

GOING DEEPER STUDY (August 24, 2025) PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

This morning our friend Monsignor Ecker joins us. He brings his love for Jesus, his love for our city, and his love for us, to Grace.

Monsignor has served as a Catholic priest for 67 years, the majority of those here in Yakima. He's also led parishes in Kennewick and Warden. In 1967 he began eight years as a military chaplain, one of those years in country, to care for servicemen and women deployed in Vietnam. He then returned to the Yakima valley where he has been, with one exception, ever since.

He serves energetically, and enthusiastically, as priest at St. Paul's Cathedral ... just down the street. St. Paul's held its first service in its current location in April of 1927. First Presbyterian Church held its first service here at Yakima Avenue and 8th Avenue in October that same year.

Monsignor Ecker has been, and still is, one of the strongest, and clearest, voices for ecumenical relationships across the Christian community. The temptation in local churches is to hunker down, focus on the demands in one's own church or denomination. While that's understandable, it's also regrettable. It is essential for pastors, church leaders and members, in churches throughout our valley, to remember we are a part of the much larger Christian community. What brings us together (Jesus) is more significant, more important, than what often separates us.

Monsignor Ecker gets this. He lives this. He cares deeply for churches in our city, and for the people and pastors in our valley. He is viewed by many, myself included, as Yakima's pastor. He is a friend of Grace of Christ, and my friend too. And so, it is our honor to welcome to Grace of Christ, Monsignor John Ecker. Listen closely ... as he preaches Jesus!

This morning's passage challenges us with the "fire" of God. Are we enthused, excited, enflamed, about bringing the word of God and His teachings to others? Are we ablaze with God's love. What is our response to the call of God on our lives? When was the last time we invited someone to come, see, and begin a relationship with Jesus? When was the last time we invited someone to church? When was the last time we invited someone to intentionally and thoughtfully follow Jesus Christ?

Ordinary People Extraordinary Lives: Monsignor Ecker (Luke 12:49-50)

Jesus said, ⁴⁹ "I have come to spread fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already blazing! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it has been completed!" (NCB)

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Read the verses following this passage? (verses 51-53)
2. What was one of the reasons Jesus said He came to Earth?
3. What is the Baptism Jesus is talking about?
4. Does this passage speak about Christian faith as if it were easy? Is it easy? Explain.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

5. What does, "I wish it were already blazing" mean?
6. What does, "how great is my anguish" mean?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. Who do you think of when you think of a great evangelist?
8. Who do you think of when you think of a great preacher?
9. Who invited you to church when you first agreed to go?
10. Who has been significant in helping you grow as a Christian?
11. Do you believe every Christian should tell others about Jesus? Why or why not?
12. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 = most important) how important is your Christian faith to you?
13. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 = very easy) how easy is it for you to talk to others about Jesus?
14. What would you say if someone asked you "why are you a Christian?" Why are you a Christian?
15. Who should you talk to about Jesus? When will you do it? What will you say? And, what will it cost you?

As you pray, remember that prayer is meant to be a natural part of your day. Prayer is a conversation: talking to God and listening to God. Thank God for His invitation to pray. Ask God to help you live out in, your day-to-day life, what you believe about Him. Ask God to help you love even your enemies. God will help you, because He loves you and He is eager to talk with you.