

Having just listened to this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, does all that sound really hard to do? That's because it is – if we're trying to do it ourselves. And to some extent we are on for that. But the Christian life is more something received from God, than it is something we achieve by our own efforts. What do I mean?

Think of a TV commercial for a luxury brand car. What's often portrayed in such an advertisement is a supposed lifestyle that comes from owning the car. In the commercial a good-looking man is driving said car, a beautiful woman sitting next to him, as he motors through the beautiful countryside. It looks like England. In fact, I think he speaks with an English accent. And then he drives up the long driveway to a stately home and gets out. That's basically the sales pitch: buy this car and all this will be yours.

Hold on to that idea as we go back to the Sermon on the Mount. "I have come not to abolish but to fulfill the [Law]." Holiness is God living in us, not our own achievement. It's Jesus who fulfills the Law. As

He lives in us, so we can act as He acts. The power of peace, chastity, honesty, etc. comes to us by God's grace, as we open ourselves up to it.

So, that means The Sermon on the Mount is not just a rigorous set of rules we must follow and probably fail at. It's more a description of what a person transformed by Christ looks and feels like! The Sermon on the Mount is an advertisement for the new life Jesus offers!

"You have heard it said . . . You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgement. But I say to you, whoever says to his brother, 'Raca' is liable to judgment. You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery'. But I say to you everyone who looks at a woman in lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." This is not an impossible ideal, but the normal Christian life -- IF that life is filled with God's grace, as it's meant to be. Normal Christians have authority over their anger, sexuality, speech. Again, what is offered to us in Christ is not rules, but a new life. When Jesus' life fills us, our anger fades, our lust weakens, our love for others increases, we speak the truth in love.

So, are you feeling down hearing this, like a less than “normal” Christian? Think back to the car commercial. It’s saying in so many words, “You’re a schlub who will never get the girl or house unless you have the car.” Jesus is more loving, but He does say, “Without me you can do nothing.” We are average schlubs – with our fallen human nature. We can’t do the things God wants us to do on our own, at least not very well. But with Him . . . it’s a whole new life for us.

So, yes, I’m comparing Jesus to a car salesman. But the question of faith is really just a matter of whether we believe Jesus’ promise is truer than a car commercial. And, that, rather than an attractive spouse, home, money, is what Jesus is offering (in the words of Galatians 5), the fruits of the Holy Spirit are, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness . . . self control.” Sounds like the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe we have doubts. Maybe our Christian life hasn’t changed us much. But then maybe we haven’t really bought

Jesus' car, that is, the life of grace, yet either. Maybe we're still just looking or have just taken it for a test drive.

Facilitating encounters with Jesus that deepen our life with Him is what we're supposed to be all about as a parish. And toward that end today I want to tell you about another way the parish is offering to form a relationship with Jesus and let His life into us more.

On February 28 and 29 – so, two weekends from now – Holy Family is putting on our “Fire it Up!” Lenten Mission. The purpose of these two days is to transform our relationships with Jesus, form deeper bonds within families around Jesus, and help us live lives filled with the Holy Spirit. Caroline and Daniel Dirkes are the co-founders of 2tim4 ministries. They're involved with Life Teen and the Catholic charismatic movement at the national level. The mission is for all ages from preschool on up, for families, singles, empty nesters, anybody. There will be different tracks for different age groups. It will be a time

of prayer, adoration, confession, fellowship, music, a fun festival of bouncy slides, face-painting, and a reintroduction to the Holy Spirit.

On Friday night, February 28 things begin with dinner and last until 9:00. Saturday, February 29 the Mission resumes right after morning mass and goes until 4:30. Lunch will be included. Children under 18 are free. Adults are \$10. You need to pre-register so we can provide craft materials and meals. You can register after mass in the narthex or Social Hall.

How's that new "Sermon on the Mount-Lifestyle" going in your life? Because that is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about – a new way of living. Please pray hard about coming to this mission on the first weekend of Lent. We all need deeper conversion and that new life of grace Jesus wants to give us -- and I think this Fire It UP! Mission could help in opening us to a faith that changes our lives in real ways. I'm just asking you to risk part of a weekend this Lent to open yourself up to that possibility.