

integritas

Ut Unum Sint.
That all may be One.

*I have given them the glory you gave to me,
that they may be one as we are one.
With me in them and you in me,
may they be so completely one
that the world will realise that it was you who sent me
and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.*

John 17 : 22-23



*'Integritas', Ennisnag, Stoneyford, County Kilkenny.
May 25th, 2003.*

If you have any queries about this centre or if you wish to receive a copy of the programme of courses available here, please contact :-

Linda Rainsberry/Patrick Treacy,
Ennisnag, Stoneyford, County Kilkenny, Ireland.
Telephone : (00) (353) (0) 56 - 7728902.
Facsimile : (00) (353) (0) 56 - 7728903.
E-mail : enquiries@integritas.ie
Website : www.integritas.ie

Copyright © 2003, Linda Rainsberry and Patrick Treacy

INTRODUCTION

Why does the Christian faith not change our lives?

Integritas is a Christian initiative which is based upon this question. It is situated at a centre where we live at Ennisnag, Stoneyford, in the County of Kilkenny. We are a married couple and we live here with our three children, Sophia, Samuel and Joshua.

On each Wednesday evening, we meet here for an hour of Christian meditation and contemplative prayer, in a prayer room, with people from the locality. We also arrange courses here throughout the year in an adjoining building where people in religious life give guidance in the practice of prayer and reflection. Classes in yoga are given by a member of the local community throughout the year. We also attempt to provide simple hospitality within the context of a family home to those who come here for prayer and for courses.

Out of this practice, which commenced in September 2000, we have felt the need to begin to reflect upon this question and consciously engage in the process of articulating an answer. This document is a first step in this process. As the initiative being undertaken here develops, this document will hopefully grow in expressing a more profound answer to this question. For the moment though, it seeks to start this exercise of articulating a vision and practice of the Christian faith which does change our lives for the better. This is the purpose of *Integritas*.

The starting point is to begin by identifying what is absent from our expression of the Christian faith which prevents it from changing our lives. We have found that there are three themes which repeatedly emerge.

(a) The fragmentation of central relationships.

The Christian faith will continue to leave us unmoved unless we understand how it addresses the real problem of this era, being the fragmentation of central relationships in our lives. We are scattered within ourselves and as societies in the Western world because we have neglected certain relationships which are essential to being fully human. The most profound of these relationships is the relationship of the human person to God. Once one neglects, or even denies this relationship, the relationships of the human person to oneself, to others and to society and creation progressively fall apart.

The Christian faith is not being articulated in a way which responds to the unconscious distress in each of us arising from the disintegration of these relationships. This initiative searches for a vision and practice of the Christian faith which leads to a re-integration of these four relationships and the term *integral* is used to describe this objective.

(b) The inner centre of Jesus Christ.

Once we become scattered in ourselves, our relationships fall apart. To prevent this, we need a centre within us which holds. This centre must be spiritual so as to protect us from being pulled asunder by the demands of each day.

The Christian faith is based upon the interior experience of the person of Jesus Christ. He is the steadfast centre in the heart of the human person who holds us and prevents us from being scattered. He is the centre around which all of our relationships may be re-integrated. It is for this reason that this initiative is primarily concerned with prayer and reflection for it is only through them that an inner experience of the Lord can be found.

(c) An additional model of lay involvement in the Christian Church.

To find the steadfast presence of Jesus Christ within oneself, we need to explore the Christian faith in a milieu where we feel at home. The existing structures of the Christian Church, while essential, lack a sense of human warmth and a feminine presence. Furthermore, while the diocesan structure and religious orders draw in many ways upon the participation of lay people, the involvement of lay people can never be total within these contexts. We need an additional model which complements the existing diocesan and religious structures but which relies upon the total commitment of lay people to create centres for prayer and reflection in their own homes.

These centres need to be places of prayer and home, not necessarily for a married couple or with children present, but children must be joyfully welcomed. They must also be places that reflect upon the problems in the human journey to God and in our society and search for the Christian response to these challenges. Yet, the basic characteristic must always be the creation of a place for prayer, for the contemplative experience of God. Bede Griffiths stressed the importance of this when writing prophetically of lay communities in these terms :-

“Whatever the work to be done, whatever service we do, it must be related and intimately associated with our prayer, our meditation, our contemplation. We are trying to bring our whole life, our whole being, our secular life, into this inner life of prayer. That is what we are seeking. That is our hope for these lay communities. And this is our prayer : that all these groups and meetings taking place will gradually evolve into a new kind of church, a church that is focused on contemplative prayer, renewing the whole Christian life and we hope, human life in the context of prayer.”

(“The New Creation in Christ, Bede Griffiths, (1992) at p. 29.)

The small initiative being undertaken here is a “lay community” seeking to address these three concerns so that, by the grace of God, a life-changing vision and practice of the Christian faith may emerge. The purpose of this document is to outline the beginning of this process, both in relation to the underlying thinking and the practical steps which have been taken to date.

In the course of the evolution of this document, many people have given of their valuable time to reflect upon earlier drafts. It has already benefited greatly from criticism which has been generously given. The consistent support of some close friends has also been very welcome. In this respect, we want to acknowledge the friendship of Eltin Griffin O. Carm. and Stephen Costello. With their respective experience in Christian prayer and philosophy, their guidance in relation to this document and the entire initiative has been of immense value. The presentation of this document has also been beautifully enhanced by photographs taken by Donagh O’Shea O.P. when he stayed with us here recently.

Louis Hughes O.P. has given a commitment to this initiative from the very beginning and has been a source of constant guidance, encouragement and enthusiasm. He has opened opportunities for new directions to enable this initiative to grow in a way that is original and attentive to the Spirit. Peter Hannan S.J. has also profoundly influenced every step that has been taken. It is hard to conceive of any central insight in this document which has not arisen from conversations with him. His steadfast emphasis upon the practice of prayer and reflection in experiencing an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ has been the cornerstone. Without the support of either of these men, this initiative would not have even begun.

In the week that this document was finalised, our friend and mentor John Mackie died. He gave a course here in June, 2002 and he studied this document in all of its drafts. He made further suggestions for its improvement having studied the final draft in the closing weeks of his life. From the very beginning of this initiative, he also gave invaluable guidance and encouragement. He stressed the importance of the need for a contemplative renewal in the Christian Church which is based in family life. He expressed concern at the lack of the feminine in this document and this weakness will hopefully be addressed as this document is revised in time. This document is dedicated to him.

Linda Rainsberry and Patrick Treacy,
All Souls,
November 2nd, 2003.



The prayer room is situated in the lower part of the main house which is shown in this photograph. The valley to the right cradles the King's River.

*It helps now and then, to step back and take the 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.

This is what we are about : we plant seeds that one day will 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 capability.

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.

Oscar Romero.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
<i>Linda Rainsberry & Patrick Treacy</i>	
PART A – THE INTEGRAL MESSAGE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.	
1. Fragmentation of central relationships – the problem of our time.	11
2. The Christian vision of at-one-ment.	14
3. The meaning of <i>integritas</i> .	17
PART B – AN INTEGRAL VISION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.	
1. Beginning with a working model.	19
2. Jesus Christ – the centre who holds.	20
3. The dynamic of the Holy Spirit – the healing of relationships.	21
4. Returning to the Father – that all may be One.	23
5. Summary.	24
PART C – AN INTEGRAL PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.	
1. The interior individual life – Prayer.	27
2. The exterior individual life – Discernment.	31
3. The interior collective life – Community.	33
4. The exterior collective life – Justice.	35
5. Summary.	38
PART D – THE INTEGRITAS CENTRE.	
1. Christian meditation and contemplative prayer.	41
2. A school in prayer and reflection.	41
3. The context of a family and community environment.	42
4. Articulating an integral vision and practice of the Christian faith.	43
5. Summary.	44



Courses are held in this building. The ornamental piece on the top of the building is comprised of four rings with a cross on the summit. This piece is symbolic of the integration of the four central relationships in human life through the person of Jesus Christ.

PART A - THE INTEGRAL MESSAGE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

1. Fragmentation of central relationships - the problem of our time.

*I am with you to save you:
I will make an end of all the nations
where I have scattered you.*

Jeremiah 30 : 11

ONE of the most compelling expressions of the significance of Jesus Christ is found in the correlation between the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden and His crucifixion. In the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve eat from the tree of knowledge. At that moment, they experience the '*fall*' and go outside of the divine kingdom which they had enjoyed. They move into the field of time and space, where life is scattered and fragmented and where they struggle with duality and a sense of separateness from God. All of their central relationships become fragmented – their relationship with God, with themselves, with each other and with nature. At this point, the centre no longer holds.

Against this background of the Jewish faith, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the culmination of a new union between God and humanity. Just as eating from the tree of knowledge marks the beginning of the fragmentation of these central relationships, the raising of Jesus on the cross is the crux for the re-integration of all of life, drawn magnetically to the love of God. His death upon the cross is the moment when all things are drawn back together as one. It marks the creation of a new centre which holds the relationship between God and humanity and from which all of other relationships are made at one or atoned.

In the present era, we have also eaten from the tree of knowledge. We live in the information age, a time of enormous technological advancement and innovation. Yet, there is also a new level of complexity to the problems which this advancement entails. The contemporary problem is the fragmentation or disintegration of central relationships that are essential for human happiness. We live in the midst of a real spiritual poverty where our sense of alienation from God and from one another is becoming more extreme. Whether the problem is the widening gap in our society between the rich and poor, the rifts within families and human relationships or the void in the human soul between the dream for one's life and the reality which unfolds, the symptoms of this spiritual poverty are the same – alienation, separation, fragmentation.

Even the manifestation of fragmentation at the most superficial level gives rise to profound problems. This is found in the breakdown of the relationship between each of us and *the central institutions of society*. The public cynicism with the social institutions of the legal system, the Christian Church and the political system is a daily theme in the discourse of Western society. The complaint made against all three institutions is essentially the same, a loss of belief in their integrity, a loss of trust in their concern for the common good and a deep sense of betrayal.

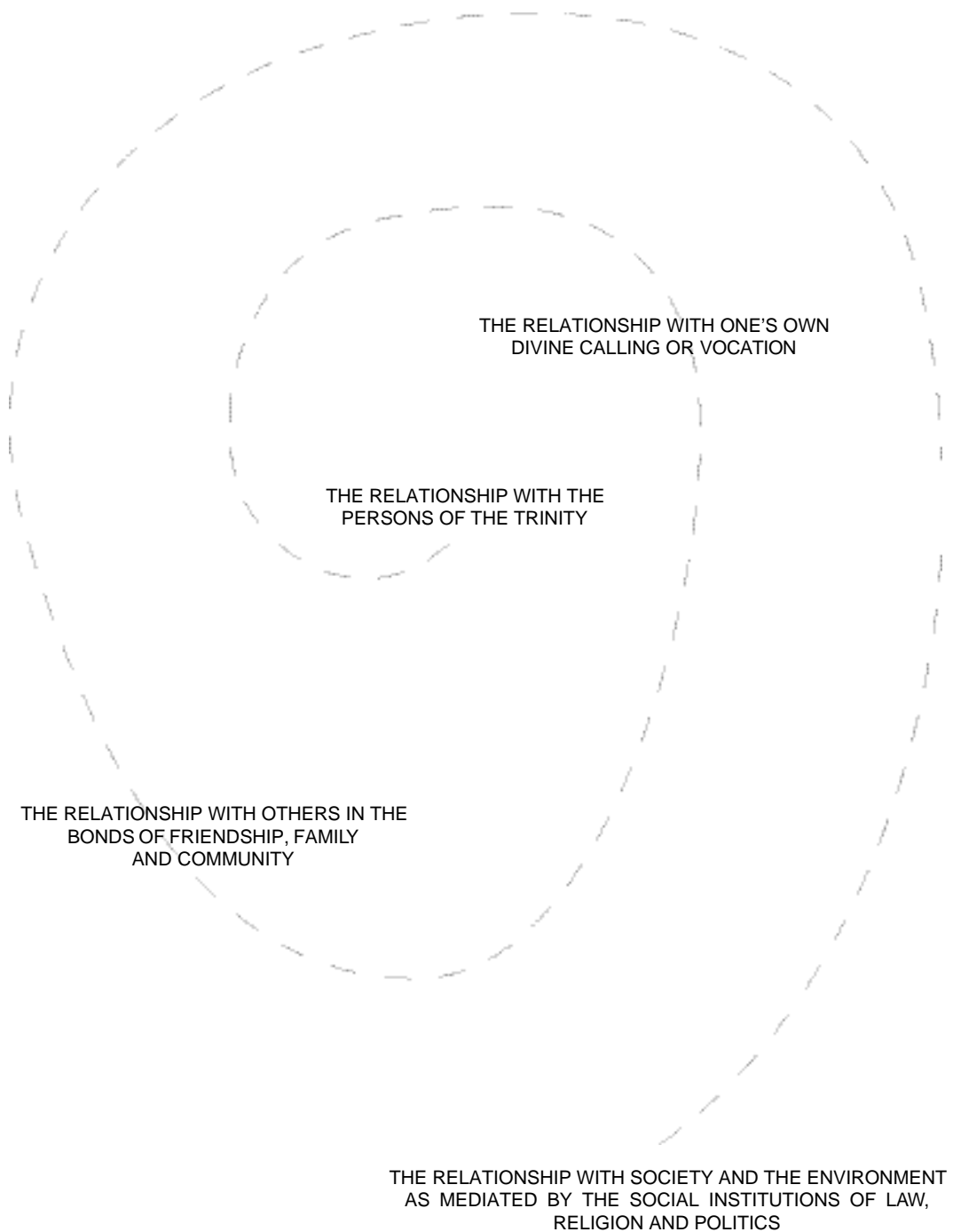
Whilst this problem is of great magnitude, it belies a deeper fragmentation in our relationships with one another. For beneath the loss of connection to our social institutions, there is a loss of our sense of *friendship, family and community*. We no longer enjoy the same bonds of family or communality of previous generations but are far more isolated and atomised in how we live together. The bonds of family and community have withered as we increasingly see our lives as exercises in individualistic pursuits.

Once again, the loss of family and community finds its roots in the severance of a deeper relationship, namely the relationship with one's own life, one's own deepest desires, one's own *vocation or calling*. When we do not honour our calling in life, we cannot share the experience of searching for our deepest longing with others. Once we cannot share the deepest sense of our being with another, we do not relate in a way that is either truly intimate or genuine. In the absence of this, our relationships remain superficial and immature and do not grow to their full potential. When we are seduced from the search for our deepest dream, we no longer live our lives from a centre of inspiration, direction and purpose. Rather, we go on but not knowing why, with lives devoid of meaning, reference or connection.

In losing the harmony between our personal calling and our relationships with loved ones, we manifest a deeper loss. This concerns the deepest relationship which has become severed, namely our relationship with God, with the One who holds us together in balance. For this is the loss of the relationship with the centre in each one of us and in the whole of creation. Once this relationship is neglected, we have no source or reference point. We have lost the sense of the centre where we can find the One who inspires us, cares for us and protects us from being scattered.

The unravelling of these relationships is shown figuratively below. The relationships spiral outwards into fragmentation once the central relationship with God, the persons of the Trinity, is first displaced. Once this is fractured, we lose the relationship with our own divine calling or vocation. In turn, our relationships with others in family and community fall asunder and ultimately, become fully evident in the breakdown of public trust and confidence in the collective institutions of society.

Figure One – The unravelling of the four basic relationships.



2. The Christian vision of at-one-ment.

*Jesus was to die for the nation – and not for the nation only,
but also that he should gather together in one
the scattered children of God.*

John 11 : 51, 52

The question of the re-integration of the four key relationships goes to the very heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The scattering which results from the displacement of these relationships forms the basis of the Genesis story in the Old Testament. This story unfolds in the progressive unravelling of these relationships.

At the beginning, Adam and Eve turn away from their relationship with God and choose to be the authority for their own lives. When their relationship with God is displaced, they in turn become ashamed of their nakedness, of who they in fact are. They also lose touch, not just with themselves, but with their calling, which is to be children of God, completely in union with the One who loves them and for whom they were made. Having lost their relationship with God, they lose their relationship with themselves and become filled with shame.

After their exile from the garden, being that place of complete relationship with God and harmony with oneself, the story progresses into the dissolution of the relationship between their sons. The elder son, Cain, kills the younger son, Abel. The killing of one son by another is a profound image of how their relationships in friendship, family and community simply fall apart.

The book of Genesis also yields stories of how the successors of Cain become divorced from the environment and lose cohesion as a society. The story of the great flood and Noah's ark is symbolic of the displacement of their relationship with nature, which becomes a foe for them to contend with. The culmination of the fragmentation of their society is found in the eleventh chapter of Genesis, the story of Babel. It tells how the people built a city and a great tower there so that they would not be scattered abroad and would become one people. Yet, their language became confused and they could not understand one another's speech. They became scattered over all the earth and they ceased building the city.

It is against the background of the successive unravelling of these relationships that the significance of Jesus Christ can be intuited. His being, or more particularly, the love from His being, re-integrates or brings together that which has been disintegrated at the 'Fall'. He re-ties that which has fallen apart (hence the meaning of the word religion, which comes from the latin *re-ligo*, to re-tie). He re-establishes these central relationships which have fallen apart by beginning at the source of the fragmentation, where He restores the relationship between God and the human person.

That this is *the* objective of Jesus becomes apparent when one considers the gospel of St. John. This theme of Jesus drawing all things together again, by attracting them to Himself, runs through St. John's Gospel. It is a restoration of unity and harmony, which fulfils a God-inspired dream had by the Prophets in the Old Testament. This dream was that the Messiah would re-establish the order, which there was between the different parts of creation at the beginning. At the heart of this gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples for the final time before his arrest, trial and crucifixion. This is known as the '*Farewell Discourse*' and runs through from chapters thirteen to seventeen. Throughout this piece, Jesus sets out the essence of His vision before His disciples, before He is taken from them. At the conclusion of these discourses, Jesus prays to his Father and states His purpose in the clearest terms before He is abducted and sent to His death. In this prayer, Jesus says :-

*May they all be one.
Father, may they be one in us,
as you are in me and I am in you.
so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me.
I have given them the glory you gave to me,
that they may be one as we are one.
With me in them and you in me,
may they be so completely one
that the world will realise that it was you who sent me
and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.*

John 17 : 21 - 23

It is the central message of Jesus that all may be one, that all may be drawn into the Father, through His love for each person. This is the great at-one-ment or atonement effected by the death and resurrection of Jesus. His being 'lifted up' on the cross, which we remember at each Eucharist, draws us like a magnetic force to the centre, where we become aware of the full extent of the love which He reveals.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

John 12 : 32

An image of the effect of His love is found when one places iron filings on a page with one pole of a magnet underneath. Slowly, the filings develop a concentric formation around the attraction of the magnet beneath. In the same way, all the disparate parts of our lives can be brought into a new order and coherence when we open to the presence of the love of Jesus Christ in the centre of our own being. St. Paul describes the significance of Christ in this sense in saying that :-

Before anything was created, He existed and He holds all things together in unity.

Col. 1 : 17

Similarly, when a potter uses the wheel, the starting point is the correct placement of the clay in the centre of the wheel. Throughout the creation of the piece, the centre must be constantly honoured as the wheel revolves or else the piece loses its shape and finally disintegrates. From the Christian perspective, when the love of God, made visible on the cross, ceases to be the focal point in our lives, what binds us together loses its hold and we disintegrate or fall apart.

The heart of the Christian message therefore is that we need the centrality of Jesus Christ in order to bring shape and integrity to our own lives. His loving presence, in the centre of the human heart, is the magnetic attraction that leads to the reconciliation and at-one-ment of all of our relationships. Without our recognition of Him at the centre, everything ultimately falls apart for no other centre can hold. In the poem of W.B. Yeats entitled the '*The Second Coming*', he uses the image of the falcon flying around the falconer to illustrate this tragedy. As the flight of the bird extends, the relationship between the falcon and the falconer is lost.

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.*

We are called instead to *kenosis* which is an ancient Greek term signifying "emptying out". It points to our need to surrender to God, to make space at the centre of our being for the One who can hold us and our relationships together and prevent us from being scattered. As we are gradually attracted to His love and to the magnetic quality of His person, distractions and pre-occupations begin to fall away. We are called instead to fully experience the love made visible by Jesus. We are called to abide in His love.

*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.
Abide in my love for you.*

John 15 : 9

After we have tried every distraction, bought all that we can afford and achieved all that is within our reach, we need to come to a realisation that to know ourselves as loved by Him is all that will satisfy us. Usually, we look for this from another person. Yet even in the strongest marriage or the deepest friendship or relationship, we learn that there is a hunger for a love written into our soul which only He, who is eternal and divine, can satisfy.

Another image of this effect of His love was repeatedly used by Jesus himself, being the image of the shepherd with his sheep. The sheep can be anxious and scattered. Yet when they are called by the shepherd, they return to the centre where he stands and where they are protected, guided and at peace. The most powerful image of this truth is, however, provided by the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. As Jesus spoke to the disciples for the final time before His arrest, the gospel of St. John describes Him as saying :-

*Listen; the time will come – in fact it has come already –
when you will be scattered, each going his own way
and leaving me alone.
And yet I am not alone,
because the Father is with me.*

John 16 : 32

The closest followers of Jesus Christ became completely scattered and disintegrated in the midst of the fear and terror which led to His crucifixion. Yet, their experience of His resurrection and more particularly, their inner conviction of His love for them, led them to become integrated once again. Furthermore, as Jews, these early followers of Jesus came from a tradition with a profound fear of being scattered. They overcame this fear in moving from the centre of Jesus Christ to proclaim His presence to the ends of the earth.

3. The meaning of integritas.

The term *integritas*, being the latin for integrity, is used to signify the vision of the at-one-ment of the whole of creation through the person of Jesus Christ. Drawing from this significance being given to Him, the term ‘*integral*’ is also used in this document to refer to how the human person can become centred or re-integrated through the person of Jesus Christ. This must involve honouring the four fundamental relationships to which the human person is called, being the relationship of the human being to :-

- (a) the persons of the Trinity;
- (b) his/her own divine calling or vocation in life;
- (c) others in the intimacy of friendship, family and community;
- (d) society and the environment, as mediated by the social institutions of law, religion and politics.

Accordingly, the term “*integral*” is used more specifically to describe an approach which seeks to honour these four fundamental relationships. The question then is:-

how can we find an integral vision and practice of the Christian faith which re-integrates these four relationships and thereby draws all into One?

The remainder of this document shall address this question.



This symbol of the resurrected Christ hangs in the prayer room

PART B – AN INTEGRAL VISION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

*He who is not with me is against me;
and he who does not gather with me scatters.*

Luke 11 : 23

1. Beginning with a working model.

An integral vision of the Christian faith must bring together every dimension of our being and of creation itself, so that all of our fragmented and scattered existence is drawn into one. In order to do so, it is helpful to begin by taking a working model which has been developed by the American philosopher and writer, Ken Wilber.

In this model, everything in creation, every system and every being, and especially the human person, seeks to realise its nature by moving in four directions. To take the human person, Wilber draws upon the obvious truth that each one of us has an interior life and exterior life. Furthermore, each of us has a desire to be individual and also to be part of a collective at the same time. The human person holds these two tensions between an interior and an exterior life and an individual and a collective identity. When these pairs of opposites are put together, one can then be seen to have four different aspects to one's life, being one's :-

- (a) interior/individual life,
- (b) exterior/individual life,
- (c) interior/collective life and
- (d) exterior/collective life.

Figure Two – The four aspects of being.

INTERIOR
INDIVIDUAL

EXTERIOR
INDIVIDUAL

INTERIOR
COLLECTIVE

EXTERIOR
COLLECTIVE

It is important to stress again that this is simply a working model. It is not being suggested that these are four rigid dimensions of the human person. Rather, this model is simply being used to explore essential dimensions of the human person which must be integrated if one is to be fully human and alive.

2. Jesus Christ - the centre who holds.

If these four aspects of our being are to flourish, they must be held together by a centre which holds. A truly balanced human life cannot be held together by the ego or by some temporal pre-occupation or addiction. Rather, a balanced life is one which surrenders to, and is held together by a divine centre. In the Christian vision, the centre which holds is Jesus Christ.

The primal longing to base our lives around a divine centre constantly appears in the imagery and art of mankind. In Irish history, when one visits the megalithic tombs in the Boyne Valley in County Meath, one is struck by how important the symbol of the spiral was to our ancestors. Over three thousand years before the incarnation of Christ, the people of this era used the stone carving of the spiral as their most sacred symbol. In each spiral, it may be that they recognised the source of life as emanating from a centre, from which all things emerge, find meaning and ultimately return.

At the centre of each one of us, we are a hunger and a thirst for this, *to know oneself as loved by God and to be loving to others*. It is the nature of this longing in the human heart which makes the person of Jesus Christ so attractive as the divine centre in our lives. His message is that we are loved by Him to the same extent that He is loved by his Father. St. Augustine put this succinctly in his idea that :-

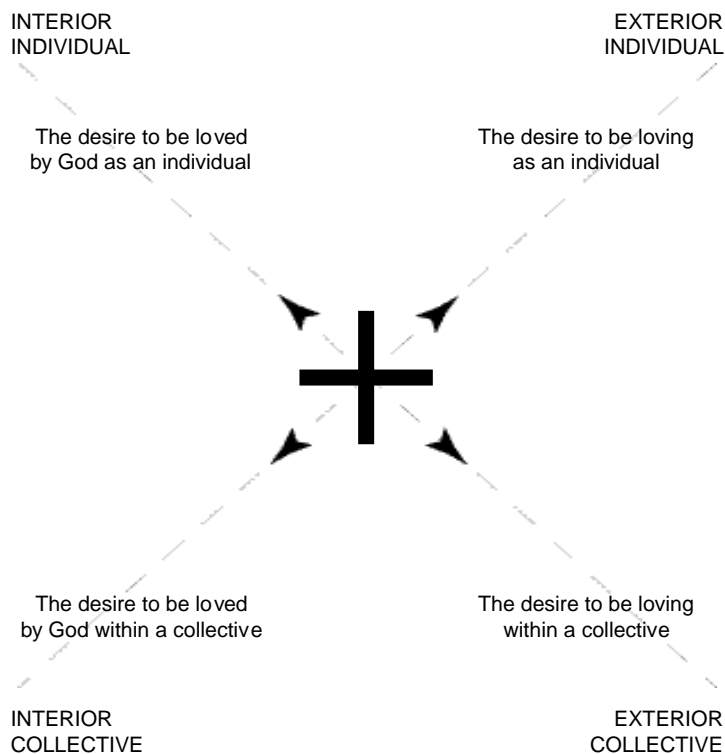
*“if I was the only person on this earth,
you Lord, would have died for me.”*

The central human longing, to know oneself as loved by God and to be this love to others, has therefore an interior and an exterior dimension. There is an interior yearning in each of us to know oneself as loved by God. There is also a corresponding yearning to be loving in one's relationships with others and with creation itself.

This longing in the centre of our being also has individual and collective dimensions. While we long to know that we are loved by God, we seek to be loved as an individual and as part of the collective to which we belong. Similarly, in how we act outwardly, we aspire to be loving in our own unique individual capacity and also by participating in the endeavours of the collective to which we belong.

Accordingly, our desire to be loved by God as an individual is a desire for an interior/individual life. Our desire to be loved by God within a collective is a desire for an interior/collective life. Similarly, our desire to be uniquely loving as an individual is a desire for an exterior/individual life and our desire to be loving within a collective is a desire for an exterior/collective life.

Figure Three – The Centre in Jesus Christ.



3. The dynamic of the Holy Spirit - the healing of relationships.

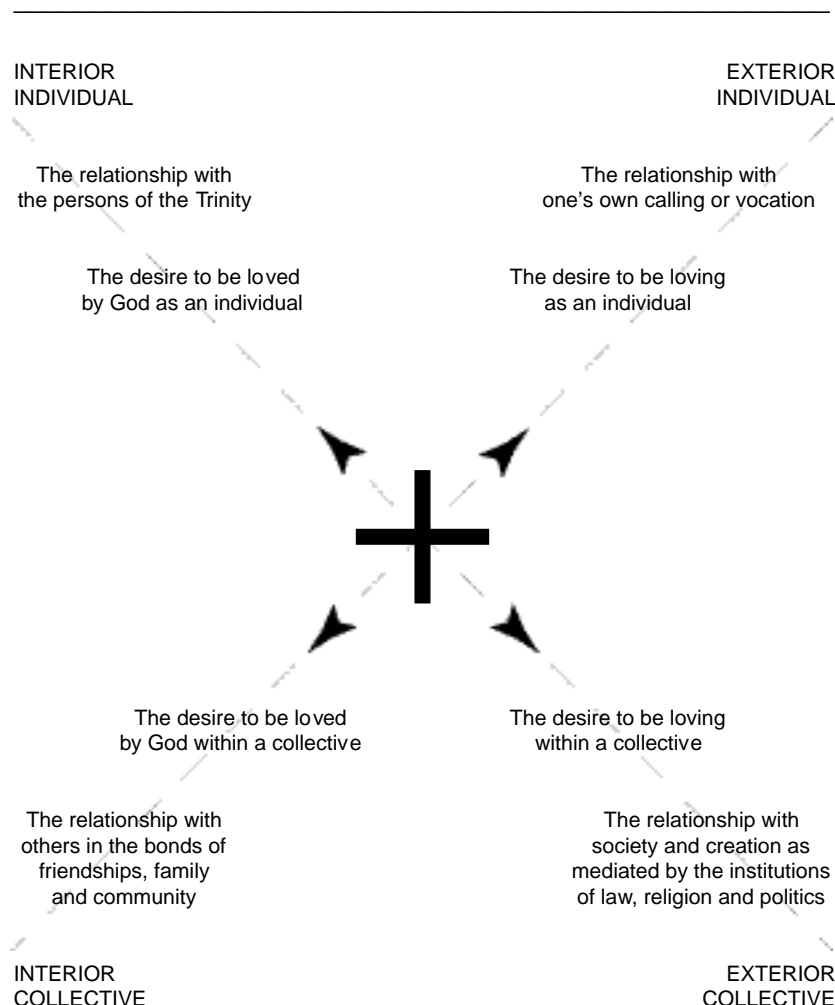
It is from the love of Jesus Christ at the centre of our being that the movement of the Holy Spirit emerges. The Holy Spirit moves through these four divine desires to heal each of the relationships which are central in our lives. Through these desires, the Holy Spirit calls us into a *relationship* which satisfies each of one of them.

- A. The desire to be loved by God as an individual is realised in *the relationship with the persons of the Trinity*;
- B. The desire to be loving as an individual is realised in *the relationship with one's own unique calling or vocation*;
- C. The desire to be loved by God within a collective is realised in *the relationships of friendship, family and community*;
- D. The desire to be loving within a collective is realised in *the relationship with society and creation, as mediated by the institutions of law, religion and politics*.

As the Holy Spirit guides us in fostering each of these relationships, we also become more fully alive. When one's relationship with the persons of the Trinity takes root, we develop an interior individual life. When one's relationship with one's own unique calling or vocation grows, one develops an exterior individual life. Similarly, the relationships of friendship, family and community lead us into an interior collective life, just as our relationship with the institutional structures of society form the basis of our exterior collective life.

It is a common mistake to believe that the Holy Spirit only moves us inwardly as individuals. For this reason, many perceive the art of spiritual direction as being about guiding someone in an inner, individual journey. Rather, spiritual direction is about opening to the movement of the Holy Spirit at least in these directions so that we enter into all of these relationships and become ever more in the image and likeness of God. Similarly, it not being suggested that the Holy Spirit moves rigidly or exclusively in these four directions. The Spirit blows like the wind where she wills. It is being suggested, however, that the Holy Spirit does at least move in these directions and that honouring the movement of the Spirit in these ways is essential in our lives.

Figure Four – The movement of the Holy Spirit in relationships.



4. Returning to the Father – that all may be one.

As the Holy Spirit leads us in each of these four relationships, we are being drawn towards the Father, where all is One. The Holy Spirit emanates from the love of Jesus Christ to effect this great atonement of which we are all part and to which we are all called. Through the healing of these relationships, a vision of integrity is realised where all of humanity and all of creation returns to the Father.

When we develop in *our relationship with the persons of the Trinity*, we are gradually drawn into a vision of *the integrity of the great religious traditions*. God resides in the centre of every person and each person has a different “*re-ligo*” or way to tie back to the divine essence within them. As we become more rooted in the heart of the Christian message, we will also become more open to learning from these other traditions.

The beauty of the ideal of integrity is that it does not demand unity alone or lead to fusion. Rather it calls for unity in diversity and diversity in unity. Instead of suggesting that all of the world’s religions must ultimately unite in a structural sense, or more particularly, that all of the Christian churches must do likewise, the ideal of integrity revels in their diversity as different cultural ways of teaching us of the mercy and love of God. This ideal also demands, however, that we recognise our unity in the love of God for us so that all forms of bigotry, fanaticism and disrespect towards the religious experience of others are not condoned. By opening to the integrity of all religious belief, the fragmentation caused by religious bigotry and fanaticism is duly healed.

When one develops one’s *relationship with one’s own particular calling or vocation in life*, one opens to the truth expressed by St. Paul that the “... *particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose.*” (1 Cor. 12 : 7) For in this relationship and especially at this time in the Christian Church, the Holy Spirit is leading us to a vision of the *integrity of vocation*. A particular model of Church has stifled the contribution that people can make by creating an apartheid between “clergy” and “laity”. In this dated paradigm, the clergy were seen as superior to the “laity”. We need to develop a sense in the Christian faith that the Holy Spirit works uniquely through each person in order to realise the potential of that person for the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is not facilitated by labels or categories which diminish the truth that the nature of Christ resides in each person and that this mysterious nature is waiting to come forth in each one of us, in a unique way, for a good purpose. By developing a sense of the integrity of vocation, the fragmentation caused by the false imposition of status is also healed.

Similarly, when the Spirit leads us *into relationship with others in the bonds of friendship, family and community*, a vision of the *integrity of man and woman* begins to emerge. The single, greatest betrayal of the vision of the Christian faith, reflecting societal prejudice, has been the manner in which the feminine face of God has been subjugated and rendered secondary. An emerging sense of the

integrity of man and woman will allow us to learn that both of the sexes must be honoured and drawn upon as equals, with their unique gifts and in their unity, as images of God. The profound fragmentation, which has arisen from the discrimination of women in every facet of social life, will also move toward healing as this aspect of integrity begins to take root.

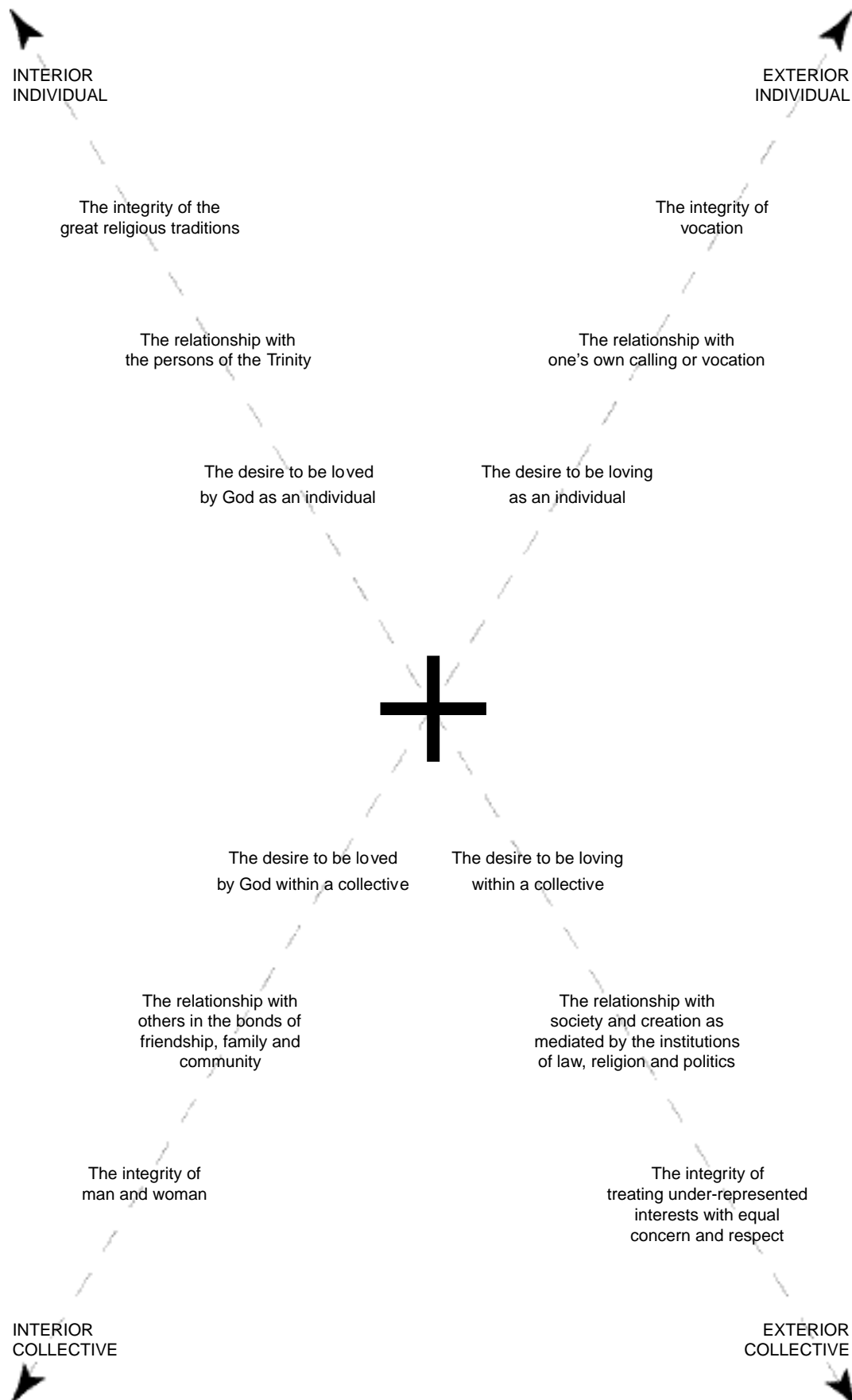
Finally, as we enter into *the relationship with society and creation, through our involvement in the central institutions of law, religion and politics*, we are also drawn towards the *integrity of treating under-represented interests in our society with equal concern and respect*. These interests can range from those of the poor and the marginalised, both at home and overseas, to those which are shared by all of us, such as environmental concerns. As this integrity is developed, we become freed from our pre-occupation with wealth and honour, and ultimately, with pride, which is the anti-thesis of Christian life. We realise that we are all diminished by the poverty and lack of opportunities suffered by others. Similarly, this aspect of integrity calls us to become increasingly aware of how we have neglected and destroyed the creation which has been given to us. Our insensitivity to our environment reflects a profound ignorance of our dependance upon creation and of our obligation to protect God's creation for the survival of future generations.

5. Summary.

Each of these aspects of integrity is a gradual revelation of the kingdom of God. They reveal the plan of the persons of the Trinity, being the realisation of all being drawn into the Father, through the Holy Spirit, from the person of Jesus Christ. This at-one-ment of the whole of creation, through the person of Jesus Christ, is the vision of *integritas*.

In the Christian faith, *the* expression of this vision is the Eucharist. It is the exposition of the truth that we are all drawn into One through Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is uniquely present in each one of us. The fact that the significance of the Eucharist is the point of fragmentation between the Roman Catholic and the Reformist traditions of the Christian faith is a terrible indictment of where we now find ourselves. More than anything else, it reveals the extent to which we have turned away from the vision of the persons of the Trinity and how we need to return. In our relationship with the persons of the Trinity, it is only we who can be unfaithful.

Figure Five – The Christian vision of integritas.





A view of part of the prayer room

PART C – AN INTEGRAL PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

*If he offers his life in atonement,
he shall see his heirs, he shall have a long life.*

Isaiah 53 : 10

For an integral vision of the Christian faith to become a reality, it must translate into practice. This section shall explore how we can develop a practice of the Christian faith which leads to the restoration of the four central relationships in our lives. It shall therefore proceed by examining a way of living this Christian vision in accordance with :-

1. The desire to be loved by God as an individual, being the desire for a relationship with the persons of the Trinity, which is one's *interior individual life*;
2. The desire to be loving as an individual, being the desire for a relationship with one's own unique calling or vocation, which is one's *exterior individual life*;
3. The desire to be loved by God within a collective to which one belongs, being the desire for relationship with others in the bonds of friendship, family and community, which is one's *interior collective life*;
4. The desire to be loving within a collective, being the desire for a relationship with society and creation itself, as mediated by the institutions of law, religion and politics, which is one's *exterior collective life*.

Before a practice of the Christian faith in each of these dimensions is explored, it is important to re-iterate that what follows is a working model. It is not meant to be a definitive statement of what it means to truly practice the Christian faith. Rather, it is a starting point for exploration of a fuller experience of what it means to be a practicing Christian.

1. The interior individual life – Prayer.

The scattering in our society, arising from the fragmentation of our relationships with each other, is a reflection of the scattering within ourselves. The starting point for the practice of the Christian faith must therefore be a way of addressing the scattering within oneself, being a way of returning to the divine centre within which holds. The answer lies in *prayer*. The making of time and space for daily prayer begins the process of *kenosis* or emptying out, so that the presence of God can occupy the centre of our lives.

Prayer is the way of staying with the vision of Jesus Christ which holds us and prevents us from becoming fragmented. To be around Him is where life and joy is found. Prayer enables us to become gradually opened, to let the love of His being,

lifted upon a cross, gradually unfold. The centrality of prayer in the Christian life cannot therefore be overstated. Prayer is simply the foundation stone of the spiritual life. It is absolutely essential if one truly wishes to develop a spiritual life and to follow one's deepest aspirations in life. If prayer is not an intrinsic part of a person's life, one becomes fragmented and unable to sense how one is being led by the Holy Spirit. It is only by having a regular practice of prayer that one becomes sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit within oneself and that one develops an interior individual life.

We are also invited to develop an integrated way of prayer, that is a practice which honours every aspect of our being, so that our whole person is brought back to the centre which holds. This way of prayer is outlined below in a series of four stages. It is important to state, however, that these stages are not meant in a rigid or linear way. These stages do not progress in a fixed way from one to the next. Rather, they are meant to describe certain landmarks in one's prayer life which ensure that the whole person of matter and body, mind and soul, are brought into the Spirit of God's love.

With this qualification stated from the outset, it is suggested that the development of prayer in a person's life progresses through four essential stages. The first stage is the *desire to be loved by God as an individual, which is the desire for a relationship with the persons of the Trinity*. This innate impulse within us is largely unconscious but it is often disclosed by restlessness and unhappiness in one's being, which is calling the person to be still and quiet. The only response which will satisfy this restlessness is to begin the practice of prayer.

In order to meet this profound desire, one has to begin by making personal and physical space in one's life for daily prayer. Personal space means a deliberate appointment of *time* for daily prayer, when one has *energy* and a commitment to use *resources* in how one prays. Once one is free enough to make the necessary personal space for prayer, through investing time, energy and resources in this practice, the next step is to create the physical space for prayer. A suitable and peaceful environment needs to be chosen which is free from clutter and objects of distraction. The sensitive placement of candles, the use of incense and the radiance of an icon can all help in creating a suitable ambiance for prayer in a room. It is also important that this be a regular area for prayer because an atmosphere develops in a place which is used regularly for this purpose. With regularity of prayer in one place, it begins to draw you to pray there and supports you. It also does not have to be a full room. It can simply be a small part of a room but nonetheless a space which is protected and kept exclusively for prayer.

The second stage of prayer is the *body/mind* stage of prayer. When the personal and physical space for prayer has been created, one begins to allow a sense of prayerfulness to permeate one's own person. The comfort of the body is a priority at this stage. Any discomfort or strain in the body will restrict the process of deepening the prayer experience. The body should be comfortable and relaxed. The breath also requires attention so that it becomes easy and unrestricted. The role of Eastern wisdom in meditation and prayer comes to the fore at this stage. It stresses the importance of the breath and the role of a prayer word in quietening the mind,

so that one is disposed to contemplative experience. This is commonly termed “*centring prayer*” which is a process which can entail relaxation of the body, attention upon the breath and concentration upon a prayer word or sentence so that the body and the mind become quiet and at peace.

When the body and the mind enter a state of calm, it is usual and common for repressed emotions to come to the fore. Underlying anxieties and compulsions arise from within ourselves because daily preoccupations, the body and the mind are no longer obscuring them. Centring prayer plays an invaluable role in allowing these repressed emotions to come to the fore but this form of prayer cannot address the underlying distorted vision of reality which gives rise to these disturbing emotions. When we find that we are in the grip of anxiety, guilt, or other emotions which perturb us repeatedly, it is because of a distorted vision of reality which needs to be addressed and healed. This is a vision which is inconsistent with the Christian vision that each one of us is loved without condition by God.

To appropriate the true vision, that one is loved to the utmost extent by God, is the purpose of the *mind/soul* stage of prayer. This term of “mind/soul” is used to refer to how the mind needs to be changed in its programmed or conditioned ways of thinking and in particular, of seeing oneself. It also refers to the soul as meaning the psyche, that open area of our inner being where we hold the joy or pain of our experiences, from where our imagination and feelings well up, where the sense of our culture and the memory of our ancestors rests. Some may refer to this as the “heart” of the human person but any term or language is inaccurate in describing this area of depth and range in the human person.

It is, however, at this stage of prayer that we take seriously the words of the Gospel that we are called to “repent and believe”, that is to see ourselves and our lives differently so that we may undergo a change of mind and heart (Mk 1 : 14 – 15). This stage of prayer is life-long rather than a passing phase. It entails a slow and steadfast process of allowing our mind and heart to be gently transformed by the attraction of the person of Jesus and by the vision of the love of God which He sets before us.

In order for this slow transformation to occur, a marriage has to take place between the Word of God and our experiences as human beings. We have to integrate our *personal experience* and the *universal experience* of our culture with our experience of the bible. To get in touch with our personal experience, we have to use our *memory* of significant events and persons in our lives. To make a connection with our universal experience, we also have to become attuned to our *imagination*. It is only when these two levels of experience are stirred up that we can then enter into the experience of the bible because it is then rooted in our personal experience and in the experience of our culture.

This process is really a dialogue between prayer and reflection, between listening and responding, so that we learn how God guides us by enlightening our minds and by inspiring desires in our hearts. As this process is undertaken, there is a breaking down of the distorted vision in our lives which leads to prolonged and destructive feelings, such as anger, jealousy, shame or guilt. Repressed feelings and emotions

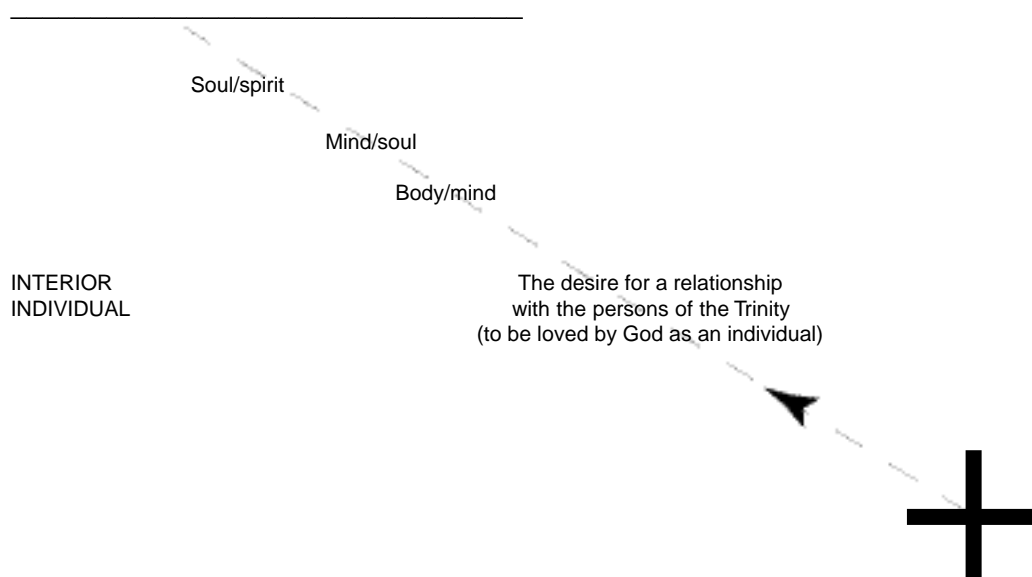
are honoured at this stage so that they may be integrated and accepted. Persistent negative thought patterns are also confronted, so that the distorted vision of one's life and one's self can be reformed in the vision that one is loved by God. This is the stage where we appropriate the glimpses of the love of God, which are being constantly revealed in our lives by others and thereby allow our distorted vision of ourselves to be uprooted. The guidance of a spiritual director is invaluable throughout this life-long process.

Once we have honoured the body and the mind and as the distorted vision of reality in our psyche or soul starts to loosen, we experience the final stage of prayer, being the *soul/spirit* stage of prayer. One does not so much enter into this stage as one is drawn or invited into it by the grace of God. This stage is the culmination of all prayer in that it is the entry into the direct, arresting experience of God, as love. In these moments of true contemplative experience, one is held in arrest by the still motion of love. Here, one's whole person is gripped by the beauty of God and by the unfathomable love that is there for each of us.

During these moments of contemplative experience, one is enflamed by the Spirit, so that a sense of compassion ensues towards others and creation itself. It is in these profound moments of prayer that we are held in the centre. We are drawn into the inner sanctuary of God's love for each one of us. In this place, we know that all is well, for all is One. This is the revelation of the mystical experience which is the ultimate depth and breadth of prayer.

At this point of mysticism, the desire to be loved by God as an individual culminates in the direct experience of God, the full realisation of the Spirit in the human person. We can get an intimation of this end point from the writings of the mystics. Alternatively, sometimes in prayer, we can be held in what Joyce termed '*aesthetic arrest*', when we are arrested by the radiance and beauty of that which is truly divine. Little more, however, can be said of this stage. It is for each one of us to experience through the grace and mercy of God.

Figure Six – The progression of prayer.



2. The exterior individual life - Discernment.

When one's life becomes rooted in prayer, there is a corresponding calling to act in accordance with this experience. In other words, there is a need to ensure that the progress of one's life in the world is a reflection of one's inward journey in prayer. This entails the development of one's relationship with one's own unique calling or vocation in life and it is dependant upon the practice of *discernment*.

It is this practice which leads to direction, purpose and meaning in one's exterior, individual life. Discernment is the constant practice of truly seeing the choices with which we are faced and choosing the option which leads to consolation. The key to discernment in this sense is that one seeks to make the choice which is grounded in the love of God. Discernment calls for reflection on the choices with which one is presented and for wisdom and courage to follow the choice which is based on the providence of the love of God. The development of discernment in a person's life also progresses through four stages. Once again, these stages are not meant in a linear or fixed sense but rather refer to key aspects in the experience of living in a discerned manner. Often, it is only when one looks back over the steps that one has taken in life that one can see how this pattern has unfolded.

The first stage is the *desire to be loving as an individual, which is the desire for a relationship with one's own unique calling or vocation in life*. This desire is first experienced as a dissatisfaction with one's existing work or options in life. In this discomfort, the person is being called to seek out and find the hidden dream, the latent, divine plan for his/her life.

In honouring the desire to be loving as an individual, one embarks upon the second stage, which is the point of *departure*. At this point, one has to have the courage to look beyond the accepted conditioning of one's peers and truly seek the unique, individual calling for one's own life. As one is then going into uncharted waters, the guidance of a spiritual director or a mentor helps one to detect the movement of the Spirit and to foster the strength and fortitude to follow this calling.

The next stage is the point of *initiation*. At this stage, one is called to the point of completely surrendering one's life and actions to a higher purpose, a greater ideal, a cause larger than oneself. There is no initiation without a form of crucifixion, without sacrifice. One dies to the ambitions of one's own ego and surrenders to the plan of God for one's life. One loses one's life in order to save it. It is at this point that one undergoes a transformation of consciousness. There is a realisation at this stage that "I" am not the doer but rather that God is the doer in me. There is a profound sense that one's happiness lies in being a servant of God and in abandoning one's life entirely to His plan. We are called to live the words of Jesus upon His death, "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*" (Luke 23:46).

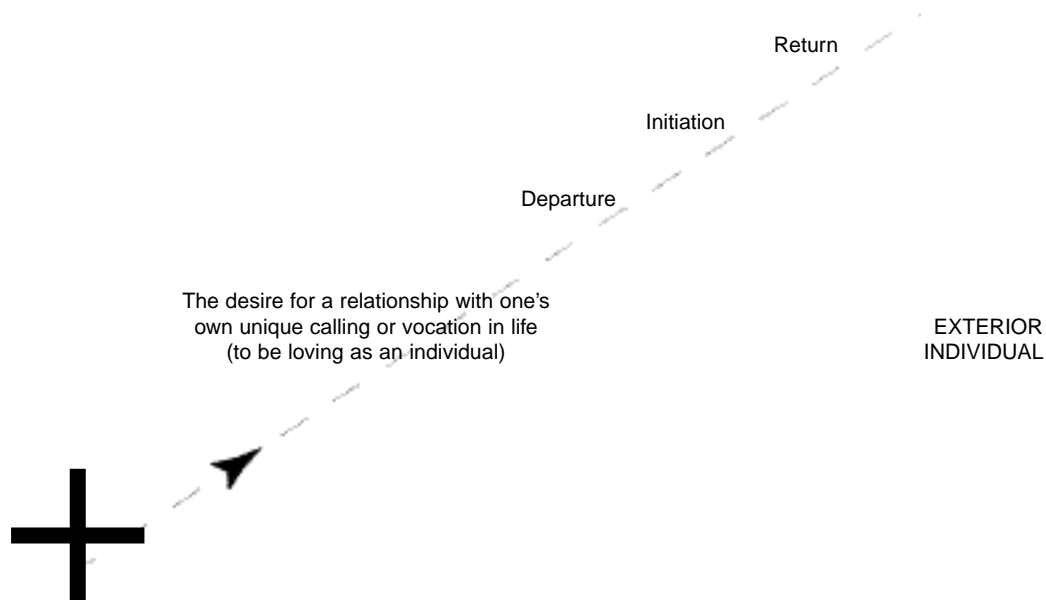
The fourth and final stage of discernment is the point of *return*. Having undergone this transformation in consciousness, one is called to return to the place from which one has come and to bring back to it the vision that was missing and which has been found. When Jesus was transfigured, He faced toward Jerusalem, to the place where He would return to fully reveal His message, the complete and total

love of God. The contemplative experience in the Christian always calls us into action, for the true contemplative is not running away from the world but tries to act in the world at a deeper level, to be in the world while not being of the world.

The centrality of these stages in the human search for meaning and purpose in life has been highlighted by the work of Joseph Campbell and in particular, his seminal work entitled *'The Hero with a Thousand Faces'* (1948). His work has shown that these are essential stages in the spiritual journey of the human person to discern the impulse system of the divine in one's own heart. Each of these stages, from the desire to be loving as an individual, through departure, initiation and return, are archetypal in the human condition.

As they are not simply linear stages in the progression of one's calling or vocation in life, one can be at the departure stage in relation to one aspect of one's calling in life and at the initiation or return stages in relation to another. The progression of these stages are, however, a broad outline of how we develop when we discern and follow the divine impulse within us, which is calling each one of us to go forth in the world and to give to others in a unique way.

Figure Seven – The progression of discernment.



3. The interior collective life – Community.

It is only through *community* that one's relationship with others in the bonds of family and friendship can be truly nurtured. The necessary milieu for prayer and discernment is also community with others. The interior collective life that is found in community provides essential support and encouragement in the development of one's personal relationship with God in prayer. Similarly, the continual process of discerning one's vocation does not happen in isolation but is nurtured by committed relationships with others.

The spiritual journey requires companionship. We need a "*holding environment*". The first stage in the creation of community is therefore recognition of our *desire to be loved by God within a collective, which is the desire for relationship with others in the bonds of family and community*. In these relationships of intimacy with others, we are affirmed through experience of the depth of God's love for us and we are nurtured and held as we go through life.

The next stage in the evolution of the ideal of community in our lives is the way in which we long for a *relationship with a significant other* in our lives, which is underpinned by a sense of commitment. At the beginning of our life, this person is usually our mother. As we mature, the person who is that significant other to us changes but the yearning is always there for one particular person to truly understand and accept us as we are. The significant other in a person's life is the person who relates the divine truth that one is loved. This may entail a relationship between two persons which leads to a conscious lifelong commitment between them, such as in marriage.

The metaphor of the "*holding environment*" was used by D.W. Winnicott to denote his concept of the infant's early relationship with the mother. Winnicott proposed that the mother's nurturing relationship with the infant provided a psychological scaffolding, or "*holding environment*" for the infant to develop internal psychic structures. In this environment, the infant has a sense of being secure, cared for and delighted in. Winnicott also maintained that we spend the rest of our lives seeking to maintain this environment in which we are first held and enjoy this sense of being significant and cared for. As we grow as adults, it becomes clear, however, that no other person, no matter how significant, can provide us with the holding environment which we require.

In the process of maturing, this desire to be loved within a collective leads us to form friendships and meaningful relationships with other significant persons in our lives. The holding environment gradually expands from one particular relationship to a second womb comprised of an ever increasing number of relationships with significant others. This is the natural progression of the relationship with a significant other into *relationships of friendship, family and local community* which are underpinned by a sense of solidarity. We often take these bonds of friendship, family and local community for granted. Yet, in a time of crisis, it can become painfully clear to us how much we rely upon each other and need mutual support.

As these relationships deepen in sincerity and authenticity, a gradual recognition emerges that there is a divinity at work in the tapestry of these relationships. If one is finding a true sense of one's own worth and significance in these relationships, a sense emerges of the One spiritual identity as their creator. For as these relationships progress, they lead us into a mutual relationship with God and ultimately, into *Christian community*.

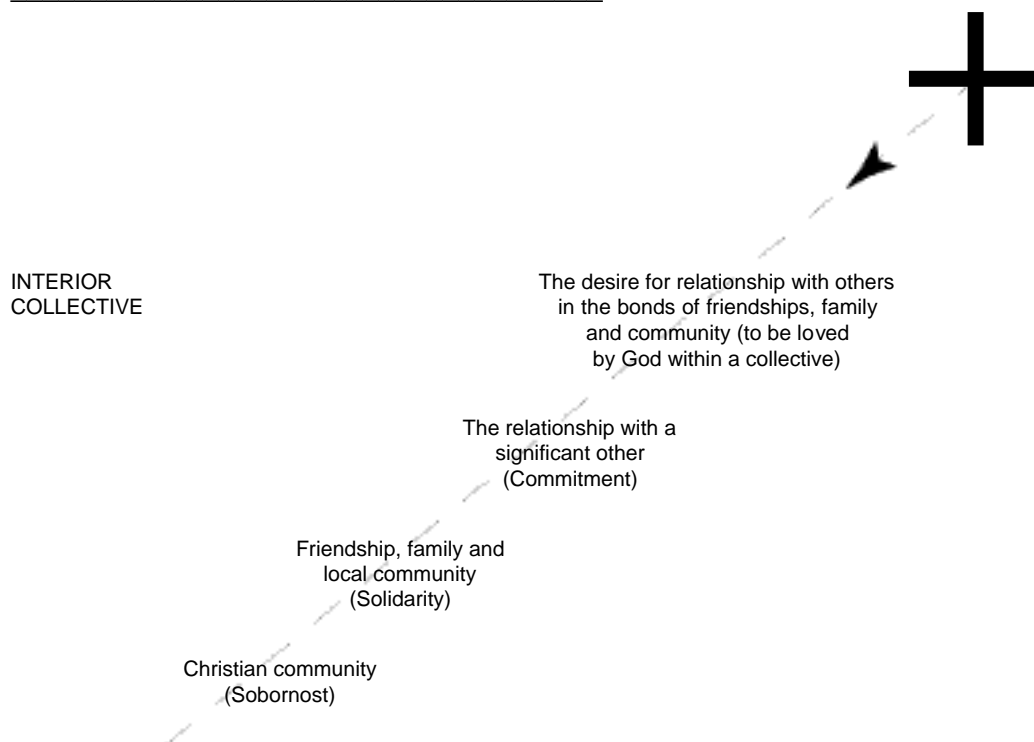
This transition from relationships based on familial or communal ties to those based upon a shared relationship with the persons of the Trinity, also explains some of the controversial sayings of Jesus about one's relationship to family. In the gospel of St. Luke, Jesus says "*If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple*". (Luke 14 : 26) Jesus is speaking here not of "hating" in the conventional sense but rather expressing emphatically the need for total detachment from one's own family and indeed, from one's own life. By entering into a spiritual and collective identity with others, one includes, but transcends the bonds of family and local community. One's identity is now in God and has out-grown an identity based on anything less than this. This is not to devalue the relationships of family and local community. Rather, it is to recognise that these relationships are not ultimate and must be relinquished, for only the relationship with others based upon a shared identification in God will satisfy the desire within us to be loved by God within a collective. It is also from this perspective that we can understand the deeper significance of the following story :-

'His mother and his brothers came looking for Him, but they could not get to Him because of the crowd. He was told, 'your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to see you'. But He said in answer, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice'.

Luke 8 : 19 – 21.

The mysterious way in which human relationships of love lead us into the one relationship with God is beautifully expressed by the ideal of *sobornost*, which is the culmination of the ideal of community in Christian life. The term 'sobornost' developed in the Russian Orthodox tradition and in particular in the writing of the Russian Aleksey S. Khomyakov (1804-1860). He described 'sobornost' as the combination of freedom and unity of many persons on the basis of their common love for the same absolute values, a unity in multiplicity, inspired by love. Similarly, Catherine de Hueck Doherty in her work entitled '*Sobornost, Eastern Unity of Mind and Heart for Western Man*' (1977) has written of the spiritual ideal of 'sobornost' as arising where each member of such a family, community, nation or whatever the group, will, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, think alike. She notes that this strange phenomenon of 'thinking alike' comes from the depths of prayer and that when people behold such a group, it seems that they are looking at an icon of Christ.

Figure Eight – The progression of community.



4. The exterior collective life - Justice.

The true test as to whether prayer, discernment and community are authentic is whether they lead to *justice* in the way that that we live together, whether they propel us into an exterior, collective dimension to our lives. The term justice is used here to mean the restoration of right relationship. This can take the form of justice in the workings of society, social justice, and also ecological justice, which refers to the restoration of right relationship between the human person and the environment.

The first stage in the practice of justice in our lives is the recognition that we *desire to be loving within a collective, which is the desire for a relationship with society and creation*. There is a longing in the human person to reach out in compassion for others, particularly for those who are unrepresented and marginalised by society, and to develop a greater sensitivity to nature and creation. An authentic contemplative life calls a person to face the complexities of injustice in all of its forms, whether social or ecological.

This desire for a relationship with society and with creation can only be realised through a new vision of the purpose of the social institutions which form the structure of society. Western society is held together by three essential systems, which determine the quality of justice, namely the legal, religious and political systems. A Christian vision of justice in our exterior collective life must look to the institutions provided by these systems and stand for an approach rooted in the transcendent in each of them. It is only when a transcendent vision takes hold in these institutions that justice will flourish in our society and in how we honour the

environment. In an address to Stanford University on September 29th, 1994 Vaclav Havel expressed this truth when he said :-

“If democracy is not only to survive but to expand successfully and resolve those conflicts of cultures, then, in my opinion, it must rediscover and renew its own transcendental origins. It must renew its respect for that non-material order which is not only above us but also in us and among us, and which is the only possible and reliable source of man’s respect for himself, for others, for the order of nature, for the order of humanity, and thus for secular authority as well. The loss of this respect always leads to loss of respect for everything else – from the laws people have made for themselves, to the life of our neighbours and of our living planet. The relativization of all moral norms, the crisis of authority, reduction of life to the pursuit of immediate material gain without regard for its general consequences – the very things Western democracy is most criticized for – does not originate in democracy but in that which modern man has lost: his transcendent anchor, and along with it the only genuine source of his responsibility and self-respect”

The first institution, which needs to find this anchor in the transcendent, is *the legal system*, for it is this system which provides us with the basic framework and starting point for the practice of justice in our society. While many of us tend to regard the legal system as at a remove from daily life, it is the place in society to which each of us has recourse in relation to any issue of justice in our lives.

It is in the legal system that the divine ideal of justice is meant to be embodied and developed through reflection. The discovery of this transcendent anchor in the legal system can lead to the fostering of two mutually supportive objectives within it, namely the development of *an ethos of public service* amongst those who practice in its administration and the pursuit of greater *access to justice* in its workings.

When those who have been wronged and victimised feel that they can have no recourse to the law, the underlying cause of the wrong is not brought into public consciousness. The reform of the legal system must therefore be the first step in the restoration of right relationship in our society. It alone is the means by which the injustice in human relationships can be fully challenged. It is also the only means by which a person can directly challenge a threat to the environment motivated by the private gain of another person or corporation. If we are to see the full reality of the social and ecological injustice in our society, the legal system must become more accessible to all.

It is also ironic to suggest that *the Christian Church* needs to re-discover a transcendent anchor, when its whole reason for being is to give expression to this. The Christian Church has, however, declined greatly by placing the clerical power of the institution, before the honouring of the movement of the Holy Spirit. The renewal of the Christian Church will only come where there is a renewal of the Christian vision which the Church is meant to express. Once the vision of how Jesus Christ answers the scattering of humanity is lost, every aspect of the Church declines. Yet, the very meaning of the word “church” is to gather together the people of God.

The role of the Church must be to articulate how the spiritual reality of the relationship between the persons of the Trinity can be incarnated in the healing of the relationships which make us human. The Church must stand for a way of living based upon the four central relationships in our lives. In this way, the Church will articulate a vision and practice of faith drawing us into One through the person of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the single most important need for the Christian Church is the emergence of an additional model to that of the diocesan structure and religious orders. There is a need for a third and complementary model where lay people take direct responsibility within the Church. While the diocesan model draws upon the support and involvement of lay people, they remain secondary to the priesthood as the persons bearing responsibility. Similarly, while many lay people draw spiritual benefit from being associated with religious orders, it is only those who have taken full vows within the order who bear the responsibility for its future direction. There remains a profound need for an additional model within the Christian Church where lay people are at the front, bearing responsibility and speaking prophetically of a vision and practice of the Christian faith. This is not to suggest, however, that the existing models of the diocesan structure and religious orders are not necessary. They are more essential than ever but even those within these existing structures cannot realise their potential when lay people are not taking responsibility in the fullest possible sense for the development of the Christian Church.

The final stage in the quest for justice lies in the renewal of *the political system*, being the working out of the vision of the kingdom in the society in which we live. While the role of the Church is to provide the vision, the role of the political system is to work out its implementation. The political system has suffered greatly because it has not been employed as an agent of a greater vision. Without being a servant of a greater vision, only self-interest and widespread cynicism can prevail.

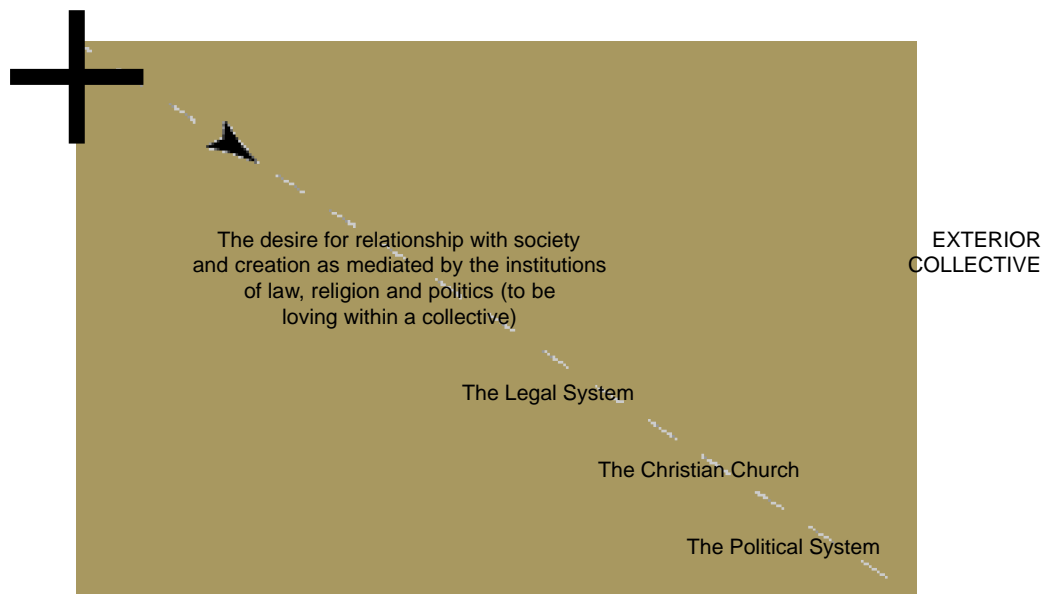
If the political system honours the four relationships which make us truly human, it can pragmatically follow the ideal of *integrated citizenship* in a *civil society*. The true potential of political involvement will then be realised as the means of finding civic participation in one's own life through engagement in politics for the betterment of others. If the political system becomes a place for civic renewal and engagement, it will realise its potential as the place where the kingdom of God is made visible and revealed in all of its glory through compassion and justice in our society and in our protection of the needs of our environment.

When a transcendent vision takes hold in these institutions, it will inevitably lead towards collective action for justice for the poor and marginalised. There can be no cohesion or integrity in society when the institutions which form its basis also serve to exclude the less well off and the disadvantaged. Rather, the Christian vision is radical in calling for profound reform in these three fundamental institutions so that they take positive action to help those who are excluded in our society and ensure that they are treated with equal concern and respect. Similarly, each of these institutions needs to develop a new orientation in responding to the environmental problems of our time and work towards healing the denigration of

the environment for commercial profits and private gain.

It is also essential that each one of us understand our calling to work with others in relation to these institutions. Every Christian is called to be involved in the reform of the legal system, the Christian Church and the political system and thereby be an agent for social and ecological justice in our community, in our society and in His creation.

Figure Nine – The progress of justice.



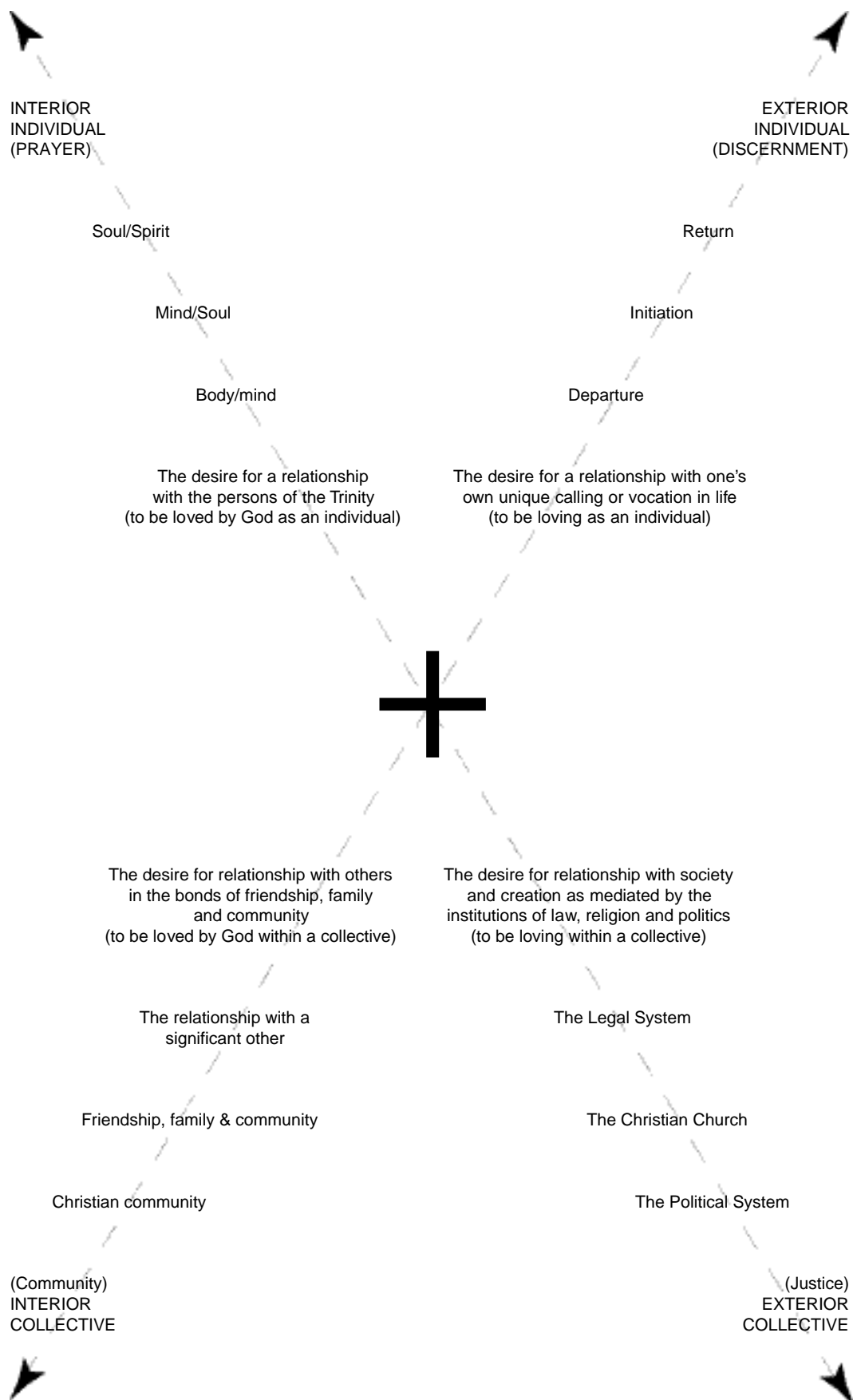
5. Summary.

The development of the spiritual life in the human person calls for a progression in each of four directions - the interior, individual and collective, and the exterior, individual and collective. Each of them begins from the centre of the cross, wherein we are held by the person of Jesus Christ and where He satisfies our essential desire to know ourselves as loved by God and to be loving to others.

From this centre, we are called to follow a way of life in which the Holy Spirit guides us in the four relationships which make us human by the continual practice of prayer, discernment, community and justice. Each of these practices also mutually support one another. Either one is progressing in the practice of all four of them at once or one is not really following any one of them at all.

Of all the ways that we lose our way in spiritual practice, this is perhaps the most common. By focusing on one of these practices in particular, the other integral dimensions of the spiritual life become neglected. When this happens, our potential in life is lost because we neglect profound dimensions of our being. The practice of the spiritual life must therefore always honour all of these practices so that the four central relationships in human life are healed and drawn into One.

Figure Ten – The Christian practice of integritas.





A lamp on the pathway leading to the prayer room

PART D – THE INTEGRITAS CENTRE.

At the *Integritas* centre, a Christian initiative is being undertaken based upon the practice of prayer, discernment, community and justice. This practice is being pursued in the hope that an articulation of the Christian faith will emerge which re-integrates the four key relationships of human life. Starting with weekly gatherings for prayer, a school in prayer and reflection is developing here, situated in the context of a family and community environment, from which an integral vision and practice of the Christian faith may emerge.

1. Christian meditation and contemplative prayer.

On each Wednesday evening, Christian meditation and contemplative prayer is held in the prayer room. These evenings begin with seeking to create an ambience that is conducive to prayer. The prayer room itself is designed with wooden features and willow reeds so as to give a sense of harmony with the environment. A central icon, made by a member of the local community, is used each evening. Candles are lit, incense is burned and music that is conducive to stillness is played.

Each evening commences with an exercise to relax the body and to become aware of the breath. A chant is played and a Gospel passage is then read. After a short period of silence, a guided exercise is given in order that the process of listening and responding to the Word may occur. These exercises are drawn from the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. They follow a sequence as set out in the text entitled “*Only if you wrestle*” (2002) written by Peter Hannan S.J. This sequence involves a number of exercises which are preparatory to undertaking the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius and then progresses into the process of these exercises.

When this exercise is concluded, a period of silence is observed for twenty minutes. The exercise precedes the period of silence so that the fruits of the exercise are given time and space to penetrate deeply into one’s heart. The reading of the Word and the exercise also serve to provide a context before one enters into the period of silence. When the period of silence is over, the session then concludes with the playing of a chant and the recital of a prayer. The wording of this prayer is set out at the conclusion of this document.

2. A school in Christian prayer and reflection.

The evenings of prayer are intended to offer continual support and guidance, based upon experience, in Christian meditation and prayer. Throughout the year, a number of courses and lectures are also given at this centre as part of an ongoing school in prayer and reflection. The primary purpose of these courses is to provide spiritual guidance in Christian prayer and reflection for those who are present for the evenings of prayer but they are open to anyone who may be interested.

In order to honour the body/mind dimension in meditation and prayer, the first objective in this school is the practice of *centring prayer*. The evenings of prayer begin with an exercise in becoming sensitive to the body and to the breath. Classes in yoga postures are also conducted on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, a weekend course is held each year where the importance of honouring the body/mind relationship as a way to God is reflected upon. This annual course addresses themes that arise from the body/mind connection, such as the role of the body and breath in prayer and the use of a prayer word as a way to quietening of the mind and entry into the Spirit. Other occasional courses arise on the theme of integrating the body/mind relationship in the spiritual life depending on the availability of other teachers and particular needs which may arise.

The evenings of Christian meditation and contemplative prayer also have the purpose of offering ongoing tuition in the mind/soul relationship by teaching participants how to pray in a way that integrates the Word with one's experience which is the practice of *prayer and reflection*. This is attempted through the guided exercise which is undertaken before the period of silence. A weekend course is also given each year which focuses on prayer as a way of integrating one's personal experience and universal experience so that one is open to being enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the love of others and one's own culture.

The final theme of this school is the relationship of *contemplation in action*. In other words, time is given to reflection upon direct contemplative experience and the implications which this has for how one leads one's life. To be arrested by the radiance of God and to be brought into the level of soul/spirit is the essence of the evenings of Christian meditation and contemplative prayer. To that extent, these evenings are an ongoing attempt to open to the grace of God which may invite us into this divine experience. A weekend course is held each year which reflects upon the contemplative experience itself.

3. The context of a family and community environment.

The practice of Christian meditation and contemplative prayer and the development of a school in prayer and reflection, have been started here in the context of a family home. The main house is designed as a home for a family and yet also to be a place for prayer. The purpose behind this is to articulate that prayer and reflection can take root within the context of marriage and family life and be enriched by the presence of children.

This approach is not original but merely an attempt to return to the original Christian Church which became rooted in small family based communities. With the Western demise of institutional structures for religious life, it is becoming increasingly apparent that we must open to a new model which is not an alternative but complementary to the existing model of Church. This complementary model must honour the simple, yet profound ties of family and communal life, as the crucible for integrating every aspect of the human person. We need families to embrace the Christian message in its attractiveness and in its challenges so as to form the basis for fundamental changes in society.

By avoiding the longstanding divorce between places for family life and for Christian spirituality, it is hoped that a Christian community will develop here, defined by persons who share a central attraction to the person of Jesus Christ. It must therefore be ecumenical. It is equally important that this initiative be a servant of the local Christian Church and not an alternative to it. Furthermore, by basing such an initiative in a familial and communal context, it protects against the danger of gnosis, that is where an initiative lays claim to some “special” knowledge which is only accessible to some and not open to all. Unless the practice of the Christian faith is open to all, it is not truly open to anyone.

In order to foster the development of Christian community here, certain initiatives are undertaken or envisaged. An annual weekend retreat is arranged for the group at a different venue so that a sense of community can develop away from the pre-occupations of daily concerns. Particular courses are offered to those who participate in Church liturgy in the locality. It is also intended that distance learning in theology will be supported here so that the group involved can meet regularly to share their experience of studying the Christian faith.

4. *Articulating an integral vision and practice of the Christian faith.*

The culmination of these three aspects of this project is the articulation of an integral vision and practice of the Christian faith as outlined in the earlier sections of this document. This final objective seeks to articulate a vision and practice of the Christian faith which integrates the central relationships of human life. Furthermore, it seeks to apply this understanding of the Christian faith to the three central institutions in our society, being the legal system, the Christian Church and the political system.

From the Christian perspective, the starting point of *justice*, or the restoration of right relationship, is the vision of how the person of Jesus Christ can re-integrate all of the relationships in our lives. The drafting and constant revision of this document is therefore the first practical step in honouring the ideal of *justice* in this initiative. It seeks to articulate the essence of the vision of Christianity which is required for the fragmented society in which we live. This initiative is based upon the conviction that the fragmentation in society can only be addressed by allowing the integrating vision of Jesus Christ inspire and renew these central institutions and is therefore ultimately concerned with applying this vision to them.

In pursuance of these aims, an annual public seminar is also planned where different aspects of this vision and practice of the Christian faith will be discussed and reflected upon. This seminar will be held at another location so that what is being undertaken here can be communicated to a wider audience. It is also intended that seminars will be given at this venue explaining the meaning of an integral vision and practice of the Christian faith and reflecting upon its central importance. Finally, there is an additional aim of publishing works, arising from a process of prayer, reflection and consultation, which apply this understanding of the Christian faith to these central institutions of our society. This will hopefully lead to an integral Christian vision and practice for:-

- (a) the legal system, based upon an ethos of public service and access to justice, so that under-represented interests in our society are treated with equal concern and respect;
- (b) the Christian Church, centred upon its calling to stand for a vision of the at-one-ment of the whole of creation through the person of Jesus Christ;
- (c) the political system, where each of us are called to integrated citizenship and to work for a civil society in which the protection of those who are vulnerable and the environment is addressed in a spirit of civic renewal.

5. Summary.

By adopting the practice which has been set out above, this initiative is a small experiment in articulating an integral vision and practice of the Christian faith which leads to a re-integration of :-

- (a) the relationship of the human person to the persons of the Trinity;
- (b) the relationship of the human person to the divine calling or vocation in their life;
- (c) the relationship of the human person to others in the bonds of friendship, family and community;
- (d) the relationship of the human person to society and to creation, as mediated by the social institutions of the legal system, the Christian Church and the political system.

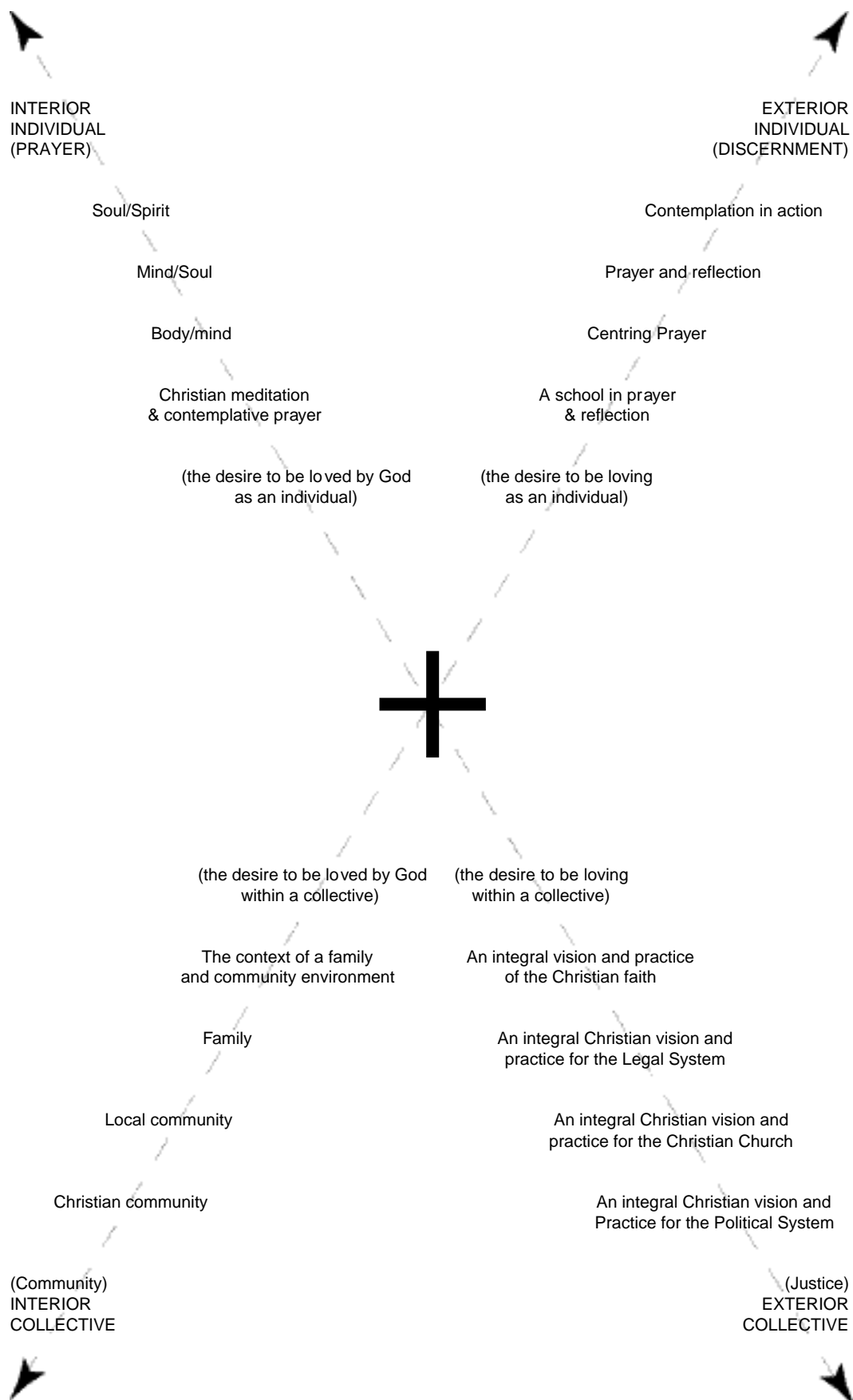
This initiative is therefore seeking to provide a model of how the Christian faith can be employed as the means to heal the fragmentation in these relationships by:-

- (a) practicing Christian meditation and contemplative prayer and
- (b) developing a school in prayer and reflection,
- (c) within the context of a family and community environment,
- (d) so as to express an integral vision and practice of the Christian faith for our society.

At the end of each of the evenings of Christian meditation and contemplative prayer, a prayer is read which draws together these essential aspirations. If we can honour them, a sense of lasting integrity will develop in our lives in which we become at one with God, with ourselves, with each other and with society and creation. The mercy and the grace of God made known in Jesus Christ shall then be spread upon the earth. In abiding in His love for us, we will come to be at one.

*May we enable each other to trust entirely
in the provident love of God;
may we form family, community and a deeper identity
in the gentle attraction of Jesus Christ;
may we support one another in responding to the unique call of the Spirit,
and serve as one in realising the dream of the Spirit for all;
so that in this covenant,
may we remain in Christ,
and with Christ in each of us,
may we come to be at **One**.*

Figure Eleven – The Integritas centre.





The view of the weir in the King's River from the main house