Hi everyone,

Let’s start with one of my favorite prayers. A “Prayer for Today’s Needs”.

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

**LORD, for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray;**

**keep me, my God, from stain of sin, just for today.**

**Let me both diligently work and duly pray;**

**let me be kind in word and deed, just for today.**

**Let me be slow to do my will, prompt to obey;**

**help me to mortify my flesh, just for today.**

**Let me no wrong or idle word unthinking say;**

**set a seal upon my lips, just for today.**

**Let me in season, Lord, be grave, in season gay;**

**let me be faithful to your grace, just for today.**

**And if today my tide of life should ebb away,**

**give me your Sacraments divine, sweet Lord, today.**

**So for tomorrow and its needs, I do not pray;**

**but keep me, guide me, love me, Lord, just for today.**

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

The Study talk is given on Saturday morning right after breakfast. The goal is to convince the candidate that they need to study their faith. But I am getting ahead of myself.

When you get the call to give the Study talk you need to ask yourself is Study a strength or a weakness. You can tell by whether when you’re at group going through your commitment card or Study the area that you look forward to talking about. Here are two very important questions before you say yes. 1st, am I grouping regularly using the “Commitment Card”? 2nd, do I study regularly, not just once in a while, but do I read **Catholic** books? The follow ups to that question are: Am I reading one now? Have I read/studied the Bible during the last year? If you **can’t** answer yes to those questions you really shouldn’t be giving this talk. The candidates at your table will figure it out and you will lose credibility with them. Talk to the rector/a and ask them to reassign you to something else. This talk is not for you at this time.

Remember that this talk is not lively but not purely intellectual either. The talk should not be a lector or theology course but friendly and as personal as you can make it.

When I was asked to give the Study talk for the Oct. 2009 weekend I wanted to talk about all the studying that I have done and how it **has and is** changing me, but this talk **does not** allow you to go into much detail. You see the outline is 3 ½ pages long and you only have 30-35 minutes to give the talk. However, if you give this talk well, it can change people’s perspective. My brother has a PhD in mechanical engineering, he read all the time for work and his profession but this talk caused him look at himself and realize that he had not been studying his faith at all.

This talk requires a number of posters. Have them done for your practice talk so they can be critiqued. We all make mistakes and it is better to make them with the team then in front of the candidates. This goes for all the other talks as well. Think about your posters and do them early. Here are the posters I used on this talk.

I have been reading the new Matthew Kelly book (**hold up the book)** “*The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*” and I know that Matthew Kelly is an easy read but he seem to talk so plainly to me. This book started out with me thinking “oh no, this is all statistics”. He found through his research that 7% of Catholic makes the Church run. But Matthew talks about what make the 7%ers different from the rest of the “**Catholic**” and he found 4 things. To us in Cursillo most of them aren’t going to be a surprise. They are “Prayer” think Piety, “Study”, “Generosity”, and “Evangelization” think Action. I wonder if he’s been on a Cursillo, well, I know his spiritual advisor, Fr. Sherry, has.

Matthew Kelly hit so many point that I felt were helpful as I was writing this talk. It was very fitting that this was the book I picked up at the time Don asked me to give this SoL talk. I plan on interjecting many items from the book throughout this talk. When I quote his book I will just say Matthew Kelly and you’ll know of which book I am referring to.

Okay enough about that, the talk starts with the definition of study and how study is required so that you engage your mind. After all, how can you expect to take action if you don’t know what you’re going to do? Study aims your actions. This definition doesn’t talk about religion and should not. We need the Candidates to make that connection. Up to here we haven’t even tried to make the talk about Christianity but from here on that all changes.

You need to talk about how Study and Piety are related. The more you know about your faith the stronger your prayer life will be. Some will talk about how Action is an outgrowth of the Piety and Study but that isn’t necessary; you can let the speaker giving the Action talk make that connection. But it is important to relate your heart to piety, your mind to study and your will to action. This concept will be built on in future talks.

The talk now is about how study is necessary for a person to be truly Christian. Every person either advances guided by ideas, or goes along with the flow and is at the whim of the masses. It’s like following a map to a lost treasure but you have no compass. It good to bring up a memory from your younger days and ask if they still think like you did in 1st grade. I am sure you have grown in your points of view and have made progress on your journey since then. By learning things, or more appropriately, studying things we advance in our thinking. So why are we **not** studying? I am a poor reader and therefore study was something that terrified me to death. But it was on the commitment card so I worked on it. I found CDs, and started a Bible study so I would be forced to do it.

We must study but what should we study? Matthew Kelly states “Most of us are not called to formally study theology, but all of us are called to grow each day in our understanding of the Catholic faith. Without this, we very quickly and easily become conformed to the worlds.”

But more traditionally and back to the outline, St. Augustine said “Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know you”. There is your answer to what we should study: ourselves and God. This is **now** where we must define Metanoia and not just in passing way. The fact that we must be constantly growing in both mind and heart is one of the most important key point that you must get across to the candidates. Always advancing, it is a lifetime of learning that we are talking about.

Matthew Kelly says it this way “Continuous learning is at the heart of Study. Continuous improvement is a long-term approach that seeks to achieve small, incremental changes. Each change can be so small and simple that at the time it seems insignificant, but as you add these changes together over time they become enormous.”

He continues, “The hardest part of doing anything is getting started. A space shuttle uses 96% of its fuel during takeoff. It’s getting started that is difficult. In any area the smallest incremental improvement can produce astounding results over a long period of time.”

We now cover the obstacles to our study and the remedies to help us overcome those obstacles. When preparing your talk remember that the practice talk in the manual skips a remedy in the outline of “Sincerity” so you will need to come up with some language of your own on that one. On that point, you can use the practice talk for information and ideas but your talk will probably be better if you don’t use too much of the practice talk from the manual.

Next you’ll talk about **who God is** and how **he reveals Himself** to us. This allow you an opportunity to add a little of yourself in the area of how God **has been revealed** to you in each of the methods which God allows you to see proof of His existence.

After talking about the purpose of Study, the talk moves to the means of study. **Finally**, you can talk about the actual means of study that you use. But don’t stop at what you use, consider discussing things you know have worked for people in your group and state that it is a means used by a friend. The actual means are 1st in Books: have 4 or 5 actual books that you have read or are reading. Here are a few books I’ve been reading, (**hold up books**) Mark Twain’s ***Joan of Arc***, Clarence Enzler’s “**My other Self**” (my signed 1st printing), Pope Benedict XVI’s “**The Apostles” & “The Fathers Volume II”,** Tim Gray & Jeff Cavins’ **“Walking with God**” & Matthew Kelly’s “**Rediscovering Catholicism”** (which I have given to my sister to read).

Those books you bring with you; hold them up for everyone to see like I just did, take your time and let them see you know those books. Don’t forget the Bible and the Catechism and if you have ever used the Ignatius Study Bible talk about it (**Hold it up)**. Make sure your books are great Catholic books. In this display make sure you’re authentic. If someone asks you about your material you need to know something about these books.

We talk about reading only the best books but Matthew Kelly has a spin that has become one of his trademarks, “What makes good books?” He asks “those that inspire you to become the-best-version-of-yourself.” Do you use DVDs or CDs, Radio, TV, the Observer? Talk about them. 2nd is Acts: Study groups, seminars, workshops, bring anything you have and show it off. (**Hold up some CD’s and Bible Studies)**

Take this time to talk about how Study has impacted your life. Consider talking about the fact you may need to kill something off in your life to allow you the time to study, remember we just asked them to have more piety in their lives too. It’s important that the candidates hear the story about your growth in this area. Was it easy or was it work, how did you add the time to study into your schedule?

Matthew Kelly advances an approach, “If you read 5 pages of a great Catholic book every day you will be amazed how your knowledge and enthusiasm for the faith will begin to grow. Just five pages a day. I hope you can hear the voice of your best self within you say, “I can do that!” Become a continuous learner.”

He continues, “The Dynamic Catholic, or highly engaged Catholics are continuous learners. On average they spend 14 minutes each day learning more about the faith.”

For table leaders, you need to help by leading the table discussion. Don’t be hesitant to talk about some of the books or other means you have used and promote the table to do likewise. If nothing else start a question at your table like “what have you been studying?”, but don’t push since there will be some that have not been doing any studying as was the case for myself.

To conclude, there is a great quote in Romans 12:2 where St Paul says “Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind.” Matthew Kelly adds “Jesus doesn’t just want followers, He wants disciples. To be a Christian disciple begins by sitting at the feet of Christ to learn. Whose feet do you sit at? Are you hungry to learn more about the faith?”

Lastly, please consider using the stone and sponge example. It works great to help the candidates understand that it must get inside and saturate their mentality. But take your time. Don’t get to the end and start rushing through this example. You won’t save time by hurrying through it now.

I wish you all the best in planning your talk but remember to pray before you start. For me, when I get to a stopping point I say a prayer of thanksgiving. Before I finish, I practice, practice, practice, it is the only way that I can give a talk.

Thanks and God bless.