

DIOCESE OF MOTHERWELL  
OFFICE OF MISSION AND EVANGELISATION



# BEING CATHOLIC TODAY

*WE IN THE OFFICE OF MISSION AND EVANGELISATION AIM TO SERVE AND SUPPORT THE BUILDING UP OF GOD'S KINGDOM IN THE DIOCESE OF MOTHERWELL. WE WILL WORK TOGETHER TO FOSTER COMMUNION AND CO-OPERATION AMONG PARISHES IN ORDER TO FOSTER CATHOLIC LIFE, ROOTED IN CHRIST AND LED BY THE SPIRIT, AT EVERY STAGE.*

*OUR LADY OF GOOD AID, PRAY FOR US.*

## FIRST MEDITATION

### THE CHRISTIAN “IN CHRIST”: ROMANS 6.3-5



## LECTIO DIVINA

### 1. LECTIO

Read the text with one verse being read by one person. Let the words flow over and through you, not pausing at this point with questions or difficulties.

<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For he who has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Now listen to the text again, this time perhaps being read by one person. Focus on a word or a phrase (no more than 3 words) that strike you. For a few minutes, repeat that word or phrase in silence to yourself, accepting it as the word of God to you in the present moment. Savour the insight and feeling the word brings. Hear the small, still voice of God saying: "This word is for you today."

## 2. Meditatio

Each person is encouraged to share the word or phrase, with no comment, with the group. After everyone has spoken, express to the other members of the group what your chosen word means to you right now and how it affirms, challenges, consoles, moves, touches your heart or affects you in any way. This is the moment when we “break the word” for each other and so build up not only ourselves but the whole Body of Christ represented by the group. Avoid the temptation to get involved in discussion at this point. What each person shares is accepted with deep respect and in appreciative silence.

## 3. Oratio

We now enter a dialogue with God, heart to heart. Let the word chosen be the springboard for your response to the One who loves and accepts you unconditionally. Any memories or thoughts, good or bad, evoked by this word, now hand over to God in trust. This may be a moment of profound thanksgiving, a loving request for healing, a prayer for a loved one, a flood of God’s forgiveness. This encounter with the Father in Christ opens us to a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit within us and to the inner transformation assured us by God.

## 4. Contemplatio

Finally, we rest in God’s embrace. We put down any papers or books we have, sit upright on the chair with feet firmly on the floor and hands in our laps. We empty our minds of all words, thoughts and images as we imitate Christ who emptied himself and became as we are. Just as in centring prayer, we may want to use the word we have chosen to re-centre ourselves when, and it is when, distractions begin to fill our minds. This is very much a prayer of the body, sometimes called “embodied prayer” during which we may feel our limbs become heavier and our muscles relax. We may even feel a certain “lifting” of the body even though no movement has taken place. During this time, it is the Holy Spirit who is doing the work, allowing us to make room and space for His action. Don’t worry if you feel “nothing is happening” or if you have to keep on returning to your word. The important thing is to remain still and complete the contemplative moment.

Fr Thomas Keating offers a more in depth reflection in his video on the website [contemplativeoutreach.org](http://contemplativeoutreach.org) on the Lectio Divina page and Sr Marie Testo gives a more succinct presentation on the same page. See also [beingcatholic.org](http://beingcatholic.org)

## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

1. Through Baptism and faith, the Christian lives “in Christ.” (“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” 2 Cor 5.11) This is called “justification” and means that Father has accepted us and continues to accept us as his children through the redeeming work of Christ. (“You belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.” 1 Cor 3.23)

*Points for reflection:*

- i. Does the word “justification” sound a bit too Protestant?*
- ii. Do I not have to wait until heaven to know that God accepts me?*
- iii. What impedes me from knowing that I am accepted by the Father in Christ?*

2. This justification is a complete free gift from God. It does not depend on our good works, our prayers or anything we might do to “prove” ourselves to God. (“...those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion of life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” Romans 5.17)

*Points for reflection:*

- i. Do we Catholics not believe that we need both faith and good works to be saved?*
- ii. Doesn't the letter of St James talk of the need for good works? (see James 2.14-15)*
- iii. How do I view my good works in my relationship with God?*

3. Another way of putting this is that in Baptism and through faith the Father has conformed us to the “paschal mystery of Christ”—his death, his lying in the tomb and his rising to new life: Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

*Points for reflection:*

- i. What does it mean to be “baptised into Christ's death?” How are we dead to sin and the old self?*
- ii. When are we united with Christ in his resurrection?*
- iii. What examples of “newness of life” are there in my daily living?*

4. Justification as a personal encounter with the Father through Christ. Faith is both an intellectual assent to the truths of God revealed by our Lord and also a total act of trust in the God who saves. (“But thanks be to God that you, having been once slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” Romans 6.17-18)

### *Points for reflection*

- i. What is the difference between faith as “intellectual assent” and “an act of trust?”*
- ii. Don’t we believe the Sacraments are all we need?*
- iii. How do I see my faith as a personal encounter with the Father in Christ?*

The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ" and through Baptism.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit we take part in Christ's Passion by dying to sin, and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life; we are members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself...

(God) gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature.... For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church 1987-1988*

“If we—all of us—accept the grace of Jesus Christ, he changes our heart and from sinners makes us saints. To become holy we do not need to turn our eyes away and look somewhere else, or have as it were the face on a holy card! No, no, that is not necessary. To become saints only one thing is necessary: to accept the grace that the Father gives us in Jesus Christ. There, this grace changes our heart. We continue to be sinners for we are weak, but with this grace which makes us feel that the Lord is good, that the Lord is merciful, that the Lord waits for us, that the Lord pardons us—this immense grace that changes our heart.”

— *Pope Francis, The Church of Mercy*



## SECOND MEDITATION

### THE CHRISTIAN AND THE HOLY TRINITY: JOHN 14.8-17, 25-26

#### LECTIO DIVINA

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If in my name you ask me <sup>l</sup> for anything, I will do it. <sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

<sup>25</sup> “I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

Continue with the next three steps outlined on page 1: Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio.



## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

1. The Holy Trinity is a communion of persons, a dynamic relationship marked by participation of each of the Persons in the other, equality, mutual love and solidarity. *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit.”* I Corinthians 13.13

*i. How does our understanding of God as Trinity differ from that of Judaism or Islam?*

*ii. When we talk of the “mystery” of the Trinity, what do we mean by “mystery?”*

*iii. What are some of the moments in my life when I felt God’s presence powerfully and how did I experience this presence?*

2. Through Christ, we are already drawn up to life in the Trinity, *“for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”* (Colossians 3.3) This is God who is “for us” (the Father), God who is “with us” (the Son) and God who is “within us” (the Holy Spirit) Because of this we are called and enabled to mirror ever more the life of the Trinity in our own lives: communion, relationship, participation, equality, mutual love and solidarity.

*i. In what ways does our experience of communion and solidarity throw light on the Trinity?*

*ii. How does our celebration of the Sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist, help us experience the Trinity as relationship, participation, equality and mutual love?*

*iii. How do I experience God “for me” (the Father), God “with me” (the Son) and God “within me” (the Holy Spirit)?*

A Threefold God totally lets go of any boundaries for the sake of the Other, and then receives them back from Another. It is a nonstop waterwheel of Love. Each accepts that He is fully accepted by the Other, and then passes on that total acceptance. Thus “God is Love.” It’s the same spiritual journey for all of us, and it takes most of our life to accept that we are accepted—and to accept everyone else. Most can’t do this easily because internally there is so much self-accusation (self-flagellation in many cases). Most are so convinced that they are not the body of Christ, that they are unworthy, that we are not in radical union with God.

The good news is that the question of union has already been resolved once and for all. We cannot create our union with God from our side. It is objectively already given to us by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us ([Romans 8:9](#)—and all over the place!). Once we know we are that grounded, founded, and home free, we can also stop defending ourselves and move beyond our self-protectiveness, too.

Richard Rohr, *The Shape of God: Deepening the Mystery of the Trinity*



3. For the individual Christian, this process of being drawn ever more deeply into the life of the Trinity is called “sanctification” and takes place as we continue to allow ourselves to be conformed to the pattern of Christ’s Paschal Mystery (“being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3.11). This mystery we celebrate and make present supremely at the Eucharist, THE Mass, through which we continue to gain access to Christ’s Sacrifice: his death, his being buried and his rising to new life. This is why the Eucharist is called the “Sacrifice of the Mass.”

*i. Discuss your understanding of Christ’s “Paschal Mystery” and how the Eucharist makes it present to us.*

*ii. In what sense is the Mass the “source and summit” (Lumen Gentium, no. 11; cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1324) of the Christian life?*

*iii. Reflect on a life event which may have given you an opportunity to enter more fully into the Paschal Mystery of Christ and so into the life of the Trinity itself.*

The death of a loved one is an example of a life event which presents an opportunity for being conformed to the Paschal Mystery. Spend some time reflecting on this and consider whether you find it helpful or not. Such a death with its pain and suffering is the opportunity we have to die with Christ and experience the deep separation, the pain and agony and perhaps the meaningless of the event. “With Christ I hang upon the cross...” We are presented with a *crisis*—a moment of judgement and decision. We can choose to deny, to anaesthetize, to avoid or to rage at the pain. Or we can choose to unite ourselves to the Paschal Mystery, to experience and participate in the deep pain of the cross. As we enter the tomb, we enter the darkness of Christ’s death. Here we begin to reconfigure our lives in the new situation. We discover our powerlessness and are given the opportunity to allow God’s grace to rebuild us for life afterwards. In all this we are not alone: Christ is present with us, bringing us to the Father through the power of the Spirit “With Christ I hang upon the Cross, and yet I live, not I, but Christ lives in me.” (Galatians 2.19-20) In the tomb, we empty ourselves of the spiritual blockages and obstacles which would have us stay in our pain and are made ready for what God is preparing us for. This time “in the tomb” may be brief but equally it could be a long period. It is a time for waiting and trusting. As we rise with Christ, we experience new life, perhaps beyond our imagining, filled with grace and peace. Our loved one remains dead, but we have been transformed and made ready for the next stage of our lives.



Another word for this Paschal mystery is the *kenosis* of Christ: This is the process of self-emptying described by Paul in Philippians 2.5-11:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In Christ, we no longer need to grasp or to hold on to what was. We let ourselves be emptied and to fall more deeply into the life of the Trinity and so to be raised up, “exalted”, to new life in Christ.

This process of conforming ourselves to the Paschal mystery can and must take place in all the events of life, the big ones—death, divorce, separation, loss of a job, loss of face, shame, being misunderstood etc—and the smaller ones—anger, resentment, jealousy; indeed, all the “deadly” sins.

In this way our experience and celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ in Baptism and the Eucharist enables and strengthens us to experience all the events of life as opportunities to enter more deeply into that Mystery, “this mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we present everyone mature in Christ.” Colossians 1. 27-28

## THIRD MEDITATION

### THE TRINITY AND THE CHURCH: JOHN 15.1-11

#### LECTIO DIVINA

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup> He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes<sup>[a]</sup> to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You have already been cleansed<sup>[b]</sup> by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become<sup>[c]</sup> my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

Continue with the next three steps outlined on page 1: Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio.



## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

1. Living in the Trinity—God dwelling in us and we in God require that we mirror the life of the Trinity, its communion of persons, relationship, participation, equality, mutual love and solidarity. (“By this we know that we abide in him and he is us, because he has given us of his Spirit.” 1 John 4.13) The Christian life thus cannot be individualistic and private. Our process of sanctification, being conformed evermore to the Paschal Mystery, takes place in the midst of a community. This community is called the Church. Together as Church we grow in holiness (sanctification) and present ourselves to the world as the Sacrament of Christ: an effective sign of Christ’s presence and Paschal Mystery in our time and place. (“The Church, in Christ, is a sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race.” *Lumen Gentium* 1).

*I. Discuss the difference between the Christian life as “How do I get to heaven?” and “How do we proclaim the presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in our world?”*

*II. What is the relationship between Christ’s Church and his Kingdom?*

*III. How is the Church a Sacrament? Aren’t there only seven Sacraments?*

*Lumen Gentium* 3. The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father. It was in Him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons, for in Him it pleased the Father to re-establish all things. To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. This inauguration and this growth are both symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus, and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself". As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ (8) is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.

*Lumen Gentium* 4. When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father. He is the Spirit of Life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal. To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through Him, until, in Christ, He brings to life their mortal bodies. The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple. In them He prays on their behalf and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons. The Church, which the Spirit guides in way of all truth and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits. By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, "Come!"

2. We become evermore Church as we emulate Christ's Paschal mystery (both as community and as individuals) and through it mirror the divine life of the Trinity itself-- communion, relationship, participation, equality, mutual love and solidarity. As noted earlier, this is experienced supremely in the Eucharist and then lived out in our daily lives.

*i. In my mind, what model of the Church do I have? Does it resemble more the Trinity or some human institution?*

*ii. Suggest some concrete ways for the Church to mirror the life of the Trinity.*

*li. For me, is the Church an "it" or a "we?"*

### 2 Corinthians 5.17-20

<sup>17</sup> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, <sup>[a]</sup> not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

I think this is truly the most wonderful experience we can have: to belong to a people walking, journeying through history together with our Lord, who walks among us! We are not alone; we do not walk alone. We are part of the one flock of Christ that walks together.  
— *Pope Francis, The Church of Mercy*

In the Church there is no do it yourself, there are no free agents.

How many times did Pope Benedict describe the Church as an ecclesial 'we'!

At times one hears someone say:

'I believe in God, I believe in Jesus, but I don't care about the Church.'

How many times have we heard this? And this is not good.

There are those who believe they can maintain a personal, direct and immediate relationship with Jesus Christ outside the communion and the mediation of the Church.

These are dangerous and harmful temptations.

These are, as the great Paul VI said, absurd dichotomies.

It is true that walking together is challenging, and at times can be tiring; it can happen that some brother or some sister creates difficulties, or shocks us....

But the Lord entrusted his message of salvation to a few human beings, to us all, to a few witnesses; and it is in our brothers and in our sisters, with their gifts and limitations, that he comes to meet us and make himself known.

And this is what it means to belong to the Church.

Remember this well: to be Christian means belonging to the Church.

The first name is 'Christian'; the last name is 'belonging to the Church'.

*Pope Francis, The Church of Mercy*



In the light of what we have reflected on the Paschal Mystery and the Trinity, here are some concluding suggestions about who we are in Christ and who we are as a Church.

**The Church as Communion and Equality.** Each diocese is considered the “local church” with its bishop, priest, deacons and people. The diocese is not a “branch office” of Rome; rather the universal church under the leadership of the pope is a “communion of communions” united in love to build up God’s kingdom on earth. As a local church, each diocese should strive to offer its people and the world a full range of ministries which serve the building up of the kingdom.

**The Church as Relationship and Solidarity.** Each diocese with its parishes may also be seen as a communion of communions, linked one to another in a relationship of solidarity. In our own diocese, some parishes are thriving while others are struggling. Moreover, no individual parish can offer a full range of ministries which the all the parishes together can. We must therefore work together supporting and encouraging each other in our life of faith.

**The Church as Participation and Mutual Love:** Individual parishes working together, sharing resources and giving and receiving support can achieve so much more than being isolated from each other. The local church is the diocese and not the parish. Participating together, parishes can offer opportunities to individual Catholics to experience more deeply the joy of belonging to and contributing to the life of the church.

Reflecting communion, relationship, participation, equality, mutual love and solidarity, the Church will become more and more a mirror of the Trinity and the Sacrament of Christ to our world.

