Yes there are times for firm words, but always given in love. Let us learn how to communicate in our marriages, in our families, in our relationships, and yes, in the business world.

Some people will say to me, "Father, I desire to live as a Catholic, as a Christian in the way that I communicate in my family. But Father, do you know what it is like out there in the world?" Oh yes I do. Any of you who know me, know I was an attorney-at-law in California for seven years before I was called to the priesthood. I know what it is like out there. Remember, everything is possible with God. It is not only possible, that's what you're created for, to communicate as God communicates. People will see that there is something about you and they will be drawn to you. They will want to be around you. Let's speak plain and simply. When people are vicious and insensitive in their speech, do you like to be around people like that? It is not a real joy.

Prayer – Communicating with God

Let's learn from the way that Jesus prays. We started every one of these teachings with the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father, because the goal of this first year in Formation is to know our Father better. Our Lady who is daughter of the Father will teach us to live in relationship to our Father. When the Lord taught us that perfect prayer, He spoke with reverence. That is how we are to communicate with God. When we pray, we pray with reverence. Jesus is a very respectful person. Our Blessed Mother is a very respectful person. When we communicate we should be respecting the other because everybody else is created in the Image of God, right?

We're supposed to see the Image and Likeness of God in others and help bring the mystery of life forth. Jesus communicated with the Father all of His life, including when He was on the cross. He said, "Into Thy hands Father, I commend my spirit," because He was witnessing Image and Likeness of God. We are to communicate His name in a whole new way. Jesus' name is holy, and please use it for blessing. Too many people misuse the name of God. They use it for cursing and that is terrifying, terrifying. Let us conform our speech to that of Christ.

Levels of Communication

Now, I understand that in communication, many communicate at different levels. Some communicate at the levels of feelings or physical level, emotional levels, intellectual levels, spiritual levels or otherwise. In fact, I find that the greatest problem in marriage is that couples communicate at different levels. One might be communicating feelings while the other is communicating at an intellectual level. Neither recognizing the level at which the other is communicating.

The simple solution is to communicate as God communicates. If you pray before you speak, your speech will be blessed. In fact, every word we speak should be with the Word before we speak a word. Our Blessed Mother, whose life we're modeling, pondered before she spoke. She was a woman of great silence. "Silence is golden," we tell our children. Do we live that way? Somehow when we grow up we become know-it-alls. Silence is golden. Pray, and then you communicate in a creative way, as God communicates.

We do not want to be determined by others. Many people will communicate to us in order to manipulate us. That is a consequence of Original Sin. Don't be determined by others. When somebody asks you a question, be respectful, but you know what, you don't always have to answer every question. Sometimes people act like, "Well, I asked a question, and you must give me an answer now; the answer I want, when I want it, as I want it." When I pray to God, God sometimes lets me continue to pray and reflect to see if it is what is in His will. We're created in the Image and Likeness of God. We can ponder, we can wait, and we learn to be happy especially when sufferings come in our life. Silence will teach you that.

Communicate Like Jesus

Communicate yourself, give the gift of your self. That brings us to Holy Communion, again the word 'communion' relates to communication. How does Jesus communicate? He gives us all of Himself in the Eucharist. All of Himself, he does not hold any of Himself back. Jesus gifts us with pure love, as He gives Himself to us. He gives all of Himself: body, blood, soul and divinity; really, truly, and substantially. Learn how to communicate through Jesus in the Eucharist. He doesn't say many words as you sit before Him in adoration. But He's touching your heart and giving all of Himself to you. You can learn a lot through Eucharist.

Set Goals

Let us move to the third way we're created in the Image and Likeness of God: we must set goals. Now, I know a lot of goal-driven people. That's because God wants us to set goals in our lives. The problem is too many people set their own goals for themselves. We need to look at God's goals for our life. God has a plan and purpose for each of us. That's what we talked about in the first teaching. We pray to find His goals for our life. His goal is that we reach communion with Him.

What do we have to do to reach that communion? Well, we study Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church and we find that God has a plan that is communicated to us in the Holy Catholic Church. If we keep his commandments and live the life that He holds out to us in the Catholic Church, then the plan of His will be fulfilled and God willing, we'll reach heaven. When on the journey on the pilgrimage of life, you reach the goals of God in your life, set new goals. Too many people reach a goal and they stop.

Pray that the Father's will is fulfilled in all people

Create yourself in the attributes of God. Let God create you in His attributes. Run in the field of His mercy, His joy, His Omnipotence. Come to the Wisdom of God. Can you see yourself running in the field of God's Wisdom? Be free. Recognize how you know what you are knowing when you know it. I know that it's kind of an interesting consideration. Know what you are knowing when you are knowing it. Do what you are doing when you're doing it. How many fail to do what they are doing when they're doing it? They're spread out here and spread out there. They have goals here and goals there.

You know when I encounter somebody sent to me by God, I ask myself "Father, help me fulfill Your Divine plan for this person." You see, I don't have a plan for that person. I'm not supposed to have a plan for that person. That even applies in marriages. One spouse is not to have a plan for the other spouse. We are going to look to God's plan, right? So I say, "Father help me fulfill Your plan for this person," and that takes me right out of myself. I'm seeing as God sees. Then when I am finished in the encounter with that person, I ask God, "Father give them every thing I failed to give them in the fulfillment of your plan". Then everything God wanted them to receive is given to them. Now that is a way to move and fulfill goals according to God.

Be open to God's Plan for you

We don't want to narrow ourselves. Sometimes people express their goal as, "Well if only I could get out of this place. If only I could get a new job. If only I could get a bonus." Is that what your life is about, running from one place to the next? God has a plan from all eternity for you. We talked about God and the Eternal Counsel of the Most Holy Trinity before creation, how in His mind and His Heart He has a plan for us.

We come to see ourselves as 'sent' persons. Why am I here? Why are you here? We're sent! We don't bring ourselves. God has a plan. He had this plan before we were even created. I am free. I don't live as "If only I could get out of this place." Why would I want to get out of this place? This is where God sent me. Praise God! So I am looking for His plan unfolding; His purpose, His plan. It's great that we strive in life, that we set goals. We must continually set goals in our lives because God has a meaning, a purpose and a goal for everything He creates. Therefore to be like God we must set goals. The problem is people set goals and then sit on them as they achieve them. As I said, we must continually set new goals.

Make Love Visible

Let us move to L, to love. We are called to make love visible. Jesus, the invisible God came from heaven to make love visible. Do we make love visible in our relationships? God did this by sending Jesus Christ. We can't just talk about it. So many say, "I love, I love, I love." They say, "I love pizza," for example. They may like pizza, but you can't love pizza. Pizza is not created in the same Image and Likeness. Pizza is not created in the Image and Likeness of God. When you take a bite out of a pizza, do you want the highest and best good for that pizza? Obviously not! That's called "pizza love." We need to know true love, sacrificial love.

Words are nothing if we're just speaking about love and not making it visible. We must act to please the Father in heaven. This is love, to spend our life pleasing God. Here's a definition of charity. Charity is to esteem the goodness of the Father in every one and every thing in your life. Then if you esteem the goodness of the Father in every one and every thing in your life, you will desire to please him. The definition of love is to please the beloved. Jesus spent his whole life pleasing the Father.

To please the Father is to love

The Father from heaven spoke at the Baptism of Jesus, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." At the Transfiguration the Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him." Jesus spent His whole life pleasing the Father. That's love. You would spend your life beautifully if your whole life was spent on pleasing the Father. That's what the Blessed Mother does. She learned from Jesus. She is the first and perfect disciple of Jesus. Our Mother takes you by the hand and teaches you to please the Father in everything in your life. That would be a life well spent. The deepest way to love any one is to help everyone to be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. I want every one to be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. That's how I love others. I want the highest and best good for them. That's heaven. Have a sense of love, the disposition to please the beloved, who is God, in everything. This sense of love comes from the Trinity in Mary, Our Blessed Mother Mary. Our Blessed Mother will teach you how to conduct yourself in the Spirit of Love.

Everything must come from the Trinity, through Our Lady. God is the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. Let us quit beginning with ourselves and ending with ourselves. That's so narrow. That is not what you are created for. Expand yourself in love. Begin with God and end with God and let everything in your life be God. Let God be all in all. Our Blessed Mother will teach you

this, and this will flow into your relationships in your families. You walk with God in the cool of the evening. That's what communion is about. You walk and you share the goodness of the Father, with others. Jesus redeemed us and restored us to communion and that is a great act of love. When He went to the cross, He taught us to love. "No greater love has a man than to lay his life down for his friends," and Jesus calls us friends. Friends reveal what God reveals to them. Jesus says, "I call you friends" because I share with you what my Father has revealed to me: that you were created in love for love. Make love visible. They will know you are disciples by the way you love one another.

Relating in love in Community

That is what people are looking for in this world. Are you relating in love? That will attract people to the communities in which you reside. Remember we are part of a Lay Formation Program of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. We live the community life. We must love each other, so that others will see this love and be attracted to this love. That is why we came to Our Lady's family.

This is the manifestation of love, the Incarnation where Jesus leaps out of heaven and into the womb of Our Blessed Mother when He sees the humility of our Lady. Incarnation basically means, where spirit becomes flesh. The fullest, deepest meaning is where Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, becomes one of us in the sense that He assumes our human nature. We are to make love incarnate in our lives, to make it visible. We remember that we are spirit though, the spirit in which we do things is very important, the spirit of love. It is not just what you do, it is the spirit in which you do things. We are called even to love our enemies. In this way we manifest that we are created in the Image and Likeness of God. Jesus says,

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who persecute you." These four challenges manifest that we are children of God, when we respond in love. It is possible with God. It is not possible of ourselves. We are to love as Jesus loved. That means to wash feet like Jesus does at the Last Supper. We are to lay down our lives like Jesus does on the cross. We live this way so that all may know that we are disciples of Jesus and Mary, that we are God's children.

Gift

The next area where we realize we are created in the Image and Likeness of God, the second G, is the area of gift. The first gift that we receive from God is our very life. We recognize that life is sacred from conception to natural death. Life is a gift, and we accept this great gift from God. We help all come to their destiny, which we will be speaking about in the next section, destiny. To move to destiny we have to understand the order of gift. You see we have been living in the order of law too long. Too many people are caught up in "my rights" and "my privileges." It is interesting that they've failed to acknowledge their duties and obligations. We recognize that God works in the order of gift, that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, and He wants us to establish the order of gift and love.

Grace and Friendship of God for ourselves and all others

The grace and love of God for ourselves and all, that is what our life is about. The Rule of Life for the Society of Our Lady of Most Holy Trinity, the principle rule is the grace and friendship of God for ourselves and all others. Friendship is a high form of love: grace and love. Grace is a gift, amazing grace. We work in the order of gift. That is how we relate. People who live in the order of law, they are not even in the right ballpark anymore, they are narrowed in.

Jesus came to help us understand that God is about gift, life, love, fullness and happiness, and this brings peace. We are to establish the order of gift. The Father teaches us about His Love by sending us Jesus. Jesus is the great gift of the Father. What a great gift! "God so loved the world that He sent His only

begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will never die.” Believing ALL that He revealed, and ALL He teaches us in the Catholic Church, that is what belief means, we talked about that. It is all about gift, the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist. Jesus teaches how to live in the order of gift in the Eucharist. He gives us all of Himself, body blood soul and divinity, really truly and substantially. He holds nothing back. He gives and He gives and He gives and He never runs out.

Let’s quit closing in on ourselves, afraid and anxious of so many things. Trust your heavenly Father and know that you are created in his Image and Likeness. Know that you are created in communion for communion. You give the gift of yourself. This way, you know you are created in the Image and Likeness of God. You witness to your Image and Likeness of God when you give the gift of yourself, like Jesus did at the Last supper. You witness to your Image and Likeness of God by washing feet and serving others. You see, we are given gifts to serve others and ultimately, Jesus serves us on the cross. We are given gifts to serve.

Give the gift of yourself

As a priest I serve when I wear this collar. I wear this collar always, except when I take a shower or workout. I wear this collar because this collar says I’m ready to wash feet. This collar says I belong to others. I no longer live for myself. I am rejoiced that I live a life for others. I don’t belong to myself. In Jesus I live and move and have my being, and I’m free. You see, there are basically two types of people in the world, “taking people” and “giving people.” Taking people are unhappy; giving people are happy in the end. Be a giver, be a generous giver. You see the way that God is a generous giver and the way that He creates, giving the gifts of the stars. His goodness overflows, good measure, pressed down, flowing over. He doesn’t just create one star; He creates a whole universe of stars. You have that kind of ability within you to be generous, to be a joyful and cheerful giver. God loves a cheerful giver. We use gifts in the service of other people and in that way we witness that we are created in the Image and Likeness of God.

The problem in America today is we can live comfortably without giving the gift of ourselves. There is a lot of waste in America. The worst form of waste is wasting human gifts. We waste human gifts. Everybody has gifts to give. We need to help them give the gift of themselves, to draw them out.

I urge you to give the gift of yourself especially in a vocation. As I said, the priestly vocation is a wonderful vocation. You become a man for others. Young men, if you have that call, give the gift of yourself, give the gift of yourself and you’ll find yourself in Christ. No longer belonging to yourself, but being a man for others. It is a wonderful, happy, fulfilling way of life. Young women, consider being a Spouse of Christ, giving all of yourself in love to the Beloved in a mystical spousal relationship.

Marriage is a holy vocation. Single Consecrated life is a holy vocation. A holy life is a beautiful vocation. Where ever you are called, give the gift of yourself and hold nothing back. Trust God. We all have gifts; we must utilize them. Again the biggest problem in the United States is how we waste gifts. We waste human gifts. God did not give us human beings to be thrown away. God does not give us gifts just to keep them to ourselves.

Gifts are to be given away, not hoarded

Another thing I notice in the United States...I love the United States, I love America, I was born an American, but one of the problems is how we hoard things. You see all these self storage units going up all over the country. It’s kind of interesting they’re called “self” storage. People are storing things within

themselves. They have so many things that they run out of room, so they have to go rent another place to go put all their junk that they never see again, but they pay rent on the storage unit. God gave them these gifts to give to others. St. Basil the Great said, "If you have two pair of shoes, one belongs to a poor man." That poor person is our brother and our sister. These things don't belong to us; everything comes from our good God. In the Northern Hemisphere, in the West, we are supposed to help our less fortunate brothers and sisters in the Southern Hemisphere. They will help us spiritually. We're all created for communion in this world. Too many gifts are wasted. People have given into the idol of comfort.

Our Lady shows us how to give of ourselves

We need each other, and we are created for relationships. We relate in the order of gifts. When you relate in the order of gifts, when you see the gift of other people, it is beautiful. You help the gift of others unfold in the Image and Likeness of God. Gifts are to be given away. Gifts are to be brought forward, unfold, and be given away. The more you give away, the more you receive. But if your hands are clutching onto things, you cannot receive what the good God wants to give you. Our Father in heaven is so generous and you are created in His Image and Likeness. Learn from our Blessed Mother how to give all of yourself to God. That is what Mary does. She gave her whole life to God and she is the happiest human person who ever lived. Do you want her happiness? Do you want to live beatitude? Do you want to live the purpose of your life? Look to Our Lady. Give all of your self to God and God in others. It's the spirit in which we do things that is important. The generous giving Holy Spirit is so beautiful. We learn from Our Lord on the cross to give. Our Father has given us everything. And all that the Father has given me I give to you, Jesus says. We are to model and imitate our Lord and Savior. Everything He received from the Father, He gives to us. We are created in the Image and Likeness of God, we learn from our Blessed Mother. Everything the Father gave her, including her Son Jesus Christ, she gives to us. Go to our Blessed Mother. Learn how to give yourself. It is time for a new order.

Destiny

The next aspect of being in the Image and Likeness of God is destiny. We all have the destiny of coming to communion with the Most Holy Trinity. We are all a unique manifestation of this communion. In a sense, we have a unique destiny. This means we should never compare ourselves to others, because we're all unique. Yet, we are all called to communion. This is God's loving plan for each of us.

God has a destiny for you and He has a destiny for me, that no one else can fulfill. Get a hold of this destiny. We need you to fulfill this destiny! That's part of God's plan. Don't waste your time comparing yourself to others. There is no comparison. If you want to compare yourself to someone, compare yourself to Jesus, and you'll see the distance you need to go. I look to Jesus to guide me, to inspire me, to strengthen me. We must appreciate the gifts in each other, as I said. We must lay hold of our destiny and run with it to be happy. Ask God to reveal your destiny to you. A person who holds on to this destiny and runs with it can work tirelessly for days and nights consumed in their destiny, and they are happy. Find the unique destiny that God has for you. Ask yourself "Why does He create me out of nothing?" He created you out of nothing to do His holy will.

God has a greater plan for your life

We'll talk about that in the next teaching on holiness, the Universal Call to Holiness. You lose your dignity when you use your own will as opposed to the will of almighty God. In fact, this whole area of destiny works at the root of your human dignity created in the Image and Likeness of God. Everybody possesses this dignity of being created in the Image and Likeness of God. This dignity flows from communion with the Trinity. All comes from the communion of the Trinity. We are created for

communion. That is our destiny. We see this in the Light of God our whole lives. We see we have a unique destiny in the manifestation of that life of God. We see that's where we are from, and where we are going and why we are here.

Those are the three questions with which we began. Why am I here? Where am I from? Where am I going? The answer is Communion with the Trinity. But yet we have a unique manifestation, because we're all unique, precious, and unrepeatable. Everything begins with God and ends with God. This is how you fulfill your destiny.

Examine your conscience and ask some hard questions...

Examine your conscience and ask yourself: ***What does the Father want me to do with my life? How do I use my will and the created things around me? Do I use them to serve the Father's plan? Do I have a relationship with the Father? Am I fulfilling the Father's destiny for me?*** When you find this destiny you will be happy. Don't sell yourself short. Respond to God's plan for your life. His plans are greater for you than your own plans for your life. I grabbed a hold of that in my life. I had awesome plans for myself and my life, but I realized I sold myself short. God has a greater plan for my life. I want that plan. I want to fulfill that destiny.

Community – We need one another

Let us move to the last aspect, the seventh aspect of being created in the Image and Likeness of God. Last but not least, we are created for community, we need community, we need each other; no man is an island. I know some people think that if they run away to an island for a couple weeks, they would be happy. There is a time for silence, but that means you should be spending time in prayer with God. We need each other. God has given us each other. We belong to each other. We need each other. God brought us together because we are all so little. We fit together very nicely. Yes, we may need to rub against each other at times to get polished, to fit together real nice.

The Trinity desires that we all be in His life as one. This is why we're created in the Image and Likeness of God. Many of us prior to coming to this Lay Formation Program have not seen each other before, but we have affected each other every moment of our lives because we are one in the Body of Christ. We have one Father, who is in all, and who is over all; one Father of one family. We cannot separate ourselves from each other, or any one else who has been Baptized. God is community: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We remember that in Our Lady's Society we have a spirituality of relationships. We are community. We have a sense that we are brought to live in the communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as Our Lady lives, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. This is her Formation Program. She is going to teach you how to live as community. In this communion is the foundation of our lives, this Image and Likeness of God. We must grab a hold of our creation in the Image and Likeness of God. You cannot go forward unless you know yourself as God knows you, unless you know that you are created in the Image and Likeness of God. I urge you to reflect on these seven aspects of being created in the Image and Likeness of God.

The three most important points

The three most important points of this teaching are:

- You are created for communion. You were created in communion for communion.
- God created you in His Image and Likeness so you can have this communion.
- Communion will bring you happiness. Communion begets happiness, happiness begets happiness.

Challenges of this month – See yourself as created in God’s Image & Likeness through prayer

The challenges of this month are to grab a hold of this plan of God through prayer. We are summarizing the last couple of months of teachings in this challenge. See yourself created in the Image and Likeness of God. You are God’s child; He loves you.

KCGLGDC

- Know yourself
- Communicate yourself as God communicates Himself
- Set goals
- Make love visible
- Live in the order of gift
- Claim your destiny of communion
- Embrace the community life

The fruit and the grace of this way of life is your happiness, simply put. It’s about your happiness. I encourage you all to stay close to Our Lady, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. She who knows herself created in the Image and Likeness of God and will help you understand yourself created in the Image and Likeness of God. Stay close to Our Blessed Mother. Know that God loves you. I leave you with a blessing. May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come upon you and remain with you forever. God bless you, and Mary smile upon you. Amen.