

3rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR B

WORD OF GOD SUNDAY

20th-21st January 2023

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

FIRST READING

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The Ninevites turned from their evil way.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jonah

The word of the LORD came to Jonah, saying:
“Set out for the great city of Nineveh,
and announce to it the message that I will tell you.”
So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh,
according to the LORD’s bidding.
Now Nineveh was an enormously large city;
it took three days to go through it.
Jonah began his journey through the city,
and had gone but a single day’s walk announcing,
“Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,”
when the people of Nineveh believed God;
they proclaimed a fast
and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way,
he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them;
he did not carry it out.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.



Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your love are from of old.
In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

℟. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice
and teaches the humble his way.

℟. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

The world in its present form is passing away.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out.
From now on, let those having wives act as not having them,
those weeping as not weeping,
those rejoicing as not rejoicing,
those buying as not owning,
those using the world as not using it fully.
For the world in its present form is passing away.

The word of the Lord.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL

Mark 1:15

℟. Alleluia, alleluia.

The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent and believe in the Gospel.

℟. Alleluia, alleluia.



GOSPEL

Mark 1:14-20

Repent and believe in the Gospel.



A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

After John had been arrested,
Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:

“This is the time of fulfilment.
The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

As he passed by the Sea of Galilee,
he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea;
they were fishermen.

Jesus said to them,
“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.

He walked along a little farther
and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

They too were in a boat mending their nets.

Then he called them.

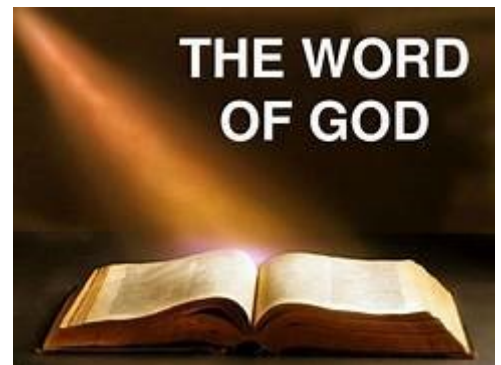
So they left their father Zebedee in the boat
along with the hired men and followed him.



SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Bible has moved centre stage in the Church, we speak of both word and sacrament. It will take time for such a change of attitude to the engagement with the Bible to become general. Pope Francis has now dedicated this 3rd Sunday to the Word of God. A couple of weeks ago I commented on how Pope Benedict had promoted the use of the Bible in the Church. Given that the two Popes are often contrasted, I find it remarkable that the Word is so important for both of them. Pope Benedict's approach may be more academic while Pope Francis may be more pastoral but with two very different Popes putting so much emphasis on the Word, the central place of the Word, the Bible or Scriptures, in the life of the Church must be assured.

The importance of the Word for Pope Francis may come from his Latin American background. It was there that Liberation Theology developed and it is profoundly Biblical. This we find in the Dutch Carmelite Carlos Mesters who belongs to our Rio de Janeiro Province and has lived among the people for many years. His book is now old¹ but he shows how the people in the base communities read the Bible with freedom, familiarity and fidelity in a way which goes beyond academic study. More heart than mind. For the well educated though, the study is important because it opens up the reading² preparing for the move from mind to heart, from reading to meditation as in Lectio Divina. We cannot leave our minds behind when we pray.



For Pope Francis, the Bible is the great story of the marvels of God's mercy. It is fitting he says that the life of our people be constantly marked by this decisive relationship with the living word that the Lord never tires of speaking to his Bride, that she may grow in love and faithful witness. The Bible is the book of the Lord's people, who, in listening to it, move from dispersion and division towards unity. The word of God unites believers and makes them one people. The Pope links this Sunday with this week of prayer for Christian unity. In one of his daily homilies, he reflected on the episode in Nehemiah, saying "the encounter with the Word of God fills us with joy and this joy is my strength, this joy is our strength". The reason is because Christians "have accepted, have received the Word of God in their heart and they continually encounter the Word of God; they seek it".

Fr Patrick Fitzgerald-Lombard OCarm

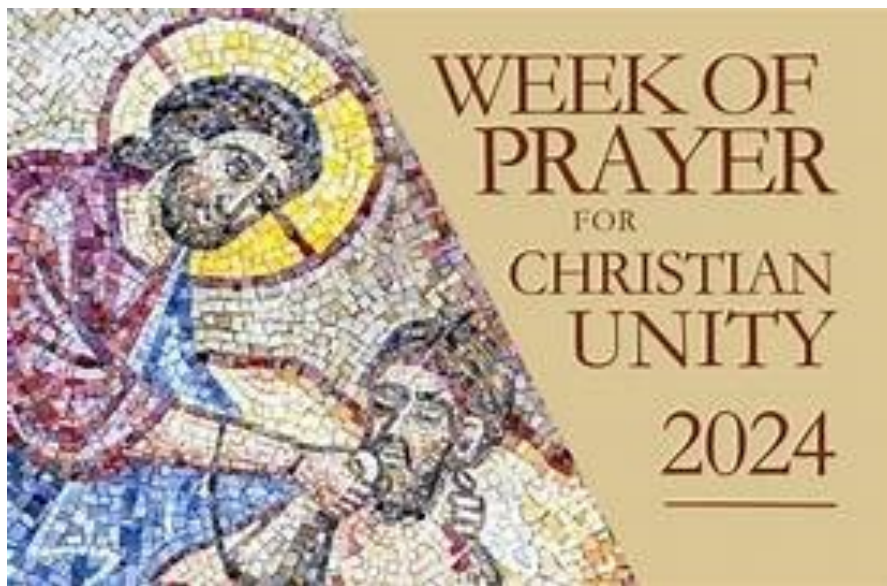
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity involves Christian communities across the world and from almost every denomination.

The materials used in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are prepared each year jointly by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

It is traditionally celebrated over the eight days of **18-25 January**, although other dates are sometimes chosen in the Southern hemisphere.

The Week lasts for 8 days (which is why it was originally called an *Octave of Prayer*), and covers the period from the feast of St Peter to the feast of St Paul.



Origins

The Week developed from an Octave of Prayer devised in 1908 by the American Episcopalian clergyman Paul Wattson, and Spencer Jones, the Vicar of Moreton-in-Marsh in England.

Wattson (who became a Roman Catholic in 1909) believed that Christian unity could only be achieved by the other churches returning to the Roman Catholic fold.

The Week was given a wider remit in the 1930s through the work of a French Roman Catholic, Paul Couturier, who did not believe that it was necessary for all Christians to become Roman Catholics. He taught that "we must pray not that others may be converted to us but that we may all be drawn closer to Christ".

The Week is now a joint project of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, and has been since 1966.

Motivation

The Week is motivated by the wish to fulfil God's desire "that all may be one". This is clearly shown in this prayer:

...I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you... May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17

If you ask Christians why they take part in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, their answers are likely to include some of these points:

- A common desire to communicate God's love to all the world
- Accepting that God's ultimate purpose is to unite all things in Christ
- Obedience to the prayer of Jesus Christ "That all might be one" (John 17:21) and that "There might be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16)
- Acknowledgement that Christ is the only one who can reconcile all things and people, and that Christ's people must pray for this reconciliation
- Desire to show the Church as foretaste, instrument and sign of the unity of God's Kingdom
- Acceptance that the Christian Church can only be the Church that God intended if all churches acknowledge their mutual interdependence
- Desire to demonstrate a unity that is sometimes hidden by denominational differences through the act of praying together
- Desire to achieve unity in a way that enriches rather than diminishes the legitimate diversity of local churches

Many people see it as their duty to pray not just for the unity of Christians but for the unity of all people who are made in God's image.



GOSPEL PICTURE REFLECTION



Fishing for Souls,
Painted by **Adriaen van de Venne (1589-1662)**, Painted in 1614, Oil on canvas,
© Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Our painting by Adriaen van de Venne titled 'Fishing for Souls' was painted in 1614, during the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) between the Protestant Dutch Republic and Catholic Spain. It depicts an allegory of the tensions between the two Christian denominations. We see a vast river landscape with large numbers of people standing on either side of the river: to the left the Protestants with the Princes of Orange and James I of England; to the right are Catholics with Albert and Isabella.

The rowing boat in the foreground contains Protestant 'fishermen' with fishing nets marked with the words Fides, Spes and Charitas (Faith, Hope and Love). They are drawing in a good number of people to bring them to their faith. The Catholic boat, on the right, holds priests who are fishing too, while being overseen by a bishop. That boat is almost sinking and looks less stable. At the time this was painted, Adriaen van de Venne showed the Catholic nets empty. Only years later after some fierce criticism of the painting, were some figures added to their nets too. The Protestant boats in the background are seen with people swimming towards them, whilst the Catholic boats in the background on the right are seen with no-one swimming towards them... The painter further conveys that the Protestant Dutch have a promising future: the sun shines there, the trees are full of leaves. Not so on the Catholic side.

Whilst this painting is meant as a fierce criticism by the Dutch Protestants towards Catholic Spain, there is nevertheless a sign of hope, the overarching rainbow, linking both sides.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus is asking all of us Christians to be fishers of people. In order to fish, we need to understand what equipment we need. We can't just go to sea hoping for the best. We need to be prepared. And we need to work together, also ecumenically. We will never catch large quantities of fish on our own. We need a boat, nets, a navigator, a fellow fisher, a sailor, etc... All these tools and instruments we can only find in prayer. Prayer is the only way to find God's guidance for all our fishing expeditions... *Christian Art*

REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL

I wonder if we more often than not hear this story too narrowly and we interpret Jesus' words "Follow me" in a way that is too small and restrictive. We tend to make them only about the church, the religious institution, and a particular way of life. They too often become about an exclusivity and a certain kind of life instead of inclusive of all people and applicable to all lives.

What if "Follow me" is Jesus' invitation to every one of us to step into the fullness of our life? What if it is the call to become fully alive? What if it's about becoming more authentically ourselves, living with integrity, and discovering our truest self? Maybe every time we act in such a way that our life seems to fit and our words and decisions reflect who we really are we are answering Jesus' call to follow him. Have you ever had the feeling that you just had to do something even though you didn't exactly know where it would take you or what would happen? It didn't just feel right. It felt necessary. And to do otherwise would be a betrayal of life and yourself? Maybe that's what how Simon and Andrew, and James and John felt. Maybe that's what it feels like to answer Jesus' call, "Follow me."

Sometimes the "follow me" moments of life take us to a really good place, but not always. Sometimes they take us to places we never wanted to go or to circumstances we never wanted to face. Sometimes they set before us the sublime and other times they reveal the ways in which our lives have become disfigured. Sometimes they are public moments for everyone to see and other times they are moments known only to God and us. They can be as adventurous as leaving everything behind and starting over in a new place or as ordinary as giving to the homeless on the corner, going home to our spouse, keeping a promise, changing a nappy. Each of these moments, in whatever form they come, can take us more deeply into ourselves and more fully into our lives, and ultimately connect us with the holy. The "follow me" moments of life are less about where we are going or what we are doing, and more about who we are becoming.

"Follow me" moments seem to have a common thread. They ask us to let go, to leave behind, to walk away. Isn't that what Simon and Andrew and James and John did? We never get anywhere new unless we are willing to leave where we are. We can never hold anything different unless we're willing to drop what's already in our hands. That means letting go of our nets, getting out of our boats, and walking away from old man Zebedee.

Please don't literalize those. They are symbols and images descriptive of our lives and they hold a key to the "follow me" moments of our lives. What are the nets in your life? The things that entangle you? Those things that capture and imprison you? What are the little boats that contain your life and keep it small? The ones that give you an illusion of security and stability? The ones that are overly familiar and comfortable and keep you sailing the same old waters of life? Who is old man Zebedee in your life, that one from whom you continually seek approval and try to meet his or her expectations? Identify the nets, boats, and Zebedees in your life and you'll find a "follow me" moment and the invitation to step more fully into your life and become more truly yourself. *Rev Mike Marsh*

A POEM
By
MALCOLM GUTE

Mother Julian

Show me O anchoress, your anchor-hold
Deep in the love of God, and hold me fast.
Show me again in whose hands we are held,
Speak to me from your window in the past,
Tell me again the tale of Love's compassion
For all of us who fall onto the mire,
How he is wounded with us, how his passion
Quickens the love that haunted our desire.
Show me again the wonder of at-one-ment
Of Christ-in-us distinct and yet the same,
Who makes, and loves, and keeps us in each moment,
And looks on us with pity not with blame.
Keep telling me, for all my faith may waver,
Love is his meaning, only love, forever

C. S. LEWIS ON GOD'S LOVE

When people hear that God loves them, they may assume this means He is content with the way they are. As C.S. Lewis explains in *The Problem of Pain*, however, the opposite is true:



When Christianity says that God loves man, it means that God loves man: not that He has some 'disinterested' ... concern for our welfare, but that, in awful and surprising truth, we are the objects of His love. You asked for a loving God: you have one. The great spirit you so lightly invoked, the 'lord of terrible aspect', is present: not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, not the cold philanthropy of a conscientious magistrate, nor the care of a host who feels responsible for the comfort of his guests, but the consuming fire Himself, the Love that made the worlds, persistent as the artist's love for his work and despotic as a man's love for a dog, provident and venerable as a father's love for a child, jealous, inexorable, exacting as love between the sexes. How this should be, I do not know: it passes reason to explain why any creatures, not to say creatures such as we, should have a value so prodigious in their Creator's eyes. It is certainly a burden of glory not only beyond our deserts but also, except in rare moments of grace, beyond our desiring...

Man does not exist for his own sake. 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.'¹ We were made not primarily that we may love God (though we were made for that too) but that God may love us, that we may become objects in which the Divine love may rest 'well pleased'. To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God: because He is what He is, His love must, in the nature of things, be impeded and repelled by certain stains in our present character; and because He already loves us He must labour to make us lovable... What we would here and now call our 'happiness' is not the end God chiefly has in view: but when we are such as He can love without impediment, we shall in fact be happy.²

God loves us not because we are loveable but because He is love. And because He is love, He can only will what is best for us, which is to be transformed into a being of holy love like Himself. He will settle for nothing less. As we meditate on God's love for us, especially in the cross of Christ, our love for God and our neighbor will increase, and our hearts will become more and more like God's — filled with love.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

The 12 Marks of a Disciple

1. Disciples are called - Jesus invited the fishermen to leave their nets and follow him. God always initiates the relationship and pursues us first, for he *'came to seek out and to save the lost.'* (Lk 19:10).
2. Disciples accept Jesus' call - The choice to be a disciple is an intentional one, which one must make in response to God's love for us.
3. Disciples trust God - Just as Peter and Andrew *'left their nets and followed him'*, discipleship often means leaving our past behind and following Jesus with faith. (Mt 4:20).
4. Disciples love others - Jesus said that *'by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'* (Jn 13:35)
5. Disciples bear spiritual fruit. The fruit in our lives proves that we are disciples of Christ, as we continue to abide in him, the true Vine.
6. Disciples obey their master - Jesus said that we are his friends if we do what he has commanded (Jn 15:14). Obedience deepens our intimacy with the Lord.
7. Disciples are docile - This means that disciples of the Lord are teachable. Whatever they learn from Jesus, they try to implement in their own lives.
8. Disciples spend alone time with Jesus - The disciples were Jesus' closest friends. They shared some of their most intimate moments with him. As disciples, we are called to invest in our relationship with the Lord, by spending quality time with him in prayer and Eucharistic Adoration.
9. Disciples carry their cross - Jesus said *'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'* (Lk 9:23) Suffering is part of the cost of discipleship.
10. Disciples serve others - When feeding the five thousand, the disciples volunteered to distribute the food. In the same way, disciples are called to serve others through the seven corporal acts of mercy.
11. Disciples are committed - Discipleship requires that no one looks back when following Jesus. Disciples set their eyes on the treasures of heaven and keep an eternal perspective.
12. Disciples evangelise - Disciples share the gift of the Gospel and make other disciples. The joy of knowing Jesus overflows in their lives that they feel compelled to share the Good News of what Jesus has done for them with others. *Archdiocese of Southwark*



PRAYER AND ACTION

Intimacy with God does not belong to a special group of religious professionals but is and should be available to all. It is our birthright. It is why we were born. It is why we are here, to open ourselves “to the inner mystery of the heart of reality which is the heart of each one of us.” [1] To open ourselves to that love, to see the world through its eyes, and to live from it with courage and commitment. . . .

All of this has to start with each of us. It has to start with my commitment to a practice of prayer. All of this has to start with my adopting a way of life that can help me grow and nourish my spiritual life, including building community, so that I may become God’s hands and feet and microphone for healing and justice.

Bucko shares several steps for those beginning a path of contemplative action:

- First commit to engaging with the world from a place of prayer, and not ideology; this gives you a felt sense of interconnectedness of all life in God and prevents othering.
- Second, commit to doing the work of coming to terms with your social location and how it relates to systemic racism, poverty, militarism, ecological devastation, and some of the distorted moral narratives that are so prevalent. Are there privileges you need to acknowledge or let go of? Are there commitments you need to reevaluate?
- Third, remember that talking about justice is not the same as doing justice, so simplify your life and commit to ethical living by buying all your necessities in socially responsible, ecologically minded, and human-scale companies. . . .
- Practice works of mercy, making sure that your hands are touching the hands of someone who is suffering, [and] include Mother Earth in that as well.
- Join a social movement, because changing your spending habits or serving others is only part of what is needed. Our lives and relationships do not happen in a vacuum but rather within institutions and systems that have their own crooked logic and are in need of massive changes. . . .

As you move toward a life of personal and political holiness, may your journey be blessed and may your life and presence remind those around you of God’s presence. Deepening your connection to God, in you and around you, do not be afraid to feel the love, the joy, and also the pain that are present. Don’t be afraid to have a heart and to risk breaking your heart. Feel into it all and know that every time you are touching the pain, you are touching the sacred wound of God. God who is always accompanying us and guiding us. God who is suffering with us. . . . God whose life-giving love and justice will one day be “all in all” [1 Corinthians 15:28].

Rev Adam Bucko

SOME REMINDERS FROM THE SYNODAL PROCESS OF WHO WE ARE

What defines the People of God?

It is a people that belongs to God.
This means that it goes beyond any
nation, continent, language, or race:



One is a member by baptism
and by living according to the
teachings of Jesus and his
Church.



Its identity is to be children
of God, which gives
freedom and grants equal
dignity to all.



Its law is the new
commandment of love.
"You shall love your
neighbour as yourself".



Its mission is to be the light
of the world by proclaiming
Jesus' Good News of love,
peace, and fraternity.



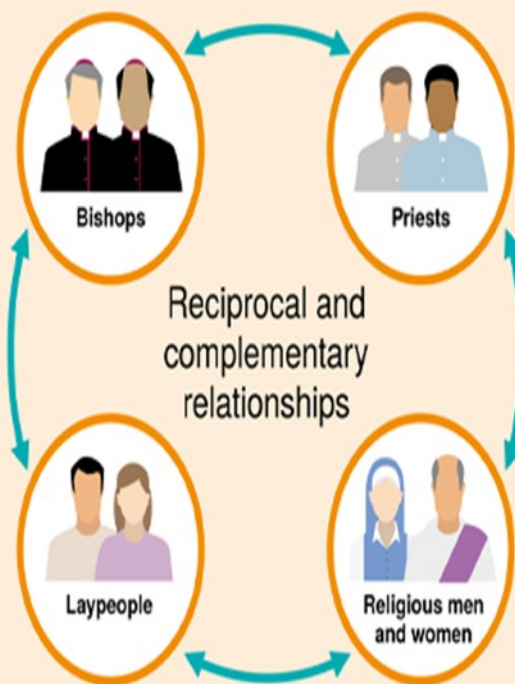
Its destiny is to live and
implement in their local context
a society of justice, joy, peace,
love, and mutual respect.

“

*Being People of God means being missionary disciples
who communicate to others the gifts they received.*

In the Church, we are all faithful

In the Church, all the faithful
constitute a single people of God:



They form a group in which there is equality of rights and duties. Each member is at the service of the others.

Pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by mutual need and complementarity.



THE CHURCH, ONE BIG "WE"



The Church understands itself as the People of God:
a community of people who lives among peoples and cultures.

The Church = People of God = Faithful or Baptized

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 lockdown. 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.

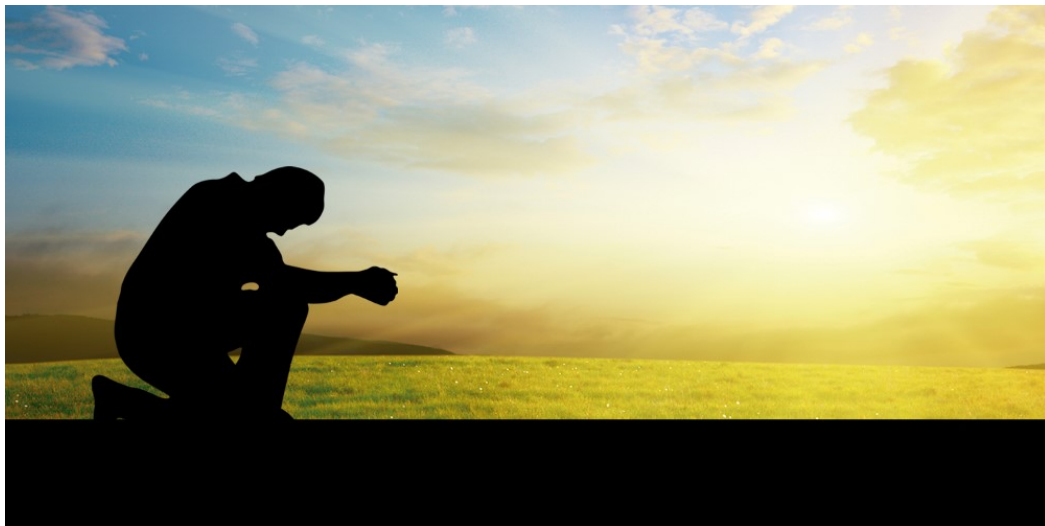
Our diocesan website also has online prayer resources—go to <https://www.rcdom.org.uk>

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

