*Host or designated reader/leader begins the Upper Room prayer hour by reading this message from Fr. David:*

**Message for August 2019**

Dear Friends in Christ:

All of us have had dreams of being the best at something we like to do. Even thinking thoughts about doing what we love to do and performing at a level where we could get paid for it and make lots of money at it. Wouldn’t that be an ideal life? On top of the latter, add friends and family that respect and admire you, people who depend upon you for advice and counsel and you have furthered the ingredients for an ideal life, right?.

The next series of Upper Room themes deal with an idyllic life of sorts, one that is achievable. Unlike the former scenario where we are (more than likely) sure to fall short, the Ideal Catholic life is well within reach. By His grace and through obedience to the Church, we can have an ideal life – one of sanctity. This is the question the Upper Room will be grappling with in future months. How do I become an ideal Catholic?

In Christ;

Fr. David

*Open with Sign of Cross and pray:*

**Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

L: **Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth Your Spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created.**

R: And You shall renew the face of the earth

L: **Let us pray – God our Father, pour out the gifts of your Holy Spirit on the world. You sent the Spirit on Your Church to begin the teaching of the Gospel; now let the Spirit continue to work in the world through the hearts of all who believe. Through Christ our Lord.**

R: Amen

L: **You, O lord, will open my lips.**

R: And my tongue shall announce Your praise.

L: **Incline unto my aid, O God.**

R: O Lord, make haste to help me.

L: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit**.

R: As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen

**Read and Discuss**

**MT 18:2-6**

1. Think about being a child and how impressionable you were. Think about how a child when victimized by an adult or another child is in many ways “ruined” for the rest of their life. What does sin do to innocence?

Now imagine all the children of the world are being loved by their parents, siblings, teachers, neighbors and communities and what kind of change in culture this would create. A society that protects and loves its most vulnerable is an indicator of what truths about that society?

Would there by wars? Famine? Human Trafficking? Refugee Camps etc?

When Jesus places the child in front of the crowd He says “this” is the ideal, this is the greatest of all.” Why? What is it about a child that deserves imitation?

**Read and Discuss CCC 2013; 2015-2016**

**2013** "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity." All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

*In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that . . . doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. Thus the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints.*

**2015** The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the ascesis and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes:

*He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows.*

**2016** The children of our holy mother the Church rightly hope for *the grace of final perseverance and the recompense* of God their Father for the good works accomplished with his grace in communion with Jesus. Keeping the same rule of life, believers share the "blessed hope" of those whom the divine mercy gathers into the "holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

1. Concerning 2013:
2. What or who is at the heart of the call to holiness?
3. For the human soul **is** there a difference between perfection and holiness (how do you define these terms)?
4. What Saint’s life do you understand to be an example of holiness to you? Share their story.
5. What part of your life today could use some transformation in order to be more perfect?
6. Concerning 2015:
7. What is ascesis?
8. There is no perfection without the cross. Why? Discuss
9. I think it is interesting that the Catechism uses the phrase “gradually lead” in reference to reaching a state of “joy” in the “Beatitudes”. That this doesn’t happen quickly. What does that say about the human condition?
10. Define the term “Spiritual Battle”. Are you in one now?
11. Concerning 2016:
12. This paragraph is packed with meaningful words and concepts. Unpack these: “Children”; “Holy Mother Church”; “good works”; “rule of life”; “divine mercy”; “the New Jerusalem”; “as a bride adorned for her husband”
13. There is a big difference between having the heart of a child and being a child. Can a child live up to this paragraph? Can someone who has the heart of a child live up to this paragraph? Discuss
14. The Ideal Catholic becomes a child of God in time. What factor plays a significant role in this transformation - which is not stated here explicitly? Discuss. (I’m thinking of one answer but there may be many)

**Pray the Joyful mysteries of the Rosary and meditate on the role of the child in each mystery.**

**Next month’s Upper Room is a continuation on the Ideal Catholic theme…**