

## Section 4: Hungry - Book Highlights

### 19. Bored?

**To say we are bored at any moment in our lives is a massive insult to God, but to say we are bored at Mass takes the insult to whole other level.**

Child: "Dad, do we have to go to Mass today?"

Dad: "No."

Child: "You're joking, aren't you?"

Dad: "No."

Child: "But there's more to it, isn't there?"

Dad: "Yes."

Child: "What?"

Dad: "You don't have to go to Mass if you can tell me the one thing that you are going to do while I am at church with all your brothers that is more important than going to church and thanking God for another week of life."

Child: "Um..."

Dad: "Okay. It might take a while to think about that, so while you are thinking about it, go and get dressed for church."

For decades parents and grandparents have been listening to kids say, "Do we have to go to Mass? It's boring." Today, it seems more and more adults are saying the same thing.

This is one of the biggest problems facing the Catholic Church at this moment in history. If we don't fix it, we are finished.

You cannot have an increasing number of people believing that the central experience of Catholicism is boring and at the same time expect the future to be bigger than the past.

**Boredom is a manifestation of selfishness.** It can only occur when we are overly focused on ourselves. It always means that we have set God and neighbor aside to focus exclusively on ourselves, and that is never a recipe for happiness.

**KEY POINT** To say we are bored at any moment in our lives is a massive insult to God.

**ACTION STEP** If you are ever bored, look for a way to get outside yourself and serve others.

### 20. Learning to Listen

**The hardest lessons to learn in life are the ones we think we have already learned.** Most people think they are good listeners, most people think they are good drivers, and most people think they are pretty good Christians. But compared to what?

From time to time it is good for us all to learn to listen again. Listen to those you love. Listen to your body. Listen to your conscience and soul. Listen to God. One of the fastest ways to improve any relationship is to become a better listener.

**There are dozens of ways to do this. Let's take a look at a few together.**

- **Look at whoever is speaking. Smile, make appropriate eye contact, and look at the person speaking.** If you are not looking at that person you immediately signal, "I'm not interested"; "I'm not paying attention"; "I'm bored with you."
- **Listen with your body. Your body language says a lot about how open or closed, interested or uninterested you are in what a person is saying.** Be mindful of your body language and get yourself into a comfortable open position that makes it easier for you to listen. Pay attention to the other person's body language too. He may be telling you things with his body language that he is not telling you with his words.
- **Don't interrupt.** I don't know anyone who likes being interrupted. It signals, "What I am about to say is more important than what you were saying." If you disagree, wait your turn. Interrupting is broadly considered rude.
- **Avoid distractions and disruptions.** Be present to who is in front of you right now. Try not to be thinking about the next thing you are going to say; this tends to cause our minds to wander and we stop listening to whoever is speaking. Turn your phone to silent, or turn it off if possible.  
If that is not possible, at least explain to the person, "I'm sorry, I cannot turn my phone off for our conversation because I am expecting a really important call/text that is out of my control." Even if you are speaking to someone on the phone, most people can tell when you are multitasking. Even if a person cannot see you, she can sense if you are really listening to her.
- **Ask questions.** Nothing shows that we are engaged and interested like good questions. It is one of the key principles of active listening.
- **Make sure you understand what the person is saying.** If you are not sure, or if you think you are sure, it can be helpful to say, "What I am hearing you say is..." or "It sounds like what you're saying is..." This is another powerful tool for active listening, which, again, signals that you are trying hard to understand what the person is saying. Everyone loves being listened to.

Book of Sirach "Conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts" (3:17). To listen well, actively, and deeply requires humility.

"Become a great listener and you will be loved more than a giver of great gifts." **Every relationship improves when we really start to listen, especially our relationship with God.** Too often we approach Sunday Mass with a passive disposition.

The passive me says: "Feed me"; "Entertain me"; "Hold me"; "Love me"; "Listen to me"; "Tell me I matter"; "Make me a priority"; "Don't make me think too much or work too hard"; and so on. The passive self tends to be a very selfish self, and resistance loves the passive self.

If we wish to have a radically different experience at Mass on Sunday, the answer is not better music, better homilies, or a more welcoming community—though I am all in favor of these and agree we need to improve them.

**Key to transforming our Sunday Mass experience and improving our relationship with God is shifting from a passive to an active disposition and really listening.** Do you merely attend Mass or do you participate in Mass?

As Catholics, we tend not to be continuous learners. You almost never see anyone in Church with pen and paper.

**First**, when we come to church without pen and paper, we are indirectly saying, “Father is not going to say anything worth writing down.”

**Second** “God isn’t going to speak to me at church today.”

He has been speaking to you, he is speaking to you, and he will continue to speak to you.

**Get yourself a Mass Journal.**

Greet God and ask him, “**God, show me one way in this Mass I can become a-better-version-of-myself this week.**” Then listen. Listen to the music, listen to the readings, listen to the preaching, listen to the prayers, and listen to the quiet of your heart. One thought or idea, one challenge or invitation will jump out at you. Write it down. Just one thing.

Spend the rest of Mass praying about how you can live out that one idea in the coming week. You will go home from Mass focused, energized, and invigorated.

Looking back at your Mass Journal(s) will become very enlightening over time.

It will help you see how persistent some of your struggles are. And it will help you to see how God helps you, leads you, challenges you, and encourages you.

**It is impossible to be bored at Mass if you come to listen to what God has to say to you right now in your life. God will speak to you.**

Nothing will have more impact on your life and your experience of Sunday Mass than opening yourself up to what God wishes to say to you.

Imagine if everyone in your parish—even the children—came to Mass each Sunday with a Mass Journal, ready to listen to God’s instructions for the coming week.

People are bored at Mass. We have known this for fifty years. What are we doing? In most cases the answer is nothing or hoping it will change.

**If we had complete awareness of what was really going on at that altar, we would crave the Mass.**

Let me give a couple more practical suggestions to improve your love, understanding, and awareness of the Mass.

Write out the Mass. That's right. Get yourself a missal and write out the Mass word for word. This simple exercise will increase your understanding and appreciation of the Mass.

Take a few minutes on Wednesday or Thursday each week and write out the Gospel reading for the following Sunday.

**The Mass is not boring, but we need to teach people how to appreciate it. It's time to put an end to people being bored at Mass.**

**KEY POINT** The most practical way to improve all our relationships is to continually become a better listener.

**ACTION STEP** Make a conscious effort to listen to God and the people in your life.

## **21. The Power of Habits**

**Habits have a massive impact on our lives. For better or for worse, they can shape our destiny.**

Resistance loves the negative patterns in your life, the bad habits. The path of least resistance effortlessly creates negative routines, rituals, and rhythms. Do you know what the negative patterns are in your life?

Do you procrastinate by watching television? Do you try to spend your way to happiness? Do you eat when you are not hungry to deal with emotions? Do you drink to escape? Do you constantly check your e-mail or social media to avoid doing the most important things? Do you keep spending time with people even though you know they are not helping you become the-best-version-of-yourself?

**We also have negative habits of the mind.** Do you worry about things that you have no control over? Do you obsess about the worst possible outcome in situations? Are you constantly judging yourself and others? Do you keep returning to feelings of guilt even after God has forgiven you? Do you dwell on things in the past you wish you had done differently? Do you blame yourself even when something is not your fault? Do you doubt yourself constantly?

We all have routines, rituals, and rhythms that are negative. They have power over us. They have central places in our story. They stop us from becoming the-best-version-of-ourselves. These negative patterns are so easy to fall into.

**What are the positive patterns in your life?** They may be simple and seemingly insignificant, but they glue your life together in a profoundly positive way. It could be driving your kids to school, reading the newspaper in your pajamas on Saturday, what you eat for breakfast, walking the dog, making love to your spouse, or reading before you go to bed.

**When was the last time you set out intentionally to create a life-changing habit?**

My whole life I have been studying champions and excellence. I have been fascinated with the best of the best at anything. The enduring sports figures, the business leaders, the saints—have better habits.

But those of us who don't exercise as much as we should experience all kinds of resistance every time we even think about exercising.

We all have habits of the outer life, good and bad. And we all have habits of the inner life, good and bad.

**Habits that help us become the-very-best-version-of-ourselves are beautiful things.**

Never get discouraged. Remember, every moment is a chance to turn it all around. If you don't like what you find when you take an inventory of your life, start developing a great new habit today. Strong habits will help you break through resistance. Good habits effortlessly defeat it.

**KEY POINT** Habits—good and bad—have an enormous impact on our lives.

**ACTION STEP** Write down your three best habits. Now write down three habits that you need to change.

## **22. How Many Sundays Left?**

How many Sundays do you have left?

Life-expectancy statistics are always changing. For example, in the year 1900 the average life expectancy was just 31 years. This impacted all sorts of things. When people only lived to 31 they tended to get married younger and have children earlier. And perhaps one of the reasons there was less divorce was because marriages were shorter.

Anyway, Simon loves to talk about how many Sundays are left. At 43 years of age with a life expectancy of 78, I have 1,820 Sundays left. It sounds like a lot, but they go quickly. As Simon loves to say, **"Don't waste a single Sunday. If you don't waste Sundays, you will be less likely to waste Mondays Tuesdays, Wednesdays..."**

**KEY POINT** Life is short. Never waste a day.

**ACTION STEP** Based on actuarial estimates, how many Sundays do you have left? Count them.

## **23. Attempted Murder**

**Our culture is trying to murder truth. It doesn't believe in objective truth.**

**"What's true for you is true for you, and what's true for me is true for me."**

This, is absurd. Some things are true and the same for everyone. Gravity is one example. Water freezes once it is chilled to a certain temperature. This is true for everyone, everywhere.

**In order to consistently overcome resistance we need to give truth a place of honor in our lives.** In order to consistently experience the happiness and joy God wants to fill us with we need to build a throne for truth in our lives.

Direct relationship between truth and happiness. Truth leads to happiness. Lies bring misery.

Are you willing to speak truth even at great personal cost? Even if we willfully and sinfully choose to do something that is wrong, we should still try to acknowledge what is good and true, rather than trying to justify our behavior.

**When we resist truth, we resist God and we resist happiness.**

Our culture is trying to murder truth you cannot murder truth without first murdering the Catholic Church. Catholic Church is public enemy number one.

**One Friday afternoon they nailed truth to a tree. But on Sunday morning, truth rose from the dead. You cannot kill truth. You can put it in a tomb, but you cannot keep it there. May the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Jesus Christ rise up in you this Easter.**

All we can do is give truth a primary place of honor in our lives. When we lie we not only resist happiness, we repel it.

**KEY POINT** Our culture is trying to murder truth.

**ACTION STEP** Give truth a place of honor in your heart, mind, and soul by telling the truth. Next time you catch yourself about to tell a lie, pause. Ask yourself why you are lying.

## **24. Hungry**

**We are all hungry for something. Figuring out what we are really hungry for is one of the great spiritual quests of life.**

**Do you know what you are hungry for?** It takes an incredible spiritual awareness to work out over time what we are really hungry for.

Hunger is so much more complex than simply desiring food.

What is the purpose of hunger? Every yearning we experience as human beings is a yearning for something more complete. The ultimate spiritual awareness leads us to understand that every yearning is in some mysterious way a yearning for God.

**God speaks to us in our hunger.** He uses our hunger to teach us and guide us. Are you able to look back on other times in your life and see that God was speaking to you through your hunger? What is he saying to you now through your hunger? Is hunger good or bad? It can be either.

**Resistance loves hunger.**

**God uses our hunger to lead us to him.** Our neediness hunger is always a reminder that our ever-present need is for God. What am I hungry for?

Some would say I am hungry to release stress and tension, and others would say I am hungry for a more balanced life. Some would just say I have a problem with self-control, and while I know that is part of it, I also know it is much more complex than that. Something is triggering this behavior.

The primary purpose of food is to fuel the body; its secondary purpose is pleasure. But I often reverse the order.

Saint Paul "To keep me from becoming too conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

"For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:19). It sounds like Paul had his fair share of tussles with resistance too.

**Everyone is indeed fighting a hard battle, carrying a heavy load. We are all struggling with something.**

What's your thing? Whatever it is, **name it, right now**. Just naming resistance causes it to lose much of its power over us. And simply naming what we are struggling with helps us to start down a healthier road.

**KEY POINT** We are all hungry for something.

**ACTION STEP** Write down everything you are hungry for at this time in your life.