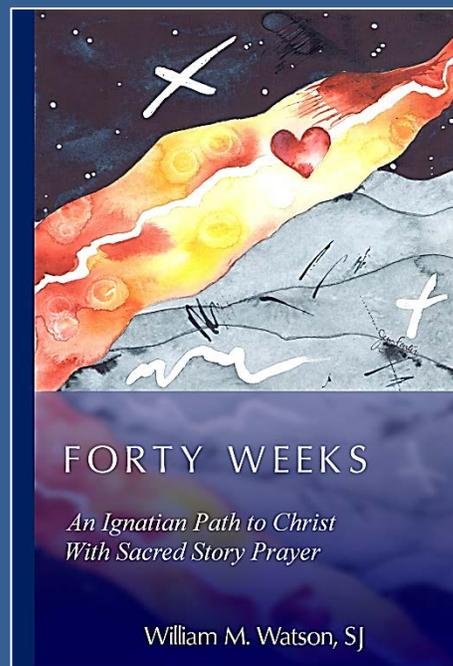
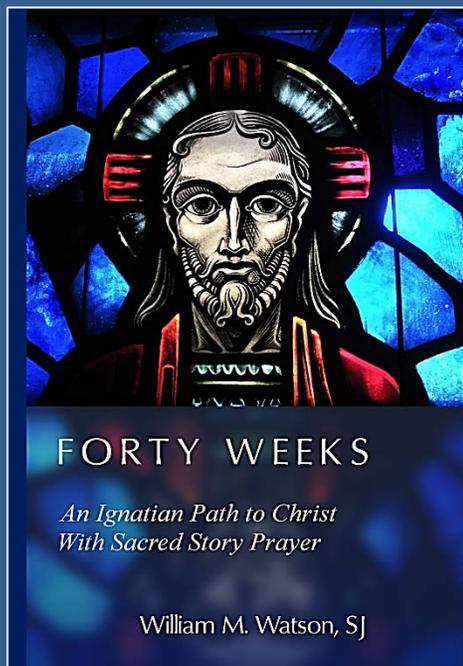


# FORTY WEEKS

Comments from Parishioners

In The Archdiocese of Seattle

On Their Experience of Praying Forty Weeks



**We asked parishioners across the Archdiocese of Seattle who are using the *Forty Weeks* Ignatian Examen prayer to help us communicate the value of the program for both personal use and for parish renewal. Using our survey tools, we asked them three questions. They were:**

- 1. In a sentence or two, how would you explain *Forty Weeks* to someone one-on-one who knew nothing about it.**
- 2. In a sentence or two, describe the most important theme of *Forty Weeks* for you personally (reconciliation, daily personal relationship with Christ, more holistic understanding of spiritual growth etc.)**
- 3. In the space of three or four sentences, write a parish bulletin announcement that both describes *Forty Weeks* and invites parishioners to participate.**

**The comments on the following pages are a selection of their responses. They can be helpful in describing the benefits of the *Forty Weeks* Program. Please feel free to use them in your own promotional efforts at your parish.**

## In a sentence or two, how would you explain Forty Weeks to someone one-on-one who knew nothing about it.

1. The Forty Week experience is time of developing a mini-retreat within yourself: a chance to grow closer to God and feel His love and presence in your life.
2. This is a process that asks me to take time to pray every day and that focuses those prayers. Not only a great habit, but I learned to be quiet in prayer and to get to the heart of what I need because praying for 15 minutes twice a day isn't done without thought before and after the prayer. It is also a great tool to do one set of prayers at work each day, [so that] work 'stuff' doesn't come home as often.
3. Sacred Story is a Forty Week prayer journey that really never ends once you begin. Learning to incorporate the Ignatian method of prayer into a daily prayer practice becomes priceless.
4. Sacred Story is a prayer for that brings your present and past life before the Lord to make sense out of it and to make your life journey to the Lord beneficial for the world as well as you personally. It's a life long journey and prayer that at times is difficult but very enriching and beneficial if you stick to it especially during the times you want to quit.
5. Sacred Story provides an opportunity to commit, through a plan, to pray daily. While I've always said evening prayers, Sacred Story provides a program in addition to the traditional prayers we all know.
6. This is the best thing that I have ever done for my spiritual life. It is literally life changing.
7. Choose light over the agent of evil as you pursue growth in the sacred story of your one life.
8. It's a very moving spiritual experience, and greatly helps to deepen one's spiritual life.
9. Forty Weeks is a beautiful and personal practice of applying the powerful life story of St. Ignatius of Loyola to our own lives today. It is a profoundly personal way Christ can walk with us in prayer to reorient our tangled and broken lives into a Sacred Story that is alive, free, and authentic.
10. It's a Prayer Discipline that teaches you how to get in touch with your spiritual side. So many of us have never even done this. "Mind - Body & Spirit" – A lot of us are lacking true balance in our life.
11. It is a daily prayer habit that takes practice and will strengthen your relationship with the Lord.
12. A 15 minute investment that reaps peace, wonder, forgiveness and hope.

13. This is an opportunity to become more prayerful in a structured and supportive way. It ties your tangible life here on earth with your journey towards eternal life and how to better unite the two through prayer.
14. The Forty Weeks program provides a method and a structure to our prayer live. It is a structure that we can follow every day.
15. This is a spiritual renewal journey that will take you step by step to a serious look at your relationship with God. It has allowed me to focus on aspects of my life that builds up hope, love, and gratitude.
16. A great way to strengthen your personal relationship with God.
17. If you want or need to get closer to God and to experience him in your life, Forty Weeks is your chance. Fifteen minutes a day for less than a year is a small time commitment. And the payoff is huge. It's a good bet--especially if you're desperate!
18. Sacred Story is the only way to find true peace by connecting daily with God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
19. Forty weeks introduces you to a way to pray/meditate/reflect. Introduced by St Ignatius, when practiced [it] will help you become closer to God. This way of reflection will help you understand why you do the things you do, help you stay more focus and awake - in the spiritual sense.
20. This is a good way to start looking at yourself in a way that you never did before. To change all those little things that keep occurring in your daily life. To go to the root, to the core of whatever is hanging in your life, heal it and get rid of it. Besides [it] is a good way to do an examen of conscience to keep improving your way.
21. It is a prayerful process to identify, heal and transform circumstances, situations and relationships in our lives that have led us to patterns of behavior that separate us from an intimate embrace of Christ and prevent us from becoming who we are created to be, disciples of Christ.
22. Forty Weeks is a life changing program that will allow you to know yourself better, see Christ in your life more clearly, and have more peace and grace than you thought possible.
23. The Forty Weeks helped me evaluate where I was spiritually in my life and [provided] concrete steps I could use to move Jesus to the center of my life. I need to acknowledge Jesus was present to me, was waiting to have a relationship with me. I learned how to pray to God. It is now a daily part of my life that I long for.
24. It is 40 weeks of learning a daily prayer life that will change your life.

25. A means of spiritual self-examination and appraisal while enhancing your communion with your creator through meditative prayer.
26. Forty Weeks is a pathway to embrace your spirituality. You will find God's love and goodness just waiting for you.
27. It is a positive learning experience as to how to pray in order to achieve bringing our spiritual nature into our conscious effort to know God and love him at all cost. All that is good follows.
28. [It] gives structure to my prayer; puts the journey of my life into a meaningful context; doesn't replace my other prayer routines but adds dimension; makes me think of motivations and strategies that have brought me closer to my Lord and strengthened my belief in a god.
29. Sacred Story leads you to a closer relationship with God by showing you how to look at your spiritual life as an on-going story. You are given tools to learn how all your past history is connected to the present and how to grow in holiness.
30. This is a structured program that helps you see how God is at work in your life through examining the "lights and shadows" of your life in the face of Christ's mercy.
31. An opportunity to commit to a prepared program of prayer, which brought me great encouragement and peace.
32. Sacred Story is a daily method for prayerfully reflecting on my life through the lens of God's love to detect patterns that might be holding me back from growing into all God would have for me.

**In a sentence or two, describe the most important theme of Forty Weeks for you personally (reconciliation, daily personal relationship with Christ, more holistic understanding of spiritual growth etc.)**

1. The most important theme of these Forty Weeks is to invite Jesus more into one's life and reflect on His Goodness and Mercy in this life we have on earth. An opportunity to grow in prayer/conversation with God and to develop a more grateful heart--one filled with Thanksgiving.
2. It took me a little bit but I finally figured out [that] what I needed in my faith relationship was to forgive. I didn't do it easily and when I first started I wasn't very sincere in my requests for God to forgive those who have harmed me. When I finally figured out that my life in faith was very parallel to my life outside faith I understood the need. I.e. when I was angry, my prayers were demanding and negotiating; when I forgave my prayers became about asking for understanding and to be understood.
3. The most important theme of Forty Weeks is: Knowing Christ is present in every moment regardless of how I may be feeling. This presence brings a deep sense of peace that instills a daily call to be with Him in prayer.
4. Our Lord Jesus calls us to live a holy life. One best way to help us get there is through prayers. In my search for a daily personal encounter with our Lord Jesus, Sacred Story as described in Forty Weeks fulfills what I'm looking for in so many ways.
5. Sacred Story has given me a new spiritual awakening. As I write my daily journal I affirm my spiritual inspirations from God, but also see those happenings or persons that counter these inspirations. It is a Sacred Journey well worth traveling on!
6. The theme of Reconciliation was the most beneficial theme for me. It's an issue I struggle with constantly, but Sacred Story has shown me that it's the most important part of Sacred Story for me. Hopefully, I will be able to reach the goal of monthly Confession.
7. Sacred Story has been a gift to me by God's grace as I awaken and re-awaken spiritually. I have surfaced many issues from my life while receiving God's mercy. I believe that the 15-minute sessions center me to God's presence. I entered Sacred Story with uncertainty, trusting that the Holy Spirit would guide me. This is a journey, a sustained process, a commitment to listening to God in my life that is achieved by always listening, watching, and praying. I have found that my

Sacred Story journey has made me more patient, more understanding, more aware of sin in my life, and more comfortable having a daily session with my Loving Father.

8. Daily Personal Relationship with Christ
9. Connecting more with the Holy Spirit was important to me.
10. Daily relationship with Christ; centering my life on Christ.
11. One's sacred story is worked out against a grand backdrop of creation, presence, memory, mercy, eternity.
12. For me, developing the daily personal relationship with Christ is the most rewarding aspect.
13. The most important part of Sacred Story cannot be limited to one [theme] alone. First, it is the daily promise of regular prayer time which is enormously helpful. Second, the deep understanding of a Loving Christ surgically extracting the disease of my own personal life through prayer and Confession. Major impediments are healing and reconciled with this program.
14. One of the most important themes of Forty Weeks is the real presence of The Enemy of Our Human Nature. The importance of developing tools to combat that negative energy in one's life. It's only through daily focus, keeping your heart and inner conversations towards Jesus. To always move forward with Christ and not let the Enemy distract you: this is what Forty Weeks has taught me.
15. It provides a vehicle to increase faith and understanding of your personal narrative and how it is related to your Catholic faith.
16. The daily reminder of God's support.
17. I love that it ties your life experiences with reflection and prayer to guide you towards a more personal relationship with God.
18. The most important theme of the Forty Weeks for me is the daily personal relationship with Christ and striving to develop that relationship more fully each day.
19. Our God is merciful and desires to have a relationship with me through His son Jesus.
20. Deepening my spiritual relationship with God.
21. Forty weeks is a series of bite-sized pieces to walk with Jesus. Just one at a time to take seriously, and to pray about with him. Concentrating on those small concepts, even for a short time every day, left me listening to Him as well. My challenges haven't disappeared, but after two years they are being transformed. Or I am!
22. Peace and daily connection with Jesus to understand how to live each moment.

23. Sacred Story brought me into a much more personal relationship with Christ - by understanding that awakening me - helping me not to be afraid that Christ would never forgive me. I understand better - Christ wants to forgive - knowing that - I have been able to bond with Christ in a way that is very satisfying to me.
24. To have a daily examen of conscience....to check with God every day. To try to be better Christians.
25. It teaches the reality of good and evil in our lives in terms of desolation and consolation and how without prayerful discernment, we can confuse the two keeping us in destructive patterns of behavior that can last a lifetime.
26. Forty Weeks for me turned my relationship with Christ to a real friendship, where I can't wait for the next time I get to spend some time with Him.
27. The most important learning I took away was to develop my discernment of why I am behaving a certain way or someone else is acting a certain way. Is the Holy Spirit working through us or is the devil tricking us.
28. This has made my life much more peaceful, spiritually deeper, and my relationship with God is extremely intense as I spend all day and night trying to follow God's examples and Sacred Story that has deepened my prayer life. I pray to God all the time day and night and giving up things to God at all times.
29. The most significant theme for me was the "whole life" reconciliation which allowed me to deal with past experiences of my hurts and the others I hurt.
30. Forty Weeks showed me how to have a personal relationship with Christ. I find that I crave the 15 minutes per day that I spend in prayer and I continually witness a change in myself as my Sacred Story unfolds.
31. Reconciliation and the manifestation of narcissism as the #1 violation of love, leading to all the rest of our sins.
32. I am a more mature individual wanting to understand what is going to make the rest of my life significant. Forty Weeks gives me a holistic look back that nothing is accidental. I feel the connection of many diverse experiences makes more sense after having used this structure.
33. Sacred Story has shown me God's mercy and forgiveness--for my past sins and the habitual sins of today.

34. It is hard to say what benefits you will receive through daily spiritual and discernment practices: centering, perspective, patience, closer relationship with God, peace. It is a practice that can help you find what you didn't even realize was missing.
35. I really appreciate the structure, which gives me a regular space in which to nurture my personal relationship with Christ in a sustained, ongoing way that builds over time.
36. Emphasizes my personal relationship with Christ on a daily basis.
37. The most important part for me has been developing compassion for myself as I seek to understand the wounds behind the destructive patterns in my life. I've had the courage to accept myself truthfully and humbly because of a growing awareness of God's unconditional love, and I know I can count on his grace in each moment.

**In the space of three or four sentences, write a parish bulletin announcement that both describes Forty Weeks and invites parishioners to participate.**

1. You are invited to join Jesus during the next 40 weeks. Please allow yourself this blessed opportunity to participate in the readings and reflections and to follow Him more closely as you go through the next 40 weeks. Your heart will grow in love and appreciation for all that you have and are. Come discover this pathway to feeling more of His love for you.
2. You are invited to personally experience Christ's presence in your life through an Ignatian prayer method. Sacred Story Institute makes Forty Weeks a prayer journey of a lifetime. A spiritual portfolio that is priceless. St. Ignatius had a secret to share. Come and see.
3. According to Pope John Paul II, prayer is the priority and the basic prerequisite to service of the Church and the world. Sacred Story Prayers help me encounter our Lord Jesus on a daily basis. These prayers assist me in being attentive to Him, day in and day out. I believe God is ready to do wonderful things for us. Sacred Story Prayers makes me vigilant for His love in my life.
4. Come join us for Sacred Story Prayer--a prayer form formulated by St Ignatian to guide us through our Spiritual journey on earth to our Eternity with our Lord. Make sense out of your struggles in life and make Jesus the most important part of your life. Eternity is forever, so learn to take 15 minutes of your day to journey towards Eternity with the Lord!
5. Come closer to Christ through prayer and fellow parishioners. Daily, planned thought directed towards Christ, yourself, and others is deeply enriching – for yourself and others!
6. Forty Weeks is a program that teaches you HOW to center your life on Christ. By following the Examen developed by Saint Ignatius Loyola, a person learns how to interact with Christ in a conscious and disciplined way. After participating in this program you will experience true joy in your relationship with Christ and you will truly be a Contemplative in Action--living every day to accomplish Christ's work here on earth.
7. These nuggets of wisdom are both reassuring and challenging. They instill respect for everyone's sacred story so one is less likely to be judgmental of others, given the challenge of concentrating on the sacred call one is given, a call that to be answered well requires a daily discipline of holiness and reflection.

8. If you would like to deepen your spiritual life, the Forty Weeks program is an excellent means of accomplishing this. It does not require more than 15 minutes a day. It also motivates you to go to confession more frequently and thus receive abundant grace.
9. Go out into the deep water is what Jesus tells his disciples after they were frustrated with their work. Christ calls us all into the "deep waters" of living to encounter His holy healing Presence. The Forty Weeks Program of Sacred Story is a grace filled opportunity to go down into the depths of one's own personal life story and the depths of Christ's unrelenting love for us.
10. I signed up for Forty Weeks because I was searching for Peace in my life. I was so tired of living a life consumed with Worry and Anxiety. Forty Weeks is a prayer discipline which has given me the tools to deal with Life's Ups and Downs. Through this process I have learned the power of prayer, of opening myself up to God's Grace and to let him in. To keep my focus on Jesus whenever I get sidetracked. Forty Weeks has taught me so much about my Catholic Faith. This discipline is helping me be the best version of myself.
11. I have had very real and damaging trauma in my life. I thought it did not impact my faith, which I always thought was so strong. Working with this program I once corrected someone who told me people with depression/anxiety/PTSD do best with medication and counseling; I said we need to include faith in any journey to health. Faith is in me and if it is something I applaud myself for or take for granted I am not going to heal as quickly or as well. If my faith is healthy, active, strong and outgoing, I will remember Christ is willing to take my pain if I let it go. I have an understanding of that now that is deeper and healthier and lovelier than I ever imagined could happen. I am not angry anymore, I see simply a need to defend and protect myself as appropriate and a need to celebrate life more and more often.
12. The 15 minutes you set aside will save you hours of worry.
13. We invite you to join in a spiritual journey towards uniting your secular with your spiritual life. Learn more about the Ignatian Prayer exercises and how it can lead you towards identifying meaning and purpose in your life. Forty Weeks is a prayer regimen that calls you to become more reflective and purposeful in your prayer life and will bring you closer to God through regular reconciliation.
14. The Forty Weeks program is based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius. It provides an opportunity to examine our spiritual life and provides a structure by which a person can develop a relationship with Christ on a daily basis. The program also helps us to look into the depths of our soul and direct or re-direct our spiritual life to Christ.

15. Forty Weeks is a method that allows busy Catholics to daily and frequently listen to God while more deeply understand[ing] the events in our lives that cause us fear, anger, and grief. This is a spiritual journey that is intended to stay with you the rest of your life. You are invited to take this spiritual journey with other members of this Parish. Please seriously reflect on where you are presently in your spiritual journey and if you are willing to take a chance at deepening your relationship with God, please attend the opening session.
16. The Forty Weeks Journey leverages the Jesuit Spiritual Exercises to deepen your spiritual relationship with God. Just like daily physical exercise strengthens your body, you will experience the strengthening of your spiritual life through daily directed prayer and reflection. If you have ever wished that your prayer life was stronger and more meaningful, we invite you to participate in the Forty Weeks Journey and see if you like the results.
17. For we who have grown up in the faith, habit leads to believing without listening. And even when we really hear it is hard to make it matter in our daily lives. Forty Weeks is a tiny time commitment, 15 minutes a day, to review one of His truths every week. This prayer discipline has led me to listen. And it has mattered a lot.
18. Ready to build a better relationship with God? Don't be afraid - time to awaken and learn how God wants to forgive! Learn the path to reconciliation! Time to get peace of mind with God - in your way! Learn more through Forty Weeks!
19. If you would like to have a few minutes daily with our Lord and want to improve your Christian attitude, try this 40 weeks of Ignatian Spirituality. This is a personal method that you can try in your own house, at your own time and the only boss is Jesus. / Guidance will be provided by internet or by monthly meetings. Please call.....
20. Begin a guided spiritual journey that will awaken you to the intimate and loving presence of God in your everyday life. Learn how that presence can transform you and your relationships.
21. Have you been thinking that you would like to have a more active faith life? That you would like to be closer to Christ, but you really hadn't found a way to do this. Look no further. Please join us in [a] life changing program based on the centuries old prayer method developed by St. Ignatius, founder of the Jesuit order, and made more accessible by Fr. William Watson SJ. See you there :)
22. If you want to [acquire] a daily prayer life and become closer to God this Sacred Story is what you are looking [for]! It will change your life!

23. "Just a closer walk with thee" can be more than a lyric. Learn more about yourself and your relationship to and with your God through "Forty Weeks".
24. Are you finding that you are bored and empty in your spiritual life? Are you thinking you have it all figured out only to find you are barely hanging in there? Forty Weeks will help clarify your relationship with Christ and together you will begin your incredible journey that will last through eternity.
25. Forty Weeks is an Ignatian-based program that introduces each participant to their own unique Sacred Story. It encourages you to seek God's mercy so that you can grow in holiness by examining your past and how it affects you today. You will receive step by step guidelines designed to open your heart and soul to the Father's desire for your life.
26. Would you like to nurture a sacred space for Christ in your life? The Sacred Story prayer program translates St. Ignatius of Loyola's classic spiritual insights into contemporary terms that will help you grow in your Christian journey of prayer, discernment, and discipleship. No matter what your story in life has been, Sacred Story can help heal the wounds of the past and journey towards your "happily ever after" in Christ!
27. Join your fellow parishioners in their efforts to become closer to Christ and learn what is wanted from each of us. Bring peace and hope into your life daily.
28. Sacred Story is a daily, strategic prayer method based on the life and experiences of St. Ignatius of Loyola which offers you the chance to look at your life through the lens of God's immeasurable love for you. In this light, you will develop a new compassion for yourself as you come to understand the wounds behind your thoughts, words and deeds; you will have the courage to name and change any destructive patterns holding you back from all God has planned for you. It is a journey of grace that will yield dividends both now and in eternity!