



FORTY WEEKS

A Journey of Healing and Transformation

FOR PRIESTS

with

Dr. Bob Schuchts

Foreword by Archbishop J. Peter Sartain

William M. Watson, SJ

Steeped in the wisdom of St. Ignatius and the insights of Catholic psychology, "Forty Weeks: A Journey of Healing and Transformation for Priests", helps priests draw closer to the heart of God the Father using Fr. Watson's Sacred Story method of prayer. With these powerful tools, priests can build the foundation for lifelong growth in intimacy with the Holy Trinity.

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L., Archbishop of Denver.

There are a lot of books out there to help priests build up their parishes, like Divine Renovation and Rebuilt. I'm glad now there's a book to help build us up as priests. I like this one because it is eminently "doable" — in short 15 to 30 minute prayer blocks, convenient for our busy lives.

It is also solid, built on the scripture and the saints, with an eye to the insights of a psychologist who is a practicing Catholic. I highly recommend you give it a try, and then share it with your priest support group. It's helping me.

Michael C. Barber, S.J., Bishop of Oakland

It is a good sign that you have picked up this book. It means that God is moving, inspiring you to "more" in your life. I encourage you to dive in. Make the commitment. There is nothing more essential, nothing more profound and practical for your priesthood than to continually deepen your friendship with Christ. Too often we want instant results. Forty Weeks: A Journey of Healing and Transformation for Priests is not about instant gratification. No this book clearly intends to facilitate what you surrendered to on your day of ordination when your bishop said "understand what you do, imitate the mysteries that you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the cross."

The life of a priest cannot flourish without some intimate "gut check" with Jesus Christ on daily basis. The renewal of our Church needs nothing less than the healing, transformation of every priestly heart; in this case; your heart! I am grateful to Fr. Watson and Dr. Schuchts for providing the wisdom and format of this book. I sense the pathway they lay out, to be followed individually or with a group, will let the astute reader know they are not alone. The spiritual fathers, St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. John Paul II, permeate these reflections with the breath of the Spirit; urging us onward to that utter and complete surrender that nothing less will satisfy our priestly heart.

James F. Checchio, M.B.A., J.C.D., Bishop of Metuchen

In a time when parish priests are increasingly overwhelmed by the growing demands placed upon them by parishioners and superiors and live in a world with many distractions, their spiritual, mental, and physical health are increasingly challenged. As a seasoned pastor, I have experienced this personally and witnessed it in the lives of fellow priests.

This book is an extraordinary resource for priests. It may be used on an individual basis or in a small group setting by priests who are serious about becoming and remaining holy priests after the heart of Jesus Christ. This resource will place them solidly on a path to holiness and provide them with the tools to stay on it in the midst of the complex world of pastoral ministry in the 21st century.

Msgr. Michael Clay, D. Min.
Associate Dean of Graduate Ministerial Studies
The Catholic University of America

Brothers, this book by Fr. Watson and Dr. Schuchts is a straightforward tool for busy priests wanting to deepen their relationship with the Lord.

Fr. Darrin Connall, Vicar General - Diocese of Spokane

Brother priests, over the years I made at least three unsuccessful attempts to solidify the discipline of the Ignatian Examen into my prayer life. Fr. Watson's process of teaching and distilling it in the Forty Weeks worked for me. Since then, the Examen has significantly deepened the quality of my prayer time, and helped me be much more attentive to the Lord Jesus in day-to-day ministry. Also, I regard the ministry of The John Paul II Healing Center to be the most important ministry to us priests currently operating in North America, and so Dr. Schuchts' collaboration and reflections with Fr. Watson in FORTY WEEKS ~ A Journey of Healing and Transformation for Priests makes it an incredibly relevant and important spiritual resource for us priests.

Fr. Brad Hagelin: Pastor – Saint Luke Parish, Seattle

I am a priest of 62 years and have spent most of them trying to share a spirituality of hope with consecrated religious, seminarians and priests. Forty Weeks offers a way to keep the truth of Christ's healing power alive each and every day in the heart of the priestly shepherd of a flock so that he can be a witness of that healing power and an encouragement to those under his care.

Rev. Joseph Henchey, C.S.S., Mundelein Seminary

On several occasions I have posed the following question to groups of priests: "Has there been a particularly powerful encounter with Jesus in your life?" The responses were hard to

hear. Deflection, confusion, and a general poverty of articulation moved me to wonder how we share our faith together. Too many brother priests do not remain in touch with their personal and intimate story of God's laboring to love each of us. Fr. Watson has provided a gift for both a new and lived encounter with the Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit, and a new way of learning our brother priests' intimacy with God. In working with seminarians, I urge them to notice that how we relate to one another often says something about how we relate to God, and vice versa.

After reading this text and appreciating its helpful format, clear content, and inviting tone, I am convinced that the compounding gift of receiving the Exercises and sharing their fruits will open new horizons for the "intimate and unceasing union" with God that our spiritual training and priestly brotherhood is meant facilitate.

Fr. Paul C. Hoelsing, Dean of Seminarians: Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

This book is invaluable. It teaches diocesan priests the fruitfulness of the Examen Prayer. This 15 minute a day prayer is the primary mechanism, built into us by God, that promotes the daily encounter with Jesus' Spirit. If we exercise the gift of faith by learning to practice this way of listening for and following Jesus' presence in discernment, the reign of God is tasted and seen in the everyday. Sharing in Jesus' trials become occasions to savor real hope and joy!

Rev. John Horn, S.J., Co-Founder of the Institute for Priestly Formation and Professor of Spiritual Theology at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach, FL.

Fr. Bill Watson has been a good friend and mentor since my undergraduate days when he was a young priest at Georgetown. I've also benefited from the wisdom gained at Dr. Bob Schuchts' conferences and from his book [Be Healed](#).

Their respective insights into St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises and spiritual healing have facilitated my own spiritual and human growth, as well as enhanced my retreat and spiritual direction ministry. As someone now working full-time in a major seminary, I welcome the collaboration of these two wonderful guides, and am excited to share this new resource with seminarians and brother priests.

Fr. Rob Kroll, S.J.: Director of Spiritual Formation – St. Francis de Sales Seminary, WI.

Forty Weeks was a great boost for me just when I was looking for a way to take a step deeper into a life of prayer and conversion. The process of praying the examen led me to a begin and continue through in a deeper and more serious life of prayer. I would definitely encourage my brother priests to consider Forty Weeks ~ A Journey of Healing and Transformation for priests.

Fr. Derek Lappe, Pastor, Star of the Sea, Bremerton

Priesthood is not a theological abstraction, and ministry is no mere idea. It is lived and expressed concretely, in the Church, in often difficult circumstances, amid the trials and stresses of every-day living. Priests, sacramentally conformed to Christ, minister to the Body, yes, but the grace of their vocation has come to them in and through the Body of Christ. Sustainable and fruitful priesthood is nurtured by a constant renewal and deepening of that ecclesial grace. Forty Weeks brings the wisdom of the Ignatian spiritual tradition to bear specifically on the lives of priests, helping them to trace the working of God's grace in the sacred story of their vocation and election, to be renewed in that grace and election, to know themselves as loved sons of the Father. This books is not a program as much as it is a school of prayer. It supports authentic renewal, offering the priest who uses it not novelty, but a profound reminder of perennial truths and the sustaining love of God as the true dynamism of ministry.

**Most Rev. Steven J. Lopes
Bishop, Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter**

One of the gifts of seminary formation is a structured prayer life. Daily Holy Hours, bi-monthly spiritual direction, and spiritual reading and classes are built into the schedule. After ordination, it is not uncommon for a priest to struggle a bit with the loss of this structure and busyness of parish life. FORTY WEEKS provides an excellent opportunity for any priest to not only add structure and accountability to their daily prayer life but a means to deeper growth in spiritual awareness and our need of the Divine Physician's healing power. A prayerful reading of FORTY WEEKS can move a priest to be motivated to daily prayer by desire rather than obligation and relationship rather than duty.

Fr. James Mason, President-Rector, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

To my brother priests: You are a priest—which means you are likely tired, probably spread too thin, and certainly under spiritual attack. Only your growing union with Christ will preserve you in a ministry that is faithful and fruitful. The world and the tempter tell you have every reason not to pray. But as your brother priest, I tell you that you have every reason to pray—this book

shows you why, and especially, this book shows you how. This book is written for priests who are wounded (all of us) and who must learn and re-learn to give themselves to Christ so Christ can be given to others. Please, read and pray this book!

**Father Robert McTeigue, S.J., Ph.D., Host & Producer: “The Catholic Current”,
TheStationOfTheCross.com**

If you want to truly know who you are as a beloved son of the Father and live that identity as God has called you as a priest of Jesus Christ, then Forty Weeks for Priests is for you. You will be taken on a daily and weekly journey to the center of your heart; the place where the Lord Jesus speaks to you most intimately as a son and His priest. These reflections will help shape your personal sacred story and will bear much fruit in your life and in your ministry. God bless you.

Fr. David Mulholland, J.D., Pastor, St. Patrick Parish, Tacoma

My brother priest or bishop, Forty Weeks ~ A Journey of Healing and Transformation was written for us. But if it sits on our shelf, we will never reap the benefits. Pick it up! Pick it up today! Start reading a section right now and begin a journey that will change your life forever.

Most Reverend George V. Murry, SJ, Bishop of Youngstown

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius proved to be of great benefit for me in my formation and preparation for priestly ministry. As a seminarian I had the opportunity to do the extended 33 day retreat and it became a well from which I continue to drink regularly the gift of God’s mercy and love. Fr. Bill Watson’s 40 Weeks journey has been a renewal of the experience that I had as a seminarian and has helped me to plumb even further the depth of the well of God’s mercy and love as I journeyed through the exercises day by day for forty weeks. It has been a great help in my own continuing discernment of God’s will and in giving spiritual direction to my parishioners.

Fr. Watson uses language and examples that resonate in one’s heart and illuminate the key concepts of the spiritual life as taught so wonderfully by St. Ignatius.

Fr. Jack Shrum, St. Anthony Parish, Seattle

Forty Weeks can help every priest deepen his own relationship with Christ and find inner healing. Following the process found in the book will help you find more meaning and joy in your priesthood.

Fr. Bryce Sibley, Pastor and Chaplain - Our Lady of Wisdom Church and Catholic Student Center, Lafayette, LA

Brothers: Jesus wants his priests to be healed, healthy and whole. I've recommended both Sacred Story and JP II Healing Center to priests in the past, but now to see Fr. Watson and Dr. Schuchts working together in this one book is an amazing conflagration of grace. I highly recommend this work for the health of the priest and the renewal of the Church.

Fr. Ed White, Pastor at St Stephen The Martyr, Renton, WA

To my brother priests, I invite you to commit to the 40-week journey discussed in this book. Though it explores many dimensions of the spiritual life, inner healing, and the Ignatian tradition, its real focus is on you and the Lord's presence in you. If you commit to at least 15 minutes per day to do the meditations in this book, you will find a whole new dimension of your transcendent self-animated by the Lord which will bring both healing and a new inner light and purpose to your priestly life and ministry.

We live in a world that prizes external accomplishments and performance, but the priestly life is so much more – imitating Jesus as contemplatives in action. This requires concerted attention to our life's story, our inner weaknesses and strengths, and the Lord's healing and transformative love within us. If taken seriously, this book will transform your priestly life.

Fr. Robert Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.

Fr Watson is a gifted teacher and wise spiritual guide. My hope and prayer is that this "Forty Week" journey that our priests can take for their healing and transformation might lead to the deeper spiritual renewal so needed for our Church too. I encourage all of my brothers to make this spiritual sojourn.

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima

Nearly all priests and bishops lament that we are not praying enough or reading enough. This book helps us to do both at the same time – while assisting us in our personal growth and in our ability to minister to others.

*Many books on spirituality, though beautiful, are not exactly directed to us priests. *Forty Weeks – A Journey of Healing and Transformation for Priests* is exactly what we need. It is realistic and easy-to-use, and it puts us in touch with the spirituality of one of our greatest saints and guides, St. Ignatius of Loyola. We all say “I need to pray more”. Because of the many demands on our time and energy however, we fall back into believing that “My work is my prayer.” The reflections in this book help us to bring our daily work and our very selves TO our prayer, so that we can become the priests and disciples that God calls us to be. Dear brother priests, I invite you to use this book for your own spiritual benefit and for the good of your ministry to others.*

Most Reverend William Wack, CSC, Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee