



**4th SUNDAY OF EASTER
GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY**

YEAR C

7th-8th May 2022

*A Parish of the Diocese
of Motherwell.
The Bishop;
Rt. Rev. Joseph A. Toal
www.rcdom.org.uk
Scottish Charity No
SC011041*

FIRST READING

Acts of the Apostles 13:14, 42-52

We now turn to the Gentiles.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Paul and Barnabas continued on from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia.

On the sabbath they entered into the synagogue and took their seats. Many Jews and worshipers who were converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God.

On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.

Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.

For so the Lord has commanded us, I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth."

The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord.

All who were destined for eternal life came to believe, and the word of the Lord continued to spread through the whole region.

The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshipers and the leading men of the city, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their territory.

So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.

The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.



RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 100:1-2, 3, 5

R. (3c) We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
serve the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful song.

R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Know that the LORD is God;
he made us, his we are;
his people, the flock he tends.

R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

The LORD is good:
his kindness endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

SECOND READING

Revelations 7:9, 14b,-17

The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water.

A reading from the Book of Revelation

I, John, had a vision of a great multitude,
which no one could count,
from every nation, race, people, and tongue.
They stood before the throne and before the Lamb,
wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.

Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me,
“These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress;
they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“For this reason they stand before God’s throne
and worship him day and night in his temple.
The one who sits on the throne will shelter them.
They will not hunger or thirst anymore,
nor will the sun or any heat strike them.

For the Lamb who is in the centre of the throne
will shepherd them
and lead them to springs of life-giving water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”



ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL

Jn 10:14

℟. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my sheep, and mine know me.

℟. Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 10:27-30

I give my sheep eternal life.



A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said:

“My sheep hear my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.
No one can take them out of my hand.
My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,
and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand.
The Father and I are one.”



THIS WEEK'S READINGS

This Sunday is traditionally referred to as “Good Shepherd Sunday.” However, the readings for today focus more on the flock than on the shepherd. The overarching theme appears to be unity in diversity. Placing this theme within the context of the Easter season, we might refocus it slightly and suggest that today we celebrate the presence of the risen Lord in communities of difference.

Trinitarian unity. Unity in diversity is first found in the primordial divine union of the Trinity, the relationship between Jesus and the one he called “Father.” United in the Godhead, they are still distinct. This is the foundational unity: all other models of unity flow from it. It is difficult to talk about this trinitarian unity. All we know about it are glimpses we can glean from the sayings of Jesus and the faith of the early believers. In the gospel, Jesus describes the intimate relationship he has with his sheep, a oneness that cannot be undermined by another. No one will snatch the sheep out of his hand. The same is said about the Father. From this, one can conclude that Jesus and the Father exercise the same kind of oversight, thus making the relationship of the sheep with the Father similar to the union they enjoy with Jesus.

Communal unity. Both the first and the second readings depict communities made up of people from every nation, race, people, and tongue, Jews and Gentiles alike. This is precisely the makeup of most communities today. Parishes and religious groups born with a particular cultural identity have slowly (and sometimes not so slowly) changed in complexion and composition. Thriving young groups have given way to retirement communities; monocultural parishes are now bi- or tri-lingual. The melting-pot mentality, which frequently forced acculturation on newcomers, has been replaced by the image of the mosaic, where diversity is retained as a vital contribution to the entire design. Jesus’ prayer that all might be one seems to have been heard.

Despite the obvious differences, all are children of the one God, all are joined in their common confession of faith, all share the same aspirations for final peace and fulfillment. Just as we must learn to look beneath the familiar to discover the presence of the risen Lord, so we must learn to look beneath the unfamiliar to find a sister or brother in Christ.

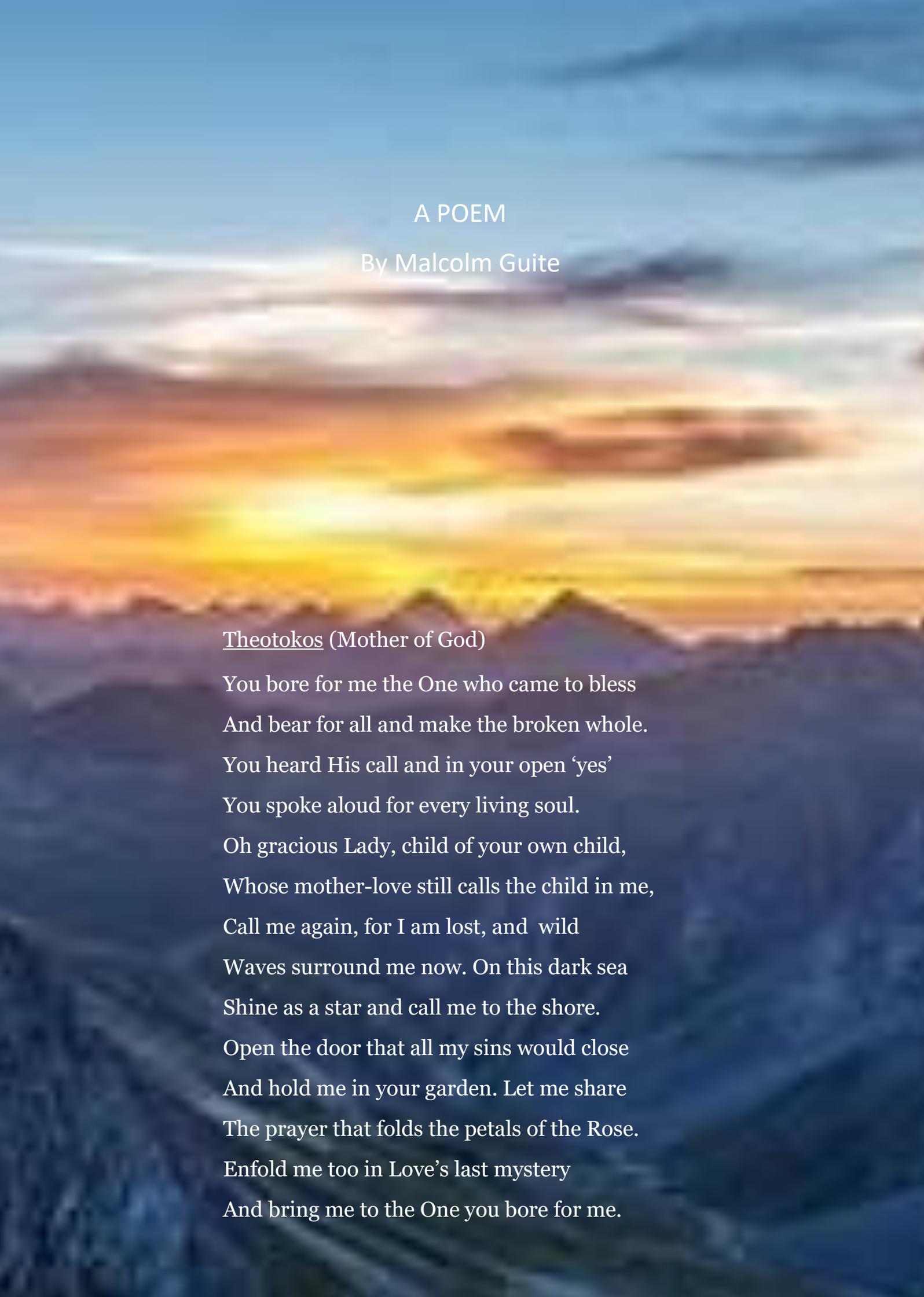
The price of diversity. Not everyone is happy with diversity. Some within the early community resented the success of Paul and Barnabas and tried to turn the people against them. These opponents may have resented their popularity, or they may have contested their teaching. Conflict could have arisen simply from what they perceived to be the threat of possible change. People generally like things the way they are and see no need to accommodate themselves to different people with different customs and ideas. Whatever the case may have been, some of the people instigated dissension among those listening in the synagogue, and they drove Paul and Barnabas out.

CONTEMPLATING MARY

The role of Mary in the Christian faith tradition arguably reveals more about God than it does about Mary herself. Indeed, one of the qualities of Christian saints is that they point beyond themselves to reveal God in Christ. What do we learn about God from Mary? In short, the God whom we confess, worship, adore, and serve is not a God who imposes divine will on human beings. This reality is a crucial feature of the Annunciation story, when the angel Gabriel visited Mary with the sacred word of Mary's call to become pregnant with and give birth to God's word made flesh in Jesus Christ. The Incarnation would not have occurred had it not been for Mary's yes to the angel's announcement in her willing assent: "Let it be to me according to your word" (cf. Luke 1:38). Thus, God calls human servants in such a way as to evoke their cooperation, their willingness to abide by the divine call. Moreover, the Holy Spirit inspires such willing cooperation when we cannot muster such assent to God's will and call on our own steam. Thus, it was that "the Holy Spirit [came upon Mary], and the power of the Most High [overshadowed her]" (cf. Luke 1:35a). Then she was able to offer her 'yes' to God.



In addition to Mary's role in pointing to God in Christ, Mary also reveals to us the nature of Christian discipleship. In crucial ways, Mary is the quintessential disciple of Jesus Christ. That is to say, as a follower of Jesus, her son, she herself at first was pregnant with the divine word and gave birth to that word who was Jesus of Nazareth. Mary's discipleship began and was centred on her womb being full of the word and her giving birth to that word for the sake of the whole world. All disciples of Christ are called likewise to be pregnant with the word of God, to dwell in worshipful and studied ways with the word in scripture and in the sacramental life of the church, to internalize that word, to incorporate that word by the power of the Holy Spirit into the fullness of who we are, and then to birth that word in deeds of love of the neighbour and in witness to the God made known in Jesus Christ. In short, in modelling faithful Christian discipleship, Mary leads the way.

A sunset over a dark sea with mountains in the background. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, orange, and yellow. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. The water is dark and calm, reflecting the colors of the sky. The mountains in the background are silhouetted against the bright light of the sunset.

A POEM

By Malcolm Guite

Theotokos (Mother of God)

You bore for me the One who came to bless
And bear for all and make the broken whole.

You heard His call and in your open 'yes'
You spoke aloud for every living soul.

Oh gracious Lady, child of your own child,
Whose mother-love still calls the child in me,
Call me again, for I am lost, and wild
Waves surround me now. On this dark sea
Shine as a star and call me to the shore.

Open the door that all my sins would close
And hold me in your garden. Let me share
The prayer that folds the petals of the Rose.
Enfold me too in Love's last mystery
And bring me to the One you bore for me.



Diocesan Centre
Coursington Road
Motherwell

Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of Motherwell

6th May 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2022

I hope this finds you well.

In this Sunday's Gospel Jesus tells us:

"The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice;

I know them and they follow.

I give them eternal life."

When we read these words or hear them proclaimed at Holy Mass, we know it is Good Shepherd Sunday and The Church's World Day of Prayer for Vocations. I invite you therefore to listen attentively to the Lord's call and to renew your response in following faithfully and lovingly in the vocation he has given each of us. Let us be grateful for this call and ask the Lord to renew our desire to serve Him and His Body, the Church, with all the talents and graces he has blessed us with.

We offer special prayers on this day for those called to be Priests, Deacons and Religious, and pray that others may hear the Lord's call to offer their lives for formation for ordination or religious consecration. If anyone reading this letter does feel called and ready to respond please share this with your Parish Priest. One of our seminarians, Kieran Burt, is being instituted as a Lector today in the Scots College in Rome at the hands of Archbishop Nolan. I ask your prayers for him and those preparing for priesthood with him.

The Lord promised those who listen and follow his voice eternal life, and we pray that this promise may be fulfilled for Canons Michael Walsh and Willie Dunnachie, who have passed away in recent times after their long dedicated lives of priestly ministry. May they rest in peace. Canon Dunnachie's Funeral Mass will be in the Cathedral on Thursday at 12 Noon.

For many, your vocation is Marriage and Family Life and the Church invites you to participate here in the Diocese in the World Meeting of Families which will take place in Rome towards the end of June. As well as the Celebration of Mass in the Cathedral on Sunday June 26th an invitation is extended to pray the Rosary in your families during the Month of May and to participate in Eucharistic Devotions as Families in our parishes around the Feast of Corpus Christi. Literature has been printed to assist participation and I hope that praying at home and celebrating our faith together in Church may strength our families in difficult times and bring consolation to those most in need.

A good number of the priests serving in the Diocese gathered together for a Day of Prayer and Reflection last Thursday and it was good for us to come together after the separation of the last two years. While acknowledging the negative effects of isolation, many priests expressed thanks and appreciation for the love and support received from parishioners during the pandemic and I join them in recording our grateful thanks for all the kindness received. Although we still need to be careful in our parishes we hope that the recovery from Covid will be marked by renewed participation in the life and worship of the Church and continued awareness of the needs of others, especially the poor and lonely in our parishes.

I take this opportunity to thank all who have participated in the Synodal Process in the Parishes, Schools, and other Groups in the Diocese. Your responses will be collated into the Diocesan Response, which will be forwarded then to the Bishops' Conference to become part of the Scottish Response. We will have a Liturgy of Reception and Thanksgiving for the Motherwell Response on 26th May, Ascension Thursday. This will take place in Our Lady of Good Aid Primary School at 7pm. Again the words of the Lord in today's Gospel ask us to listen to him and to follow what he says. Our following of the Lord is enhanced by our walking together in communion and listening to one another as we are being so strongly encouraged to do.

May the Good Shepherd lead us in our efforts and watch over us all as we seek to serve him and each other to the best of our ability in the particular vocations he has blessed us with.

With my prayers and best wishes.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph Toal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+ Joseph Toal

THE CONSPIRACY OF INCARNATED LOVE

One of the great realizations I gleaned from my years studying the life and works of Rabbi Abraham Heschel is the power, imperative, and sanctity of the common deed, the seemingly simple gesture, word, or act so typically overlooked and often left undone.

We live in a time that celebrates the big—big wigs, big shots, big fish, big cheese, big enchilada, big deal—that is enamoured with the spectacular, sensational, and dramatic, that is partial to pageantry. Suckers for splash and flash, we live in a time when it's all about the Headline, the lead story, the attention grabber.

The wisdom traditions within authentic spiritual paths are counter-cultural and counter-intuitive in this regard. Their adherents are not taken in by the spin doctor's of the dominant culture who obsess over prestige, power, and fame, who hawk Madison Avenue, fuss over the big man on campus, the belle of the ball, the cat's meow, the grand slam.

What is emphasized instead is the hidden, humble, discreet, daily, unspectacular, ordinary, necessary, seemingly simple, beneficent act on behalf of the common good. Rabbi Heschel suggests that we should always regard ourselves “as though the world were half guilty and half meritorious. One (good) deed may turn the scale of the whole world on the side of guilt or on the side of merit.” He continues:

Every person participates at all times in the act of either destroying or redeeming the world. The Messiah is in us. This is why every child is of such immense importance.

Every person and every act counts. The way we cultivate integrity, nurture honesty and dignity, develop character, seed and harvest deep sympathy, mutual care, and kinship, learn and live compassion, justice, and commit ourselves to the commonweal is through simple, heartfelt acts of faith, acts of hope, acts of love, constantly repeated. Earthshaking? No. Earth-saving? Perhaps.

This is the little way of St. Francis, Charles de Foucauld, Therese of Lisieux, Dorothy Day, and Mother Teresa. This, not proselytizing, is how we participate in the repair of the world, how the earth is christened, how we honor and beautify one another, how we revere God's creation, how we are consecrated by love for love, how we live Jesus, and how we come to realize becoming human and becoming holy are the same thing.

Let's join together in the conspiracy of incarnated love by consecrating the common deed and practicing regular, not so random acts of kindness. What makes an act holy? Nothing more and nothing less than doing or saying something good, just, kind, or loving for another by consciously dedicating it and intentionally connecting it to the movement and enlivening presence and direction of the Spirit. Those who practice consecrating the little word, the small gesture, the seemingly simple kind and thoughtful act, eventually don't have to pause to mindfully dedicate it — it is within them already, and the choice they spontaneously make for the good of others and all of creation comes forth from this deep intention and becomes a vital part of the liturgy of life. *Dan Miller*

ON MEDITATING

When we meditate, we enter the mind of Christ from the ground up. We settle into the mystery of the concrete immediacy of our breathing and our bodily being. We are quietly attentive to the thoughts and feelings that arise, endure, and pass away within us. Sitting in this way, we do not fly off into some eternal realm. Rather, we enter into the mind of Christ, which knows and is the divine generosity of the concrete immediacy of ourselves just as we are.

This is why we sit in meditation: so that we might settle into this ordinary mind; so that in becoming, at last, just ourselves, we might realize our eternal oneness with God.

There is no single way to meditate. However, there are certain components that facilitate the process:

Body Posture: Sit still. Sit straight. Place your hands in a comfortable or meaningful position in your lap. Close your eyes or lower them toward the ground. Breathe slowly and naturally

With respect to **your mind**, be present, open, and awake, neither clinging to nor rejecting anything. Take a stance of observing all your thoughts, feelings and reactions as they pass through you rather than responding unconsciously from them.

And with respect to **attitude**, maintain nonjudgmental compassion toward yourself- as you discover yourself clinging to and rejecting everything - and nonjudgmental compassion toward others in their powerlessness that is one with yours

In this stance of humble acceptance, simply re-instate the meditative stance of being present, open and awake each time you realise you've drifted off yet again into the clinging and rejecting of your wandering mind.

There are two methods to help stabilise meditative awareness. The first is to use your awareness of your breathing as an anchoring place in present moment awareness. Each time you realise you have once again drifted off into sleepiness, day-dreaming, or clinging to this or that sensation, thought or feeling, simply renew your awareness of your breathing as a way of re-grounding yourself in meditative awareness of the present moment. The silent, interior repetition of a word or phrase is another traditional method for sustaining present-moment attentiveness.

The ego self struggles in its efforts to sit present and awake, as a way of being open to God's presence, until the ego exhausts all its own means of overcoming its inability to realise oneness with God. Then, just as all seems lost, we look up to see God with us with open arms. Suddenly, we realise there is no place within us that is not encountered, embraced, and made whole in a love that does not even care to hear our litany of shortcomings and regrets. We are profoundly loved by God without any foundations for being loved, except divine love itself. *Anne Solomon*

SUMMARY REPORT OF OUR FIRST SYNODAL SESSION

COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

In our church, as individuals and a community we should welcome strangers and newcomers. Get a feel for being together with others. We can put barriers in our head which prevents us reaching out – that people will feel patronised, that they view things differently, that they are too difficult. A need to put ourselves in others shoes, to recognise that they can find themselves in quite different circumstances. Conversation is vital to community. Together we can accomplish so much more than by ourselves.

The daily, morning Mass gives a real sense of togetherness and community. This is what we want from the whole parish. This synodal experience is also what we want everyone to experience. Awareness of our spiritual journey together is growing.

A sense that we don't walk together – people are prepared to walk away for fickle reasons eg they don't like the singing or attend only because of the Sunday obligation. A feeling that people just do what they want. There is a reluctance among many practising Catholics to take more part in their parish. What exactly does walking together mean and what does it hope to achieve? Do we simply leave behind those we deem not "true" Catholics?

We must be as inclusive as possible in our parish life and find ways to reach out especially to young people. Are clubs and Masses for them the way forward? The obstacles to young people attending are great – mental health issues, peer pressure, social media. There is a generational change in people's attitude to the Church. The SVDP is a good example of inclusion and reaching out as are the Mini-Vinnies in the primary school.

There are perceived obstacles blocking certain people from attending: the divorced, the poor, the unemployed, gay people. Some even don't come because they can't afford to. How does the Church look from the outside: old, white, male-run, hetero-normative?

Covid has made people wary of reaching out. Once the emergency has passed we need to make more effort to let people know they are not alone and to identify those who are not coming back.

LISTENING

We need to slow down and give ourselves enough time to truly listen and pick up how people are feeling deep-down. Loneliness and poverty are barriers to being listened to. We might think some people are difficult to approach but we can be surprised by the welcome reaction. The parish is there for all of us in hard times. How can we best get this across to everyone especially if they feel the community is not very welcoming?

We can develop the art of listening through prayer when we hear both God and ourselves. This creates the peace within us which enables us to listen.

The voice of the world is very loud and can drown out the Church's voice. The Church's teaching should be explained more clearly and though this might mean some people don't accept it, a stronger church will emerge. Fear that the Church's message is being diluted and fear for the future of the Church.

Refreshing to hear other people express their fears and hopes and to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. Good, too, to listen and identify with the prayer experiences of others.

SOME WORDS USED DURING THE MEETING

Relaxed, comfortable, peace, quiet. Reassured at the presence of the Spirit. Hopeful. Experience the presence of Jesus – given an image. Confirmed. Feeling of being relieved at “getting prayer out”. Sense of yearning, awareness of something deeper, desire to be closer to the Lord. Self-knowledge – word from scripture focussed into a moment of self-knowledge. The Emmaus walk - disciples thought they knew and the Lord didn't – in fact the reverse. Security in the sense of Jesus walking with us – we all walk together with Jesus.

OTHER COMMENTS

It is so encouraging to be given chance to share - to be asked about views. Good to meet others and discuss things. Reassurance that we're not alone – sense of community. “We're not mad” – individuals independently all identifying similar themes - initially afraid to speak out in case they were thought to be 'mad'. Worried about the challenges ahead – how to reach young people. Sense of welcome in the group and from the parish – what about the 'lapsed'? the marginalised – need to reach out to them. We need to represent the 'voiceless'. How do we 'tap into' the “middle group”/young adults?

SUMMARY REPORT OF OUR SECOND SYNODAL SESSION

SPEAKING OUT

Some voices in the church speak more loudly than others and may not best represent the Church – Sancta Familia Media could be an example of this. Spokespeople for the Church must represent the different voices in the Church and not simply take one line. We need truly representative advocates formed in the spirit of the 2nd Vatican Council.

It can be difficult to discard old attitudes which discouraged speaking out. Perhaps this reflected an understanding of God as a God of fear. There is a cultural issue, too, where speaking out was discouraged. We must recognise that the “official” Church hasn’t always got things right and so it’s important that other voices be heard. We need to hear deeply Christ’s words “You foolish men!” More women’s voices!

The youth are “speaking” with their feet. Cajoling and threatening words no longer work. Ways should be found which encourages them to find their voice in the Church. They don’t expect adults not to talk about their faith or be embarrassed about going to church. We can be more direct with them in inviting them to come along.

Speaking and listening are first steps to a new way of being Church. The willingness to speak out to the larger world prevents the Church from becoming inward-looking. We need to recognise the authority the Church can have in speaking to the world and serving the common good of all especially the marginalised of today eg immigrants. Would a Christian political party help?

The Holy Spirit is with the community when it speaks in unity. The Spirit will also lead us to see what we have in common with other faiths and find ways to speak together.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

There can be no room for a “holier-than-thou” attitude – this discourages and marginalises. A move from an individualised and privatised faith to an evangelising one will make us more confident in speaking about our faith. Also this prevents the Church from being seen as a “closed shop.” This requires a new mindset and a desire to leave our comfort zone.

People do want to be involved but are not sure how to go about it. In which ways do we address this? Is this our only opportunity? What is hindering deeper involvement?

DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

There are many issues which bring together Church and society – climate change, poverty, asylum seekers, food banks. There are good people outside the Church doing good things and they too are led by the Holy Spirit. Love is what there is in common and is what unites church goers and non-goers.

We need to remember the good things we are doing however small and the contribution they make to society. Actions speak louder than words.

What is the purpose of reaching out to society – is it simply to bring more people to church?

Dialogue with society will not always be about agreement. How do we handle different views?

There is a need to develop spaces and times for people to meet and reflect on issues in the Church and in society. Promoting fellowship within the parish will foster our understanding of how we can serve society. "Parish" rather than "Church" is a better way to refer to our faith community.

Parish – Fellowship – Community – Sharing – Dialogue: these are key words for the sort of community we desire.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MEETING

Totally relaxed – came in mind buzzing – time passed so quickly

Renewed

Sense of searching going on – sense of something going on

Anxious coming in to find the tables had been mixed up – now relaxed with newer people

Calm – was downcast from the reading until saw a vision of angels

Overawed – "the only one" – aware of the mysteries of faith. Sense of unity

"Getting myself out of the way" – feeling the Spirit beginning to speak through me

Anxious coming in – listening to the passage made me more relaxed and happier – sense of permission to say what I felt I should say

Confused – the Emmaus walkers 'are the church', but in spite of all they had heard

SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES

Do we need more opportunity for discussion beyond these 4 meetings?

Many issues – a new way of being church – need for more ongoing dialogue leading to concrete outcomes

Practical support to enable people to come to Mass eg creches

We are church- we have the responsibility to be church – need for more discussion leading to practical outcomes

Noted the commonality of the church- what is church? – we are church – there should be more emphasis on Parish and what that entails – people rather than bricks and mortar – fellowship and community

What if another parish priest comes along and dismantles everything?

Eucharistic ministers not being used: that pastoral activity needs to be re-instated
Is lunchtime on a Saturday a good time to meet?

SUMMARY REPORT OF OUR THIRD SYNODAL SESSION

CELEBRATION

Our Servers, Readers & Eucharistic ministers all encourage others to fuller participation in the Mass. Parishioners, in particular women, should be officially appointed to the ministries of Reader and Eucharist. Is there a place for more lay-led celebrations in which parishioners could come together to reflect, for instance, on the Sunday readings?

The Mass is a celebration with others alongside our celebration with the Lord. Gathering for Mass brings us together as a community. How do we encourage more active participation by families? Do the demands of work and family prevent this? How do we bring our celebration out of the church and into the world?

Lockdown did have some positive benefits – it helped us realise that we were missing something good when we couldn't attend Mass; it gave more time for us to reflect and pray; we became more aware of the beauty of this God-given world.

Mass gives us a clearer focus -- we can see the Lord more clearly in the Eucharist, in others and in ourselves. Our understanding of the Scriptures deepens. There is a sense of renewal and willingness to reach out to others.

ECUMENISM

Bigotry and sectarianism have sharply declined but, alongside that, religion is rarely a topic of conversation with non-Catholic friends and family.

There is ecumenical work in our town – Streetlevel, joint services, World Day of Prayer, Christian Aid, Scouts, CHOICES shop. Good progress has been made but it could be seen as superficial. Could more be done together especially in the work of evangelisation? Together we could have a stronger Christian voice – there is more that unites than divides. We must focus on what we agree on rather than where we differ. We can learn from other churches especially regarding synodality.

AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

Do we need a different model of being church especially in the light of child abuse? Governance is all top-down, and all by men. A priest coming newly into a parish can abolish the parish structures on his own authority. Everything is too priest-dependent. This needs to change. The role of women must be expanded.

Have we become a middle-class Church so that unintentionally others feel excluded? Everyone is involved in the work of encouraging and reaching out, ready to promote and explain our faith. Sometimes when help is offered the priest it is refused and this can cause lasting hurt.

The parish retreat was a good experience of participation but it wasn't followed through. What are the ways to involve the wider parish community?

All of us need to discern together the “signs of the times.” Often society moves more quickly than the Church with the result that the Church looks left behind on certain issues eg women, sexuality, injustice.

There is some division in the Church at present crystallised in pro- and anti- Pope Francis.

We know that change is needed but it is difficult to know where to start at parish level. But already in these weeks, people feel that they have been given a voice and have the confidence to speak. As we proceed, it will be important to have clear structures which invite the people to participate and to develop team-work. A clearer idea that all are the church, not just the clergy, will foster co-responsibility. From this will emerge that every individual has gifts which must be recognised and used. Succession planning is also needed as priest and parishioners move on. The role of the Parish Pastoral Council needs reviewing.

Partnership, co-responsibility, team-work, participation were all key-words which emerged.

SUMMARY REPORT OF OUR FOURTH SYNODAL SESSION

DISCERNING AND DECIDING

This depends on listening to the Holy Spirit and to be open to his guidance. It involves hearing as many voices as possible and establishing the platform for people’s voices to be heard with the view to establishing some consensus about the way forward. A love of the Scriptures and prayer together are also essential parts of this process. Listening also to other Christians and hearing their experience is required.

Part of this is discerning what belongs to the heart of the faith and what are human traditions which can be changed and developed eg celibacy, artificial contraception. This requires an openness on the part of all members of the Church and not a retreat into opposing factions. The time of top-down decision making is over.

The importance of developing and growing one’s spirituality was mentioned; becoming aware of the different types of spirituality within the Church eg Ignatian. This could be a way of engaging those whose faith is weak – showing the practical results of faith. Creativity in the practice of the faith should be encouraged. On-going renewal in faith is needed to future-proof the parish and build resilience – for instance, if the time comes when the parish no longer has a residential priest.

The scandals in the Church show how the present decision-making and discerning process is flawed.

Active participation by all should be the presumption in the life of the Church. This will strengthen the leadership roles of priest and bishop.

FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

The decision by the bishops to re-introduce the Sunday obligation is an example of a Church without synodality. Getting the thoughts of parishioners to the hierarchy is an uphill struggle.

Everyone has to be receptive to change and growth if synodality is to take root. How exactly will a synodal Church look like?

We must avoid creating the feeling that nothing will change. But change can happen immediately if and when we become a welcoming parish – saying hello to the newcomer, creating a supportive space for the single mother, the divorced, the widowed, the unemployed. Meeting socially after Mass for a cup of tea, spending some time talking to people are powerful ways to encourage belonging.

Mass, although the central act of our faith, cannot be the only place we meet. New ways of meeting and talking about our faith need to be found. We will understand more deeply what synodality is by doing it -- coming together. A stronger connection with our schools is required. Social media must be part of our synodal experience.

THE DAILY EXAMEN

A great way to pray is to look for God's presence in your life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. Try this version of St. Ignatius's prayer.

- 1. Become aware of God's presence.** Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.
- 2. Review the day with gratitude.** Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.
- 3. Pay attention to your emotions.** One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

- 4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.** Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

- 5. Look toward tomorrow.** Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for his protection and help. Ask for his wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God. End the Daily Examen with the Our Father.

UPDATED GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

Many of the restrictions we have grown used to in the past year and more have now been lifted.

However, we are still required to sanitise our hands on entering and leaving the church, wear face-coverings and practise respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

If you attend the same daily, Vigil or Sunday Mass each week, there is no need to book or sign in. If you come to a Mass which you don't usually attend, you are asked to leave your name. There will be a sheet at the entrance for this purpose.

The distribution of Holy Communion will revert to its previous place in the Mass. Please wait until the usher invites you to come forward. You are still asked to receive the Sacrament in the hand. At present, the Sign of Peace is still prohibited

The Collection during Mass and the Procession of the Gifts are now re-instated.

The use of hymn books and Bulletin sheets is permitted.

The longer version of the Bulletin will still be published on-line.

May I thank all of you for your support and dedication during these months of lock-down. In particular, thanks to our ushers and sanitizers. And thanks to all those who quietly helped their neighbours and took steps to make that need known or found them support.

The church is now fully open for private visits. The Sanctuary area is roped off and alarmed so it is not possible to light votive candles.

Remember there are many resources to foster your prayer and spiritual life. Please continue to check our parish website and Facebook page for new materials. Each week I post a video with a little reflection on the Sunday Gospel. Also check out our Links page on the website and you will be directed to other useful sites. Remember our twitter account too—[@saintaths](#). Some beautiful prayers and reflections can be accessed there.

Our diocesan website also has online prayer resources—go to <https://www.rcdom.org.uk>

There is also a closed Facebook group you might wish to join—Contemplative Theology. All you have to do is ask to join. There are also Twitter accounts you may find helpful: [@LectioMotherwel](#), [@rcmotherwell](#) and [@motherwellRE](#) Recently a new Facebook page has been opened: Motherwell Diocese Adult Formation. You'll find material there aimed at deepening our understanding of the faith.

The Liturgy of the Hours, the prayers and readings of the Mass and much more can be found at www.ibreviary.com

Beautiful reflections for all seasons and times can be found at www.thesacredbraid.com

Another good resource is <http://www.catholicireland.net> Reflections on the readings of the Mass, suggestions for children's faith formation and lots more.



LIVE STREAMING

WE USE LIVE STREAMING TO ENABLE:

1. HOUSEBOUND PARISHIONERS TO ENGAGE WITH MASS FROM HOME RELATIVES/FRIENDS WHO CANNOT ATTEND A BAPTISM / WEDDING / FUNERAL TO VIEW IT
2. EVANGELISATION: ENABLING THOSE WHO CANNOT OR DO NOT ATTEND CHURCH TO ENGAGE WITH ACTS OF WORSHIP.

THESE REASONS ARE NECESSARY IN THE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF THE CHURCH. THE IMAGES ARE MADE AVAILABLE LIVE ONLINE AND CAN BE ACCESSED BY ANYONE. LIVE STREAMING IS CARRIED OUT CONTINUOUSLY FROM OUR CHURCH. YOU MAY LOG ON AT ANY TIME TO PAY A VIRTUAL VISIT.

THE CAMERA FOCUSES ONLY ON THE SANCTUARY AREA AND THE AREA IMMEDIATELY IN FRONT OF IT. IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO HAVE YOUR IMAGE LIVE STREAMED PLEASE BEAR THIS IN MIND.

About Us This Parish is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of MOTHERWELL, registered charity number SC011041. If you have questions about this notice, please contact frmagill@rcdom.org.uk

