

*The*  
SEVEN  
PILLARS  
*of* CATHOLIC  
SPIRITUALITY

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

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**Dynamic Catholic**

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome!

When Matthew Kelly was a teenager, a spiritual mentor entered his life to help him establish seven transformational habits. These seven pillars have been an enduring source of growth and comfort for Kelly over the past four decades. Now, he wants to introduce you to *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality*.

We don't know where you are in your life right now, but we do know that these seven ancient habits can transform you from the inside out. No matter where we are in our faith, we all need our spirituality re-energized from time to time. You are not ahead or behind. You are walking with God's timing, and right now, you are meant to be reading and discussing this book.

Through this study guide, you will dive deeply into seven incredibly important aspects of our Catholic faith: Confession, Daily Prayer, The Mass, The Bible, Fasting, Spiritual Reading, and The Rosary. These pillars will become the structure of your spiritual life, if you let them. Be open to God's promptings in your heart as you read and discuss.

So, are you ready to redesign your spiritual life?

We hope you enjoy *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality* and pray this study guide is a useful resource as you learn more about the genius of Catholicism.

May God bless you with a prayerful spirit and a peaceful heart,

**The Dynamic Catholic Team**

# STUDY GUIDE

## PURPOSE AND FORMAT

The purpose of this study guide is to help readers delve further into *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality* by exploring personal reaction and application. While it has been produced primarily for use in small faith groups and book clubs, it can also be used by individuals for personal reflection.

The study guide comprises seven sessions. These sessions could take place once a week or once a month, at the discretion of the group.

Each session follows the same format:

- **Opening Prayer**
- **Discussion Questions**
- **Closing Prayer**
- **Seven Pillars Challenge**
- **Announcements**

We recommend that a group meet for sixty to ninety minutes, but that the group agree upon a fixed length of time and adhere to that time.

It is assumed that participants will have completed the reading assignment before attending each session (with the exception of Session 1).

# TO THE LEADER

Hey there!

First and foremost, we want to thank you for taking the initiative to not only read *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality* but also go through the book in a group setting.

Here at Dynamic Catholic, we are quite proud of this book. Not just because we are confident the message it holds will transform lives, but because of ordinary people who are willing to share that message with others and to do so in such a simple, beautiful, inspiring way.

These people are the reason Dynamic Catholic exists. You are the reason why we do what we do. Our mission is to help ordinary people living their ordinary lives become extraordinary saints, one Holy Moment at a time.

And you, leading this group, that's a Holy Moment.

Know that we are praying for you and your endeavor to introduce others to the genius of Catholicism.

To help you throughout this seven-session journey, here are some tips and best practices for leading a group study.

The first session is an introductory meeting for the group. If you haven't done so already, use this as an opportunity to distribute books and make introductions within the group.

Sessions two through seven each tackle one or two sections of the book. Ideally, people would read these sections before attending the corresponding meeting. It's important for you as the leader to mention at the end of each meeting the pages you will be discussing next time so participants will come prepared.

# BEST PRACTICES

Never led a small group? Don't sweat it! Here are five tips for creating a great environment for small groups.

- 1. Keep your meeting time and place consistent.** A good example of this would be: meet once a week, at a time convenient for all participants, in a location that has accessible parking.
- 2. Communicate in advance.** Make sure everyone knows what the assigned reading is for the next session. If you're meeting at someone's house, let people know beforehand where they can park (e.g. in the driveway, at the curb, down the street).
- 3. Get to know each other.** Even if you have already been meeting for some time, it can be beneficial to begin your time together with a fun, lighthearted question. Starting sessions this way helps individuals get to know each other a little and feel more comfortable together. Here are some fun suggestions:
  - Which fictional character would you want to be your best friend?
  - What is your dream vacation?
  - If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life what would it be?
  - What is your favorite, funniest, or most awkward childhood memory?
- 4. Allow room for silence.** It's okay if there are moments of quiet in the group. It may feel uncomfortable or awkward, but often, people need time to process or to summon the courage to speak up.
- 5. Begin and end with prayer.** Start every session with the opening prayer (found at the beginning of each section), and close each session with the closing prayer (found at the end of each session). You can also give people the opportunity to offer personal prayer intentions.

# READING SCHEDULE

## **SESSION 1**

### FIRST MEETING

No reading is required beforehand

## **SESSION 2**

### WHAT IF?, PROLOGUE, AND CONFESSION

Read pages 5-38

## **SESSION 3**

### DAILY PRAYER

Read pages 39-67

## **SESSION 4**

### THE MASS

Read pages 69-92

## **SESSION 5**

### THE BIBLE

Read pages 93-110

## **SESSION 6**

### FASTING AND SPIRITUAL READING

Read pages 111-134

## **SESSION 7**

### THE ROSARY AND CONCLUSION

Read pages 135-152



# SESSION 1

## FIRST MEETING

*No reading is required beforehand.*

### OPENING PRAYER

*Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts and minds*

*and allow us to see the beauty of our faith,*

*and the blessing it is to be gathered together today.*

*Show us what is possible and fill us with the grace, strength,*

*and wisdom to live all the good things*

*we explore here together.*

*Send your Spirit upon us so that we can discover your dream*

*for us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves,*

*and have the courage to defend and celebrate this true self*

*in every moment of our days.*

*We ask you to bless in a special way those who have fallen away from the Church,*

*and those who are searching for God. Lead their hearts close to you.*

*We ask all this through your Son, Jesus.*

*Amen.*

### ACTIVITY

Facilitate an icebreaker: ask members to share their name, how long they have been with their parish, and a little bit about themselves.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite thing about being Catholic?
2. On a scale of 1-10, how spiritually healthy are you right now? How is God inviting you to grow spiritually at this time in your life?
3. What is one thing you are hoping to gain from this experience?

## SESSION 1 (CONTINUED)

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*Thank you for bringing us together today. Please bless our group and our efforts as we dive deeper into the beauty of the Catholic Church and the genius of our faith.*

*We end this session by praying the words you taught your disciples to pray...*

***[Pray one Our Father].***

*Amen.*

### **SEVEN PILLARS CHALLENGE**

The saints were experts in using the Seven Pillars to better themselves and grow closer to God. Choose a patron saint to accompany you on this journey. Research this saint's life and ask for his/her intercession as you open your heart to God through this book group.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The reading assignment for our next gathering is *Session 2: What if?, Prologue, and Confession*.
- Our next gathering will be . . . (date, place, and time).

## SESSION 2

# WHAT IF?, PROLOGUE, AND CONFESSION

*Read pages 5-38*

### OPENING PRAYER

*Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts and minds*

*and allow us to see the beauty of our faith,*

*and the blessing it is to be gathered together today.*

*Show us what is possible and fill us with the grace, strength,*

*and wisdom to live all the good things*

*we explore here together.*

*Send your Spirit upon us so that we can discover your dream*

*for us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves,*

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*We ask you to bless in a special way those who have fallen away from the Church,*

*and those who are searching for God. Lead their hearts close to you.*

*We ask all this through your Son, Jesus.*

*Amen.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If your spiritual life were a house, what would it look like? (Refer to pg. 9.)
2. Think about the examples of Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods constantly working to eradicate their weaknesses and become better athletes. When was the last time you identified a weakness in any area of your life and then systematically set about eradicating it?
3. In the chapter about Confession, Matthew Kelly discusses the importance of coaches in our lives. Who is your spiritual coach? What is something he/she has taught you?

## SESSION 2 (CONTINUED)

4. What has your experience with Confession been like up until now? How are you hoping to strengthen your relationship with this sacrament?
5. Do you have a routine around going to Confession? What do you think about the idea of going to Confession at a specific time each month?
6. Walking with God demands that we bring order into our lives and put first things first. How can you be more attentive to what God is calling you to be?
7. What is one practical piece of advice that you can take from this week's session on the first pillar of Catholic Spirituality: Confession?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*Thank you for the beautiful gift of your mercy, which is never-ending. Help us to trust that your love is bigger than our faults. Please give us the courage to return to Confession with open hearts so that we may experience the graces of that beautiful sacrament in our everyday lives.*

*We end this session by praying the words you taught your disciples to pray...*

***[Pray one Our Father].***

*Amen.*

### **SEVEN PILLARS CHALLENGE**

Take a few moments to look up Confession times in your area. Consider adding a time to your calendar in advance and making Confession a monthly habit.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The reading assignment for our next gathering is *Session 3: Daily Prayer*.
- Our next gathering will be . . . (date, place, and time).

## SESSION 3

# DAILY PRAYER

*Read pages 39-67*

### OPENING PRAYER

*Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts and minds*

*and allow us to see the beauty of our faith,*

*and the blessing it is to be gathered together today.*

*Show us what is possible and fill us with the grace, strength,*

*and wisdom to live all the good things*

*we explore here together.*

*Send your Spirit upon us so that we can discover your dream*

*for us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves,*

*and have the courage to defend and celebrate this true self*

*in every moment of our days.*

*We ask you to bless in a special way those who have fallen away from the Church,*

*and those who are searching for God. Lead their hearts close to you.*

*We ask all this through your Son, Jesus.*

*Amen.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about a time when you achieved a goal through daily discipline. How did you set yourself up for success?
2. In this chapter, Matthew mentions *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. In these letters, Screwtape, a senior devil, advises his nephew, Wormwood, on how best to capture souls. Screwtape talks about a tried-and-true method: “We will make the whole universe a noise in the end.” What noise clutters up your daily life?
3. How do you currently make time in your life for prayer? What rituals, habits, or insights have you found most helpful in making time for prayer?
4. Sometimes, it’s easier to start a new habit by pairing it with an existing one. Where could you potentially incorporate ten minutes of prayer into your daily life?

## SESSION 3 (CONTINUED)

5. On page 51, Matthew writes that the Big Question is “God, what do you think I should do?” Think of a situation you’re facing right now. How does this question put that situation into perspective?
6. The chapter ends with an anecdote and reflection on Psalm 23 and the importance of getting to know the Shepherd. What is one way you hope to get to know Jesus better at this time in your life?
7. What is one practical piece of advice that you can take from this week’s session on the second pillar of Catholic Spirituality: Daily Prayer?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*Thank you for the gift of prayer, which makes it possible to converse with you at every moment of our lives. Inspire us to bring our joys and sufferings to you each day. Remind us always to consult you before making decisions. Teach us to step into the classroom of silence so that you can fill our lives with peace and guide us to holiness.*

*We end this session by praying the words you taught your disciples to pray...*

***[Pray one Our Father].***

*Amen.*

### **SEVEN PILLARS CHALLENGE**

Set a time to spend 10 minutes in the classroom of silence each day until the next group meeting. Report back with how it impacts you.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The reading assignment for our next gathering is *Session 4: The Mass*.
- Our next gathering will be . . . (date, place, and time).

## SESSION 4

# THE MASS

*Read pages 69-92*

### OPENING PRAYER

*Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts and minds*

*and allow us to see the beauty of our faith,*

*and the blessing it is to be gathered together today.*

*Show us what is possible and fill us with the grace, strength,*

*and wisdom to live all the good things*

*we explore here together.*

*Send your Spirit upon us so that we can discover your dream*

*for us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves,*

*and have the courage to defend and celebrate this true self*

*in every moment of our days.*

*We ask you to bless in a special way those who have fallen away from the Church,*

*and those who are searching for God. Lead their hearts close to you.*

*We ask all this through your Son, Jesus.*

*Amen.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite memory from a Mass you have attended?
2. How do you typically prepare for Mass?
3. 50 million American Catholics have stopped going to Mass in the last 30 years. What do you think would draw those people back?
4. As a group, read next Sunday's Gospel slowly and pick out a word or a phrase that strikes you or jumps out at you. Discuss the reading for a few minutes.
5. This chapter is full of spiritual game changers to consider. What is one idea or habit you want to implement to elevate your spiritual life?
6. What is your favorite moment in the Mass? What makes that moment wonderful or special for you?

## SESSION 4 (CONTINUED)

7. What is one practical piece of advice that you can take from this week's session on the third pillar of Catholic Spirituality: The Mass?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*Thank you for the incredible genius and beauty of the Mass. May we never take for granted the grace you shower on us through the Mass, especially in the Eucharist. Please inspire us to fall more deeply in love with the Mass and to understand its power more fully with every passing day.*

*We end this session by praying the words you taught your disciples to pray..*

***[Pray one Our Father].***

*Amen.*

### **SEVEN PILLARS CHALLENGE**

Prepare for Sunday Mass ahead of time. Choose a day to read through the upcoming Sunday Gospel and discuss it with a family member or friend. (You can find the Mass Readings [here](#).)

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The reading assignment for our next gathering is *Session 5: The Bible*.
- Our next gathering will be . . . (date, place, and time).



## SESSION 5

# THE BIBLE

*Read pages 93-110*

### OPENING PRAYER

*Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts and minds*

*and allow us to see the beauty of our faith,*

*and the blessing it is to be gathered together today.*

*Show us what is possible and fill us with the grace, strength,*

*and wisdom to live all the good things*

*we explore here together.*

*Send your Spirit upon us so that we can discover your dream*

*for us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves,*

*and have the courage to defend and celebrate this true self*

*in every moment of our days.*

*We ask you to bless in a special way those who have fallen away from the Church,*

*and those who are searching for God. Lead their hearts close to you.*

*We ask all this through your Son, Jesus.*

*Amen.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite Bible story or verse? What makes that story or verse special to you?
2. Think back to the story of the father and son at the beginning of this chapter. When was a time that God surprised you by providing everything you needed and more?
3. All throughout the Bible we encounter people who are broken, flawed, and uncertain- and yet, God does amazing things through them because they are available to his will. Is there a particular person in the Bible who you relate to most or who inspires you? Why?
4. What is your current relationship with the Bible? Whether reading the Bible intimidates you or you do it every day, how do you want to grow your relationship with God's word?

## SESSION 5 (CONTINUED)

5. Was there anything in particular that you found interesting about the history of the Bible?
6. Looking to the week ahead, where can you incorporate a few minutes of reading the Bible daily?
7. What is one practical piece of advice that you can take from this week's session on the fourth pillar of Catholic Spirituality: The Bible?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*Thank you for the gift of the Bible, carefully passed down through many generations so that we can read it today. We know that the Bible is the long history of your love revealed to us, and we ask that you deepen our appreciation and expand our understanding of this amazing gift. Please inspire us to read the Scriptures daily, and to listen for your voice as we encounter your Word.*

*We end this session by praying the words you taught your disciples to pray...*

***[Pray one Our Father].***

*Amen.*

### **SEVEN PILLARS CHALLENGE**

Choose one of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John—and read from that book for ten minutes a day until the next group meeting.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The reading assignment for our next gathering is *Session 6: Fasting and Spiritual Reading*.
- Our next gathering will be . . . (date, place, and time).

## SESSION 6

# FASTING AND SPIRITUAL READING

*Read pages 111-134*

### OPENING PRAYER

*Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts and minds*

*and allow us to see the beauty of our faith,*

*and the blessing it is to be gathered together today.*

*Show us what is possible and fill us with the grace, strength,*

*and wisdom to live all the good things*

*we explore here together.*

*Send your Spirit upon us so that we can discover your dream*

*for us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves,*

*and have the courage to defend and celebrate this true self*

*in every moment of our days.*

*We ask you to bless in a special way those who have fallen away from the Church,*

*and those who are searching for God. Lead their hearts close to you.*

*We ask all this through your Son, Jesus.*

*Amen.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What surprised you the most or challenged you the most in the chapter on fasting?
2. On pg. 112, Matthew writes that “You will never have more happiness than you have discipline.” What connection between happiness and discipline do you see in your own life?
3. What are one or two ways you could incorporate fasting into your spiritual life? What are some benefits that could result from that fasting?
4. Can you think of a time where a book, fiction or nonfiction, genuinely changed your life? Share your experience with this book. What about it moved you?

## SESSION 6 (CONTINUED)

5. In a world with a short attention span, how can you make time to prioritize spiritual reading in your life?
6. How has reading *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality* affected your spiritual life so far?
7. What is one practical piece of advice that you can take from this week's session on the fifth and sixth pillars of Catholic Spirituality: Fasting and Spiritual Reading?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Lord,

*Thank you for the benefits of fasting. Please show us little places where we can offer sacrifices to you, and inspire us to sacrifice with a happy and humble heart. Thank you also for the endless ways to draw closer to you through spiritual reading. Guide us towards content that will feed our souls, rather than poison or numb them. Motivate us to dedicate more time to spiritual reading this week so that we may come to know you better.*

*We end this session by praying the words you taught your disciples to pray...*

***[Pray one Our Father].***

*Amen.*

### **SEVEN PILLARS CHALLENGE**

Fast from something small between now and the next group session.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The reading assignment for our next gathering is *Session 7: The Rosary and Conclusion*.
- Our next gathering will be . . . (date, place, and time).

## SESSION 7

# THE ROSARY AND CONCLUSION

*Read pages 135-152*

### OPENING PRAYER

*Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts and minds*

*and allow us to see the beauty of our faith,*

*and the blessing it is to be gathered together today.*

*Show us what is possible and fill us with the grace, strength,*

*and wisdom to live all the good things*

*we explore here together.*

*Send your Spirit upon us so that we can discover your dream*

*for us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves,*

*and have the courage to defend and celebrate this true self*

*in every moment of our days.*

*We ask you to bless in a special way those who have fallen away from the Church,*

*and those who are searching for God. Lead their hearts close to you.*

*We ask all this through your Son, Jesus.*

*Amen.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Matthew acknowledges that there is a stereotype about those who pray the rosary: “an overly pious old woman with little education and too much time on her hands” (pgs. 261-262). Going into this chapter, what was your outlook on the rosary?
2. Describe a time where you asked someone to pray for you. What impact did that have on you?
3. When you were reading through the mysteries of the rosary, was there a particular one that struck you? Why?
4. What is your relationship with Mary like? How do you want to get to know her better?

## SESSION 7 (CONTINUED)

5. What is one practical takeaway or insight that you never want to forget from reading *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality*? How will you keep incorporating it into your life?
6. What was something you learned about Catholicism that you didn't know prior to reading *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality*?
7. Now that this book study is ending, how are you going to continue learning about Catholicism? Brainstorm next steps—spiritual reading, daily rosary, praying in a church, etc.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*Thank you for the gift of the rosary. Through the intercession of Mary, our Mother, please teach us to know you better by embracing this ancient prayer and the clarity and peace it can bring to our lives.*

*Thank you also for the gift of this time together. Give us the courage to share what we have learned with others. May we go forward from this place changed for the better and ready to implement the Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality into our daily lives.*

*We end this session by praying the words you taught your disciples to pray...*

***[Pray one Our Father].***

*Amen.*

### **SEVEN PILLARS CHALLENGE**

Pray a rosary for the intentions of your small group and any other intentions you may have in your heart. (If you want to pray alongside Matthew Kelly and his children, click [here](#).)

## SESSION 7 (CONTINUED)

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- If you enjoyed *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality*, the next title we would recommend for you is *The Forgotten Way*, Matthew Kelly's inspiring book on the power of speech. To order your copy, visit [DynamicCatholic.com](http://DynamicCatholic.com).
- Ninety percent of Catholics have never visited their local Catholic bookstore. We would like to encourage you to visit Dynamic Catholic's online bookstore sometime in the next couple of weeks and explore the incredible Catholic books that are available.
- Thank you for taking part in our study of *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality*. We hope that it has ignited your faith in a new way, and that you will share some of what you have learned here with others in your circle of influence.



**Dynamic Catholic**

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