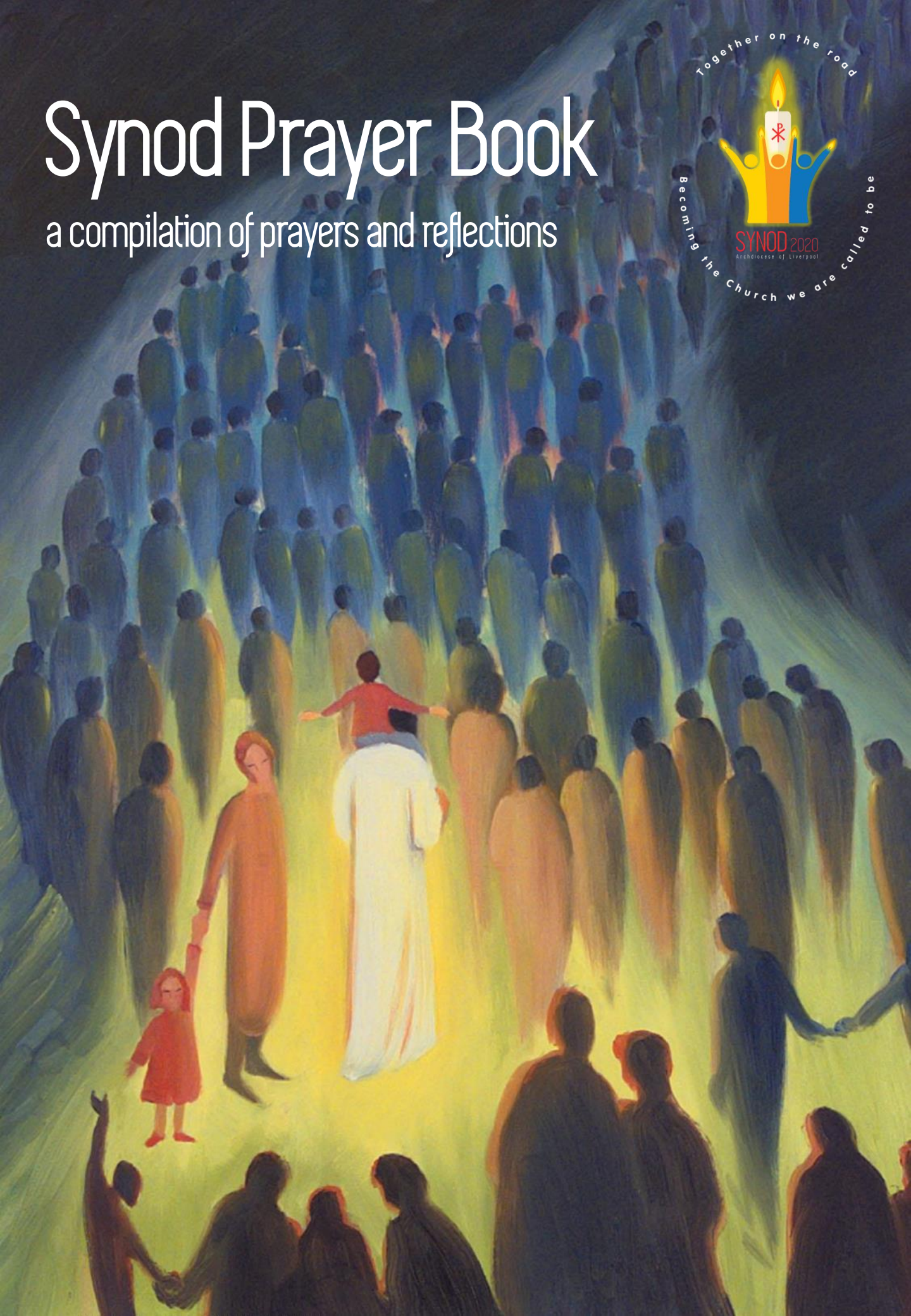


Synod Prayer Book

a compilation of prayers and reflections



Foreword

"If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour."

(Psalm 127.)

Dear Synod Members,

I am delighted to have this opportunity to thank you for your willingness to give your time to our Synod journey. Without your openness to the action of the Holy Spirit our Synod would not be possible.

This little book of prayers and reflections has been produced to play a part in keeping us all turning back to the Lord, time and time again, for His guidance and His help.

Prayerful listening to the Word of God and to each other, and discerning together where the Lord is calling us to change, are at the very heart of what it means to be a "synodal" Church. We travel the road together always attentive to the Lord's direction. Pope Francis has invited us all to see, not *our* way forward, but the *Lord's* way for us.

I hope that the contents of this book will be a call not only to place prayer at the centre of our gatherings to listen to each other, but also to keep us faithful to our own times of prayer when we try to allow the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts and our decisions.

Each of us finds our own way of prayer. Not everyone can pray in the same way. I hope that the prayers provided here will inspire you to draw from other sources in our rich Christian heritage of prayer.

May God bless you in this holy task we have begun and may He keep you always attentive to His call.

+ Malcolm McMahon OP

Most Reverend Malcolm McMahan OP
Archbishop of Liverpool



How to use this book

Synod members have now been prepared to lead times of listening in our parishes and with other groups. These times of listening have their own prayers included in the format suggested during the Synod members' preparation session.

The prayers in this book may be useful for other meetings such as Pastoral Area gatherings and meetings of parish groups, e.g. catechists, readers, UCM, clergy meetings etc. They might also help us in our own personal times of prayer.

- Set up a prayer focus table, light a candle before you begin, give people a moment to be still and to prepare to listen out for God's call in the time of prayer. The most important moments will be times of silence when we are able to listen to God's call in our hearts and to respond to that call.
- Perhaps some of the prayers could be copied and left at the back of your church or put on a parish notice board or in a newsletter so that more people will have a chance to reflect and to pray on these themes.
- Some of the prayers include reflective questions. These can be used as the start of a conversation with the person sitting next to us or for a time of personal prayer. It might be helpful to play quiet instrumental music to give people time to think and pray before talking to their neighbour or before concluding the time of prayer.
- Some of these prayers might be good to read to a group slowly, as a form of guided meditation. We hear things differently when they are read to us without a text in front of us.

It is hoped that this book will be a prompt for you to find your own prayers and reflections to lead us deeper into prayer. It is not meant to be an exhaustive collection. Please write your own prayers and reflections or find other prayers and readings that you find helpful and share them with each other.

There are many good websites that offer more reflections and readings for times of prayer. Here are just a few:

www.cafod.org.uk/pray
www.sacredspace.ie
www.pray-as-you-go.org

If you have a phone that uses apps look up "3-minute retreat" which offers short scripture reflections for each day.

Contents

Part 1 – Prayers for Groups

The first part of this book is designed to be photocopied just as the pages are so that they can be used to open meetings, for listening, discussion, and reflection.

- Change starts with me
- Martha, Martha!
- Our God comes close to us
- She has put in more than all the others
- The Church as a field hospital
- God speaks in the silence
- Many gifts from the one Spirit
- It's Christ's Church, not ours
- The call to service
- God in an apron
- Praying at the foot of the cross

Part 2 – Other Prayers and Reflections

The second part of this book offers different prayers for personal reflection or that you can use as part of a time of prayer in your parish or with a group.

- The Empty Chair
- The Prophetic Community
- God's Dream
- Blessing
- Christ Emerges
- The Grail Prayer
- Pope Francis' Five Finger Prayer
- A People Place
- Cardinal Basil Hume to the Synod of Bishops
- Prophets of a Future Not Our Own
- Mary, the Mother of all disciples
- Let Your God Love You
- The Sharing
- Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the New Evangelization
- Prayer of Pope Francis to Our Lady, Undoer of Knots
- A Prayer to St Anthony of Padua, Restorer of Lost Things
- St Joseph, Protector of the Church
- Reflections of Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman
- On Listening
- Quotations from Bishop Dermot Farrell
- Prayers of the Missal
- Excerpts from Evangelii Gaudium
- Excerpts from Lumen Gentium

All of these prayers can be downloaded and printed from the Synod 2020 website www.synod2020.co.uk.

Part 1

Prayers for Groups



Change starts with me – it isn't always someone else's fault



Luke 6:36-38, 41-42

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon and you will be pardoned. Give and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given... How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye", when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye.'



Reflection

God, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change,
which is pretty much everyone, since I'm clearly not you, God.

At least not the last time I checked.

And while you're at it, God,
please give me the courage
to change what I need to change about
myself,
which is frankly a lot,
since, once again,
I'm not you,
which means I'm not perfect.

It's better for me to focus on changing
myself
than to worry about changing other
people,

who, as you'll no doubt remember me
saying,
I can't change anyway.

Finally, give me the wisdom
to just shut up
whenever I think that I'm clearly smarter
than everyone else in the room,
that no one knows what they're talking
about except me,
or that I alone have all the answers.

Basically, God, grant me the wisdom to
remember that I'm not you.

Amen.

(A New Serenity Prayer by Fr James Martin SJ.)



Questions to ponder

- Why do you think we are so quick to judge others?
- Why do you think we can be so quick to complain about the Church?



Concluding prayer

Father in heaven, form in us the likeness of your Son and deepen his life within us.
Send us as witnesses of gospel joy into a world of fragile peace and broken promises.
Touch the hearts of all with your love that they in turn may love one another.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Martha, Martha!



Luke 10:38-42

In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking.

Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered: 'Martha, Martha,' he said 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her.'



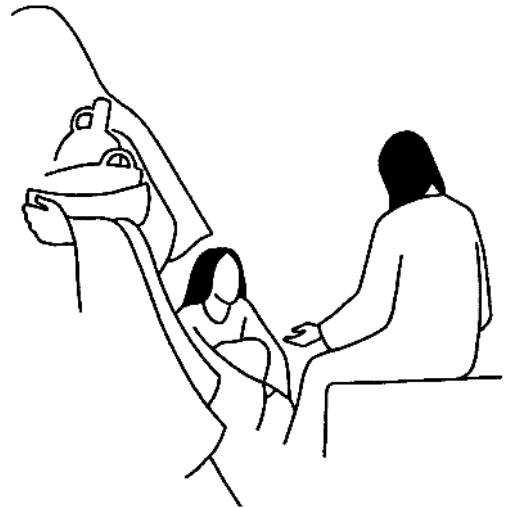
Questions to ponder

- How do you feel when you hear this story?
- What has Jesus asked you to remember with these words?
- Why might this be a good passage to keep close to us as we prepare for Synod 2020?



Concluding prayer

Jesus, when we feel the need to act,
to just 'do something',
slow us down.
Make us stop and pray.
Keep us listening, kneeling at your feet.
May we act always
with your words and your example
in our hearts.
Amen.



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Our God comes close to us



Mark 6:1-3

Jesus went to his hometown and his disciples followed him. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary ...?" And they took offence at him.



Reflection

It can be hard to believe that God comes close to me. Those in the synagogue could not believe it.



Questions to ponder

- How can God be speaking to me through someone I have known in my local community?
- Do I have a fixed view about where God is to be found in my life?
- How can I be more open to his presence?

(From Sacred Space © Irish Province of the Society of Jesus 2010.)



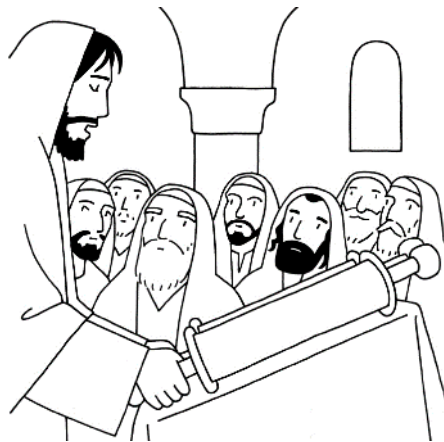
Concluding prayer

Forgive me Lord for the times I have not listened to people who speak words I do not wish to hear.

Forgive me Lord for the times I have judged others by their outward appearance.

Help me Lord to let go of my fixed views and to find you in the presence of those who walk along beside me, today and every day.

Amen.



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She has put in more than all the others



Mark 12:38-44

In his teaching Jesus said, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares, to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive.'

He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the treasury, and many of the rich put in a great deal. A poor widow came and put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury; for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'



Reflection

Mark keeps these two incidents close together.

Jesus first talks about a religion that is about appearances and honour. He speaks against a religious practice that is about the outward show, not the inner reality. Then he points to an example of true faith, this poor widow, the one who trusts enough to give back all she had to live on.



Questions to ponder

- Are there things in my life that I hold back from God and am afraid to place in His hands?
- Do we sometimes find our security in what we can touch and hold on to, rather than in the loving care that God has promised He will show us always?



Reflection

When we know we are loved and held by our Father it is a bit easier to let go and to trust in the path He is asking us to walk.

The widow teaches us another important lesson.

Her gift wasn't much at all in human thinking.

What difference could her two small coins ever make?

But her gift was wonderful in God's eyes.

It might be easy to think we can't make a difference, but God sees and values every time we try, in our own small way, to do what He asks of us.

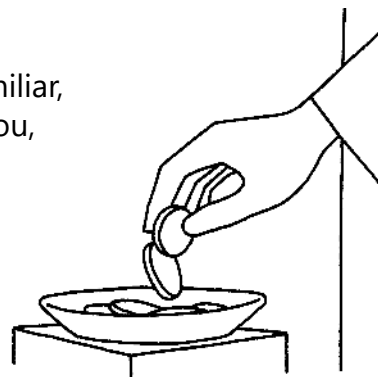


Concluding prayer

Jesus, when we cling on to what is safe and familiar,
when we are afraid of letting go and trusting you,
touch our hearts and help us to remember
that you will never let us down.

We are safe in your hands.

Amen.



The Church as a field hospital – a place of healing and mercy



Luke 10:25-37

There was a lawyer who, to disconcert Jesus, stood up and said to him, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What do you read there?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself'. 'You have answered right,' said Jesus 'do this and life is yours.' But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands; they took all he had, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him on to his own mount, carried him to the inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said "and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the brigands' hands?' 'The one who took pity on him' he replied. Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same yourself'.



Reflection

The thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds ... And you have to start from the ground up.

(Pope Francis, interview with Antonio Spadaro SJ, August 2013.)



Question to ponder

Pope Francis dreams of a Church that is like a field hospital after battle.

- What kind of Church do you dream of?



Concluding prayer

God of mercy and compassion,
you draw near to us in Jesus, your Son,
lifting us out of death,
binding up our wounds,
and nursing our spirits back to health.
May your tenderness compel us to go and do likewise.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



God speaks in the silence



1 Kings 19:4-13

Elijah went on into the wilderness, a day's journey, and sitting under a furze bush wished he were dead. 'O Lord,' he said 'I have had enough. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down and went to sleep. But an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat'. He looked round, and there at his head was a scone baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. But the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you'. So he got up and ate and drank, and strengthened by that food he walked for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into the cave and spent the night in it. Then the word of the Lord came to him saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I am filled with jealous zeal for the Lord Sabaoth, because the sons of Israel have deserted you, broken down your altars and put your prophets to the sword. I am the only one left, and they want to kill me.' Then he was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.' Then the Lord himself went by. There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a gentle breeze. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.



Reflection

We have just heard the story of Elijah. Elijah wished he was dead. An angel of the Lord came to him twice and encouraged him to eat and drink in preparation for his journey along the road to Horeb, God's mountain.

We are told that he journeyed for forty days and forty nights. He went into a cave and spent the night there. It was within the silence of the cave that the still small murmur of the voice of God was heard.

Many, many years later, Mary and Joseph set out together on the way to Bethlehem. They reached a type of cave not too dissimilar to Elijah's cave, a shelter for shepherds, on a hillside in the region of Bethlehem.

A Pilgrim Remembers

I went there with a group of pilgrims, together on the road to Bethlehem. Join me now as we stumble down some steps into a cave partially underground. It was totally silent inside. We sense rather than see other people. As our eyes adjust to the darkness, we can see a manger with an image of the Christ child within. In the gentle stillness, in the presence of God the humming began.... *Silent night, holy night*. It was within the silence of the cave that the still small murmur of the voice of God was heard. I knew I wasn't the only one to hear it when the man standing next to me shed silent tears. Let us listen to that silence now....

Continued overleaf



God speaks in the silence



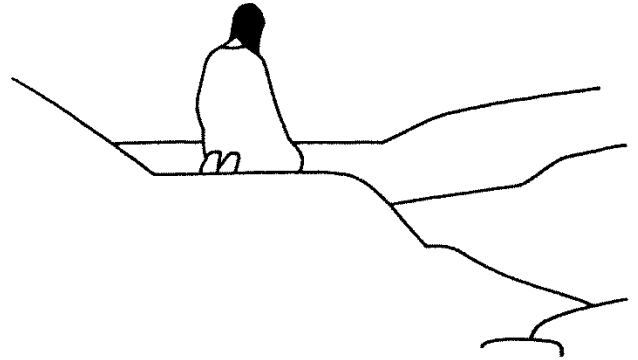
Questions to ponder

- Can I set aside a time of silence each day to listen to the voice of God?
- Am I able to listen in silence and see the Spirit at work in the broken lives of God's people?



Concluding prayer

Lord, we pray that through stillness which leads to silence, we may hear the voice of God, and we may listen with the compassion and tenderness of Christ to each other. Amen.



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Many gifts from the one Spirit



From 1 Corinthians 13

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose... Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ... God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one... If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honour, all parts enjoy it.



Reflection (from "Community and Growth" by Jean Vanier)

Don't just look at the obvious gifts, the talent. There are hidden and latent gifts, much deeper ones, which are linked to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to love. They too must flower.

In Christian Community, everything depends upon whether each individual is an indispensable link in a chain. Only when even the smallest link is securely interlocked is the chain unbreakable.

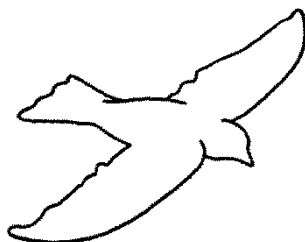
It will be well, therefore, if every member receives a definite task to perform for the community, that they may know, in hours of doubt, that they too are not useless and unusable.

Every Christian community must realise that not only do the weak need the strong, but also that the strong cannot exist without the weak.

Using our gift means building community. If we are not faithful the building will be weakened. St Paul emphasises the charismatic gifts in this building but there are many others which are more directly linked to a quality of love. Bonhoeffer speaks of the different ministries a community needs: holding one's tongue, humility, tenderness, silence in the face of criticism, listening, constant readiness to render small services, support of brothers and sisters, proclamation of the Word, speaking the truth in love. There are people who have the gift of being able to sense immediately, and even to live, the sufferings of others – that is the gift of compassion. There are others who know when something is going wrong and they can pinpoint the cause – that is the gift of discernment. There are others who have the gift of light – they see clearly what is of fundamental concern to the community. Others have the gift of creating an atmosphere which brings joy, relaxation and individual growth. Others again have the gift of welcome. Each person has a gift to use for the good and growth of all.

Concluding prayer

Take a moment to thank God for the many gifts of the Holy Spirit you have experienced at work in your parish community.



It's Christ's Church – not ours



Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets'. 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said 'the Son of the living God'. Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.'



Reflection

"Remember, it's Christ's Church, not ours. Jesus founded the Church, died for the Church, sent his Spirit to the Church, and will someday return for his Church. As the owner of the Church, he has already established the purposes, and they're not negotiable. Our duty is to understand the purposes Christ has for the Church and to implement them."

(Rick Warren in 'The Purpose Driven Church' © 1995 Rick Warren)

In his biography of St Francis of Assisi, St Bonaventure tells the story of Francis entering the little dilapidated chapel of San Damiano. As he prayed before the crucifix, he heard a voice say: "Francis, rebuild my church, which has fallen into disrepair." At first, Francis took this literally, physically restoring the ruined chapel. Later, he came to understand his mission in a more spiritual sense: to recall the Church to the radical simplicity of the Gospel and to the image of Christ in the poor.



Questions to ponder

- How would you describe the mission of Christ's Church in today's world?



Reflection

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that we may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to
eternal life.

*(Known as the 'Prayer of St Francis of Assisi',
the prayer can be traced back to a magazine called 'La Clochette' published in Paris in 1912.)*



Concluding prayer

Lord, renew your Church by the light of the Gospel. Strengthen the bond of unity between the faithful and the pastors of your people, together with Francis our Pope, Malcolm our Bishop, and the whole Order of Bishops, that in a world torn by strife your people may shine forth as a prophetic sign of unity and concord. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.



The call to service



John 13:1-5

It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was.

They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from the table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.



Reflection (an extract from a reflection by a Benedictine monk)

Washing feet is a very menial task, a sign of the host welcoming a guest; a sign of the recognition that you are important to me. You are important because of who you are, not because of what you have done for me; not because you are a sinner or a saint, but because in you there is the unique presence of God. Service is at the heart of the Christian Gospel. "My service" Jesus was saying, "is to die and to rise and to give new life. Your service is to go forward and wash people's feet to show that it is love that really counts." My feet are my way to God, I walk the path to God; my feet are that part of my anatomy which enables me to move. They are the way to love. We are all pilgrims on the way. But which feet are we to wash?

- The feet that have never walked; the feet of people who have never had the opportunity of experiencing the walk in any other way than "being walked by someone else"?
- The feet that never wore shoes; that are so poor that they haven't got shoes?
- The feet that are always shackled; the feet that have been put in prison?
- The feet of those who are so talented; who use those feet in a magical way?
- The feet that give pain as we get older?
- The feet crushed in accidents; feet that are lost through no fault of our own?
- The feet that spend hours training to run a marathon for charity?
- The feet that are blown off by landmines?
- The feet of those who have walked and have never found; the ones who doubt?
- The feet that have always taken the wrong turnings?
- The feet of strangers who have come to our churches?
- The feet that long to walk to Heaven?



Questions to ponder

- Who are the people who 'wash my feet'?
- Where does our community already serve by 'washing feet'?
- How can we wash feet for those who never make it to the 'Upper Room'?
- What can I/we do practically to wash feet – in the here and now?



Concluding prayer

Let us pray. Loving Lord, you call us and challenge us to service. Give us humble hearts that care, gentle hands that reach out and open eyes and ears that recognise opportunities to serve your people. We make this prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



God in an apron



John 13:12-14

When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes again he went back to the table. 'Do you understand' he said 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'



Reflection

Try to imagine this scene. You are sitting at the table with Jesus and His friends the night before He died. A confusing sorrow overshadows you. Yet, a mysterious hope has settled in your heart. Suddenly Jesus is standing in front of you. He looks into your eyes and immediately you are filled with a tremendous worth.

Supper was special that night.
There was a heaviness and a holiness hanging in the air.
We couldn't explain the mood, it was sacred, yet sorrowful.
Gathered around the table eating that solemn, holy meal seemed to us the most important meal we had ever sat down to eat.
We were dwelling in the heart of mystery.
Though dark the night, hope felt right as if something evil was about to be conquered.
And then suddenly the One we loved startled us all.
He got up from the table and put on an apron.
Can you imagine how we felt? God in an apron!

Tenderness encircled us as He bowed before us.
He knelt and said "I choose to wash your feet because I love you".

God in an apron, kneeling.
I couldn't believe my eyes.
I was embarrassed until His eyes met mine.
I sensed my value then.
He touched my feet.
He held them in His strong brown hands.
He washed them.
I can still feel the water.
I can still feel the touch of His hands.
I can still see the look in His eyes.

Then he handed me a towel and said, "as I have done, so you must do".

Learn to bow.
Learn to kneel.

Let your tenderness encircle everyone you meet.
Wash their feet not because you have to, because you want to.

It seems I've stood two thousand years holding the towel in my hands, "as I have done so you must do", keeps echoing in my heart.

"There are so many feet to wash", I keep saying.

"No", I hear God's voice resounding through the years.
"There are only My feet. What you do for them you do for Me."



Praying at the foot of the cross



Luke 23:35-43

The people stayed there watching him. As for the leaders, they jeered at him. 'He saved others,' they said 'let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.' The soldiers mocked him too, and when they approached to offer him vinegar they said, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself'. Above him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews'.

One of the criminals hanging there abused him. 'Are you not the Christ?' he said. 'Save yourself and us as well.' But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. Jesus' he said 'remember me when you come into your kingdom.' 'Indeed, I promise you,' he replied 'today you will be with me in paradise.'



Reflection

The place is Calvary. Imagine the scene.

The ground beneath your feet is full of dust and tiny stones.

And what of the atmosphere, is it quiet ... expectant ... hushed ... heavy ... oppressive?

Look at the people who are there at the foot of the cross - do you know them?

Is Mary the Mother of Jesus there? Is the beloved disciple? Who else is there?

Listen, hear the leaders jeering. Listen, hear the soldiers mocking.

Look. Listen. And now see.

See the inscription. Move nearer to the cross. Raise your eyes and read,

'This is the King of the Jews.'

Now lower your eyes from the inscription to the face below it and look into the eyes of Christ...

What do you see when you look into his eyes? What are his feelings for you? What do you see as you hold the gaze of God?...

What does God on a cross see as you return his gaze?

What does he see when he looks into your eyes?

What are your feelings for him?...

We might say with the good thief, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom."

What one thing would you like Jesus to remember about you?

"Indeed, I promise you...." Jesus replied.



Questions to ponder

- What one thing does Jesus promise you today?

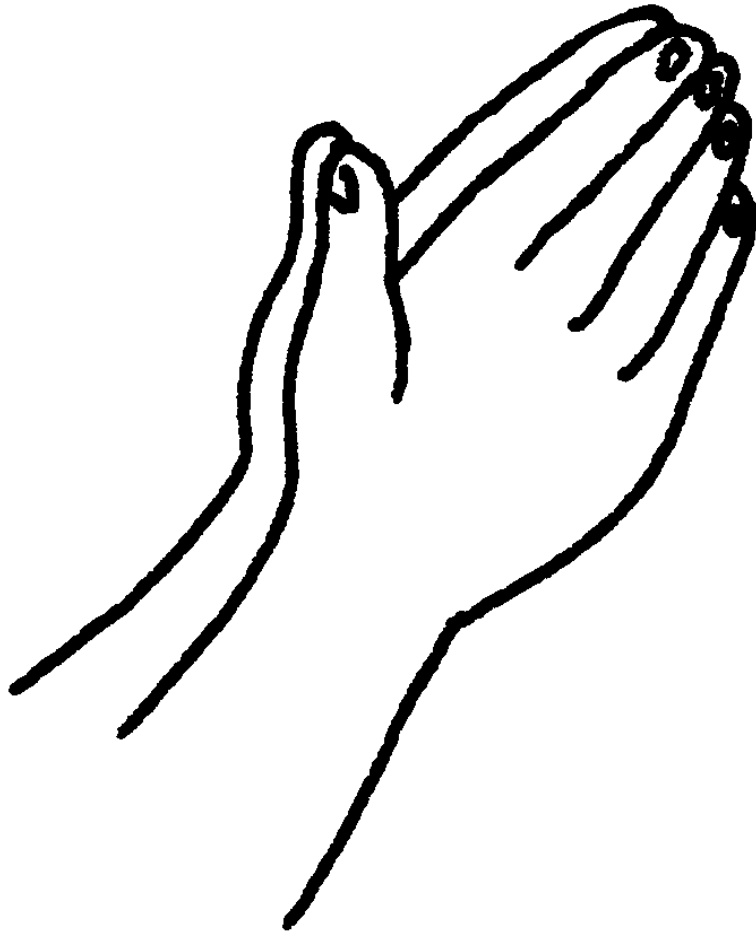


SYNOD 2020

Synod Prayer Book

Part 2

Other Prayers and Reflections



The Empty Chair

A priest went to visit a patient in his home. He noticed an empty chair at the patient's bedside and asked what it was doing there. The patient said, "I had placed Jesus on that chair and was talking to him before you arrived. For years I found it extremely difficult to pray until a friend explained to me that prayer was a matter of talking to Jesus. He told me to place an empty chair nearby, to imagine Jesus sitting on that chair and to speak with him and listen to what he has to say to me in reply. I've had no difficulty praying ever since".

Some days later as the story goes, the daughter of the patient came to the rectory to inform the priest that her father had died. She said, "I left him alone for a couple of hours. He seemed so peaceful. When I got back to the room I found him dead. I noticed a strange thing though: his head was resting not on the bed but on a chair that was beside the bed".

From: A way to God. Anthony de Mello SJ

The Prophetic Community

I believe that the way ahead, the only way,
lies through our making ourselves what we ought to be.

When our sons and daughters,
our grandsons and granddaughters
can look at the Catholic Church and say:

'There is the community
of reasonable and sensible people
who actually believe in this person called Jesus Christ
and his resurrection.

That is the community which is not obsessed with itself,
but puts itself at the service of humanity.

That is the community in which people pull together.

That is the community which has fire in its belly about justice:
doesn't mind rattling the bars of people's cages.

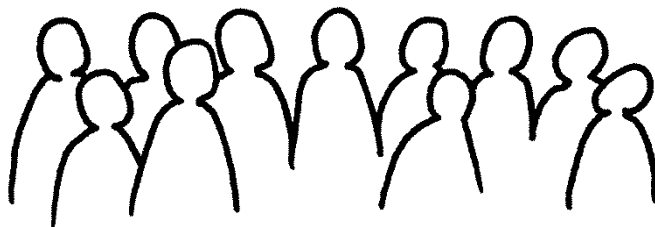
That is the community which clearly possesses a treasure
a hidden treasure which makes its members happy'.

When our children and grandchildren can look at us
and say that about us

they will also want to say:

'And that is the community
I wish to belong to'.

Monsignor Tony Philpot



God's Dream

The Lord God said: I myself will dream a dream within you,
good dreaming comes from me, you know.

My dreams seem impossible,
not too practical nor for the cautious man or woman;
a little risky sometimes,
a trifle brash perhaps.

Some of my friends prefer to rest more comfortably
in sounder sleep with visionless eyes.

But from those who share my dreams

I ask a little patience,

a little humour,

some small courage,

and a listening heart – I will do the rest.

Then they will risk and wonder at their daring;

run, and marvel at their speed;

build, and stand in awe

at the beauty of their building.

You will meet me often

as you work in your companions who share the risk,

in your friends who believe in you

enough to lend their own dreams,

their own hands,

their own hearts,

to your building.

In the people who will stand in your doorway,

stay awhile

and walk away knowing that they too can find a dream.

There will be sun-filled days

and sometimes a little rain –

a little variety – both come from me.

So come now, be content.

It is my dream you dream,

my house you build,

my caring you witness;

my love you share

and this is the heart of the matter.



Charles Peguy

Blessing

May we be blessed with companions on the journey, friends who will listen to us
and encourage us with their presence.

May we learn to live with what is unsolved in our hearts, daring to face the questions
and holding them until, one day, they find their answers.

May we find the still, quiet place inside each one of us where we can know and
experience

the peace that passes all understanding.

May love flow in us and through us to those who need our care.

May we continue to dream dreams and to reach out into the future
with deeper understanding of God's way for us.

Amen.



SYNOD 2020

Synod Prayer Book

Christ Emerges

From the banal, Christ emerges.
From the misshapen, Christ emerges.
From the rough edges, Christ emerges.

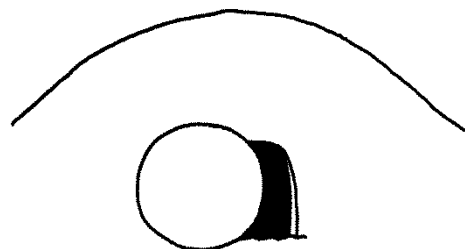
Christ emerges despite the mess.
Christ emerges from the mess.
Christ emerges because of the mess.

From our heartache, Christ emerges.
From our mistakes, Christ emerges.
From our quiriness, Christ emerges.

Christ emerges in the pain.
Christ emerges for the pain.
Christ emerges to end the pain.

From nothing, Christ emerges.
From the chaos, Christ emerges.
From eternity, Christ emerges.

Christ emerges through us.
Christ emerges with us.
Christ emerges in us.



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The Grail Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work;
I give you my feet to go your way;
I give you my eyes to see as you do;
I give you my tongue to speak your words;
I give you my mind, Lord, that you may think in me;
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.
Above all, Lord, I give you my heart,
that you may love in me your Father and all humankind;
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me,
so that it is you, Lord Jesus,
who live and work and pray in me.
Amen.



© The Grail Society

Pope Francis' Five Finger Prayer

Using the fingers on your hand, start with the thumb and pray these intentions in this order:

2. The next finger is the index.
Pray for those who teach you,
instruct you and heal you.
They need the support and
wisdom to show direction to
others. Always keep them
in your prayers.

3. The following finger is
the tallest. It reminds us
of our leaders, the
governors and those who
have authority. They need
God's guidance.

1. The thumb is
the closest finger
to you. So, start
praying for those
who are closest to
you. They are the
persons easiest
to remember.
To pray for our
dear ones is a
"sweet obligation".



4. The fourth finger
is the ring finger.
Even though
it may surprise you,
it is our weakest finger.
It should remind
us to pray for
the weakest, the sick
or those plagued
by problems.
They need
your prayers.

5. And finally,
we have our smallest finger,
the smallest of all.
Your pinkie should remind you
to pray for yourself.
When you are done praying
for the other four groups,
you will be able to see your own needs
but in the proper perspective
and, also,
you will be able to pray for your own
needs in a better way.



A People Place

If this is not a place where tears are understood,
Where do I go to cry?

If this is not a place where my spirits can take wing,
Where do I go to fly?

If this is not a place where my questions can be asked,
Where do I go to seek?

If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard,
Where do I go to speak?

If this is not a place where you'll accept me as I am,
Where can I go to be?

If this is not a place where I can try to learn and grow,
Where can I be just me?

William J. Crocker

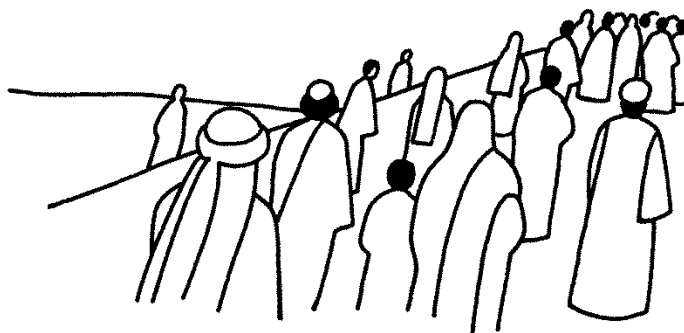
Intervention by Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster at the Synod of Bishops on 14 October 1980

I heard a voice speaking, and it spoke of the Church, and I saw in my dream a vision. It was a vision of the Church. I saw a fortress, strong and upstanding. Every stranger approaching seemed to those who defended it to be an enemy to be repelled; from that fortress the voices of those outside could not be heard.

Then I had another vision. It was of a pilgrim, a pilgrim through history and through life. That pilgrim was the Church. The pilgrim was hastening towards the vision, towards all Truth. But it had not yet reached it. It limped along the road. But meanwhile there were sign-posts to show the way, or rather they told you that this or that road was not the right one. The pilgrim is always in search, I reflected, and that can be painful. The leaders, too, of the pilgrimage are often themselves not always clear. They must sometimes co-agonize with the other pilgrims. Co-responsibility will always involve co-agonizing.

The fortress was a temple, but the pilgrims lived in a tent. It is sometimes better to know the uncertainties of Abraham's tent than to sit secure in Solomon's temple.

- How have you experienced the Church as a fortress, strong and upstanding?
- How have you experienced the Church as the pilgrim limping along the road?



Prophets of a future not our own

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime
only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise
that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No programme
accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives
includes everything.

That is what we are about.

We plant a seed that will one day grow.

We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations
that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation
in realising that.

This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.

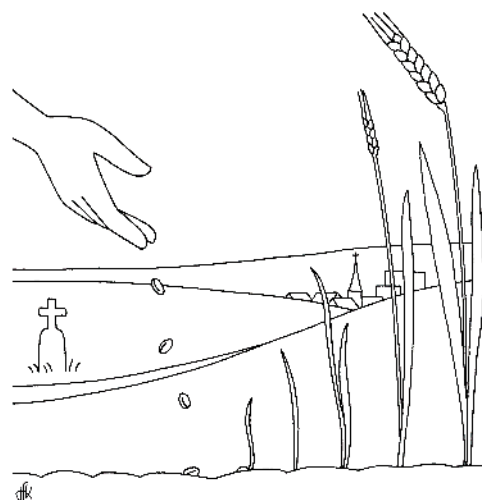
It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning,

a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace
to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.



*Bishop Kenneth Edward Untener
(often attributed to St Óscar Romero)*



Mary, the Mother of all disciples

This was the most simple
and yet greatest prayer
ever uttered.

It was not a prayer that sought
but a prayer that accepted.

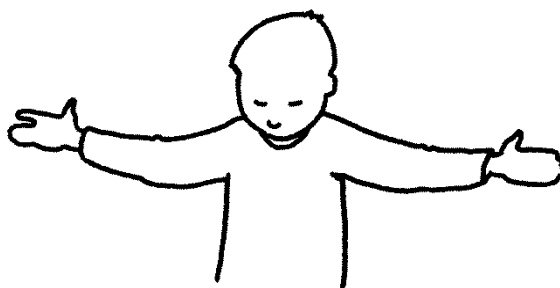
It was a prayer that began and ended
with the same word,
listening
then acquiescing.

As Mary heard God's word,
accepted God's word,
and so, gave birth to God's word,
so may we say to God
our simple "yes".



Let Your God Love You

Be silent.
Be still.
Alone.
Empty
Before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows.
God understands.
God loves you
With an enormous love,
And only wants
To look upon you
With that love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.
Let your God—
Love you.



Edwina Gateley



SYNOD 2020
A COMMITMENT TO TOGETHERNESS
Synod Prayer Book

The Sharing

We told our stories – that's all.
We sat and listened to each other
and heard the journeys of each soul.
We sat in silence
entering each one's pain and
sharing each one's joy.
We heard love's longing
and the lonely reachings-out
for love and affirmation.
We heard of dreams
shattered
and visions fled.
Of hopes and laughter
turned stale and dark.
We felt the pain of isolation
and the bitterness of death.

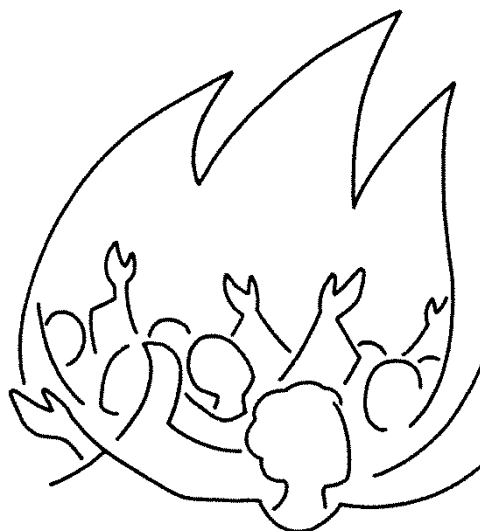
But in each brave and lonely story
God's gentle life broke through
and we heard music in the darkness
and smelt flowers in the void.

We felt the budding of creation
in the searching of each soul
and discerned the beauty
of God's hand
in each muddy, twisted path.

And God's voice sang in each story.
God's life sprang from each death.
Our sharing became one story
of a simple lonely search
for life and hope and oneness
in a world which sobs for love.
And we knew that in our sharing
God's voice with mighty breath
was saying love each other
and take each other's hand.

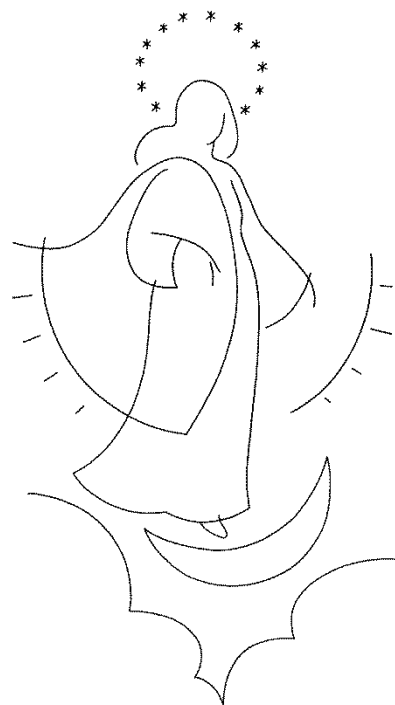
For you are one though many
and in each of you I live.
So listen to my story
and share my pain and death.
Oh, listen to my story
and rise and live with me.

Edwina Gateley



Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the New Evangelization

Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes"
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.
Filled with Christ's presence,
you brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him exult in the womb of his mother.
Brimming over with joy,
you sang of the great things done by God.
Standing at the foot of the cross
with unyielding faith,
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.
Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.
Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom.
Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.
Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia!



*From Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation
Evangelii Gaudium (24 November 2013)*



SYNOD 2020

Synod Prayer Book

A prayer to St Anthony of Padua, Restorer of Lost Things

We humbly ask for your prayers St Anthony.

You found your greatest joy in proclaiming the message of the gospel to the poor and the lost, renew in us a passion for sharing the love of God, revealed in Jesus, with all people.

You who delight in restoring what has been lost, help us rediscover the fervour and love

that may have grown cold in us.

Help us to hear again the gentle invitation of Jesus to follow Him, wherever that call may have grown faint or become a distant memory.

St Anthony, Model of Christian Charity and Restorer of Lost Things, pray for us, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Amen.

Prayer of Pope Francis to Our Lady, Undoer of Knots

Holy Mary, full of God's presence during the days of your life, you accepted with full humility

the Father's will, and the Devil was never capable to tie you around with his confusion.

Once with your Son you interceded for our difficulties, and, full of kindness and patience,

you gave us examples of how to untie the knots of our life.

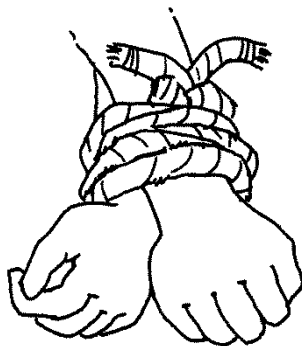
And by remaining forever Our Mother, you put in order, and make more clear the ties that link us to the Lord.

Holy Mother, Mother of God, and our Mother, to you, who untie with motherly heart the knots of our life, we pray to you to receive in your hands our Archdiocese of Liverpool and Synod 2020 and to free us of the knots and confusion with which our enemy attacks.

Through your grace, your intercession and your example, deliver us from all evil, Our Lady, and untie the knots that prevent us from being united with God, so that we, free from sin and error, may find Him in all things, may have our hearts placed in Him and may serve Him always in our brothers and sisters.

Amen.

Adapted for Synod 2020



St Joseph, Protector of The Church

St Joseph, husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus,
you have been charged with the protection of the universal Church
so that you might care for all the children of the Kingdom
in the same way that you lovingly cared for the members of the Holy Family.

From heaven, where you now live with Jesus and Mary,
guide and protect the people of God walking toward fullness of life.

Bring together from the four corners of the world all your children
so that they may live in one Spirit.
Lead all Christians to unity in the Church.

We ask your intercession St Joseph for the work of the Church
in the Archdiocese of Liverpool,
as we journey together
towards Synod 2020.

Obtain for the Holy Father, for Archbishop Malcolm, and for all the faithful,
who with them, form the Church community,
the graces of understanding, courage and strength
so that we may all live according to the teaching and example
of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Adapted for Synod 2020



Reflections from Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman

Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman will soon be declared a Saint of the Church. Here are some of his best-known reflections. We can ask him to intercede for us as we seek to live together the Mission God has entrusted to each of us.

“God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.

He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments.

Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about.”

Meditations on Christian Doctrine

Stay with me, and then I shall begin to shine as you shine:
so to shine as to be a light to others.

The light, O Jesus, will be all from you.
None of it will be mine. No merit to me.
It will be you who shines through me upon others.
O let me thus praise you, in the way which you do love best,
by shining on all those around me.
Give light to them as well as to me; light them with me, through me.

Teach me to show forth your praise, your truth, your will.
Make me preach you without preaching - not by words,
but by my example and by the catching force,
the sympathetic influence, of what I do -
by my visible resemblance to your saints,
and the evident fullness of the love which my heart bears to you.

Meditations and Devotions

He rose in the night, when no one saw Him; and we, too, rise we know not when nor how. Nor does anyone know anything of our religion’s history, of our turnings to God, of our growings in grace, of our successes, but God Himself who secretly is the cause of them.

Parochial and Plain Sermons



On Listening

When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know.
But if you listen, you may learn something new.

The Dalai Lama

The ultimate benefit of genuine listening:
you honour the other person.

Source unknown

Humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking. I told the young people in the pre-Synod Meeting: "If you say something I do not like, I have to listen even more, because everyone has the right to be heard, just as everyone has the right to speak".

*Pope Francis at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops
(3 October 2018)*

In this Liverpool 2020 Synod, following Pope Francis, we want to come up with bold and creative ways, courage to speak openly and honestly, without hesitation, without polite deference, the freedom to speak candidly and honestly without holding back, while listening with humility, with an open heart to the other. This is real dialogue. The Synod is a space for genuine dialogue and discernment [sifting].

But what is Dialogue? What is Discernment?

Dialogue is a conversation on a common subject between two or more persons with differing views, the primary purpose of which is for each participant to learn from the other something new about reality so that each can change and grow.

Fr Eamonn Mulcahy CSSp

Teach me to listen, O God, to myself.

Help me to be less afraid to trust the voice inside – in the deepest part of me.

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice –

in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence.

Teach me, Lord, to listen.

Teach me to listen, O God, to those nearest me,
my family, my friends, my co-workers.

Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is:

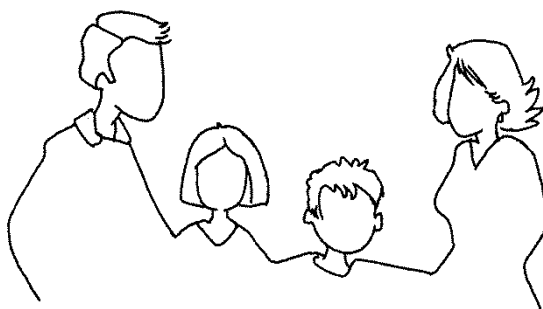
"Accept the person I am. Listen to me".

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me –

the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

Amen.

Fr John Veltri SJ



Excerpts from an address by Bishop Dermot Farrell at a conference with laity and priests in the Diocese of Ossory, Ireland, on 24 November 2018

Pope Francis is constantly putting his synodal vision of the Church before us. The question he is asking, and that we should ask ourselves, is what kind of Church is God calling the priests and all Catholics to be in the longer term – perhaps less self-referential and more a community of missionary disciples, less clerical and more synodical, to use the language and categories of Pope Francis.

The mission of the Church, the work of God, is not just the work of a group of professionals, it is the call and the responsibility of all the baptised. There is little sense of mission within the Catholic Church (in Ireland), and there is no sense of what that mission should be. We need to recover the missionary mandate of Jesus Christ.

Crisis demands creativity. This time of reduced numbers may well afford us an opportunity to be creative and to reimagine the institutional Church. We have not been abandoned by God; God's will is to be found in this situation. Let us not look back to our own experience of the Church of our youth but look ahead to the Church in which we will minister and worship in the years ahead.

Prayers adapted from the Missal

Merciful Father, grant that all the faithful of the Church, looking into the signs of the times by the light of faith, may constantly devote themselves to the service of the Gospel.

Keep us attentive to the needs of all that, sharing their grief and pain, their joy and hope, we may faithfully bring them the good news of salvation and go forward with them along the way of your Kingdom.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

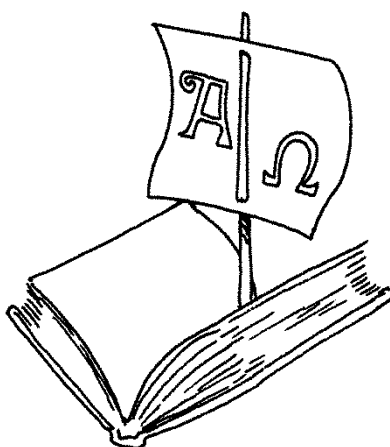
Amen.

Father of mercy and love, we ask you to open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters; inspire in us words and actions to comfort those who labour and are burdened.

Make us serve them truly, after the example of Christ and at his command. And may your Church stand as a living witness to truth and freedom, to peace and justice, that all people may be raised up to a new hope.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.



Pope Francis: Evangelii Gaudium

I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for self-preservation. [27]

Christ's resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On razed land life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads. Each day in our world beauty is born anew, it rises transformed through the storms of history. Values always tend to reappear under new guises, and human beings have arisen time after time from situations that seemed doomed. Such is the power of the resurrection, and all who evangelize are instruments of that power. [276]

At the same time, new difficulties are constantly surfacing: experiences of failure and the human weaknesses which bring so much pain. We all know from experience that sometimes a task does not bring the satisfaction we seek, results are few and changes are slow, and we are tempted to grow weary. Yet lowering our arms momentarily out of weariness is not the same as lowering them for good, overcome by chronic discontent and by a listlessness that parches the soul. It also happens that our hearts can tire of the struggle because in the end we are caught up in ourselves, in a careerism which thirsts for recognition, applause, rewards and status. In this case we do not lower our arms, but we no longer grasp what we seek, the resurrection is not there. In cases like these, the Gospel, the most beautiful message that this world can offer, is buried under a pile of excuses. [277]

Faith also means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive, that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, that he does not abandon us and that he brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity. It means believing that he marches triumphantly in history with those who "are called and chosen and faithful" (*Rev 17:14*). Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree (cf. *Mt 13:31-32*), like the measure of leaven that makes the dough rise (cf. *Mt 13:33*) and like the good seed that grows amid the weeds (cf. *Mt 13: 24-30*) and can always pleasantly surprise us. The kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. Christ's resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain. May we never remain on the side-lines of this march of living hope! [278]

Pope Francis: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*

Speaking of **dreams and visions**, Pope Francis observes: 'When young and old alike are open to the Holy Spirit, they make a wonderful combination. The old dream dreams, and the young see visions [192]. If young people sink roots in those dreams, they can peer into the future [193].' That is why we need **to take risks together** walking together, young and old. 'Roots are not anchors chaining us' but 'a fixed point from which we can grow and meet new challenges'. [200]

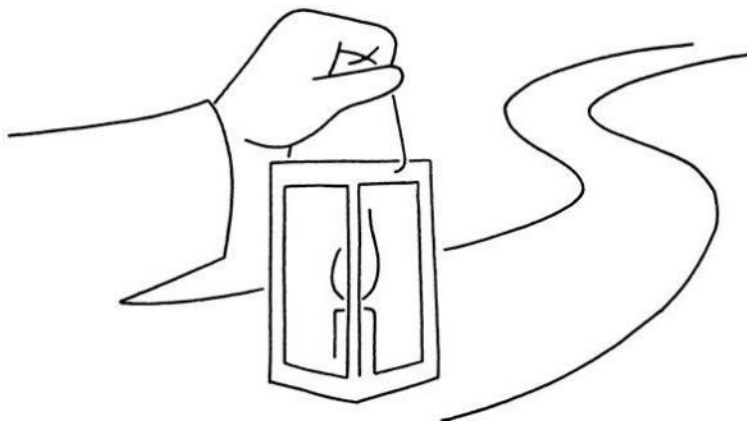
The exhortation concludes with **a wish** from Pope Francis: 'Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith... And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us.' [299]

Pope Francis to Jesuits in the Baltic States, September 2018

What needs to be done today is to accompany the Church in a deep spiritual renewal. I believe the Lord wants a change in the church. I have said many times that a perversion of the Church today is clericalism.

But fifty years ago the Second Vatican Council said this clearly: the Church is the People of God. Read number 12 of *Lumen Gentium*. I know that the Lord wants the Council to make headway in the Church.

Historians tell us that it takes a hundred years for a Council to be applied. We are halfway there. So, if you want to help me, do whatever it takes to move the Council forward in the church. And help me with your prayer. I need so many prayers.



Lumen Gentium n.12 (Second Vatican Council)

The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give praise to His name. The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole people's supernatural discernment in matters of faith when "from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful" they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God. Through it, the people of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life.

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills", He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit". These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labour to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuineness and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good.



Acknowledgements

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Synod 2020 Office

St Mark's Presbytery, Penmann Crescent, Halewood, Liverpool L26 0UG

T: 0151 486 1206 | **E:** synod2020@rcaol.co.uk | **W:** synod2020.co.uk



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