Contemplative Prayer
at
Integritas

A domestic centre of Christian faith

Wednesday evenings, at 8.00 p.m. (except during July and August)

Be content. We are the body of Christ. We have found Him. He has found us. We are in him. He is in us. There is nothing further to look for except the deepening of this life we already possess.

Thomas Merton, *A Search for Solitiude*



As Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God is essentially an inexhaustible history of mutual self-surrendering love.

Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, (2004), 81.

Above: Sketch of the Trinity, William Blake, (circa 1787-1818).



integritas

A domestic centre of Christian faith

Ut Unum Sint
That they may be one

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,
so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
The glory that you have given me I have given them,
so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me,
that they may become completely one,
so that the world may know that you have sent me
and loved them even as you have loved me.

(John 17 : 21-23)



Above: *Absent Presence*, The Garden, *Integritas*.

Perhaps the time has come to say farewell to the idea of traditionally Catholic cultures. Maybe we are facing a new and different epoch in the Church's history, where Christianity will again be characterised more and more by the mustard seed, where it will exist in small, seemingly insignificant groups that nonetheless live an intensive struggle against evil and bring the good into the world - that let God in.

Pope Benedict (1997)

We must start out again from the new generations to make the Church fruitful: to generate many domestic Churches in which a Christian style of life is lived, where one feels familiar with Christ, where one learns how to listen to those who are next to you, just as Christ listens to us.

Pope Francis (2024)

Integritas is a domestic centre of Christian faith based in the family home of Linda Rainsberry and Patrick Treacy at Ennisnag, Stoneyford, County Kilkenny. It explores how to bridge the separation of culture and religion through the integrity of Christian faith.

Integritas (l. integrity) is a name chosen to reflect the dynamic truth of Christian faith, which is that the self-surrendering love between the Father and the Son draws all of us to them and into one body as the Holy Spirit proceeds from them. Through their mutual, self-surrendering and eternal love, they never cease to gather us to themselves and envelop us in their divine love.

Our deepest desire is to surrender to the movement of their love, which is realised in our lives when we honour four key and sequential relationships, being with:

- God, the persons of the Holy Trinity
- one's nature, calling and mission
- family, friends and the local Christian community
- the universal Church, humanity and creation

The programme at *Integritas* concentrates upon these four relationships by focusing on:

I **Contemplative Prayer** as a way of being attuned to God, the persons of the Holy Trinity, with evenings of Christian contemplative prayer held each Wednesday at 8.00 p.m. (except during the months of July and August);

II **Missionary Discipleship** as a way of being aligned with one's deepest nature, calling and mission so as to lead a Christian life, with a course on how to do so entitled *'Missionary Discipleship: The Christian Pilgrimage of Human Life'* held on Saturdays;

III **Familial Love and Friendship** as a way of being attentive to one's family, friends and local Christian community, with an ongoing series of seminars entitled *'Love Revealed: the revelation of God in familial love and friendship'* held on Saturdays;

IV **Christian Social Engagement** as a way of being authentic by seeking to promote what is human, unify society and respect creation, with the specific emphasis here being upon the truth of Christian Anthropology through a lecture series entitled *'The Christian Vision of the Human Person'* held on Saturdays.

Integritas Prayer

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.

In appreciation of the friendship and guidance of

Peter Hannan
(1934 - 2023)

and

Louis Hughes OP

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The emptiness of the transcendental creature exists because the fullness of God creates this emptiness in order to communicate himself.

Solitude before God and being at home in his silent immediacy is indispensable to all humans.

The Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist.

Karl Rahner

I CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

… where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.

(Matthew 18 : 20)

And if two of you are gathered together – then there is a whole world,
a world of living love. Embrace each other tenderly and praise God,
if only in you two His truth has been fulfilled.

(Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Karamazov Brothers*, Book Six: The Russian Monk.)



Above: *Christus Pantocrator*, by the hand of John M Reynolds,
Prayer Room, *Integritas*.

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;
what is essential is invisible to the eye.

From *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

THE ORDER OF PRAYER AT INTEGRITAS

INTRODUCTORY MUSIC

During the introductory music, as we wait for people to gather, you may wish to read and reflect upon these words from the Gospel of St. John. They express the essence of what God, the three persons of the Holy Trinity, profoundly desire for each one of us – that we abide in their love.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.
If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as
I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.
I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you,
and that your joy may be complete.

(John 15 : 9 -11)

I Relaxation of the Body and Awareness of the Breath

We begin the evening with a short exercise helping us to become aware of the body and to make it as comfortable for prayer as possible. We then concentrate upon the breath and upon a change in our awareness from the usual understanding that I am breathing, to the deeper and more truthful appreciation that I am being breathed. This exercise ends with these words from the Gospel of St. Matthew:

Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.
Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble
in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.

(Matthew 11 : 28)

II Centring Prayer

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46 : 10

The source of centring prayer is the indwelling Trinity : Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Gregory the Great (6th century) in summarising the Christian contemplative tradition, expressed it as 'resting in God'.

i Choose a sacred word that resonates within you and has one or two syllables, such as the name of Jesus in English or other languages : *Íosa, Jesu*.

ii Become aware again that I am not breathing, I am being breathed.

iii Allow the sacred word to be said repeatedly in rhythm with each breath.

iv When distracting thoughts arise, simply return to saying the sacred word in rhythm with the breath.

A short period of silence follows.

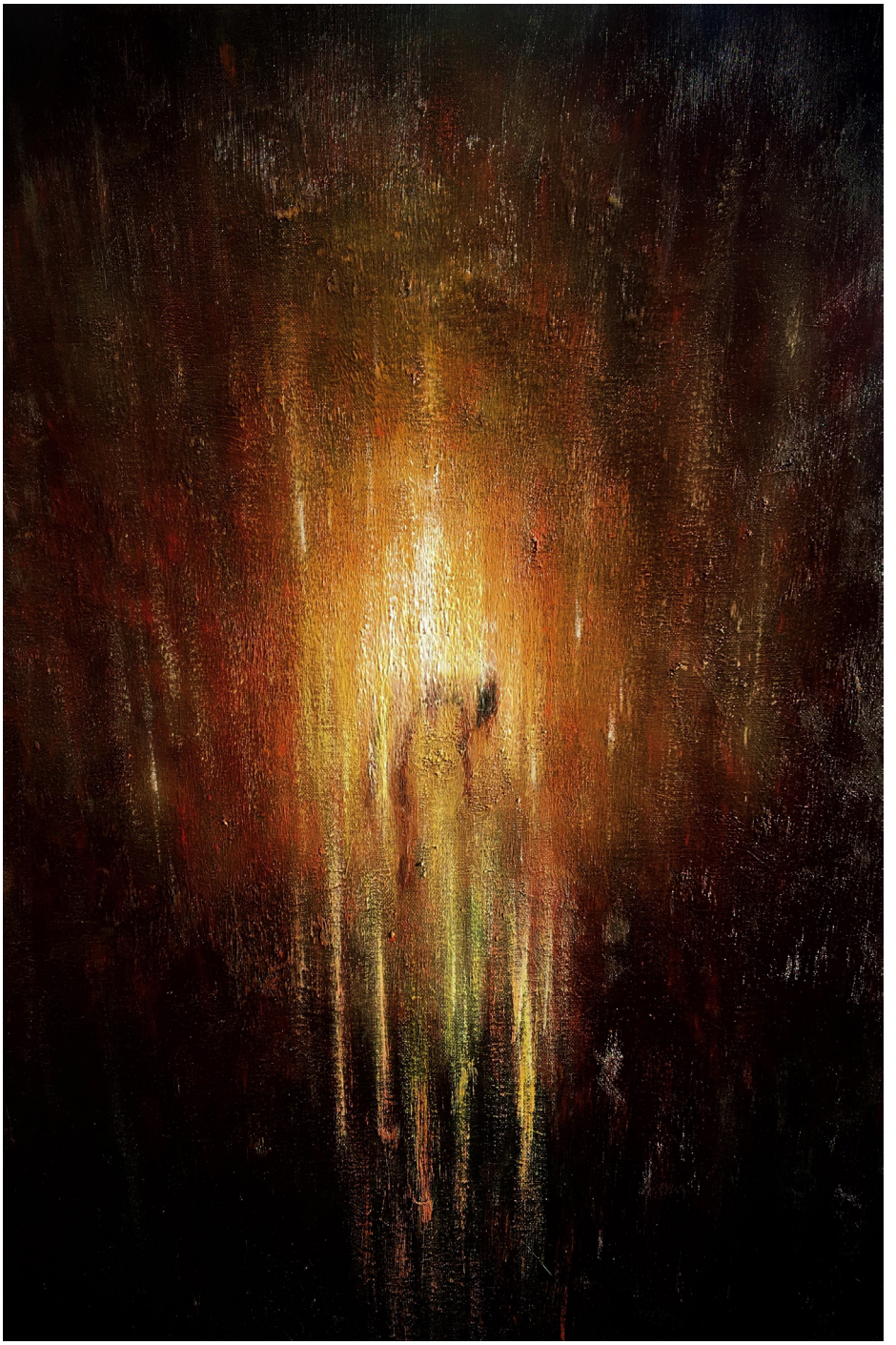
Lord Jesus Christ,
meek and humble of heart,
you offer to those who follow you
a yoke that is good to bear,
a burden that is light.
Accept, we beg you, our prayer and work of this day,
and grant us the rest we need
that we may be ever more willing to serve you,
who live and reign for ever and ever.
R./ Amen.

Isaiah 2 : 3

Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may instruct us in his ways,
and we may walk in his paths.
For from Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful
and enkindle in us the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit
and we shall be created.

R./ And you shall renew
the face of the earth.



Above: *The Abyss of Mercy*, Eoin Madigan, Prayer Room, *Integritas*.

III Prayer seeking God's mercy

For no one can confess his sin without having at the same time confessed God. It is neither a preliminary nor an effect. They happen together, in one unique spiritual intuition. Against all expectation, at the moment when God pardons it and when it is so to speak made good and restored in grace, sin becomes the place where God makes himself perceptible to the heart of man.

It must be added that there is no way to encounter God truly and to know him besides this way of conversion. Before it God is a word, an analogical concept, a presentiment, a desire, the God of the philosophers and poets, but not yet the God who reveals himself through an excess of love. The Lord came for sinners, to live and to eat with them and not with the just, to find what was lost (Matt. 9.13; 18.11). God makes himself known in pardoning. As for the sinner, it is in measuring the pit of his sin that he discovers the abyss of mercy, at the moment when the one fills up the other and engulfs it.

(Extract from *Repentance and Experience of God* by André Louf, Abbot of the Abbey of Mont des Cats, France)

A PSALM OF REPENTANCE
(read in alternate verse)

Psalm 50 (51) : 1- 4, 6, 10 - 12

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight.

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Psalm 95 (96) : 9

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
let the whole earth tremble before him.

A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING
(read in alternate verse)

Psalm 99 (100) : 1 - 5

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God;
it is he that has made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

IV Introduction of the theme for the evening's prayer

A short explanation is given of the theme for this evening's prayer and why it is chosen. The theme follows the pattern of the content of *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola* and is in harmony with the current theme of the liturgical calendar of the Church.

REFLECTIVE MUSIC

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies … the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

(Rom 8 : 22 -23, 26 -27)

V Contemplating the Word of God

The most important fact in all of Theology and Spirituality is that the three persons of the Trinity want to reveal themselves to each person.

Karl Rahner

SCRIPTURE

(related to the theme for the evening's prayer)

The following way of praying with the word of God assumes that the Bible is the story of the Trinity's passionate desire to reveal themselves to you. Each part of this story will reveal some aspect of the Father's love that Jesus makes visible and that the Holy Spirit gives you an intimate knowledge of. The following steps can be used to converse with God in a psalm, for example, or with Jesus in a story from the Gospel.

1. Quieten yourself in whatever way you wish, such as by listening to the sounds you hear around you. Then focus your attention on God's presence by repeating a word or phrase that helps you to do this.

2. Read a piece of God's word and notice what aspect of God's love it reveals to you. Choose a word or phrase to express and savour this love.

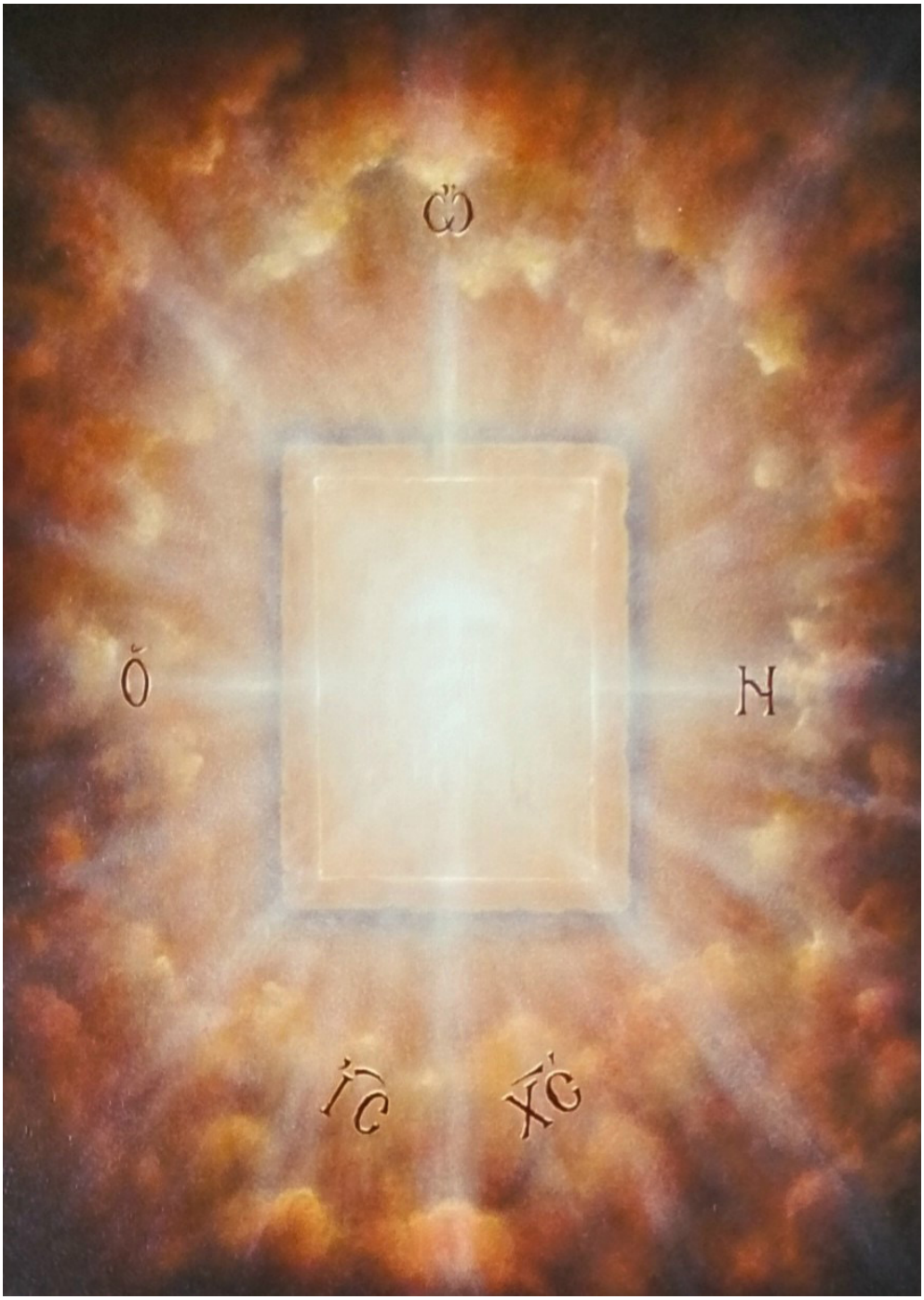
3. Spend time letting the attractiveness of this aspect of God's love grow. It may help to ponder the way someone you know radiates this kind of love.

4. Put words on what, in effect, God is saying in this piece of scripture and then let Him say this to you using your own name. The more intimate, challenging and creative the words you choose are the better. Let God say these words to you a number of times so that the love they express may sink in.

5. Tell God how you feel about what He says to you. You may find that one part of you resists this while another part welcomes it with gratitude, hope or joy.

Neither painting nor sculpture will be able any longer
to calm my soul, now turned towards that divine love
that opened His arms on the cross to take us in.

Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564)



Above: *Ecce Dominus Tuus*, (Behold your God), Eoin Madigan,
The Prayer Room, *Integritas.*

VI Reflecting on your prayer

The purpose of reflection is to become aware of the fact that the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit reveal themselves to you in prayer. It is also meant to help you to become familiar with how they want to do this by means of the Holy Spirit enlightening your mind and attracting your heart. Therefore, when you reflect on your prayer, dwell with the reality that it is the Holy Spirit who leads you into an intimate knowledge of God's love. Then, notice and record, however briefly, anything that struck you about this love during this prayer such as:

- what aspect of God's love you stayed with;
- what you found attractive about this love;
- what words God used to express this love to you;
- how you felt about what He said to you.

Begin your next period of prayer by reading what you have written. This will give continuity and lead to a build-up of what is being revealed about God's love to you. From this a true vision of who God is for you and who you are for God will take shape. In this way you will be answering Jesus' call to repent and believe the Gospel of his Father's love for you. (Mark 1 :15)

VII Prayer for family, friends and special intentions

Jesus compares our entry into the love that He and His Father have for us to a home they come and make in us. 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.' (Jn 14 : 23) In a home the members of the family are drawn into a holding environment by the love of their parents and by their growing capacity to receive this love and respond to it. The bond Jesus establishes with us is even closer. Jesus calls the union He wants to establish with us 'complete' as He draws us into His own union with the Father and the Spirit (Jn 17:22-23). In drawing us to Himself, He reintegrates *(l. integritas)* all that is within us and all that is without, gathering 'into one the dispersed children of God'. (Jn 11 : 52)

[There is an invitation at this time to name any person whom, and express any intention that, you wish those present to remember and pray for with you.]

After this period of silent prayer and expression of intentions, we say together one of the following:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name.
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
both now and forever.

Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended into hell;
on the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

Amen.

Official Prayer for the World Meeting of Families 2015

God and Father of us all,
in Jesus, your Son and our Saviour,
You have made us your sons and daughters in the family of the Church.
May your grace and love help our families in every part of the world
to be united to one another in fidelity to the Gospel.
May the example of the Holy Family, with the aid of your Holy Spirit,
guide all families, especially those most troubled, to be homes of
communion and prayer and to always seek your truth
and live in your love, through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Psalm 45 (46)

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."

The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.



The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection.
Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love* (2016) 11.

Above: *The Holy Family*, by the hand of John M Reynolds, *Integritas.*

VIII Compline (abbreviated)

V./ O God, come to our aid.
R./ O Lord, make haste to help us.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PROTECTION
(read in alternate verse)

Psalm 90 (91) : 1 – 2, 5 -6, 10 – 11, 14 -15

Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High
and abide in the shade of the Almighty
say to the Lord: "My refuge, my stronghold,
my God in whom I trust!"

You will not fear the terror of the night
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the plague that prowls in the darkness
nor the scourge that lays waste at noon.

Upon you no evil shall fall,
no plague approach where you dwell.
For you has he commanded his angels,
to keep you in all your ways.

You set your love on me so I will save you,
protect you for you know my name.
When you call I shall answer: "I am with you."
I will save you in distress and give you glory.

NUNC DIMITTIS

The Song of Simeon

A./ Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep;
that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

At last, all-powerful Master,
you give leave to your servant
to go in peace, according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation
which you have prepared for all nations,
the light to enlighten the Gentiles
and give glory to Israel, your people.
Give praise to the Father Almighty,
to his Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord,
to the Spirit, who dwells in our hearts,
both now and for ever.

R./ Amen.

**A./ Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep;
that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.**

Visit our homes, we pray you, Lord:
drive far away from them all the snares of the enemy.
May your holy angels stay with us and guard us in peace,
and let your blessing be always upon us
through Christ our Lord.

R./ Amen.

**A./ In your mercy, Lord,
dispel the darkness of this night.
Let our households sleep in peace
so that at the dawn of a new day
we may, with joy, waken in your name
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

The Lord grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.

May the peace of Christ always dwell in our hearts and in our homes.

R./ Amen

CONCLUDING HYMN



Above: *Dawn*, Eoin Madigan, *Integritas.*

May He support us all the day long,
till the shades lengthen
and the evening comes,
and the busy world is hushed,
and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done.
Then in His mercy may He
give us safe lodging,
and a holy rest and peace at the last.

(St John Henry Newman)



Above: *The Icon of the Crucifixion*, by the hand of John M Reynolds, Meeting Room, *Integritas*.

The kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a programme subject to free interpretation, but it is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God.

St John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 18

Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty ideal, but the encounter with an event, a person, who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 217

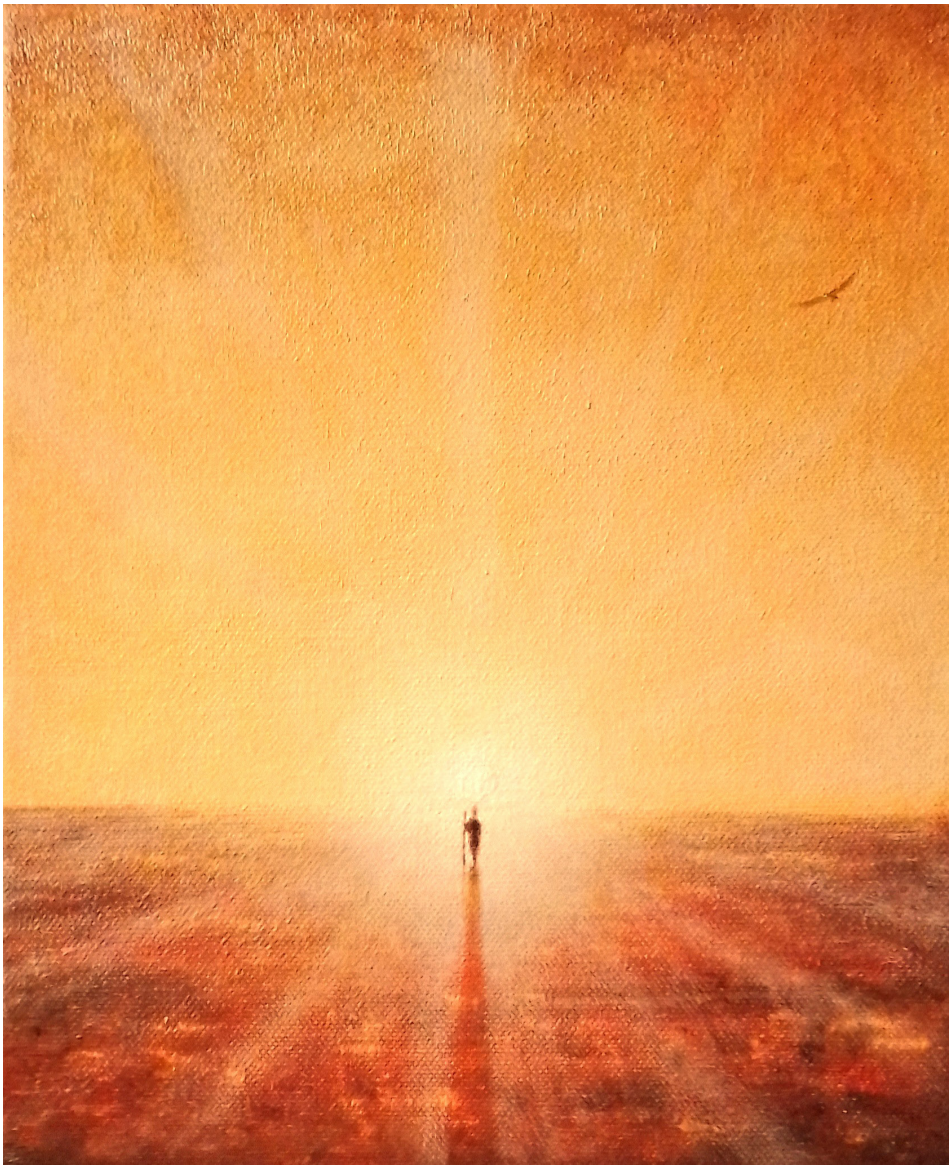
Keep your eyes fixed on the outstretched arms of Christ crucified, let yourself be saved over and over again. Gaze upon the outstretched arms of Christ crucified, let yourself be saved over and over again.

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit,* 123

Psalm 26 (27)

The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked advance against me to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.
Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.
One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.
For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.
Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.
Hear my voice when I call, Lord;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, Lord, I will seek.
Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.
Though my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me.
Teach me your way, Lord;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.
Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.
I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

II THE WAY OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER AT *INTEGRITAS*



Above: *Emergence,* Eoin Madigan, *Integritas.*

Psalm 15 (16)

Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord: You are my God.
My happiness lies in you alone.
He has put into my heart a marvellous love
for the faithful ones who dwell in his land.
Those who choose other gods increase their sorrows.
Never will I offer their offerings of blood,
never will I take their names upon my lips.
O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;
it is you yourself who are my prize.
The lot marked out for me is my delight:
welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!
I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.
And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my body shall rest in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead,
nor let your beloved know decay.
You will show me the path of life,
the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand happiness for ever.
Give praise to the Father Almighty,
to his Son Jesus Christ the Lord,
to the Spirit who dwells in our hearts,
both now and forever.

Amen.

I THE WAY OF PRAYER AND REFLECTION

… without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelisers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence.

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 259)

Integritas is a domestic centre of Christian faith which first commenced in September 2000 with prayer on Wednesday evenings. These evenings of prayer and reflection have continued since then and commence each year at the beginning of September and conclude at the end of June.

These evenings take place between 8.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. on Wednesday evenings. The purpose is to engage the whole of one's person in prayer – body, mind, soul and spirit. The practice, therefore, commences with a relaxation exercise, which ensures that the body is comfortable and becomes still. This exercise then focuses upon the breath, leading to an awareness that one is not breathing but being breathed. This awareness underpins an understanding throughout the prayer that one is called to be an instrument in service of God's love in the world.

A period is then allowed for centring prayer. This is a relatively short period which would be considerably longer for those who regularly practice this way of prayer in daily life. Nonetheless, it is allowed for at this early point in the prayer so as to further concentrate the mind and to bring it into harmony with the soul (the realm of the psyche) and to create greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit within oneself.

These two initial practices of relaxation of the body and breath and centring prayer, come from the tradition of *apophatic* prayer, which counsels the person in contemplation to let go of images and feelings that do not lead directly to resting in God's presence. Apophatic prayer is an ancient and venerable way of prayer found in the writings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers and in the writings of Christian mystics such as St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross. It renounces images and feelings in order to finally come to rest in the presence of God.

The next stage is a series of prayers from Scripture which seek the mercy of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They begin with the reading part of Psalm 50 (51) in alternate verse, which commences with the words *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love"*. This marks a change to prayer in the *cataphatic* prayer which honours and reverences images and feelings and goes through them to God. Any sort of prayer that highlights the mediation of creation can be called cataphatic. Praying with one's senses, feelings, intuitions and imagination are cataphatic forms of prayer.

The next stage is the introduction of the theme for the evening's prayer. The sequence of these themes is broadly taken from the *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola*, which are availed of for two related reasons. Firstly, the spiritual themes of these exercises develop a heightened awareness of the person of Jesus Christ and of how His central presence gives a new order to one's life. This is the basic vision of *Integritas*, namely that through a growing attraction to Him, a new integrity emerges in one's life. This integrity becomes a reality through the strengthening of four progressive relationships in one's life being :

- The relationship with God, the persons of the Holy Trinity;
- The relationship with one's nature, calling and mission;
- The relationship with others in family, friendship and the local Christian community;
- The relationship with the universal Church, humanity and creation.

The second reason for relying upon the *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola* is that they are particularly applicable to the lives of lay people and to discerning the will of God for one's life in the midst of difficult choices and constant demands. By continually reflecting on one's life in this way of prayer, one is increasingly called to become totally dependant upon Jesus Christ, to notice the gentle, recurring calling of the Holy Spirit Spirit from Him to choose a life that is integrated and to be encouraged through faith in Him to follow the path that leads to the Father.

At this stage, we then arrive at the central and pivotal point – listening to the reading from the Gospel which is related to the theme of the evening and then being in silence so that the Word of God can be contemplated. After this period of silence, one is then invited to reflect upon what has emerged during this period of silence and to note it down so that it will be remembered and available to be reflected upon thereafter.

Following this period of reflection, a period of prayer is allowed for our families when family members, living and deceased, are remembered and the wellbeing of all families is prayed for. The central importance of families, of marriage and the care and nurturing of children by their parents is critical for our shared future, for the good of society and the Church and justifies specific prayer and attention.

The final stage of the evening turns to an abbreviated form of Compline, drawing from this great monastic practice of prayer and uniting with the universal Church in thanksgiving to God and in asking for His protection and care in our lives and in our homes. Music is played at the conclusion of the evening and one can stay in silence in the prayer room thereafter for as long as one wishes.

II THEMES FOR EVENINGS OF PRAYER

The evenings of prayer at *Integritas* follow a particular rhythm wherein certain themes (drawn from the *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola*) are explored in a way which is in harmony with the liturgical calendar. The sequence of these themes is as follows:

Foundation

September and the first two weeks of October

These initial six evenings are based upon the first part of the *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola*. They are concerned with bringing us in touch with the reality of the love of God in our lives. We all have different concepts of God which prevent us from believing that God is all loving or that the love of God is a reality in our lives. For some, it is impossible to accept that the love of God is immanent or uniquely present in the life of each one of us. For others, it is not possible to believe in the love of God as transcendent, as all pervasive, beneath, behind and through all things, working for the salvation of all of creation.

The first two of these six evenings seek to work with the sense of God's love being immanent in our lives and the next two reflect upon the transcendent nature of divine love. It is essential not just to experience both of these aspects of the love of God but also to ensure that they are in balance. The deepest desire of the human person is to know oneself as loved by God and to live in service of this love in one's life. The final two evenings concentrate upon how one is being called by the love of God in one's life and the way one is responding to the truth of this love. The purpose of these six evenings of prayer is to allow one's soul to be attracted by the love of God by moving towards an image of a loving God and discovering the love of God in one's life.

Throughout these evenings, it is helpful to stay with what St Ignatius described as the *"Principle and Foundation"* of one's life. By this, he meant that as we become attracted to the love of God, we voluntarily want to give our lives in service of this love. In seeing that nothing matches the love of God, we seek to ensure that nothing is put before it and that our lives are based upon and ordered around this love. This obedience, or listening to God, is a response to the yearning for the love of God that each one of us is. During each of these six evenings, a piece on the *Principle and Foundation* described by St Ignatius of Loyola is set out so that it can be reflected upon and kept in the background during one's prayer.

Mercy

Third week of October to the beginning of Advent

In the first stage of these evenings of prayer, as described above, we reflect not only upon how God is loving and provident but also upon how He asks us to listen to this love, believe in it and surrender our "whole heart, soul, mind and strength" to it. In this second stage, we concentrate on what happens when we do not surrender to this love.

This is what we mean by sin and we seek an understanding of three aspects of it:

1) The *nature* and the *seriousness* of sin, its destructiveness or tragedy. We seek a cosmic sense of sin, such as the injustice we see in the world today, as well as a personal one.

2) *Our involvement* in sin or our basic sinfulness that we own.

3) *The extraordinary response of God to our sinfulness.* To get the clearest picture of the extent of God's fidelity to us, by exploring the full extent of our infidelity to God, is the ultimate objective of this stage.

This stage draws upon the second part in the *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola* which concentrates upon the permanent, steadfast nature of the love of God in our lives. It does so by first making us conscious of the presence of sin in human affairs, both as individuals and as a society. This is a necessary corrective to the strong contemporary tendency to deny the presence of sinfulness as a reality in our lives. Having acknowledged the existence of sinfulness, this stage seeks to then make us aware of our own personal, unique involvement in human sinfulness. We are challenged to see this destructive reality in our own lives, to acknowledge its presence and to become aware of how unattractive and serious it is. Finally, this stage invites us to realise the constant presence of the mercy of God for each one of us. By becoming aware of one's own sinfulness, one can then enter into a sense of the depth and extent of the mercy of God for oneself, personally.

Birth

Advent and Christmas

The Incarnation, the Word taking flesh, is the most important event in human history. It is God taking human form. Hence, our understanding of the person of Jesus is so important because He reveals to us what God is like. During these evenings of prayer, we are concerned with developing an intimate knowledge of Jesus, with having a deeper sense of Jesus Christ within oneself, a new sense of the birth of His presence within oneself.

Accordingly, in these evenings, we look at how personal the love of God is for each one of us in the way that Jesus uniquely calls each of us to be with him. In this part, Jesus asks the central question that He poses in the Gospels – "who do you say that I am?" (Lk 9 : 18-21) He asks who am I for you? What do you think of me? How do you feel about me? The grace we are looking for in this part is " …an interior knowledge of Jesus the Lord who became a human being for me." (St Ignatius) Accordingly, there are three aspects to the interior knowledge which is being sought in this part, namely that :

1) Jesus is the Lord or God and 2) He became a human being 3) for me.

In other words, we are looking for an interior knowledge (a) of Jesus who is God or love (b) made visible or expressed in human form and (c) that He does all this for me.

The entire part of the *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola*, which is drawn upon during these evenings, is concerned with a conversion of the heart to Christ. This is essential before we embark upon the next part which is a call to mission in service of Christ. The Christian claim that Jesus is decisive is not a claim that God is to be found only in Jesus and nowhere else. It is a claim, however, that the only God that might possibly be discovered elsewhere is the God disclosed into the world through the Incarnation and then revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The scripture readings are taken from the narratives concerning the birth of Jesus in which belief in the reality of Jesus being the Lord or God is very clearly stated. The readings also relate to the life of Jesus as an infant, as a child and His hidden life before He became a public figure. They are chosen so as to establish within us a sense that Jesus was a human being and lived an ordinary life in many ways before His true identity was made known abroad.

Call

First Week after Christmas to Ash Wednesday

The next part of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which these evenings of prayer draw upon, centres upon the call given to each one of us to be a unique part of the mission of Jesus Christ. In order to realise this calling, we need to become aware of how we are being simultaneously drawn towards and away from Him. We are constantly presented with two ways, one that will lead to one's deepest desires being realised in Him and the other which seeks to distract us from the joy and purpose of a full life that Jesus wants for each one of us.

The main focus of our attention in this fourth part of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to continue to grow in an interior knowledge of our Lord who has become a human being for each one of us so that we might know, love and follow Him. We seek to become more sensitive and responsive to the attitudes we need to adopt if we want to follow Jesus. In this part, one is challenged to identify the concrete decisions and choices that have to be elected for if Jesus is to gradually become the centre of one's life and if one's life is to become a reflection of Him.

If we act on the belief that our significance and worth are not a gift, but have to be earned, we live in a very different world in which we will notice a loss of joy and enthusiasm. This is because the significance we earn by what we have or do is often fragile, fleeting, intermittent and superficial. The feelings that a sense of insignificance generates are anxiety, anger, guilt, sadness and fear. When this image of ourselves as insignificant, and the feelings it generates become habitual, we develop a poor self-image which erodes or blocks our belief in those who love us. This erosion of faith and hope leads us down what Jesus calls the road to "destruction" (Mt 7:13-14).

During these evenings, we seek to become more aware and conscious of the various ways we are seduced to follow another way than that of Jesus. We become aware of the tendency in each one of us to make something other than God the centre of our lives so that we then become distracted from God and become pre-occupied by something else. When this occurs, we seek to create ourselves rather than allowing ourselves to be created by God.

Death

Lent

The six evenings of prayer throughout Lent concentrate upon how we realise the calling that each of us has from God. For this to happen, there has to be a constant dying to oneself, to one's own ambitions and preoccupations and to personal attachments that inhibit us from following our calling.

This part centres upon the important role suffering plays in the growth of all of our relationships but especially in our relationship with Jesus. The aim of this part is to enter into an experience of the sufferings and death of Jesus in the way you would want to enter into the sufferings of a friend. For our contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus to foster our relationship with Him, we need to focus on:

(a) the intense, passionate love that led Him to undertake them

and

(b) on the love this inspires in us

and

(c) how our whole being is being drawn to Him and how our lives are called to a new integrity *(integritas)* around Him.

In our efforts to share in Jesus' suffering and sorrow, it is best to enter our own first. Without becoming familiar with our own experience, that of Jesus remains unreal. We may then find it difficult to identify with or be involved in what He went through. In doing this, we avoid focusing on the physical sufferings of Jesus as these are largely outside our experience and may distract us from entering where most of His suffering lay. The ultimate objective of sharing Jesus' sufferings is to grasp something of the passionate love which inspired Him to undertake them, not just for a group but for each person and ultimately for oneself. Facing the personal nature of this overwhelming reality enables us to get a more intimate knowledge of His love and to be confirmed in our calling to follow Him by taking the hard road joyfully.

Resurrection

Easter period

In this part, we seek to enter into a sense of the glory of Jesus Christ and to experience the joy of His presence in every relationship and in all things. For when a relationship or a thing is seen as a gift and thus as a sign of His presence and providence, it becomes a revelation of His beauty and draws us to Him. The aim of this part is, therefore, to be glad and to rejoice in the glory of Christ our Lord. The radiance of Jesus' love, seen in His growing attractiveness in the Gospel stories, reaches its climax in the glory and joy of His resurrection.

Jesus is no longer visibly present to His Church. He is now exalted, at God's right hand and it is from there that He exercises His authority over heaven and earth. In the mystery of the resurrection, our joy emanates from Jesus being with each member of the Church. Each one of us is drawn by the attractiveness of the risen Lord into His body and into full relationship with the persons of the Trinity. When He becomes the centre of our lives, a new integrity develops in our lives around Him. By drawing us to Himself, He brings us inwardly into the relationship with the persons of Trinity from where a new and eternal sense of order, cohesion and relatedness develops in our lives. The word *integritas* is used to describe this phenomenon, that is how the growing attractiveness of Jesus at the centre of one's life leads to a new integrity in one's life and relationships around Him.

Redemption can be seen as reconciliation, a befriending of all estranged by sin. This reconciliation is achieved when Jesus draws everyone to Himself and to each other by His growing attractiveness in the Gospels and especially when He is "lifted up" on the Cross and in glory (Jn 12 : 32). Everything, when seen as a gift and thus as a sign of His presence and providence, is a revelation of His beauty and draws us to Him. Everything is a revelation of the risen Lord and can put us in touch with the glory and joy of His love.

Closely connected with Jesus' desire to share His risen life with us is the way the love He expressed in His death and resurrection draws all things to Himself and to each other. St Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* aims to help us further with this reintegration of all things in Jesus by asking us to do an exercise he calls "The Contemplation to Attain the Love of God" *(the Contemplatio)*. The love of God is to be found in all things.

Cultivating this vision involves developing our ability to see everything in the following four ways :

1. Everything is a gift from God, whether that gift is natural, personal or supernatural;

2. As everything as a gift is a sign of the giver's love, everything is a wayside sacrament or a powerful sign of God's love and presence;

3. Everything that happens is a sign of God's providence in that "by turning everything to the good, God co-operates with all those who love Him". (Rom 8 : 28)

4. An appreciation of God's gifts leads to an appreciation of the giver. (Eph 1 : 1-14)

This experience of God giving us all things and sharing even Himself with us evokes a desire to love and serve God in all things. In this part, we are seeking an interior knowledge of God's gifts, so that filled with gratitude for them we may in all things serve Jesus who through the attractiveness of His love for us seeks to become our Lord. We seek to develop a vision of all things that we come across each day as gifts and thus as signs. As such, everything puts us in touch with the love of God.

Trinity

Pentecost

Atonement, the at-one-ment, the gathering of all into one, is the final, climactic theme of these evenings of prayer. It expresses the whole purpose of contemplative prayer. By being drawn to Jesus Christ, by finding our centre in Him, every aspect of our lives develops a new integrity around Him. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, draws all to the Father, gathering all that is scattered into One. This is what the term *integritas* (l. integrity) is chosen to signify.

In essence, this is the whole purpose of these evenings of prayer. It is to allow the person of Jesus Christ to gradually win us over, through His incomparable attractiveness, so that He becomes the centre of our lives. This, in turn, leads to everything that is fractured or discordant in our lives becoming integrated around him, through the dynamic of the Holy Spirit, and brought into the oneness of the Father.

Lady Julian of Norwich wrote of us being enveloped in the love between the persons of the Holy Trinity, in the fourteenth century, in this way:

> "We are enfolded in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. And the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are enfolded in us: all-mighty, all-wisdom, all-goodness, one God, one Lord."[1]

What is it that draws us to Jesus Christ and to the Father? We become increasingly aware of being enveloped in the eternal self-surrendering reciprocal love between them. The total self-giving of Jesus Christ, to which we are drawn by its incomparable attraction, is a mirroring of the eternal, mutual, self-giving love of the triune God, whose love He came to reveal and to gather us into.

Hans Urs von Balthasar posits a compelling picture of this eternal mutual self-giving of the persons of the Trinity. He writes that:

1. *Revelations of Divine Love,* St Julian of Norwich, from the fifty-fourth chapter.

> the Father strips himself without remainder, of his Godhead and hands it over to the Son; he imparts to the Son all that is his. [...] The Son's answer to the gift of the Godhead can only be eternal thanksgiving as selfless and unreserved as the Father's original self-surrender. Proceeding from both, as their subsistent 'We', there breathes the 'Spirit' [...] as the essence of love he maintains the infinite difference between them, seals it and, since he is the one Spirit of them both, bridges it.[2]

This same triune God is the creator and sustainer of all that is, so that von Balthasar can comment, in asserting what is the absolute ground on which we can rely, that the "absolute truth [...] is itself a truth of eternal relations in an eternal life".[3] What underpins reality, in other words, is an eternal mutual giving and receiving in relationship. This illuminates the biblical depiction of God as love. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them (1 John 4:16).

Moreover, this eternal movement of love constitutes, within the triune nature of God a "pole of bestowing, a pole of receptivity, and a pole of reciprocity".[4] God the Father bestows all that he is (apart from being Father) to the Son, who receives this eternal gift with infinite gratitude and returns, in total surrender, all that he is to the Father, from which mutual self-giving love proceeds the Spirit. This action of giving and receiving discloses the mutuality at the heart of divine triune life, which we are all called into.

A final statement about the mystery the Holy Trinity and our relationship to them was expressed by Karl Rahner in these terms:

> God freely steps out of himself in self-communication … through the Son who appears historically in the flesh as man … and the Spirit who brings about the acceptance by the world of this self-communication.
>
> Man understands himself only when he has realised that he is the one to whom God communicates himself.[5]

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2. *Theo-Drama, IV, The Action* (1994 edition) 323-324.
3. *Explorations in Theology, Volume I: (*1989) 80.
4. Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's Theologia Crucis*, (1995) 167.
5. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, (1997) 46, 86.

III ENGAGING THE WHOLE PERSON IN PRAYER

The particular significance of *The Spiritual Exercises* of *St Ignatius of Loyola* and Ignatian spirituality are the insights they provide into how to:

(i) be founded upon the unchanging love of the Father;

(ii) discover the deepest desire within oneself, which is for the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ;

(iii) discern the interior movements of the Holy Spirit, which precede from the Father and the Son.

To meet these aims, however, one must begin by allowing the whole of one's being to be drawn into prayer. This raises the question as to what is the whole of one's being or personhood. This very question was answered by Jesus in the following passage from the Gospel of St Luke:

> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied, "How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your s**trength** and with all your **mind**"; and "Love your neighbour as yourself." "You have answered correctly", Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." (emphasis added)
>
> Luke 10:25-28

This particular passage from the Gospel of St Luke is understood as pivotal as it crystalises what Jesus affirms as to how to fully live in a way which leads to the Father. It is not emphasised, however, that in this passage, Jesus also confirms all of the elements which make a person whole. If the word "strength" is understood as referring to a person's physical strength in the body, we then see that the whole human person is understood as a continuum from body (bodily strength), to mind, to heart, to soul and ultimately, spirit.

As we live and have our being in creation, we can understand that to be fully human and alive is to live on a continuum of matter (i.e. within creation), body, mind, soul and spirit. Each of these levels of human being are meant to be successively integrated, that is included and transcended, so that the human person is fully whole and alive. Each of them must also be fully honoured in contemplative prayer if this way of prayer is to engage the whole human person and ensure that every aspect of one's being is brought before God. The engagement of the whole person at the different levels of matter, body, mind, soul and spirit are progressive and incremental elements in the prayer evenings at *Integritas*.

Matter: the level of form and content

In terms of matter, the creation in which we live, the place which we inhabit, is the matter of our lives. In the context of contemplative prayer, the place where we pray is the matter of prayer. It needs to be place of quiet and preferably, a place of beauty and of symbol. In this way, where we create such a place for contemplative prayer, we find that this place-making is a contemplative practice in itself.

At *Integritas*, icons are relied upon for their beauty and symbolism in conveying truths of the Christian faith. Iconography can create in the viewer a sense of paradox as it seems to distort reality. Contrary to the principles of Italian Renaissance painting, Orthodox iconography is not trying to copy nature but rather attempts to capture the idealised, spiritual dimension of the content of forms. The scene and person(s) are not placed in the natural, corruptible world that surrounds us but are projected in the world of the kingdom of heaven, where everything is incorruptible. Consequently, Orthodox iconography is not painting with a religious content but with a pictorial language which borrow from the material world in order to represent another, intangible and spiritual world, which reflects the theological views and doctrines of Christian faith.

Body: the level of physical strength

We are incarnated, embodied creatures, living in a culture of expressive individualism in Western countries. This culture leads to what the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has termed "excarnation". This term describes the modern tendency to move spiritual and religious life away from the body and communal, physical practices, towards a purely cerebral belief system based on abstract thinking and intellectual assent. This is a denial of our embodiment as our physical nature contradicts our claims to ever increasing personal autonomy and choice. By realising the truth of our embodied nature, we understand that we are dependent upon our breath for life and upon others to sustain us. We realise that our true happiness and freedom comes from being grateful and devoted to God and by being caring and compassionate to others.

In terms of the practice of contemplative prayer, at the beginning of it, the body must be comfortable as any physical pain or discomfort only serves to distract. The posture needs to allow the back to be upright and yet comfortable. In this way, the capacity to breath normally and fully is not impaired, allowing the breath to be fully and yet at ease. By beginning each session of prayer by also focusing upon the gift of each breath, by remembering that we are being breathed rather than breathing, we are also opened to the truth of being human, of being a creature. With this awareness, we realise that all we can truly do is completely surrender to God, our Creator, with a disposition that is grateful and joyful.

Mind: the level of understanding and reason

The mind must be engaged and brought to a place of focus and concentration. Otherwise, the mind becomes wayward and distracted and then prevents one being drawn into the deeper experience of being contemplative. By praying with vocal prayer and then reading a passage of sacred scripture, one's mind becomes fully engaged before entering into a period of silence thereafter. When the period of silence has ended, the practice of making a note after the period of silence engages the mind again in the act of remembering. What has been seen or realised in silent prayer can then be formulated into words by the mind and prevent this realisation from falling into forgetfulness. The writing of what has been revealed in silence and the repetition of it thereafter allows it to erode engrained ways of thinking which obscure or block our appreciation of God's infinite love for each one of us. It enables a distorted vision to be broken down so that the truth of God's loving presence comes forth and permeates through one's entire being.

This practice of making notes after prayer and the keeping of a journal of experiences in contemplative prayer is very important so as to really appropriate what is being revealed and to allow oneself to be changed by it. This simple practice can become a transformative method of prayer in itself by following these four steps at the end of a period of silence in contemplative prayer:

(i) Begin by noticing and recording what has arisen for you in this period of prayer;

(ii) Recall and experience the emotions and feelings which have been aroused by what occurred and noting them also;

(iii) Seek the intuitive insight which comes from this experience and then formulate this insight into a seven-syllable affirmation;

(iv) Allow Jesus to say this affirmation to you, beginning with the use of your own name.

Heart: the level of feelings and emotions

The logic of the mind has not the vision of the heart. The heart is the emotional centre of the human person. It is the place from where human feelings emerge. It is also the meeting place between the human and the divine. In this sense, the heart, is the centre of the human person. The level of the heart must be engaged in prayer or else the emotional centre of one's being is not engaged. This means that feelings and emotions that arise in prayer must be allowed to arise without judgment or fear. Those which are dormant or repressed have to be first brought to conscious awareness in contemplative prayer before one can be brought by God's grace and gentleness into the deeper dimensions of the presence of God within oneself. By reason of the importance of integrating feelings and emotion, the way of prayer at Integritas places a particular emphasis upon music which is evocative and which serves to release emotions which are dormant and which need to be brought into a fuller awareness within oneself.

Soul: the level of intuition and apprehension of the divine

The soul, which can also be termed as the psyche, is the place of our being where our human recognition ends and our divine recognition leads to intuitions of eternity. It is the place of poetry, of intuition and of paradox. In this way of prayer at *Integritas*, different readings are chosen from spiritual writers and religious figures which express dimensions of the Christian revelation which draw the mind and heart into the unknowing knowing of God's eternal love for oneself, others and the whole of His Creation.

Spirit: complete surrender and abandonment to God

In contemplative prayer, to be brought by the grace of God into the transcendent level of spiritual strength, all of these earlier dimensions of one's being must be included and transcended. This opening to the place of spiritual 'strength' is not just a place of personal weakness and surrender to God but also a place where, paradoxically, personal identity is completely lost and yet experienced in the most radiant and clear way. This is the place of silence in prayer. The period of silence is, therefore, the key experience in the way of prayer at *Integritas*.

Jesus taught that we die to ourselves or we must "lose ourselves to find ourselves" (Mark 8:35). It was not the body self that has to "die" (which much of Christian history seemed to believe), but the "false self" which is a substitute for our deepest truth. Our attachment to our small, separate, false self must die to allow our True Self—our basic and unchangeable identity in God—to live fully and freely. The identity which we each have in the body, the mind, the heart and the soul must each be progressively included and transcended so that our entire being can then surrender to its deepest identity, of being one with God, not in identity, but in love.

Thomas Merton beautifully describes this in his book *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* as follows:

> In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the centre of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realisation that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream. . . . This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud. . . . I have the immense joy of being [hu] man, a member of a race in which God . . . became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now [that] I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realise this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun. . . . Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach,

the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed.

. . . At the centre of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God in us. It is so to speak His name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence, as our sonship. It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely. … I have no programme for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.[6]

6. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Doubleday: 1966), pp. 140-142.

III CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER IN THE CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL LIFE



Above: *Pilgrimage,* Eugene Conway, *Integritas.*

Saint Patrick's Breastplate

I bind unto myself today
The strong name of the Trinity
By invocation of the same,
The Three in One and One in Three.

I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to harken to my need,
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward,
The Word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.

Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger.
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

I bind unto myself the Name,
The strong Name of the Trinity;
By invocation of the same.
The Three in One, and One in Three,
Of whom all nature hath creation,
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.

I THE THREE ESSENTIAL SKILLS OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL LIFE

Christian faith makes a statement which contradicts the most basic claim of the world. In Western culture, we are taught that we have to earn our worth, that we have to achieve and acquire in order to be significant. The vision of the Gospels completely contradicts this. It says that our worth is a given and that we are irreplaceable in the eyes of God simply as we are. Our significance is a given before God because God is found within us. Ralph Waldo Emerson put it in this way : *"What lies behind us, and what lies before us, are small matters compared to what lies within us."*

As we go through life, we have to choose which of these two claims or values that we will believe in. If we believe in the claim of the world that we have to earn our worth, life is an unceasing struggle to acquire, to attain, to be acclaimed. This is existence but it is not life. For in the struggle of this existence, Wordsworth counsels that in *"getting and spending we lay waste our powers"*. The claim of the world admits no rest and we become exhausted. The world's demands can never be satisfied and we become disillusioned. Yet, even in following this path, we are constantly prompted from within that we are restless for something which we cannot find from the world. We long for something beyond time. St Augustine described our longing in this way: *"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts will be restless till they rest in thee."* In our youth, we are trained to succeed, to be acquisitive, to be successful. We are not educated in how to see ourselves as loved simply as we are or in how to express this love to others. This is the essence of the Christian vision. It is what is meant by Jesus when He says that He has come that we may have life to the fullest extent. (Jn 10:10)

The prayer of *St Patrick's Breastplate* expresses the truth that the Christian life is a pilgrimage into an ever-deepening relationship with the persons of the Holy Trinity. In his first Encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas* [7], Pope Leo teaches that the very heart of Christian faith is "the mystery of the living God, revealed in Jesus Christ, who, as a communion of Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is love itself in relationship, expressed in the mutual gift of self and in sharing with the world." [8] Pope Leo then proceeds to make the following statement in his Encyclical:

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7. Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV On Safeguarding The Human Person In the Time of Artificial Intelligence, 15 May 2026.
8. *Ibid* at paragraph 48.

> "Created for relationship, every human person is planned and willed by God to enter into communion with him, with others and with creation. Human dignity does not depend on a person's abilities, wealth or position in life, nor on the right or wrong choices made; instead, it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of his unfailing love." [9]

It must follow from this that God speaks to each one of us, uniquely, directly and constantly. God does not, however, speak to us in the way that we speak to each other. God does not use human language to speak to us. Instead, each of the persons of the Holy Trinity have a distinct and particular way of communicating to us.

From the writings of St Ignatius of Antioch, at the beginning of the second century, we can infer that he understood the Father to be somehow silence itself - silence that produces, from its infinite depth, a Word, the Son. St John of the Cross tells us that silence is God's first language. The language of the Father is ***silent stillness***. To truly listen to the Father, we need to practice **being still**. It is in the silence of our being that we experience the wonder of God's creation and begin to appreciate the unfathomable greatness of His infinity, genius and kindness to all of His creatures and creation.

The language of the Son is ***ordered desire***. Our deepest desire is to know and become like the person of Jesus Christ. To do so, we are called to practice **being reflective**. This enables us to reflect upon our many desires, sometimes conflicting, so that the deepest desire can then emerge from within our being and then clarify what we truly want to dedicate our lives to.

The language of the Holy Spirit is ***interior movement***. In order to listen to the movement of the Holy Spirit within our consciousness, we need to practice **being discerning**. Through our lives, we constantly experience conflicting movements within ourselves, calling us to follow different, and sometimes contradictory, directions. The Holy Spirit leads us inwardly in a particular way, a way which is ideal for us in terms of surrendering to God's love and in realising this love to the best that we can in our lives.

We need to continually practice, therefore, three skills in order to communicate with the persons of the Holy Trinity:

- Being still (listening to the Father's language of silent stillness)
- Being reflective (listening to the Son's language of ordered desire)
- Being discerning (listening to the Holy Spirit's language of interior movement)

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9. *Ibid* at paragraph 50.

Being Still

Be still and know that I am God.
Psalm 45 (46) : 10

To allow the Christian vision to take root in our lives, we have to first stop the unceasing clamour and agitation of the world. This prevents us from resting and being rooted in the deeper place within ourselves. Like the surface of a pond of water, to see the life of God within us, we need to be calmed if we are to see into our depth. We need to develop a practice that enables us to see within ourselves.

1. Select a place in your home where you can sit or lie down and be still. Let this be your place to be alone with God. You may find a prayer stool helpful or a mat. Similarly, choose a religious image that you find attractive for this place and place a candle before it if you wish. Alternatively, you may practice this exercise when you are not distracted by others and by one of the many forms of media and communication, such as when travelling, or when you are facing a stressful situation, like beginning an examination or awaiting an interview.

2. Allow your body to be as comfortable as possible. If you are seated, let your back be as upright as it can be while honouring the natural curvature of it. Become aware of all of your body and change your position so that it is not causing any ache or strain for you. The body must first be allowed to become relaxed and calmed.

3. Become aware of your breath – cool air breathing in, warm air breathing out. Simply stay with your breath. Do not try to change it but just simply notice it.

4. As this continues, become increasingly aware that you are not breathing, you are being breathed. The breath, the Spirit of God, the life force, is moving through you. Allow a word to emerge from within you that is in rhythm with each inhalation and exhalation, like the two syllables of the name of Jesus in Irish '*Iosa*' or in Latin '*Jesu*'.

We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us that they may see, it may be, their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet.

(W B Yeats, *Earth, Fire and Water,* in *The Celtic Twilight: Faerie and Folkllore* (1893).

Being Reflective

The unreflected life is not worth living. All of us need to draw away from our busy lives from time to time. We seek a space where we can think about the meaning of life and what really matters to us. (Socrates)

When one takes the time to practice being still, desires, thoughts of past experiences, emotions and insights will rise to the surface of one's mind. It is then important to reflect upon what is emerging from within oneself because it is through this inner experience that God speaks to you.

1. Find a journal that you can keep solely for the purpose of recording what emerges from within you when you are still.

2. During a period of stillness, various thoughts, recollections and emotions may surface. After a while, however, one particular recollection, emotion or insight will become predominant. Allow what one is experiencing to simply rise to the surface and try to name and describe the experience in writing exactly as it is, without making any judgment about it. This noticing and naming of what is arising from within oneself is the essence of reflection.

3. Once the practice of reflection takes place regularly, one will begin to notice two movements within oneself. One movement is of consolation when one recollects a good experience or has a feeling of confidence about the future that gives an inner sense of joy or happiness. The other movement is of desolation when one recollects an experience with anger, guilt or sorrow or has a sense of anxiety about the future.

4. Becoming aware of these inner experiences of consolation and desolation and noting them down in writing is very important because it is through them that God communicates with each one of us. God prompts us from within ourselves into living a truly authentic life and to be the person that one truly is, that is to realize one's unique vocation or divine purpose in life. God leads us in this way by helping us identify our deepest desire and emboldens us, through consolation, to follow and realise it.

The greatest sin for the Greeks was to be unaware of the inner eventfulness of your own life.

(Carl Jung)

Being Discerning

One is not born into the world to do everything
but to do something. (Henry David Thoreau)

The deepest desire of the human person is to allow one's life to be in service of the will of God, to realise one's unique vocation. George Bernard Shaw said that true joy in life is being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one. The difficulty, however, is that the power of the world attracts us with all sorts of lesser desires and ambitions based upon the false belief that we have to earn our worth or significance in life. The purpose of reflection is to discern the will of God for one's life, to realise one's unique vocation, through discerning between the experiences of consolation and desolation that arise within oneself. The following principles are at the heart of discernment :-

1. When we truly want to follow God's will, the desire from God emerges within us gently and consistently over time and leaves an aftertaste of peace and joy. The desire that is not from God arises within us suddenly, is very powerfully attractive and leaves an aftertaste of anxiety and disturbance.

2. When we do not want to follow God's will but choose instead to meet the demands of the world, the desires within us move in the opposite way. When we are orientated away from God, the desire that is not from God is gentle and seductive. The movement of God within oneself (often referred to as one's conscience) is disruptive and challenging as it tries to awaken oneself to how one's life is moving in the wrong direction.

3. Stay focused upon the deepest desire within oneself and will for the one thing. Being caught up in too many good aims will prevent you from realising the one thing that you alone are called to be and to do. Constantly ask what it is that you are called to be and do which will never be realised without you.

4. Make no decision when you are in a state of desolation and always keep the end in mind. The one who perseveres to the end will be saved. (Mt 24: 13)

I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world.

(Pope Francis)

II JOURNALING AND THE FORMULATION OF AFFIRMATIONS

Journaling is the practice of regularly recording in writing your thoughts, feelings and experiences to better understand your inner world. One of the foremost teachers of the benefits of journaling is Ira Progoff. In his work, he explains the importance of the formulation in words of the deepest insights which we receive so that their truth can be assimilated. In this way, a series of profound affirmations emerge which, through their repeated recollection and use, enable us to be freed from persisting negative and distorted perceptions of reality. The distorted vision is gradually broken by the repetition of the affirmation so that a new and life-giving perception of reality is freed within oneself. This occurs because the affirmation itself is drawn from the deep and truthful experiences of contemplative prayer.

The *"Mantra/Crystal"* is a specific exercise within the teaching of Ira Progoff [10] in how to use journaling to enable one's inner world to become more clear and transparent through crystallising one's thoughts. It involves selecting a seven-syllable phrase from your journal entries to capture an underlying insight which then acts as a focal point for an inner momentum of clarity and perception. The *"Mantra"* acts as a meditative tool or a recurring phrase that you can repeat to yourself, keeping your mind aligned with the emotional energy of the insight. The *"Crystal"* represents a crystallisation of your ideas. It serves to solidify raw, meandering feelings or journal entries into a single, concrete takeaway.

Essentially, the emergence of this affirmation or *"Mantra/Crystal"* occurs through the following steps being taken after one has been engaged in contemplative prayer:

(i) After the period of prayer has been completed, notice or recall, and then record, the significant occurrence during it. Sometimes, during the period of prayer, it may also be necessary to do this so that one is not distracted by having an anxiety that it will be forgotten.

(ii) Once this has been done, one then names and writes down the emotions and feelings which have been aroused.

(iii) After this has occurred, one then formulates the intuitive insight which comes from this experience.

(iv) Finally, one then shapes this insight into a seven-syllable affirmation.

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10. See *At a Journal Workshop - Writing to Access the Power of the Unconscious and Evolve Creative Ability* Ira Progoff, Ph.D., originally published in 1975 and subsequently published in a new edition by Penguin publishers.

The keeping of a journal of what emerges from the experience of contemplative prayer in this way has a number of benefits. Firstly, it allows a pattern to be recorded of what is emerging in one's contemplative life. This is of great benefit when one wishes to review what is the terrain of one's inner life. Secondly, a body of memories become recollected and recorded which are affirming and life-giving. These are invaluable in keeping one in touch with all that is life-giving and affirming in one's life. Thirdly, and consequent upon the recollection of these memories, a body of affirmations also gradually arise.

The benefit of the emergence of these written and recorded memories and affirmations is that their repeated recollection allows one to stay within a circle of consolation. Indeed, when a negative feeling such as anxiety or anger arises, one can be grateful for this feeling because it is reminder that one has forgotten all of the truthful and life-giving store of memories and affirmations which one has built up over time and of the importance of returning to them.

III PRAYING WITH EXPERIENCES FROM PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

> " … love is a teacher; but one must know how to acquire it, for it is hard to acquire, it is dearly bought, it is won slowly by long labour. For we must love not only occasionally, for a moment, but for ever."
>
> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Karamazov Brothers*

Each of us live with a fundamental resistance to seeing ourselves as loved or loveable. We are captured by a distorting vision of ourselves which causes us to fixate on what makes us inadequate or unattractive to others and which also becomes preoccupied with the faults or limitations of others. We need, therefore, to find a way to become freed from this fixation of always seeing only the 'black spot' on the white page of our entire lives and the lives of others.

The truth is that each one of us, as created by God, are loved by Him. This is the simple and most profound truth which Jesus puts before us when he says "Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15) We must find a way or a living practice which dismantles the distorted vision of ourselves and others.

> And did you get what
> you wanted from this life, even so?
> I did.
> And what did you want?
> To call myself beloved, to feel myself
> beloved on the earth.
>
> Raymond Carver, *Late Fragment*

One of the primary ways in which God communicates His love for each of us is through the experience of love from others. This can only be communicated to us, however, if we are trained to see it and if we are able to appropriate it. In order to do so, we need to be skilled in practising a way of prayer which meets both of these objectives.

A way of prayer which dismantles the distorted vision of oneself and others

This way of prayer must challenge the distorted perception of oneself over time by enabling one's whole person – body, mind, heart, soul and spirit – to be transformed by the truth which is revealed in loving encounters with significant others in our lives.

It also must be rooted in the tradition of Christian prayer so that it draws upon the wisdom which has emerged from multiple centuries and generations of Christian life to inform it. This can occur if the Benedictine method of *Lectio Divina* is employed, that is the progression from *lectio* (reading), to *meditatio* (meditating), to *oratio* (speaking), to *contemplatio* (contemplation).

1. Body *(preparation)*

As with all prayer, the starting point is to ensure that one's body is alert and yet comfortable. One should be seated in a position in which one's back is as straight as possible which also not being strained. This allows one's breath to be more full and also at ease. The position one takes should be adjusted so that there any strain or unease is removed or, at least, reduced as far as is possible before prayer begins.

2. Mind *(lectio)*

Begin by identifying a particular human quality or virtue which you need to appropriate. For instance, you may be experiencing anxiety, so that you need to experience reassurance. You may be preoccupied inwardly with anger or resentment, so that you need to experience forgiveness or detachment. Once you have identified this human quality or virtue which you need, recall an incident with another person which led to you experiencing it directly and profoundly. Give yourself time to remember this incident. Allow it to emerge. When it does emerge, let the recollection of it transform from being fleeting to being as detailed as possible. Writing down your emerging recollection of this experience will assist your memory of it to become increasingly clear in your mind. In this way, you are then recalling and reading the experience which you have had.

3. Heart *(meditatio)*

The next stage is to listen to the feelings which the recollection of this experience is provoking in you. Let these feelings emerge without any judgment or censoring of them. They are neither good nor bad. They do need, however, to be noticed and named. Writing these feelings down will also help in becoming aware of them and in letting them emerge. This essential part of this process allows the heart to become engaged through the free expression of emotions.

4. Soul *(oratio)*

After the emotions have been allowed to come to the surface of one's awareness, a quietening at a deeper level comes to the fore of one's awareness. It is as if the water in the well of one's consciousness gradually becomes more still, so that the essential truth at the base of it is revealed and spoken. At this stage, one is allowing the soul within oneself to speak, to say what is the deepest insight which is being said to you from the recollection of this experience. Again, give yourself as much time as you need for this insight or intuition to be spoken to you. Allow words to be chosen for it which express it in the clearest form so that it speaks to you in the very core of your being. This affirmation can be as poetic or factual as you wish. The critical feature of this intuitive response is that it speaks to you as profoundly as possible. It is particularly effective if you can allow the words of the affirmation which you have formulated to be expressed in seven syllables. So, for instance, the insight spoken to you could be *"My-love-for-you-is-stead-fast"* or *"A-bide-in-my-love-for-you"*.

5. Spirit *(contemplatio)*

Now, finally, imagine Jesus looking at you with complete love. Allow Him to say this affirmation to you beginning with your own name. Let Him say this truth to you again and again. When this period of prayer has ended, the negative or disturbing feeling which this affirmation responds to will, of course, emerge again. Treat this emergence, however, as an opportunity to remember God's love for you by saying this affirmation in response over and over again. In this way, the distorted vision of reality which one is trapped by becomes gradually deconstructed by experiencing the truth of God's love in the repeated saying of this affirmation. This affirmation has emerged from a felt experience of the love of God revealed in an encounter with another person which has been recalled and felt and from which the deepest insight has emerged from within oneself. Conversion is the response to the love of Jesus Christ who, saying one's name with an affective intensity never before seen, makes one discover who one is and allows one to be one's true self. His love for us generates a new relationship with all things.

IV TO BEAR WITNESS TO WAS HAS BEEN CONTEMPLATED

The definitive way of knowing whether the practice of contemplative prayer is fruitful is whether is becoming more conformed to Jesus Christ in how one is living one's life. As Pope Leo has stated, we are called " … to bear witness to what has been contemplated, to the encounter one has had with the God of life." [11] The following writings are offered simply as touchstones to provoke within oneself the question as to whether one is following this calling in response to the experience of contemplative prayer and to offer encouragement to do so. These pieces can also be dwelt upon, and absorbed, in the course of reflecting upon this question.

The new creation in Christ

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

2 Corinthians 5: 17-21

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 of these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12: 7, 12

The Mission of My Life

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

11. Pope Leo XIV, Address to the members of the St Andrew School of Evangelization, 29 August 2025

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.

(St John Henry Newman, *The Mission Of My Life,* Meditations and Devotions, 1893)

It is enough for one man to lay only one stone of so noble and grand an edifice; it is enough, more than enough for me, if I do so much as merely begin, what others may more hopefully continue. One only among the sons of men has carried out a perfect work, and satisfied and exhausted the mission on which He came. One alone has with His last breath said "*Consummatum est*." But all who set about their duties in faith and hope and love, with a resolute heart and a devoted will, are able, weak though they be, to do what, though incomplete, is imperishable. Even their failures become successes, as being necessary steps in a course, and as terms (so to say) in a long series, which will at length fulfil the object which they propose. And they will unite themselves in spirit, in their humble degree, with those real heroes of Holy Writ and ecclesiastical history, Moses, Elias, and David, Basil, Athanasius, and Chrysostom, Gregory the Seventh, St Thomas of Canterbury, and many others, who did most when they fancied themselves least prosperous, and died without being permitted to see the fruit of their labours.

(St John Henry Newman, *Christianity and Letters*, A lecture read in the School of Philosophy and Letters, November, 1854)

I have no idea where I am going

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave to face my perils alone.

(*Thoughts in Solitude*, Thomas Merton)

Experiencing the Spirit in actual life

The following reading is from the former German Jesuit, Karl Rahner. The Jesuit ethos is centred on "finding God in all things", which involves finding God's love - the Spirit - in all circumstances. The reading reflects on how God's love is made manifest through a person who faces the challenges of life with strength and decency, who follows the goodness of their own heart without needing a reason why. In Grandad's

case, that commitment to goodness gave rise to five loving children and fourteen grandchildren who he supported tirelessly. He was devoted to his family - to the continuation of life - and in life there is the Spirit. In other words, Grandad's new home, where has gone to rest with Granny, was always within him.

This passage is entitled *Experiencing the Spirit in Actual Life*:

How might we find the Spirit in the midst of everyday life?

Take someone who is anxious, who cannot make the good and the bad of his life fit together. He cannot see how he is to include God as an entry into the accounting, as one that makes the debit and the credit come out right. This man surrenders himself to the unknown, to the hope of an incalculable ultimate reconciliation of his existence in which he whom we call God dwells; he releases his unresolved existence, he lets go in trust and hope and does not know how this miracle of letting go occurs, and in letting go, his life is no longer his own possession.

There is a man who tries to love God although no response seems to come from God's silent inconceivability; a love that feels like a leap into groundless space.

There is a man who does his duty where it can be done, with the terrible feeling that he is doing something ludicrous which no one will thank him for.

There is a man who notices how the trickle of his life wanders through the wilderness of existence, apparently without aim, and with the fear of complete exhaustion. And yet he hopes, he knows not how, that this trickle will find the infinite expanse of the ocean.

One could go on like this for ever, perhaps even then without coming to that experience which for this or that man is the experience of the Spirit in his life. For every man makes that experience within the unique situation of their specific life. Every man! But he has to dig it out from under the rubbish of everyday experience, and must not run away from it where it begins to become legible, as though it were only an undermining of life's supposed certainty.

Let me repeat:

- where responsibility is accepted and borne where it has no apparent offer of success and advantage;

- where the leap into the darkness of death is accepted as the beginning of everlasting promise;

- where the sum of all accounts of life, which no one can calculate alone, is understood by an inconceivable Other as good, though it still cannot be "proven";

- where the bitter, deceptive and vanishing everyday world is withstood until the accepted end, and accepted out of a force whose ultimate source is still unknown to us;

- where one dares to pray into a silent darkness and knows that one is heard, although no answer seems to come back about which one might rationalise;

- where one lets oneself go unconditionally and experiences this capitulation as true victory;

- where a man entrusts all his knowledge and all his questions to the silent and all-inclusive mystery which precedes all knowledge;

- where we rehearse our own deaths in everyday life, and try to live in such a way as we would like to die, peaceful and composed;

there is God and his liberating grace. There we find what we Christians call the Holy Spirit of God. Then we experience something which is inescapable (even when suppressed) in life. There is the mysticism of everyday life, the discovery of God in all things; there is the sober intoxication of the Spirit, of which the Fathers and the liturgy speak which we cannot reject or despise, because it is real.

(Reflection by Joshua Treacy and read by him at the Requiem Mass of his grandfather, Patrick F Treacy, on the 31st of May 2025).

IV KEY WRITINGS CONCERNING CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER



Above: *Domimus Illuminatio Mea* (The Lord is my light) Ps 26 (27) :1,
The Garden, *Integritas.*

Morning Poem

Every morning
the world
is created.
Under the orange

sticks of the sun
the heaped
ashes of the night
turn into leaves again

and fasten themselves to the high branches–
and the ponds appear
like black cloth
on which are painted islands

of summer lilies.
If it is your nature
to be happy
you will swim away along the soft trails

for hours, your imagination
alighting everywhere.
And if your spirit
carries within it

the thorn
that is heavier than lead–
if it's all you can do
to keep on trudging–

there is still
somewhere deep within you
a beast shouting that the earth
is exactly what it wanted–

each pond with its blazing lilies
is a prayer heard and answered
lavishly,
every morning,

whether or not
you have ever dared to be happy,
whether or not
you have ever dared to pray.

(Mary Oliver)

I THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF CONTEMPLATION

The following is an extract of an address given by Rt Revd Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Synod of Bishops in Rome on 11 October 2012, whom he was invited to address by Pope Benedict XVI.

To be fully human is to be recreated in the image of Christ's humanity; and that humanity is the perfect human 'translation' of the relationship of the eternal Son to the eternal Father, a relationship of loving and adoring self-giving, a pouring out of life towards the Other. Thus the humanity we are growing into in the Spirit, the humanity that we seek to share with the world as the fruit of Christ's redeeming work, is a contemplative humanity. St Edith Stein observed that we begin to understand theology when we see God as the 'First Theologian', the first to speak out the reality of divine life, because 'all speaking about God presupposes God's own speaking'; in an analogous way we could say that we begin to understand contemplation when we see God as the first contemplative, the eternal paradigm of that selfless attention to the Other that brings not death but life to the self. All contemplating of God presupposes God's own absorbed and joyful knowing of himself and gazing upon himself in the trinitarian life.

To be contemplative as Christ is contemplative is to be open to all the fullness that the Father wishes to pour into our hearts. With our minds made still and ready to receive, with our self-generated fantasies about God and ourselves reduced to silence, we are at last at the point where we may begin to grow. And the face we need to show to our world is the face of a humanity in endless growth towards love, a humanity so delighted and engaged by the glory of what we look towards that we are prepared to embark on a journey without end to find our way more deeply into it, into the heart of the trinitarian life. St Paul speaks (in II Cor 3:18) of how 'with our unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord', we are transfigured with a greater and greater radiance. That is the face we seek to show to our fellow-human beings. And we seek this not because we are in search of some private 'religious experience' that will make us feel secure or holy. We seek it because in this self-forgetting gazing towards the light of God in Christ we learn how to look at one another and at the whole of God's creation.

In this perspective, contemplation is very far from being just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer, liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity that is capable of seeing the world and other subjects in the world with freedom – freedom from self-oriented, acquisitive habits and the distorted understanding that comes from them. To put it boldly, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.

II THE FIRST TASK IN LIFE IS PRAYER, POPE FRANCIS

During his daily Mass on the 8th of October 2013, Pope Francis said:

"The Lord tells us: 'the first task in life is this: prayer.' But not the prayer of words, like a parrot; but the prayer, the heart: gazing on the Lord, hearing the Lord, asking the Lord."

Pope Francis, General Audience, 16 October 2013

"Apostle", in fact, is a Greek word meaning "sent", "dispatched". An Apostle is a person who has been given a mandate, he is sent to do something and the Apostles were chosen, called and sent out by Jesus to continue his work, that is to pray - which is the primary job of an apostle - and, second, to proclaim the Gospel. This is important, because when we think of the Apostles we might think that they were only sent out to proclaim the Gospel, to do many good deeds. However, a problem arose in the early times of the Church because of how much the Apostles had to do, and that is why they instituted deacons, so that there would be more time for the Apostles to pray and proclaim the Word of God. When we think of the Successors of the Apostles, the bishops - this includes the Pope for he too is a bishop - we must ask ourselves if this successor of the Apostles prays first and then proclaims the Gospel: this is what it means to be an Apostle and this is what makes the Church apostolic.

The Church is apostolic because she is founded on the preaching and prayer of the Apostles, on the authority that was entrusted to them by Christ himself. St Paul writes to the Christians of Ephesus: "You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being a cornerstone" (2:19-20); that is, he compares Christians to living stones that form an edifice that is the Church, and this edifice is founded on the Apostles, like columns, and the cornerstone that carries it all is Jesus himself. Without Jesus the Church cannot exist! Jesus is the foundation of the Church, the foundation! The Apostles lived with Jesus, they listened to his words, they shared his life, above all they were witnesses of his Death and Resurrection. Our faith, the Church that Christ willed, is not based on an idea, it is not based on a philosophy, it is based on Christ himself. And the Church is like a plant that over the long centuries has grown, has developed, has borne fruit, yet her roots are planted firmly in Him and that fundamental experience of Christ which the Apostles had, chosen and sent out by Jesus, reaching all the way to us. From this little plant to our day: this is how the Church has spread everywhere in the world.

Pope Francis, General Audience, 14 April 2021

Everything in the Church originates in prayer and everything grows thanks to prayer. When the Enemy, the Evil One, wants to fight the Church, he does so first by trying to drain her fonts, preventing them from praying. For example, we see this in certain groups who agree on moving ecclesial reforms forward, changes in the life of the Church... There are all the organisations, there is the media that informs everyone... But prayer is not evident, there is no prayer. "We need to change this; we need to make this decision that is a bit tough...". The proposal is interesting. It is interesting, only with discussion, only through the media. But where is prayer? Prayer is what opens the door to the Holy Spirit, who inspires progress. Changes in the Church without prayer are not changes made by the Church. They are changes made by groups. And when the Enemy - as I said - wants to fight the Church, he does it first of all by trying to drain her fonts, preventing prayer and [encouraging] these other proposals to be made. If prayer ceases, for a little while it seems that everything can go ahead like always - by inertia - but after a short time, the Church becomes aware that she has become like an empty shell, that she has lost her bearings, that she no longer possesses her source of warmth and love …

And this is the Church's essential task: to pray and to teach how to pray. To transmit the lamp of faith and the oil of prayer from generation to generation. The lamp of faith that illuminates fixes things as they truly are, but it can only go forward with the oil of prayer. Otherwise, it is extinguished …

Without faith everything collapses; and without prayer faith is extinguished. Faith and prayer together. There is no alternative. For this reason, the Church, as the house and school of communion, is the house and school of faith and prayer.

III ADORATION AS THE KEY TO MENTAL HEALTH, ROMANO GUARDINI

In his book on the Apocalypse of St John, Romano Guardini devoted a chapter to the topic of adoration. In it, he reflects on the nature of God and the act of adoration as the proper response to our Creator. Adoration becomes an act of the mind embracing truth, of the will directing us to our true beatitude, and of the body in kneeling. Adoration for Guardini establishes the true order of things. Guardini's writes:

In adoration angels bow before their divine Lord, the creature before his Creator. But how and why? Not as a man who journeys on the sea in a frail boat and is compelled to bow before a storm. Not as a physician who has fought for the life of a man and is obliged to acknowledge himself helpless before the advance of disease. In both cases this would mean bowing to a superior force. But certainly not adoration.... The angels, the elders, the four living creatures prostrate themselves before God for a very different reason, not only because He is all-powerful, but because He is worthy.

This thought it is which determines our relation to God, and we must understand it well. We are as nothing before Him, nevertheless we have the dignity of our personality. Not from ourselves, but from Him. Yet a dignity which is really ours. And it places an obligation upon us. Before a God who were only power, we could not bow low, we could only submit. But God is not mere power, He is mind as well. As great as is God's power, just so great is His truth. As perfect as is His sovereignty, just so perfect is His justice. As truly as He is real, just as truly is He holy.... The hymn of the Mass, called the Gloria from its opening word, contains an expression which at first may appear meaningless. "We thank Thee for Thy great glory." What does that mean? Do we not thank a person for what he gives, rather than for what he is"? But the words express the thought exactly. That God exists and that He is what He is constitutes no mere necessity, or fact, but a grace and a blessing. Yes, it is true. we are permitted to thank Him for His mere being.

And here lies the root of adoration. It is the bowing down of all creation before God, not only because He is all-powerful, but because He is worthy as well.

A great and blessed mystery is adoration. In it man fulfills his ultimate obligation to God and at the same time safeguards his own soundness, for it is the instrument of truth. Adoration is not merely all act by which we reach out to the knowledge of God, but a movement of man's whole being. The very foundation, the pillar, the arch, the essence of all truth is -- God is God; man is man ...

Adoration is the safeguard of our mental health, of our inmost intellectual soundness. But what do we mean by that? Can the mind of a man fall ill? It can indeed.... Illness of the spirit finds entrance only in so far as it reaches the mind's seat of health, of soundness, namely, truth and justice. A man's mind falls ill when he relinquishes his hold on truth-not by lying, though he lie often, for in that case the injury to the spirit can be repaired by contrition and the renewal of good will - but by an inward revolt from truth. True illness of the mind and spirit sets in when a man no longer cherishes truth but despises it, when he uses it as a means to his own ends, when, in the depths of his soul, truth ceases to be to him the primary, the most important concern. In such a case, a man may not appear ill, indeed he may be functioning efficiently and successfully. But the order of his being is deranged. The scales with which he measures are out of balance. He no longer distinguishes between ends and means. He can no longer tell the destination from the way. He has lost the inner certainty of direction. He lacks answers to those final questions-why? For what purpose? And his whole being is affected.

What has all this to do with adoration? In fact everything. For the man who worships God will never risk losing his balance entirely. Whoever adores God in his heart and mind and also, when the moment arises, in actual practice, is being truly protected. He may make many mistakes, he may be deeply bewildered and shaken, but in the last analysis the order and direction of his life are secure.

We would do well to see this clearly and to act accordingly. But our resolve to practise adoration should not be simply one among many good resolutions as, for example, to keep one's word, or to do one's work properly. For here we arc concerned with the very centre and measure of being. Everything depends upon whether or not adoration has its place in our lives. Whenever we adore God, something happens within and about us. Things fall into true perspective. Vision sharpens. Much that troubles us rights itself. We will distinguish better between the essential and the non-essential. The end and the means, the destination and the way. We discriminate more clearly between good and evil. The deceptions which affect daily life, the falsifications of standards are, to some extent at least, rectified.

As has been said, we must make a practice of adoration. The important thing is not to wait until obligation requires it, which might happen seldom enough; if we limit ourselves to such occasions, they would grow less and less frequent. Religious acts must be practised if they are to grow into strong habits. God desires our adoration and we need it for our soul's health.

Whenever possible we should kneel. Kneeling is the adoration of the body. And in kneeling, we share the posture of the four-and-twenty elders who represent all creation in adoration before God. Then we should be still, cast aside all unrest of body and mind, be quiet in our whole being.

At the moment of adoration we are there for God. And for God alone. This very detachment from the oppression of care, from the cravings of the will and from fear is in itself adoration, and floods the soul with truth. Then say: God is here. I am before Him as are those forms in the vision, bowing down before His throne. I cannot see Him, for everything here is still in the obscurity of time, still earthly. But I know by faith that He is here. He is God; I am His creature. He made me; in Him I have my being. And now there is probably no need to write further. The one concerned must look up iota the face of God-His God-and tell Him what his heart bids him say.

Then he will experience for himself how really blessed and healing adoration is. So much that has been tormenting subsides. So many anxieties show themselves to be groundless. Desires and fears become regulated. Man gathers strength to meet the demands which life imposes upon him, is fortified at the very core of his being, and takes a firmer hold upon truth.

Man's adoration of God, here and now, with the limited vision possible in time, has a beauty all its own. It anticipates that stage when all will be clear and comprehensible. For whenever man adores God, the new creation breaks through. Is this not a wonderful thing to achieve? Wonderful, too, that a man can give glory and honor to God even while that same God is permitting Himself the appearance of weakness, and that a man may keep faith with Him Who, for the sake of truth, allows Himself to be dishonored; to recognise that here and now God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power. Perhaps the greatest experience that can come to a man is that he, a transient being, still caught in the confusion of this life, can give what is due to a God who is unintruding, can erect a throne for Him in his own heart, and, for his own part at least, establish the true order of things.

IV CONTEMPLATION AS EXPERIENCED BY THOMAS MERTON

We have to travel in the void and be perfectly happy about it.

Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*

Contemplation is more than a consideration of abstract truths about God, more even than affective meditation on the things we believe. It is awakening, enlightenment and the amazing intuitive grasp by which love gains certitude of God's creative and dynamic intervention in our daily life. Hence contemplation does not simply 'find' a clear idea of God and confine Him within the limits of that idea, and hold him there as a prisoner to whom it can always return. On the contrary, contemplation is carried away by Him into His own realm, His own mystery and His own freedom. It is pure and virginal knowledge, poor in concepts, poorer still in reasoning, but able by its very poverty and purity, to follow the Word 'wherever He may go'.

Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*

The message of hope the contemplative offers you…is not that you need to find your way through the jungle of language and problems that today surround God: but whether you understand or not, God loves you, is present to you, lives in you, dwells in you, calls you, saves you, and offers you an understanding and light which are like nothing you ever found in books or heard in sermons. The contemplative has nothing to tell you except to reassure you and say that, if you dare to penetrate your own silence and risk the sharing of that solitude with the lonely other who seeks God through you, then you will truly recover the light and the capacity to understand what is beyond words and beyond explanations because it is too close to be explained: it is the intimate union in the depth of your own heart of God's spirit and your own secret inmost self, so that you and He are in all truth One Spirit.

Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love; Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns (Letters I).*

The contemplative does not set out to achieve a kind of intuitive mastery of history, or of man's spirit, or of the things of God. He seeks the centre of his own living truth, and there all he needs to perceive of these other mysteries is granted to him at the moment when he needs it. If he needs nothing, nothing is granted. And if nothing is granted, then nothing is desired. The wisdom of the contemplative is then, not the wisdom of a man who needs to possess knowledge and learning (though he may be a learned man). It is the wisdom of a man who has forgotten wisdom, and who seeks to possess nothing because he needs nothing. All that he needs comes to him from God, even before he begins to need it.

Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience*

The true contemplative is not the one who prepares his mind for a particular message that he wants or expects to hear, but who remains empty because he knows that he can never expect or anticipate the word that will transform his darkness into light. He does not demand light instead of darkness. He waits on the Word of God in silence.

Thomas Merton, *The Climate of Monastic Prayer*

A Biographical Note On The Contemplative Life Of Thomas Merton

In 1941 at the age of twenty-six, Merton sought refuge in the Trappist monastery of Our Lady of Gethsemani, Kentucky, "in revolt against the meaningless confusion of a life in which there was so much activity, so much movement, so much useless talk, so much superficial and needless stimulation" that he could not remember who he was. For the next half of his life he learned a new way of being, supported by a rhythmic pattern of daily prayer that aided the recovery and discovery of a new self, his true self, drawn up like a jewel from seas of confusion, restlessness, and banality.

What Thomas Merton discovered in the Abbey of Gethsemani he desired to share with the whole world: a deeply experiential life in God that is the gift of our creation, the very reason we were born, a grace available to everyone. It meant for him "the search for truth and for God…finding the true significance of my life and my right place in God's creation." Merton taught that the contemplative journey toward the indwelling and all encompassing God is made on the existential pathways of one's own self. The search for the One is the discovery of the Other in a transformative encounter with the divine image and presence at the core of our true self.

Yet, as Merton faithfully reminded us, everyone is shadowed by a false or illusory self who wants to exist outside the reach of God's will and love, outside of reality and life. This counterfeit and evanescent creation is dedicated to the narcissist cult of its own shadow in self-orbiting liturgies of egocentric adulation, ordering all things in its universe around itself. Over and over Merton warns us that the only true joy on earth is to escape from the prison of this disturbing stranger who occupies our psyche, and enter by love "into union with the Life Who dwells and sings within the essence of every creature and in the core of our own souls." To live in this conscious communion is what Merton means by contemplative life that plants in us something of heaven.

Contemplative life, therefore, begins with the recovery of one's natural unity, a reintegration of our compartmentalised, colonised, traumatised, technologically entranced, and workaholic being. We must gather our fragmented selves from our distracted, exhausted, noise polluted, and frenzied existence, so that when we say "I" there is actually a unified human person present to support that pronoun. But this is only the preliminary work of salvation, because the deep transcendent self is a divine creature, shy and wild, secret and spontaneous, preferring the silence and humility of

a pure heart in which to make its mysterious appearance. This true self "must be drawn up like a jewel from the bottom of the sea," by a steady work of descent to recover the immortal diamond in whose every facet is reflected the invisible face of God.

Contemplation, then, is a gradual interiorising of consciousness, a going inside to quiet our minds, calm our hearts, and move toward deeper levels of our own nature. It is aided by regular intervals of silence and solitude, stillness and serenity that allow our lives to be listening to the ever speaking mystery of God. Merton reminds us that while our existence is noisy, our essential being is silent: beneath the clamour of our chaotic lives there is a resonant ground of silence. In this rich silence – the silence of God – we taste the sweetness of our own souls, the peace of our own hearts. Merton encourages us to take every opportunity to feed on this silence, soak it into our bones so that we might hear the divine One say in us: "I am." The contemplative discovers that the secret of our identity is hidden and revealed in the love and mercy of God. There is nothing else worth living for, "only this infinitely peaceful love Who is beyond words, beyond emotion, beyond intelligence."

In this sudden awakening, we come to realise that all of reality is swimming in meaning, charged with the glory of divinity. More intimately, we discover that love is our authentic nature, our true destiny, a personal revolution that energises a certain special way of being alive. It is for this self-transcendence and communion that we exist, becoming the likeness of the One whose image we are: radiant centres of reconciling love, extending the circumference of mercy and care throughout the earth. In that likeness we become peacemakers, justice builders, caretakers of creation, and witnesses to the sufficiency of the next breath and heartbeat ... in a world gone mad for money and power and things. Such contemplative traction aids us in resisting the vertigo of our times, which would pull us of off course in the various storms of history.

In Merton's teaching, contemplation is the practice of supreme mindfulness and care. Yet, paradoxically, its fruit is a serene carelessness, as we are progressively freed from self-preoccupation and neurotic concern; we are allowed to live without the paralyzing anxiety that would extend its rule to our souls. There is no need for harried, hurried vexation. God is hidden within, and all things that are not a means of bringing the heart to this tranquility in the divine will are useless. This is the fruit of contemplative praise that arises from the hidden ground of love: the discovery of God in the discovery of our true self, and in that love which is the reality of both God and self, to embrace the world.

[From *A Book of Hours Thomas Merton* edited by Kathleen Deignan, illustrations by John Giuliani, with a foreword by James Finley, Sorin Books, Notre Dame, Indiana, (2007) at pp. 16 and 24-27.]

Life without undue care

When Thomas Merton gave a final talk as the Master of Novices on the 20th of August 1965, it was entitled *A Life Without Care*. [12] In it, he explained how and why we burden ourselves with 'cares' about our jobs, our lives, our families and our relationships - indeed, how and why we allow ourselves to be "devoured by care", going over things in our minds, piling reflection on reflection until we are sick to our stomachs.

"This is care, see!" Merton exclaims: "And we are here in this monastery to get rid of it. And we get rid of it by going through it. Since God offers to take the care of our affairs upon himself, let us once and for all abandon them to his infinite wisdom that we may never more be occupied with anything but Him and his interests…

God asks us to live in such a way that He will do the thinking about us so that we don't have to think about ourselves. And as we get on in the spiritual life, we have to learn to do that with matters of virtue. Caussade says you should reach the point where you don't think of your own virtue at all - you just do what you do, and he disposes of the outcome.

This presupposes, of course, that you are practising some virtues and leading a halfway decent life. This is not easy because we are all prone to worry about a lot of things, but if you are going to live the solitary life, you must learn how to forget yourself and simply enjoy it.

… We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time. And this is not just a nice story - it is true. We maybe cannot see this, but if we abandon ourselves to Him, we see it sometimes…

And what is it that makes the world opaque? It's 'care'! Because everything becomes opaque in so far as we regard it as individual objects. We become concerned with them and fail to see God - that is to say, the larger - infinite inter-connected forces at play. [Our lives] become this particular problem or thing - this day I have to live through - this job or challenge I have - this particular requirement or person… It comes to me as 'Something wrong here' in a big opaque package, and I spend my time opening it up. But after the event or when we come to know the disreputable person or challenge, we find there is nothing there… ".

[From *The Way of Thomas Merton A Prayer Journey Through Lent* Robert Inchausti, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (2022) at pp. 92-94.]

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12. Thomas Merton's final talk as novice master (20 August 1965). A recording is also available at https://soundcloud.com/greg-hillis/thomas-merton-a-life-free-from-care.

V CONTEMPLATION IS A CERTAIN SORT OF SEEING

JAMES ALISON

I take it that contemplation is a certain sort of seeing. I take it from [René] Girard that we always learn to see through the eyes of another.

The desire of another directs our seeing and makes available to us what is to be seen. I also take it that when we talk about contemplation in a Christian context, we are talking about quite a specific sort of seeing. We are talking about learning how to be given our desire through the eyes of another. The other is Jesus, the Word of God. So, we are being taught to look at what is through the eyes of the One who reveals the mind of God. That is, to be possessed by the mind of God ourselves.

By being taught to receive ourselves and all that is around us through the eye and desire of God, our 'self' becomes an incarnation of that desire, and we start to speak words formed by the un-hypnosis, the awakening desire of the Creator. In other words: we are being taught to be loving lookers at what is by the One who is calling into being and loving what is. We are being taught to see and delight in what is by the One whose delighting is what gives it, and us, to be.

[Extract from a presentation by James Alison, prepared for a day retreat with Sebastian Moore on *Contemplation in a World of Violence: Girard, Merton, Tolle*, Downside Abbey, Bath, 3 November 2001.[13]]

13. See http://girardianlectionary.net/res/alison_contemplation_violence.htm



Above: *Homecoming,* Trini Kenny, *Integritas.*

Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is true,
whatever is noble,
whatever is right,
whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is admirable –
if anything is excellent or praiseworthy –
think about such things.

(Phil 4 : 8)

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand. Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5: 1-2, 5.

The life of prayer consists in being habitually in God presence and being aware of it, in living in a relationship with God as we live our customary relationships in life.

Pope Benedict XVI

At some thoughts one stands perplexed, especially at the sight of men's sin, and wonders whether one should use force or humble love. Always decide to use humble love. If you resolve on that once and for all, you may subdue the whole world. Loving humility is marvellously strong, the strongest of all things, and there is nothing else like it.

(Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Karamazov Brothers*, Book Six: The Russian Monk.)

The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are
persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 5 : 3-10)

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of
the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.



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Contact Details:
Linda Rainsberry and Patrick Treacy
Tel : (353) (0) 87 293 6951 | 227 0969
E : enquiries@integritas.ie
www.integritas.ie

Ennisnag
Stoneyford
County Kilkenny
R95 CR7W
Republic of Ireland