

**JIM MURPHY**  
**Session 4**

Do you ever get a song in your head and it will play and play? Or how about this one? Some of us who are getting older can relate to this. Do you ever lie awake at night and you're trying to think of the name of some movie star? You lay there and like, "What was that guy's name?" Like you get up at 2:00 in the morning and start Googling things so you can figure it out and go to sleep. You don't do that? Oh, I guess I'm just too neurotic. It bugs me. I had this terrible experience once. Remember Bonanza? (hums theme song) I could not remember, like it really mattered that night, but I could not remember the name of the cook. Thank you! Thank you so much! You win a bowl of crackers. I could not for the life of... I called friends. I called at 11:30 at night. "Hey, did you ever watch Bonanza?" "Shut up!" Click, you know. "Did you ever see Bonanza?" "Yah." "Who's the name of the cook?" "I don't know and I don't care! Don't call me again!" Click. Oh my gosh, it took me three days. Where were you when I needed you? That's all I can say. Where were you when I was going crazy? Okay, Hop Sing. If you're ever in a trivia question and you win a million dollars, remember me when you come into your kingdom, okay?

Okay, let's kind of start moving toward wrapping things up. Again, empowered and equipped, and we're stressing that equipped isn't about doing activity; it's about God transforming who we are so that we can do the things of God in God and not just doing things thinking we're doing something good. Very, very, very, very, very important point. We talked about character that comes from the seven gifts that we receive at Confirmation, that are taken from the scripture Isaiah 11. We're also talking about the fruit of the Spirit, the very nature of those changes by the action of the Holy Spirit, and that the Spirit brings to completion, brings to fulfillment, brings to readiness, brings to preparation who we are. And from the very words of the Catechism itself, it says that these spiritual gifts, not charisms, these spiritual gifts prepare us to be docile and responsive to the inspiration of the Spirit. So if you really want to be a man or a woman of the Spirit, you've gotta pay attention to these changes of character. I mean, it's great if you can walk on water, I mean, that's really kind of neat. But that doesn't necessarily define you as a man or woman of the Spirit. It's these inner transformations that have to be foundational. But having said that, once that foundation is set, God wants to pour charisms out on everybody. Why? So that He can work through us to build His kingdom and to bring people to the saving knowledge of God the Father. So charisms, simply put, are things beyond our human ability that are given to us. But isn't it interesting? Even those things require our cooperation. And we've said that most of the miracles Jesus does, He prefers to collaborate with us, rather than to step back and say, "Let Me show you how it's done." He wants us in on it with Him. So you could legitimately say, "I don't deserve charisms" and I'd agree with you. You don't deserve them, but it's not a matter of deserve. Or don't think you're some hotshot

because you do have the charisms, and don't think you're some kind of a bad person if you don't, if you say, "Well, I don't know what I have."

The other thing too, and Paul says this in several places, for reasons that none of us in this room understand, God distributes charisms as He wills. And we don't honestly know why He does. In fact, in another place, Paul writes how the power of God... the Greek translation calls it "the dancing finger of God", which means that God is God and you're not. So He gets to move sovereignly, like the farmer from Minnesota. If we would have said, "Let's come up with a list of candidates who could speak John of the Cross like poetry", we probably would not have picked the farmer from Minnesota who can't give a weather report. You know, so many times God does things that we don't understand, and I think it's His plan that we don't understand, because knowing human nature, the minute we understand it, we try to control it and monitor it and package it and sell it. And I think God in His wisdom wants to at times keep us guessing so all the glory goes to God, and we can't claim it as our own.

So if all of this is a bit baffling, a bit mysterious, welcome to the club. I'm more and more suspect if anybody says, "I've got this all figured out." I don't. I can barely grasp what's going on. I don't even know who Hop Sing was. It's like there's mystery here. When I was younger I always used to pray to God to give me the answers. Now I ask for the grace to live with the questions. And I'm okay with not having to know or define or describe everything. It's mystery and I'm really okay with that. So again, let's all take a deep breath and relax and let God be God and let Him move the way He wants to move.

Another thing about charism is we have to realize that charism isn't necessarily a sign that that person is a perfect person. Sadly, we have many examples of people who had charisms but we'd come to find out later that their own personal life was falling apart. So don't ever be impressed by people because of charism. It doesn't mean anything, okay? Sinners. God can use a sinner to accomplish His will, or a saint. You know, it's all about God's work. So if you have all kinds of charisms, well, good, but don't let it puff you up. If you think, "Well, I don't have that; I don't have that," don't be worried about it. God gives you what you need to fulfill your part of His plan for salvation.

Having said that, I would like to offer a theory. I personally believe that there are a lot more charisms within us than we know. I really honestly believe that. I think there's a lot of things that God has placed in us but for a host of reasons, we have never allowed them to come to the light of day. And I don't know if it's that we're afraid or that we might make a mistake or "I'm not good enough; it couldn't possibly be me," or what will people think. I don't know why it is but I have just a gut feeling that there are more charisms in this room than we can possibly imagine. And if God would just kind of wave his hand and everybody would be completely free, I think this would just be a hot bed, a greenhouse of supernatural charismatic gifts. My

personal opinion, my opinion only. I don't think God has become stingy on pouring out His Spirit; I think there's something within us that is reluctant to say, "Yah, this is what He's done." I don't know if we're afraid we're bragging; I don't know what the problem is but my personal feeling is that there are way more charisms in this room than anybody in this room can imagine. That's honestly what I think.

And that kind of brings us to our last area of the day. We're talking about completion, that equipping isn't about getting tools. It's about being prepared, it's about completion, it's about being ready for whatever God has in mind. Awhile ago... and these two stories are kind of funny and they're kind of sad. I met a guy awhile ago; I guess by now he's in his early to mid-40s. And he said that back several years ago his dad was kind of a blue collar, working-class guy, and his mom, you know, they weren't wealthy. But his mom saw an ad in, I think, some catalog, maybe Sears, for some furniture. And she kept saying to the husband, "I would love this furniture." And you know the guy, he went to the factory every day, didn't say much. And she had a picture of it on the refrigerator, and she had gone to the store and "Oh, the fabric is so beautiful and so soft and it's just perfect." One day the guy surprised his wife and bought her that set of furniture. And I mean, for this woman, this like elevated her whole social status. "We got the furniture from Sears." So this guy told me he was there the day it was all delivered. The truck came out and it was all wrapped in plastic and, you know, tape around the legs to keep the wood nice and all that sort of stuff. So they get all the furniture in the house and the kids are all excited to rip off the paper and the mother's like, "Don't touch a thing. Don't take that paper off." "What do you mean, don't take the paper off? We want to sit on it." "You can sit on it but we're going to keep the paper and the plastic on it." She says, "That fabric, have you seen how beautiful that fabric is? I don't want kids spilling pop and the dogs going to poop over there. I don't want that stuff. Keep the paper and the plastic on." And the guy says, "Honey, I worked overtime for three months to get you this furniture because you loved it." "I do love it but I want it protected." So my friend said for the next, I don't know, like 15-20 years, the plastic shredded and she would duct tape it. They said they never saw the beautiful furniture that was underneath. And then sadly, mom passed away. And I said, "Whoa, how was that?" And he said, "Well, we all came home from the funeral and we tore the paper off. My uncle was sitting there on the couch and he spilled some pineapple juice and this guy was here..." And he said that the sad part was that the furniture was so outdated, it looked like, you know, something from a Salvation Army store; it was so old. But, man, that fabric was beautiful. And I mean, it's kind of a funny story and it's kind of a sad story, because the very thing that the woman wanted, she was trying so hard to protect it that she never enjoyed it. She never felt that beautiful fabric. It was there, always, if I may say, under wraps.

And then I heard about a guy and he was quite amazing. A craftsman, really good with his hands and with tools. And have you ever seen these canoes that people build out of single strips of wood and they don't paint them, they leave them like the natural finish? This thing, I

mean literally, was a piece of art. And in his workshop he showed it. It had these beautiful, beautiful strips of, you know... one was birch and one was maple. I mean, this thing... it looked like a musical instrument. It was gorgeous. And I think he said some ridiculous... I think he said like 12... he put some varnish on it, then sanded it and put another coat of polyurethane and sanded it. Oh my gosh! I mean, this thing was... this thing was hanging up in a shed. And I said, "Wow, how's it ride?" And he said, "I don't know. I'm not going to put it in the water." And I said, "Don't you want to sail it?" And he said, "I want to but I put so much into this thing that, I mean, it's going to get scratched. I put it on the gravel and the gravel's going to scratch it. No, no, it's staying right here." And his grandkids just came to the shed and say, "Grandpa, can we go canoeing today?" "Get your own canoe." "We want to use your canoe." "No, no!" Well, the old guy passed away and a couple months later I went to the house and the canoe wasn't in the shed. It was down on the beach, and it was scratched and there was dirt in the bottom, and it was pretty torn up, and there were two little boys having the time of their life - his grandsons - playing in that canoe.

And I think of the woman, if she could've come back from her own funeral and saw the family enjoying her most precious possession, and if the old man could have come back from his funeral and saw his own grandsons and hear them laughing, they were splashing water on each other, wouldn't that have been worth more than the varnish or the fabric or the wood legs? And again, I find both stories kind of funny and I find both stories very sad, because I think the canoe wanted to get scratched. I think the canoe wanted to have two little boys laughing and splashing and rolling over. I think the furniture wanted to be sat on. I think the furniture wanted Uncle Louie to spill his pineapple juice on it. I think the furniture, almost like Jesus, you know, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and labor, you know, take a load off. Come and sit down. That's what I was built for." The canoe was built to have little boys travel across the lake in it. That's what it was built for. And while the original owners cherished what they had, neither of those, according to the Greek word, neither the canoe nor the couch were ever equipped. They were never perfected; they were never fulfilled; they were never complete; they were never used for the purpose with which they were intended.

And I can't help but wonder what is still wrapped up in me? You know, they say... I've talked to some people who work in hospice care who are with people at the end of their life, and they say, generally speaking, as people come to the end of their life, they don't so much regret the bad things they did; they regret all the good things they could have done and never did or never got the time or never got around to it. You know, they always say that nobody lays on their deathbed and says that they wish they had put more time in at the office. It's like, you know, I had a little brother who loved me and I wouldn't give him the time of day. And now it's too late. You know, those kinds of things.

And I feel that there's a tragedy, a tragedy, when we don't complete all that God has intended for us. I heard one thing a guy said, "The saddest thing that ever is is a song that has never been sung." You know, God put a song in your heart; God put an idea into your head. "Yah, some day when I get a chance I'm going to go down and do something at the convalescent... someday when I get a chance." Someday comes and someday goes, and you never quite get there. Now, I mean, to be fair, I know everybody's busy. We all have good ideas and maybe they're just good ideas. But I venture that there are some things that God has put in your heart that He, if I may say, He has built you for, that have not yet been accomplished. As good Catholics, we were taught that there are two ways a good Catholic sins. A Catholic sins by doing things they should not do – sins of commission – and a Catholic sins by not doing the good things they should do – sins of omission. And I have to say as I'm getting older and older, I'm more and more worrying about judgment day of the good things I could have done but didn't, afraid, too busy, I don't have the money, I don't have the time, what will the neighbors say, whatever it is. And so I really believe that God wants us to launch the canoe and let it get dirty. God wants us to rip the stupid paper off the couch and let people sit on us. Let us accept people, and if we pick up a few stains, we get a little dirty, so be it. Pope Francis recently said that in this Church we need shepherds who smell like sheep. We need shepherds who smell like sheep. We've gotta be out among the people.

We were talking earlier about, you know, prophetic words, etc. Well, one of the words that I would say was very prevalent around the world about eight to ten years ago, and everywhere I went, people would say "Oh, we just got a word from the Lord. We just got a word from the Lord," and it was the same word around the world. And to paraphrase, the word was "get out among the people. Go out and bring this to the people. Don't stay huddled up among yourselves and keep telling each other that God loves you (which is important), the rest of the world needs this. Go! Go be among the people." But I would have to say in some places people respond to that word and in many places they haven't. So if we follow this concept of equipped, meaning perfected, meaning used for the purpose for which it was intended, whether we talk about that as Church, we talk about that as Charismatic Renewal, we talk about a particular prayer group, we talk about our own nuclear families, or it comes out that we talk about me, you as individuals, I really feel there is something here. There's something that God is still nagging us on, still kind of poking us with a finger, and saying, "Guys, there's so much more that you can be and so much more that you can do if you would just trust Me and take that leap, literally, take that leap of faith."

You know, so many times we wish God would make it crystal clear and include guarantees. If you go talk to that person, they're going to accept everything you say. That'd be nice but there's no guarantee that they will. If you pray over that person, they will absolutely heal. That'd be nice; but we don't know that they will. If you go talk to some soul, man, they're going to have a big conversion and give up drugs. It'd be great; don't know if they will. And I think

sometimes we're so afraid of what happens if it doesn't go the way I think it should that we're not willing to try anything. And friends, I have to say, with all due respect, I think we have to put more trust in God. I think we're still too "I've gotta manage this thing; I've gotta do it right." And I think it's a normal, natural human experience. But I think God is saying... don't take this the wrong way... I think God is saying, "Get a little bit more reckless. Get a little bit more crazy. Take a chance."

You know, when Colonel Harland Sanders (not to be confused with Hop Sing), Colonel Sanders started his chicken dynasty, it was a very simple plan. He literally went around to restaurants and let people sample his chicken. And if they liked it, then he was going to start the franchise and cut them in on a piece of the action. Do you know that Colonel Harland Sanders went to 1000 restaurants who were not even interested in anything he had to say. A thousand restaurants turned him down. I probably would have quit after ten. I would have gone home and made myself a big batch of chicken, laid down on the couch and ate myself into oblivion. You know, after 1000, he went out and did 1001, and, at 10001, history was made.

Thomas Edison tried 10,000 times to do the incandescent light bulb - 10,000 times. In fact, his own laboratory staff said, "Sir, maybe we just can't pull this off. Shall we get the lanterns back?" And Edison said, "Are you kidding me! We are so close to success, we have already found 10,000 ways that don't work." He did, he did. He said, "Numerically, it's just a matter of time before we find this. We've already eliminated 10,000 options." And it wasn't long after that that they found it.

My point is... I think in a certain sense, we're blaming God too much for not seeing a more supernatural world. In my experience, I don't see God holding back one bit. I see men and women, good men and women, faithful men and women, holy men and women, who are just a little hesitant. And I don't know what to do about that. I don't know how you just wave your hand and all of sudden everybody's ready to roll. But here's I think a couple things that might help us, each of us in our own personal struggle. A couple things that might help us.

I'm talking about character again. One thing that I think all of us need is a good dose of humility. What if you are wrong? What if people do laugh? What if you do make a mistake? Is that really the worst thing in the world? We have brothers and sisters on the other side of this world who are getting their heads physically sawn off for their faith. And we're that worried because someone rolls their eyes at us? I think, speaking collectively, we have such a low tolerance of rejection that we're terrified, and people always say to me, "Well, I don't want to make them feel uncomfortable." Frankly, I don't think you want to be uncomfortable. And that's understandable; it's normal. But let's admit it. Let's own that and bring that to the Lord. St. Paul very strongly says that when you were baptized, you died with Christ. Why should a bunch of dead people care what others think of them? You're already dead. Now you are hidden in

Christ and you live in Christ. So somebody laughs at you? So what? Somebody makes fun of you? It probably won't be the first time and it probably won't be the last. And what if, what if... let's say over the next three years, you reach out to 100 people. I'm making this up. You reach out to 100 people and you do your level best to share your love of God, your concern for them. Ninety-nine people spit in your face and one finds life in Christ. You will have had a very good three years. If your whole life brings one soul to Christ, I think that's fantastic. There are so many of us, if everyone just brought one, we could change things. So what we need, friends, we need humility. If they like us, if they don't like us, if they agree with us, if they make fun of us - oh well. One term I heard, and please don't take this as cynical, but a good formula to remember is: s-w-s-w-s-w-n. And here's the decoding: Some will, some won't, so what! Next? Often in scripture a parable is spoken of people scattering seed. You simply don't have the time to sit there for the next six months and watch it. You have to keep spreading the seed. And you can't be so wounded every time people make fun of you. You just gotta get over it, guys. And the only way you do that is humility, that "I'm not going to be destroyed if somebody laughs at me." So humility is a big part of this.

I think the second thing... John the Evangelist says that there is no fear involved, that perfect love casts out all fear. I remember when I saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. I currently have seen it, I think, 27 times; I like the movie. And I remember the day after I saw that movie, I was just walking up to strangers, "Hey, have you seen *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? Have you seen that movie? Have you guys seen that new movie with Indiana Jones in it?" They're like, "No." "Oh, you've gotta see it!" I was so excited about it, I just wanted to tell everybody. That's how a lot of us were when we first encountered the Lord. We were so crazy in love with God that we just wanted to tell people. Now, we've gotta have these big seminars; if they say this, you say this, and quote papal documents. In the old days, we were just in love with God. In fact, there used to be a joke that we should probably... everybody whose gone through a Life in the Spirit seminar, we should probably lock them up for about six months till they kind of come back to earth. "Hey, I love Jesus! Do you love Jesus?" "Yah, I guess so." You know, it was kind of a joke that people were so enthusiastic. I wonder if we need that enthusiasm again. I wonder if you and I need to be so in love with God that we don't have to strategize how to tell people.

Recently I was doing, of all things, an evangelization workshop up in Alberta, Canada, and God bless these people. They would sit there and we would talk hour after hour, and they were taking notes, and we were looking at chapter and verse from the Catechism, and what does Pope Paul say about this... They were just taking this thing... it was so academic. That afternoon I was asked to come to a convalescent home, and it was kind of the Memorial Day in Canada. So a priest was there and he said mass for all the people who had died. I was a complete stranger, but when the mass was over, people came to me with pictures. "This was my son. He was killed in a car wreck when he was 36 years old." "Here's a picture of my husband. We were married for 72 years. He just died last year. I just can't go on without him."

“Here’s a picture of my granddaughter. She graduated from university and she’s got a great job, and she said she’s going to come and see me pretty soon.” And I thought, we didn’t have to give these people a program of how to approach me. They simply shared about the people in their life they loved. They didn’t have to rehearse it. Nobody said, “I hope you don’t mind me telling you this but I think my granddaughter...” There was no embarrassment; there was no hesitation; there was no “I hope you don’t mind if I tell you this.” They couldn’t wait to talk about the people they loved, living or dead. And I thought, this is how this is supposed to work. It’s all about love. We love our friend, Jesus, so much that it’s the easiest thing in the world to talk about. We can’t even dream that people wouldn’t be interested. They surely would want to hear this. So I have to ask: Is the love that we have for Jesus stronger than the fears that we have about the world? And I don’t think love means you have to be rude; it doesn’t mean you have to be pushy; it doesn’t mean you have to be arrogant. But I have to ask the question: Where is the love of God in us that the most natural thing in the world is to simply share the story of our Lover? That’s it. Share the story of our Lover. Where is that love?

You know, one time in the Book of Revelation Jesus appears and is speaking to the different churches. And this church is strong and they’re resisting and they’re keeping the faith. And He says, “But I hold this one thing against you. You have lost your first love.” Oh my gosh, folks! Sometimes I wonder... we’re growing in holiness; we’re growing in prayer; we’re probably reading the scriptures more. All of that is advancing but where is our pure, basic, compassionate love for Jesus? Because when that’s there, it’s pretty easy to share it.

John Wesley, the great evangelist, said this; I love it. He said, “When you’re on fire, the whole world will come out just to watch you burn.” Okay? Don’t worry about the world. You burn for the love of God. And when you’re on fire, you become attractive to people. I was attracted to my sister because I saw a fire in her that I had never seen before. And I honestly have to ask this as a friend: Are the fires that once burned in you for God, are they still hot and bright? Everybody here has to answer that for themselves.

The third element I think we need is a love and a compassion for the rest of humanity. Myself personally, I confess at times I can become judgmental. I can kind of create this “us and them”, you know. We’re the good guys; we follow Jesus. Everybody outside our circle, you know, I have no interest in them. And, man, I can’t tell you how many times God has to keep coming to me and correcting me. And when He said, “Father, forgive them,” He included all those other people that I don’t like, and He included me. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And you know, you meet people who have turned away from God. I still feel great compassion for them. Whether they love God or they don’t love God, God loves them. Jesus died on the cross for every person, those who are cutting off our people’s heads. Jesus died on the cross for the people who are beheading us right now. I don’t know how we reach out to

them; I don't know how we help them to know the love of Christ, but to wish they all go to hell isn't going to move anything forward. So there's a conversion that has to take place in us.

Let me ask you this: If you were praying one night for a loved one or friend who's really sick or has cancer or some very difficult disease, and an angel appeared to you and handed you a little golden vase and said, "This vase has a healing oil. Anybody who drinks from this vial will be instantly healed," would you really put it in your sock drawer and say, "Well, I think I better pray about this"? You would knock the door down going through it to get to your friend. Why? Because you love your friend. And you would say, "Here, take this and drink it." "What is it?" "Well, it's from the Lord." "I don't believe in God." "Just shut up and drink it."

You know, there's gotta be something in us that it matters that most of the world is going to bed hungry tonight. There's gotta be something in us that doesn't know what to do that the suicide rate in the United States among young people is going off the charts. There are so many things. And what's the answer? The answer is God. Oh, God's the answer to all our problems? Yes, God is the answer to all of our problems. Is it that simple? Yes, God is the answer to all of our problems. Can you imagine a world where everybody authentically was living in a relationship with Jesus Christ in the fullness of the Spirit as a child of the Father? Can you imagine what that world would be like? That's what we hold out for. That's what we gotta believe. That's what we gotta dream. That's where we've gotta go. And I do understand. It's like, you know, well, you're just dreaming crazy dreams; you're swimming upstream; you're shoveling sand into a hole on the beach. I realize it sounds crazy but what's the option? What do you want to believe in? The world's all going to go to hell? Is that the vision for your life? Is that what you want to live like? I believe God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that if anyone would believe in Him, they would not die but have everlasting life. And I don't know how to save the world, how to fix the world. I come out of the garbage dumps of Mexico absolutely devastated. They've got food for another week. They've got medicine for three more months. They're still being bitten by rats; they're still living in a hell hole; they're still in abject poverty. We didn't fix anything. But in six weeks, I'll go back down and give them some more pills and some more food and chase away a few rats. I know we're not solving the problems, but by God, by God's grace, I'm going to keep doing it until I die because I can't just say, "Well, that's the way it is."

I know you've heard this story before but there's a big storm on the coast and thousands, thousands of starfish are washed up on the beach. And there's a little boy picking... you know, he's counting them. "327", throws back one, "328"... An old man standing there says, "Son, what are you doing?" The little boy says, "Mister, well, all these starfish are washed up on the beach, and they'll die if they aren't in the water, so I'm going to take each one and throw it back in the water." And the old man kind of looked at the boy with a little smile and laughed and said, "Son, as far as you and I can see down the beach, there are starfish. You can't

rescue them all. They're going to die. It's just the way life is. I mean, do you really think what you're doing is going to make any difference?" The little boy looked at him and picked up one. "It will make a difference for this one. 329."

I think sometimes because we can't do everything, sometimes we're afraid of doing anything. And I would like to close today by proposing that perhaps we are not going to be equipped, perhaps we're not going to be complete, perhaps we're not going to be prepared, until the canoe goes in the water and until that stupid wrapping paper comes off the couch. Let's start being who we are, and if we get stains and if we get scratches and people don't appreciate us and people make fun of us, oh well. At least we were complete in our service to God. I don't want to die with a song in my heart left unsung. I don't wanna do anything anymore that is anything except building the kingdom of God, building up the Body of Christ, and reaching out to the lost, pleading with them to come back to the light.

You know, we had before us here the San Domiano Cross, and I know you know the story but it's the perfect close for the day. Francis, the rich kid Francis, the playboy Francis, the party boy Francis and his buddies were definitely off on the wrong track. And little by little by little, Francis felt drawn closer and closer to God. So one day in a chapel in Assisi, Francis came in and knelt before the San Domiano Cross. And he went into some kind of spiritual ecstasy and he heard a voice coming from the Cross. And the voice said, "Francis, rebuild My Church which you now see lays in ruins." He heard it, and he spent a long time afterwards in prayer. He didn't know what to do. He went outside and not far from that chapel was another little church that was in ruins, the bricks were gone, the roof was caved in. Francis, in his abject simplicity, picked up a brick and put it back in the wall. And over the next couple of days, he found other bricks and put them back into the wall. And all of his rich little friends came and said, "Hey, what are you doing?" "I'm going to rebuild the church which is in ruins." And they said, "We'll help you." So all these rich kids are out there, probably getting their hands dirty for the first time, bloody knuckles picking up bricks and putting them in the wall. It's a cute story that when they ran out of bricks one night, they walked into the city and started singing songs in the middle of the night and people started throwing bricks at them. "Thank you very much", and they took those bricks and continued to build the wall. Now here's an interesting twist to the story. It wasn't until sometime later that it gradually, gradually dawned on Francis that maybe he wasn't supposed to be building physical churches. Maybe the "church" that lays in ruins is the Church. And he and his rich little buddies, now wearing rags, walked to Rome and met with the Pope and the rest is history. Some say that Francis saved our journey of faith.

Here's my point. When Francis went out and started putting bricks in the wall, technically speaking, he was wrong. That isn't what God had in mind. But, I propose to you, had Francis not tried something and put the bricks in the wall that wasn't intended to be fixed, he would have never got to the point where he needed to be. And I think everybody here wants this

picture perfect, air-tight plan, guaranteed success, and then, “Jesus, I’ll follow You if You can deliver that.” Folks, it is never coming. It’s going to be wishes and dreams and inspirations that you’re not sure of. It’s going to be the comment of friends; it’s going to be a need that you see and you think, “I just can’t stand by any longer.” It’s pretty rough around the edges; it’s not always pretty; it’s often quite frustrating; and there’s no guarantee of success. And Jesus says, “Come and follow me.”

So at the end of this day I don’t think the question is: God, what are You going to do? I think at the end of this day God is saying to His people, “How about it, guys? What are you going to do? Does the canoe stay in the shed or does it go in the water? Are you going to keep the covers on the couch or are you going to let people get messy?” And ladies and gentlemen, there’s only one person in the room who can answer that question, and, in all due respect, it’s not even God. It’s you.

Personally, I don’t think every prayer is about words. I think it’s about heart. So I’d like to conclude our time today with a very, very, very, very simple prayer. What I would like to offer, to invite, is in a moment, anyone who wants to can come up and touch the San Domiano Cross. You know the story, you know what it means, you know what it implies. Frankly, it won’t be like “row three come forward”. Nothing like that. Come or don’t come. Frankly, I don’t personally care. But I want to give everybody here a chance that if you want to come to the Cross, put a hand on it, don’t say anything. You touching that Cross, God will know what it means, and you will know what it means. And just take a moment with that Cross and say, “God, let’s put the canoe in the water; let’s take the paper off the couch. Bring me to completion by using me in any way You need to. And God, it doesn’t have to be guaranteed; it doesn’t have to be neat; it doesn’t have to be perfect. I’m willing to follow You even if it doesn’t make sense. I’m willing to follow You even if You won’t guarantee success. I’m willing to follow You even if it’s tough, and I don’t completely understand it.” And I stress this one thing: If you do not want to do this, I beg you, do not do it. Don’t cheapen it for everybody else like, “Well, this is how we’re closing the day.” Do it or don’t do it. Only you and God know, okay? It’s in your hands.