

*Living Justly, Loving Tenderly and
Walking Humbly with our God*
MICAHAH 6:8

Living Justice



Kildare
MINISTRIES



Brigid

Isaiah 2: 2-4

In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.



Brigid's Blessing

Music composed by Sr. Genevieve Sheedy csb,

St. Brigid Mary of Ireland
ask for us all today,
the courage to do God's bidding
whatever the world may say.
The grace to be strong and valiant
the grace to be firm and true
the grace to be faithful always
to God, God's Mother and you.

Living Justice: **Brigid**

Brigid of Kildare lived in the twilight period of the Celtic world coming under the influence of Christianity. We see in this liminal space a high degree of crossover between the Celtic goddess Brigit and the Christian St Brigid – it is almost certain that the early Irish converts conflated the saint with the goddess and regarded the saint as retaining and manifesting certain qualities and functions of the goddess such as healing and fertility. What really matters however, is the unique contribution of St Brigid as a powerful force in promoting justice, charity and good-living.

The Early Life of St Brigid (Cogitosus) expresses two fundamental qualities of Brigid: her great faith and her extraordinary charity. The vast majority of this book details her concern for the poor and oppressed and much of her life story is concerned with issues of ordinary domestic life, transformed by her deep faith. Brigid was born into the household of Dubthach, a noble lord with considerable property. Her mother Broicsech was a slave of Dubthach's household, and so Brigid was in a unique position to be able to empathise with the plight of the oppressed while having the resources to respond with charity. She became famous for her generosity towards the poor which was considered excessive by those members of the household whose goods she gave away.

One of the best-known stories associated with Brigid is that of her giving away her father's sword to a poor man so that he could barter it for food to feed his family. The story is that Brigid's father took her to the King of Leinster so that she might work as a servant. He left her outside in his chariot together with his prized possession, a jewelled sword. Whilst she was waiting outside, a beggar suffering from leprosy came by. Brigid, seeing his need, gave away the jewelled sword much to the annoyance of her father. Thus, a sword- a weapon of war, was transformed into a life-giving instrument, turning a 'sword into a ploughshare.'

The well-known icon of Brigid depicts the placing of her foot on the jewelled sword, generally interpreted as indicating her desire to promote peace and non-violence rather than fighting which frequently broke out between warring clans in her time.

It challenges us all today to adopt an active stance of non-violence in the face of conflict.



Nano

Mark 10: 17-21

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother." ' He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'

'In Nano Nagle's childhood years she was fashioned and formed in a secure loving Christian family home amidst the beauty of the landscape of Ballygriffin, Co Cork. In this environment, Nano's respect for the dignity of people and human rights was rooted, and her appreciation of the beauty and wonder of creation nurtured daily. In one of her letters she writes: "If I could be of any service in saving souls in any part of the globe, I would gladly do all in my power."

'As an adult, the city of Cork of her day where she ministered was marked with violence and bloodshed – often caused by the ignorance of the many and the oppression of those in power. Her vision was of empowering the disenfranchised through education which in turn would lead to a more just and peaceful society where all could flourish and fulfil their potential. Today, those who walk in the footsteps of Nano are at the frontline of human rights activity, tackling inequality, creating awareness and taking action to influence global policy.

'Protecting the planet and promoting sustainability is a core part of ensuring that the dignity of those living on earth can be maintained. It is also a way of demonstrating respect to the earth and cosmos that God has created for the human race.'

Nano Nagle text sourced from nanonagle.org/justice-peace-integrity-of-creation/

The following excerpts taken from: Consedine, M. Raphael: One Pace Beyond: the Life of Nano Nagle pp210-213

'If I could be of service in saving souls in any part of the world, I would willingly do all in my power.'

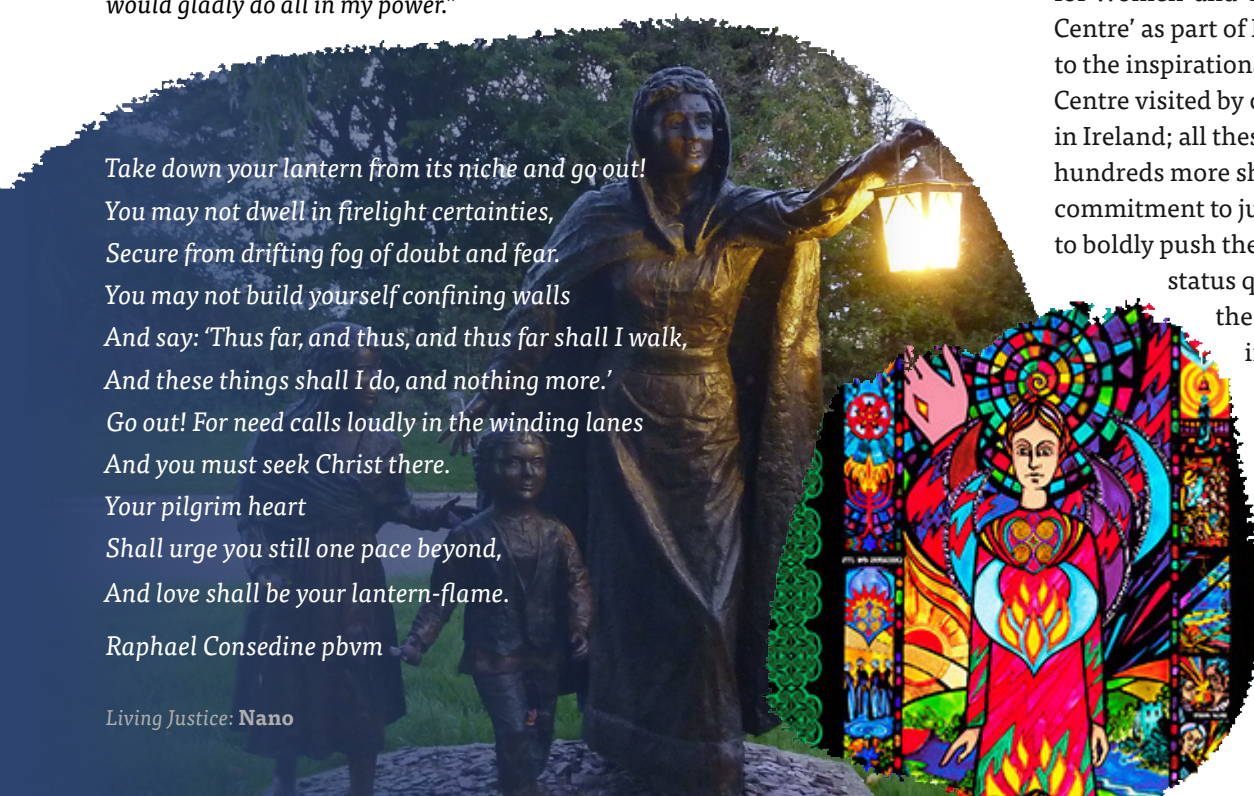
Nano is a 'Champion of freedom of thought in a minority –dominated society; fearless upholder of the church's right to direct the teaching of its children; foundress of a great religious family; pathfinder for many other Irish Congregations...' these are all titles attributed to Nano Nagle.

21 years after the death of Nano Nagle in 1784, after the final solemn seal of the Church's approval of the Congregation of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary was approved by the Vatican–growth was small but definitive and groups soon departed for Newfoundland, America, Australia and New Zealand.

'In 1866, sisters left for Tasmania, to Melbourne in 1873, then in the '90's to NSW, Queensland and Western Australia.' The 'Unknown Southland' of Nano's girlhood was to have its hundred centres from which the work would be carried far.'

Now, the spirit of Nano Nagle is present and active all over the world. From our more familiar 'Wellsprings for Women' and 'Presentation Family Centre' as part of Kildare Ministries to the inspirational Cork Migrant Centre visited by our own pilgrims in Ireland; all these missions and hundreds more share the same commitment to justice and the desire to boldly push the boundaries of the status quo and challenge the conventional institutions and thinking of our time – to go 'one pace beyond.'

*Take down your lantern from its niche and go out!
You may not dwell in firelight certainties,
Secure from drifting fog of doubt and fear.
You may not build yourself confining walls
And say: "Thus far, and thus, and thus far shall I walk,
And these things shall I do, and nothing more.'
Go out! For need calls loudly in the winding lanes
And you must seek Christ there.
Your pilgrim heart
Shall urge you still one pace beyond,
And love shall be your lantern-flame.
Raphael Consedine pbvm*



Daniel

Matthew 22:36-40

Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?'He said to him, '“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

Daniel Delany was born in Paddock, Ireland, in 1747. His parents were relatively well-to-do but when his father died young Daniel spent the rest of his childhood with his two aunts in the nearby village of Mountrath. It was here too that the parish priest, Father Denis Lawlor, influenced Daniel's decision to enter the priesthood. The public practice of the Catholic Faith in Ireland was outlawed by British Law during these times. Therefore, Daniel was

smuggled out of Ireland to France in order to receive his priestly education. After excelling in his studies, Daniel was ordained a priest in 1770 and spent some six years in St. Omer, France, until his return to Ireland in 1776.

On his return to his native land he found that the condition of the Catholics had worsened considerably during his absence. Poverty and hunger had turned the country into a land of misery and lawlessness. Drunkenness, fighting, and the lack of religious observance in a Catholic country led the young priest to seek to return to his successful career in France. It was the pleas of his mother that originally kept him in his native Ireland, and over time he became deeply immersed in the needs of his local community. As he took up his duties as assistant priest in the parish of Tullow, he began to realise that the cause of much of the evil of


the day was the lack of education among the people. Determined that the Irish Catholics deserved better, he started Sunday schools for the children of his parish.

In 1783, at the young age of thirty-six, Father Delany was consecrated a Bishop, and did much to better the conditions under which the people of his diocese lived. After organising many public religious functions which were still illegal under British law, Bishop Delany finally took steps to secure for his Sunday schools a reliable source of catechists: he founded two religious congregations. On February 1st, 1807, he received the first women to start the Sisters of Saint Brigid (Brigidines) and a year later on February 2nd, he received four men to start the Brothers of Saint Patrick (Patricians).

Maxims Attributed to Bishop Delany

- Love God and live together in peace and charity.
- The Cross is the sure way to find Christ.
- The force of love will convert the hard wood of the Cross into a bed of roses.
- Do everything in a spirit of holy love and you will not find your hands empty at journey's end.
- It is not, my dear children, God's consolations but God himself you should seek.
- What you are those who come after you will be: the fountain should itself be pure in order to have the stream pure.
- From every seed sown and cultivated by pure love we shall be sure to reap a harvest of endless glory.
- Never entertain yourself or others in speaking of another's faults or failings.
- You should be no less careful to draw a veil over these than if they actually belonged to yourself.
- For you holiness will not consist in doing great actions, but in doing your least actions with great purity of intention and a genuine desire to please God.
- By performing the ordinary duties of your day well you will perfect yourself, and your day will be full of merit and good works.

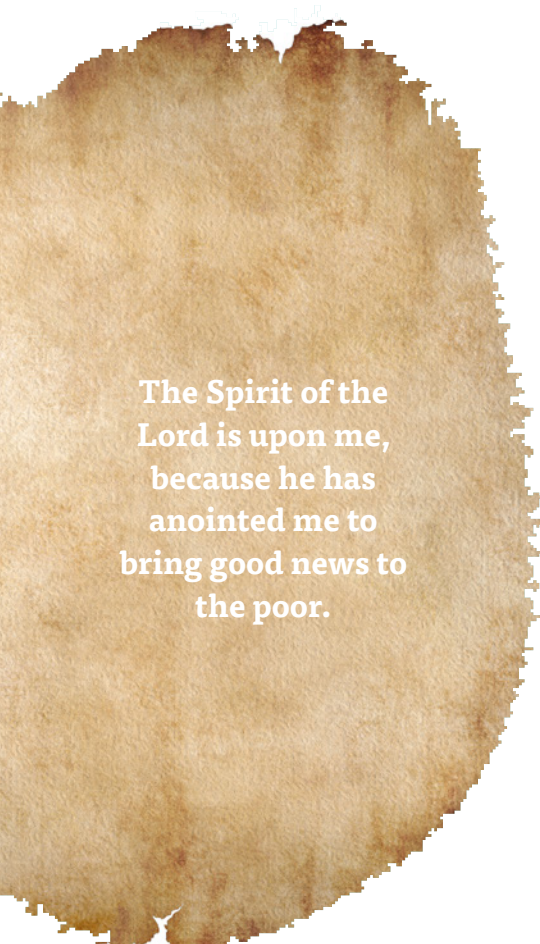




The liberating mission of Jesus

Luke 4:16-30

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free."



The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

For Christians the call to faith and its consequences provide a foundation for living rooted in the liberating mission of Jesus. Discipleship is greater than a 'Jesus and me' relationship; it entails both 'call', being drawn to Jesus, and 'response', being sent in mission. Radical discipleship calls for deep commitment and a movement beyond one's comfort zone to an encounter with marginalised people and broken lives. In so doing it invokes the potential for personal transformation – the call to discipleship is almost always disturbing, both to the individual and the status quo.

From the time of the early Christians a call to discipleship has led to a reorientation – a turning away from certain attitudes and turning towards Jesus and his teaching. Jesus did not love people in general but people in particular and he undertook his ministry through encountering specific people and the stories of their lives, inviting them to transformation and liberation.

Jesus was profoundly imbued with the sentiments of the Hebrew Scriptures which he read and studied, and the message of the prophets was central to his ministry, as seen in Luke 4:16-18. The Last Judgement scene of Matthew's gospel (Mt 25:31-46) echoes the Old Testament belief that God is intensely concerned with the wellbeing of the poor and marginalised, so much so that Jesus declares that whatever we do to the poor, we do to him. Our neglect of the needy is something he takes personally.

Jesus chose to be an outsider, identifying with other outsiders without neglecting the people of Israel. At the same time he was neither uncritical nor impartial; his partiality extended intentionally to every person or class excluded by the establishment – this was the heart of the liberating mission of Jesus. He rejected the type of religiosity that ignored social responsibility and the plight of the distressed, unmasking the lie that hierarchy was part of the 'Divine Plan' and calling for a social and religious revolution. Hence, true Christianity in the image of Jesus will always be countercultural. Jesus disturbed the status quo and challenged the complacent. His ministry was unexpected as he dismissed the notion that some people are more worthy than others. In essence, his message was one of unification and reconciliation, outreach and inclusion.

Through the mission and ministry of Jesus we do not have a blueprint or manual of how to build a perfect society. Rather, we are called to seriously consider his words and deeds and to use our energies to work out how we might truly care for others. Catholic Social Teaching provides us with a map for navigating this path. Broadly speaking, Catholic Social Teaching sums up the teachings of the Church on social justice issues. It promotes a vision of a just society that is grounded in the Bible and in the wisdom gathered from experience by the Christian community as it has responded to social justice issues through history.



The four core principles of Catholic Social Teaching are:

Human Dignity

We believe that every person is made in God's image, every person has inherent dignity and every life is sacred. The innate dignity of each person is the foundation and inspiration of our vision for a just and compassionate world. We see the image of God in every person, no matter their circumstance.

The women, men and children most vulnerable to extreme poverty and injustice should not be hindered from living a life equal to their dignity.

The Common Good

We believe that humans are not only sacred but social, and that we experience the fullness of life in our relationships with others. Working towards the common good requires a commitment from each of us to respect the rights and responsibilities of all people. We believe every person is entitled to share in society's resources. Every person is also responsible for sharing our society's resources – the common good - with others. This extends beyond our personal interests, and beyond national borders, to our one global human family.

Solidarity

Solidarity requires that we see another person as a neighbour, a fellow human who is equal in dignity.

Solidarity means recognising the responsibilities we have to each other, and taking an active role in helping others attain their full potential. This is more than just a feeling. It drives us to action. We are called by the principle of solidarity to take the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) to heart, and to express this understanding in how we live and interact with others, not as a matter of charity, but of justice. Solidarity makes it impossible for us to look away from the injustices that our sisters and brothers experience.

Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity means that all people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. These decisions should be made at the appropriate level, by the people most affected by the decision.

It also means that those in positions of authority have the responsibility to listen to everyone's voice, and make decisions according to the common good. Partnerships and collaboration amongst groups, including all levels of government and social institutions, are necessary to work toward a shared, unified vision for society.

Out of the four core principles flow the principles of the Preferential Option for the Poor, Participation, Economic Justice and Care for our Common Home, among others. These principles are responsive to particular social issues such as poverty and inequality, the right to work, and environmental degradation.

*Loving God,
lead us beyond ourselves
to care and protect
to nourish and shape
to challenge and energize
both the life and the world
You have given us.*

*God of light and God of darkness,
God of conscience and God of courage
lead us through this time
of spiritual confusion and public
uncertainty.*

*Lead us beyond fear, apathy and
defensiveness
to new hope in You and to hearts full
of faith.*

Joan Chittister osb

see:

www.caritas.org.au/learn/cst

Drawing from the prophets

Amos 5:21-24

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings and grain-offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

“There is a disturbing quality about the urgency of Jesus’ call, a shaking of the foundations which those who want a quiet life are bound to resent and resist.”¹

The biblical prophets are excellent examples of people disturbed by God, who then became a disturbance themselves to call people back to the ways of God. Whenever religious practice drifted away from social concern it was the prophets who rose up. A true prophet responds to and serves God’s interests ahead of their own. Those disturbed by a call to righteousness inevitably find their lives reoriented in a continuous process of displacement as they try to remain faithful to the inspiration of God’s spirit.

Amos, a herdsman living in about 750 BCE is the first in an extraordinary line of biblical prophets whose oracles have been left to us in written form. The book of Amos reflects the civil atrocities of the time: brutalities of war, captivity, desolation and political collapse. Amos called the people to remember their sacred history calling them back to their covenant with God, condemning religious worship that ignored the needs of the poor. Like Amos shortly before him, Hosea denounced the injustice and violence of his time, insisting that God demanded justice for the poor and oppressed: *“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings (Hos 6:6)”*. A little less gloomy than Amos, Hosea balanced his words of judgement with the promise of restoration and renewal.

Closer to 700 BCE, Isaiah was a prophet from whom not only do we draw directly but who also inspired writings from disciples and interpreters, compiled in his name. Unlike Amos and Hosea, Isaiah was an urban prophet concerned more with the coming of the Messiah. For Isaiah, God has particular concern for the marginalised: *“cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow (Isa 1:16-17)”*. Around much the same time, Micah lived

as a rural prophet speaking for the poor farmers suffering at the hands of powerful landlords: *“What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic 6:8)”*. These great prophets teach us that we must do more than merely decry what we do not like – we must also teach ‘the why’ of the unjust situation and describe the world that could and should be.

The spiritual legacy of the prophets embodies the commitment of Jesus and all those who came before to call for the Will of God for everyone. Prophetic spirituality is a call to live our faith on the streets of the world, an active spirituality that demands commitment as well as concern. It is a call to not only be faithful to the liturgical dimensions of our traditions but committed to a spirituality that cries out against injustice. It is easy to ignore the notion that we have a role to play – we can be lulled into thinking our spiritual task is to be ‘obedient’ but often fail to ask obedient to what and to whom? Our task fundamentally is to be obedient to the Will of God – this is the difference between personal spirituality that leads to private sanctification and prophetic spirituality. Christianity calls us to being a prophetic presence so that our world becomes a better place for us being there.

1 James D. G Dunn in Antony J. Gittins, *The Way of Discipleship: Women, Men, and Today's Call to Mission*, p.61



**Prophetic spirituality is a call to live our faith on the streets of the world,
an active spirituality that demands commitment as well as concern.**

Characteristics of modern day prophecy

(Joan Chittister, 'The Time is Now')

A prophet...

- says no to everything that is not of God
- says yes to embracing life, the pursuit of wholeness, acceptance of others, co-creation
- supports tradition but is wary of traditionalism
- reminds us that faith in a living God has often been smothered and even abandoned by institutional trappings
- refuses to promote a faith that concentrates on a few select sins while allowing social injustice to suffocate and silence everything else
- constantly risks being shunned socially, even ridiculed and ignored, while remaining committed to the Word of God ahead of social approval
- neither avoids the truth nor embellishes it, believing the truth is in itself enough to commit us all to something better
- speaks for reform of institutions which exist to preserve themselves
- acts in service to others – there is nothing prophetic about becoming what we are railing against
- is loud, clear and non-violent – prophecy is not a call to anarchy but rather a call to be the best of what we say we are
- engages with the community knowing that prophecy comes through dialogue and education, not force

"The prophet will persist for as long as it takes to make the present what God intends it to be as well as to prepare the future to maintain it."

- Joan Chittister OSB

"One must not love oneself so much as to avoid getting involved in the risks of life that history demands of us... those who try to fend off the danger will lose their lives, while those who out of love for Christ give themselves to the service of others will live, like the grain of wheat that dies, but only apparently. If it did not die, it would remain alone. The harvest comes about only because it dies, allowing itself to be sacrificed in the earth and destroyed. Only by undoing itself does it produce the harvest... This is the hope that inspires us Christians. We know that every effort to better society, especially when injustice and sin are so ingrained, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us... Let us all do what we can."

(From the final homily of St Oscar Romero, Archbishop of El Salvador).

Loving God, Spirit of Life,

We pray for the courage to speak truth to power.

We pray for wisdom to know how.

We pray for discernment.

Help us to denounce sin, but love the sinner.

**Help us to announce by our lives and actions
the power of your promise of life.**

Amen.

Ecological Justice

Psalm 104:24-30

O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

The use of fossil fuels and other human actions have contributed to climate change in such a way that will bring suffering to millions of the poorest humans living in vulnerable places, and accelerate the extinction of many other species. On this trajectory we will hand to future generations an impoverished planet depriving them of the beauty, joy and wonder we have enjoyed for millennia. We urgently need an ecological conversion – a change of mind and heart towards deepening respect for other species and their habitats, and a commitment to an interrelated global community of life. This is a call to deeper love and respect for all creatures having their own integrity before God and involves making significant changes; for a more sustainable lifestyle, to patterns of production and consumption and to our economic and political choices. The deepest reason for this conversion is that we see all of creation as emanating from God.

The compassionate God revealed in Jesus is the same God of creation – creation and incarnation are interconnected in one great movement of God's self-giving love. Thus, caring for the poor and caring for mother earth go hand in hand, especially as the poorest people on earth are the ones who suffer most from ecological degradation. Action for justice and an ecological way of life are inseparable as aspects of the one human vocation before God.

Old Testament biblical texts put humans in their place before the immensity and wonder of God's creation, and before God (Job 38:39-39:12; Psalm 104; Psalm 148). The Gospels show how Jesus regularly referenced the natural world in parables (Mk 4:3-8; Mk 4:26-29; Mk 4:30-32; Mt 13:33; Mt 13:24-30; Mt 13:47-48; Mt 6:26; Mt 6:28-30; Mt 7:24-27; Mt 7:15; Mt 7:16-20; Lk 13:6-9; Lk 15:4-6). They show someone in touch with the natural world as a gift of God. Reflecting on Scripture and participating in the celebration of the Eucharist calls us to ongoing ecological conversion. As we encounter the risen Christ as the transformation of the whole world, we are drawn into a profound communion that involves the entirety of creation in God.

From the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has indicated his concerns about the environment. The Pope's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si* falls within the body of Catholic Social Teaching, directed not only at Catholics but to all people of good will.

The two key words appearing throughout the document are 'urgent' and 'crisis'. Pope Francis fears we are headed towards an environmental catastrophe that will impact on us all, but most pressingly on the world's poor. The encyclical calls for an integral ecology – an ecological commitment integrated with a commitment to the good of humanity and above all the poor, held together in the same vision. Concern for the environment is connected to sincere love for fellow human beings; integral ecology involves love and respect for animals and plants but also human history, and a particular respect for indigenous peoples.

Pope Francis call upon us all to consider the impact of our decision-making and be prepared to ask difficult questions around our procurement of products and use of resources. The challenge put to leaders is to evaluate and consider our global obligations, to limit consumption and assist developing countries to support programs of sustainable development, such as renewable energy. The call is to develop a new culture informed by principles of participation, care of people and the planet and a spirituality of communion with the earth, recognising that the poor are often ignored in discussions about climate change and economics, whereas they should be at the forefront as they are the first and worst affected by decisions.





Extract from 'Climate Justice', Mary Robinson

Constance Okollet, a small-scale farmer and community organiser from eastern Uganda, appeared at a tribunal held by Oxfam in 2009 to gather evidence from frontline witnesses to the effects of climate change. Okollet gave testimony of the impact of dramatic changes to weather in her village over several years. In mid-2007, usually the dry season, persistent rain fell preventing farmers from harvesting their crops. One day in September the rain fell more heavily than usual, developing into flash flooding. Along with other residents, Okollet and her family fled the village in swarms, making their way to higher ground as floods ravaged their village. The scene was repeated across Uganda with tens of thousands of people displaced and infrastructure destroyed, and across Africa where in 2007 alone, twenty-two African countries experienced their worst wet season in decades, with devastating rains affecting over 1.5 million people.

Upon returning to their village, Okollet welcomed her destitute neighbours into her badly damaged but intact home. Twenty-nine people sheltered within her tiny home but with no food available and no clean water to drink, the health of the entire village community remained in jeopardy. The government provided families with quick-maturing seeds to replant their crops but the seeds struggled to take hold in the dry soil, the result of a severe drought that followed the flood and lasted for six months. Famine began to take hold and for women already struggling to hold their families together in a subsistence existence, life became unbearably difficult. She testified: "The women in my community have never had time to rest. But now, with climate change, their life is even worse. There is less water now, so I have to go more frequently to the well. Sometimes, when the well is low, I wake up at midnight to fetch water because the line during the day is too long. Sometimes I go to my field only to find that someone has stolen my crops. I know that my neighbours must be very desperate, very hungry, if they are forced to steal."

Prayer for a Just Climate

*God of Creation,
You created night and day.
You separated the sea from the sky.
You gave life to all living creatures and
saw that it was good.
Help us to reconnect with the majesty of
your creation.*

*God of Love,
Fill us with your love for all creation.
Empty us of apathy, selfishness and fear.
Inspire us to live simply and in harmony
with creation.
Help us to be good stewards, caring for
all creation with self-sacrificing and
nurturing love.*

*God of Compassion,
Breathe into us solidarity with all who
suffer now
and the future generations who will
suffer
because of our environmental
irresponsibility.
Help us to put people before profit and
'being' before 'having'.*

*God of Justice,
Empower us to work together as one
global community,
To find creative and just solutions to
protect those most vulnerable in our
world, and all of creation for future
generations.
Move us into action for climate justice
and to restore your creation.*

Amen.

(Caritas Australia)

*God of Justice,
Empower us to work together
as one global community...*

Walk in Solidarity

If we listen strongly to the Jesus Dreaming law very special Spirit times can occur. The great Creator Spirit sent Jesus to tell us the greatest story of all. It is a simple yet powerful story, one that says that if we believe his law of love and keep it strong, just as we kept the old law, we will not die forever but will live again. Jesus spoke first to the women, telling them to go at once to his close friends and followers with this good news. Of course, some did not believe the women. Then Jesus himself came to his friends, talking and eating with them. Finally, Jesus returned to his own true country with the Creator. He told his friends and followers not to worry. They would not be left alone. The Spirit would come who would stay with them always. Again they waited together till the special ceremony time the Jewish people called Pentecost. This was a time of thanks for good seasons and plenty of food. Mary stayed with the followers of the New Way for many years until it was time for her to go to her true Dreaming place with the Creator and her son Jesus. She is the mother of God.

(Source: Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, 'Dreaming in the City')

We failed to ask – how would I feel if this were done to me?

The Redfern Speech – Delivered in Redfern Park by Prime Minister Paul Keating, 10 December 1992

"... in truth, we cannot confidently say that we have succeeded as we would like to have succeeded if we have not managed to extend opportunity and care, dignity and hope to the indigenous people of Australia – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. This is a fundamental test of our social goals and our national will: our ability to say to ourselves and the rest of the world that Australia is a first rate social democracy, that we are what we should be ... Redfern is a good place to contemplate these things. Just a mile or two from the place where the first European settlers landed, in too many ways it tells us that their failure to bring much more than devastation and demoralisation to Aboriginal Australia continues to be our failure. More I think than most Australians recognise, the plight of Aboriginal Australians affects us all... Nowhere in the world, I would venture, is the message more stark than it is in Australia. We simply cannot sweep injustice aside... However intractable the problems seem, we cannot resign ourselves to failure – any more than we can hide behind the contemporary version of Social Darwinism which says that to reach back for the poor and dispossessed is to risk being dragged down.

That seems to me not only morally indefensible, but bad history... Isn't it reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to

the problems which beset the first Australians – the people to whom the most injustice has been done. And, as I say, the starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins, I think, with that act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask – how would I feel if this were done to me? As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us... I think what we need to do is open our hearts a bit. All of us.

Perhaps when we recognise what we have in common we will see the things which must be done – the practical things... The message should be that there is nothing to fear or to lose in the recognition of historical truth, or the extension of social justice, or the deepening of Australian social democracy to include indigenous Australians. There is everything to gain. Even the unhappy past speaks for this... And if we have a sense of justice, as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership. As I said, it might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we had lived on for fifty thousand years – and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours. Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless. Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given up without a fight. Imagine if non-Aboriginal Australians had served their country in peace and war and were then ignored in history books. Imagine if our feats on sporting fields had inspired admiration and patriotism and yet did nothing to diminish prejudice. Imagine if our spiritual life was denied and ridiculed. Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it. It seems to me that if we can imagine the injustice we can imagine its opposite. And we can have justice.”

... if we have a sense of justice, as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership.

Solidarity is the tenderness of the people (Dr John Falzon)

There is a beautiful saying from the Sandinistas that
Solidarity is the tenderness of the people
Solidarity

Is that profound human tenderness
Profound because it is simple
Human because it is concrete

Anything that is only an idea or an ideal
Can never even remotely be equated with solidarity
In the face of oppression
In the struggle for liberation
It is the locking of arms
Not the sending of wishes
It is expressed in the smallest of gestures
As well as in the grandest of plans
It is what comes of the interconnectedness of things
The intersectionality of the experience of oppression
The recognition of the dialectic
Such as when the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King was shot
Because he named the connection
The structural and historical knot that ties
Oppressive racism
To capitalism
It being no accident that he was in Memphis at the time of his killing
To support striking garbage workers
Something worth remembering in Australia today
As the lowest paid in society
Whether they are in the labour market
On its insecure margins
Or completely excluded from it
Are attacked and punished
Sacrificed on the altar of greater profits and lower corporate taxes

His stance beside them
Was also a recognition of another foundational principle of solidarity
Namely
That solidarity might produce heroes
But it is never individualistic
It is deeply collective

It is a privilege
Not a favour
To stand in solidarity with
People experiencing oppression
If we commit ourselves to the struggle for liberation
Then we take our orders from the
People
The word obedience
Comes from the Latin word meaning
To listen to
Solidarity



Means studying reality
The concrete study of the concrete situation
Cutting through the lies
For the truth told by the people pushed to the margins
Will
In the end
Drown out the lies
Told about them

Sometimes
When I type out the word solidarity I mistakenly type
*Soil*idarity
I like this typo
Because it reminds me that solidarity Is about the common ground
That must be fought for
Against the commodi cation of everything
And everyone
That human solidarity cannot be disconnected from
The environment in which we live
That we are all made from the most magnificent and magical dust
And that the socially constructed hierarchies
Of power and wealth
Are just that
Produced by socio-economic formations Not nature
And that just as they are made
They can and must
Be unmade
And that the real power for progressive social change
Comes not from above
But from the People
Under the guiding stars of struggle and hope

The feminist movement teaches us that
The personal is political

The refusal to take the side of the oppressed
Is the acquiescence to being taken by the side of the oppressor
As the poet and theorist Audre Lorde reminds us:

*The true focus of revolutionary change
Is never merely the oppressive situations We need to escape
But that piece of the oppressor
Which is planted deep within each of us*

I will leave you with the most beautiful description of solidarity that I know
Which comes from Aunty Lilla Watson
And a group of First Nations activists in
Queensland in the 1970s

*If you have come to help me you are wasting your time
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine
Then let us work together.*

Welcome without Prejudice

Matthew 25:31-46

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you

welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that

are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

"There is no reasoning that justifies over six years of incarceration of innocent people – an imprisonment that continues to this day."

'The boats are coming' is one of the greatest lies told to the Australian people...

Behrouz Boochani, *The Guardian*, 2 July 2019 (extracts)

If we pay attention to the discourse and propaganda techniques of consecutive governments over these years we notice that essentially the same language and rhetoric has been maintained without the slightest change. Every government has imposed the same logic on society: the policies have been designed and implemented to "stop the boats". As a result of this simplistic reasoning they have justified an inhumane political program.

The greatest error that many have committed is accepting the government's reasoning which is based on the simple formula: "We have incarcerated these people on Manus and **Nauru** to 'stop the

boats'". If one analyses the different dimensions of this particular exile policy it becomes obvious that the government is lying.

The policy of exiling refugees to offshore prisons is in no way a deterrent. Even if we just entertained the idea that the policy of exile really worked then it would have been relevant to roughly the first six months to a year of its implementation. There is no reasoning that justifies over six years of incarceration of innocent people – an imprisonment that continues to this day.

The reality is that no one is observing the situation in Manus and Nauru, no one considers our fate, no one is waiting to see when we are freed, no one is looking to see where we will be settled.

Many Australians liken the policy of exiling people to Manus and Nauru

to a brick constituting a structure constructed by the government. According to this view, if one brick is removed from this building the whole edifice will suddenly collapse. I argue that this view is completely wrong. Over six years the Australian government has transferred about 1,000 people from these two islands to Australia. In contrast to the government logic, not one boat has come into Australian waters. In addition to this, since 2013 the government has transferred to Australia hundreds of refugees who had been incarcerated on Christmas Island. These refugees were always told they would never make it to Australia and would be eventually exiled to Manus and Nauru. Again, no boats made it into Australian waters. According to official statistics the government sent more than another 700 to the US. Again, no boats came in. The group of refugees in Manus has reduced from 900

individuals in 2016 to 450. In Nauru the numbers reduced from 1,200 to 250 in the same period. One conclusion can be reasonably arrived at. Obviously, the government's intention has never been to close these prisons. Dutton says he would like to free everyone overnight if he could but cannot because the boats would start coming again. This is an outright lie. The question remains, however, if this policy has no relationship with boats arriving in Australia then why does the government insist on keeping people imprisoned on these islands over these years?

The existence of these two-island prisons has always been a justification for the political profit-making of the Liberal party. By making these sites the highlight of their campaign they were sending a message to voters that they were prioritising national security. They were creating the impression that they were strong and the Labor party weak. For years the Labor party

sought to resist the political attack by adamantly supporting the same political project, especially before the last election. For years the two parties have been in competition over who could better sustain the cruel and inhumane policy.

A second pillar of this political project is the economic gain involving these two island prisons. There has been a lack of transparency on how the Manus and Nauru contracts are run. Exact figures are difficult to establish but more than \$9bn has been spent on this state-sanctioned hostage taking and boat turnbacks. What is clear is this: There are strong lobbies that see it in their best commercial interests to maintain this political strategy. Financial profit is one of the main pillars of this political program.

But the third fundamental pillar pertains to individual gain. Without a doubt, this political strategy has ideological foundations based on racism.

If the government had intended to gradually remove one person from this island every three days then all the refugees would be freed by now. By accepting the New Zealand offer to take 150 people a year the government would have ended this situation. Right now they could use the medevac law to evacuate all the sick refugees from the island over a period of two to three months. Over these years the government could have easily emptied these prison camps, but the reality is that they earn political profit for their parties; there are people who benefit financially; and there are also the individual ideological gains. For these reasons they have never intended on solving this issue. "The boats are coming" is one of the greatest lies told to the Australian people in decades. History will reveal all.

Behrouz Boochani: Untitled (Manus Island poem)

Forgive me, my bird, as I am not able to embrace you.

But here,

in this corner,

I know some immigrant birds. I smile at them at the crack of dawn

and I embrace them with open arms, as open as the immensity of the sky.

My beautiful love!

Forgive me, as I am not able to quaff the aromatic scent of your breaths, but here, in this ruin,

I know some wildflowers which grow every morning in my heart,

and at the dead of the night, they drift into sleep with me, in my place.

Forgive me, my angel!

I am not able to caress your gentle skin with my fingertips.

But I have a lifelong friendship with sea zephyrs

and those zephyrs strum my nude skin here, in this green hell!

Forgive me, as I am not able to climb the green mountains of your body, but here, at a depth of the darkness, in the middle of every night, I enjoy deep and utter seclusion with the tallest and more vain coconut trees.

My beautiful! I sing you in the profundities of the oldest and the oddest songs,

further away from the world of a man who loves you amongst the deepest oceans and the darkest forests.

Inside a cage,

the man loves you,

inside the cage located between the vastest ocean and the greenest forests.

Forgive me, my love.

Forgive me, my love, as I am only able to love you from a remote island,

inside the cage,

from the corner of this small room.

Forgive me, please, as the only portion of the world that belongs to me is these pieces.

Build Right Relationships

Micah 6:6-8

Micah 6:6-8 'With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'

The notion of 'right relationships' is an ancient idea central to the biblical understanding of justice. Hebrew Scriptures show that the Jewish people had a heightened sense of concern for the poor, growing out of their historical experience of slavery and liberation. They believed God had intervened directly in their liberation which led to a deepening sense of who God is and what God asks of them. They were committed to living in the spirit of a liberating God and treating others with this same spirit. Justice in the bible is fundamentally grounded in relationship with God, manifested especially in how the poor are treated. It is not distinguished from charity or mercy, but includes them.

Justice in terms of 'right relations' is the virtue by which we organise life for a peaceful and harmonious order, governing all social relationships. It is not an arbitrary notion but arises from reflection on what sustains our being. Some key elements of Catholic Social Teaching reflect this understanding:

solidarity: the call to join in with the promotion of human freedom and dignity, the recognition of others as persons with needs and rights like ourselves, and the sustained effort to see others as God sees them, committing ourselves to supporting their wellbeing;

subsidiarity: power and responsibility exercised at the lowest possible level, recognising that those most closely involved with various functions are often the best placed to make decisions;

human rights: these arise directly from the demands of human nature and thus exist independently of governments although they should be reflected in legislation, entailing obligations to others and leading to mutual collaboration;

participation: people have the right to shape their own future as far as practicable and to participate in community life – not restricted to political rights but also the right to employment and social services such as healthcare;

preferential option for the poor: reflects particular concern for the marginalised, grounded in Scripture and challenging us today not only to aid the poor but to address conditions that cause poverty and distress, empowering people to find their own voice and agency for change.

2 live well, 4 give well

In 1997 John Steward travelled to Rwanda to work with communities torn apart by the 1994 genocide. His experiences are chronicled in the work *From Genocide to Generosity*, sharing stories of healing formed from a focus on building right relationships rather than retribution. In his work in Rwanda, John was confronted with deep rooted hatred formed over generations of prejudice and ignorance leading to conflict among ethnic groups. Traditional methods of bringing perpetrators to justice were only leading to an escalation of violence – a shift in thinking was needed. John and his team developed a process of working with communities, centred on forgiveness and healing (see www.2live4give.org)

Forgiveness is not a unique act, but more a kind of inner pilgrimage, to:

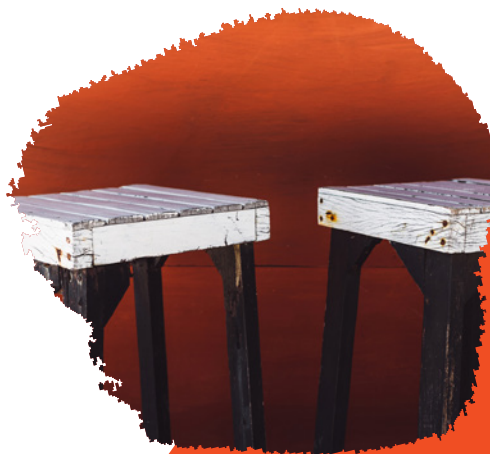
1. Not take revenge and to cease offensive actions. There is no point in wanting to forgive if the offensive situation is going on.
2. Recognise our inner wounds. Denying, minimising or avoiding are defence mechanisms that prevent us from reaching real forgiveness. They hold the energy inside us.
3. Share our inner wound with someone. Rather than bear the wound all by ourselves, tell the story to someone who will listen and not judge, or moralise or give advice. This allows us to see the situation in a larger perspective.
4. Identify the loss and grieve it. List all the losses caused by the offence and grieve for what you have lost. Weep, wail, mourn, and reminisce.
5. Accept the anger and the desire for revenge. It is natural but does not have to push us to destructive actions. Anger is there to express the need for justice.

6. Forgive myself. We feel guilt, shame and blame, a desire for revenge – these feelings affect our inner harmony and they need forgiveness as do our mistakes. To forgive myself is the first condition allowing me to forgive others.
7. Understand our offender. Put aside blame and place oneself in the other's position – imagine their suffering, realising what they did is irreversible. Recognise their value as a human being; accept their mystery.
8. Find some meaning for the offence in our life. With time we might see some positive value or meaning to what happened. But this cannot be felt straight after the vent.
9. Know that we are worthy of forgiveness, which gives us dignity and a sense of value. For those who accept the idea of a God who forgives, there is possibility to feel accepted unconditionally.
10. Stop pursuing forgiveness. Forgiveness is not a moral obligation. We cannot demand it from others. Not all people are ready to forgive – they do not respond to pressure. The process takes time and everyone has their own process. Pressure adds guilt and builds the wall of resistance and resentment.
11. Open myself to the grace to forgive. It is beyond comprehension – we don't understand in advance how we will forgive.
12. Decide to end the relationship or renew it. If forgiveness leads to reconciliation, it is impossible to meet each other in the way it was before the offence. The relationship will begin on a new basis. Forgiveness may be given and the relationship ends, for different reasons. It is still beneficial for the offended and the offender.

The story of Deborah Niyakabirika:

"We came back to Rwanda in 1996 and found the government had changed. The majority of the politicians were now Tutsi, but I thought that was okay. In March 1997, some soldiers came into my house. They found us praying, they sat down, and they told me they wanted my son, my seventh child. They took him outside, and after twenty minutes I heard shots. I went out and found they had killed him. I felt hatred for Tutsis. But more than that, I thought the Hutus were my friends, but no Hutus came to help me during the burial. Only Tutsis helped. I started thinking, "Which group should I trust?" So I took time to pray. I asked God, "How should I live with peace in my heart?"

I thought I was being asked to forgive the person who killed my child, and I was not happy about it, so I stopped my prayers. Then one day in a dream I saw a house built on a platform which stood above Rwanda, and I saw these words written: 'The path to heaven passes through your enemy's house.' I tried to figure out a way to get there without passing through that house of my enemy – but there was no other way. I kept thinking about it and kept dreaming about that house, my enemy's house. It was like a puzzle to me, but gradually I learned the lesson: In the house of my enemy is where I will begin to find real peace. To have peace one must go and sit inside in the room of our enemy's house."



We seek your presence, O God,
not because we have managed to see clearly
or been true in all things this day,
not because we have succeeded in loving
or in reverencing those around us,
but because we want to see with clarity,
because we long to be true,
because we desire to love as we have been loved.
Renew our inner sight,
make fresh our longings to be true
and grant us the grace of loving this night
that we may end this day as we had hoped to live it,
that we may end this day restored
to our deepest yearnings,
that we may end this day as we intend
to live tomorrow,
as we intend to live tomorrow.

From *Sounds of the Eternal* by John Philip Newell

Call to Action

James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

"Discipleship is not intended as a soft option or the guarantee of an easy life. There is a cost, and disciples must be willing to pay the cost." (Anthony Gittins)

Mission is a verb calling for a disposition towards action. In Christian terms it describes a lifestyle characterised by boundary-breaking. Jesus came to break down boundaries of privilege and segregation, to include rather than exclude, to welcome actively rather than admit reluctantly. Authentic Christian spirituality is expressed in living from the conviction that God sustains and restores relationships. This calls us to radical engagement with the world, with social justice and with the rest of humanity.

Jesus declared that he was sent to the poor and needy in general, although he had to deliberately seek out, encounter and be encountered by actual people in specific circumstances. Our good intentions are not enough – the call to Christian discipleship is to encourage and support one another in a generous response to the Gospel and the call of the Spirit. The image of Jesus as gentle, meek and mild does not match the Jesus of the Gospels who is a disturbing figure. His boundary-breaking ways provide courage to those willing to follow in his footsteps.

Pope Francis is calling all those in different fields of mission to join him in cultivating seeds of change, to effect a mission of love and mercy. Leadership for this mission demands that we become risk-takers for the sake of the Gospel, pushing the boundaries of love and inclusion. For Pope Francis, the inclusion of the poor in society is inextricably linked with peace. His call is to be a church that brings the love of God to the world through words, attitudes and actions rather than a church standing on the sidelines of the struggle for justice. Every Christian is called to work for the liberation and promotion of the poor, enabling their full participation in society, working to eliminate structural causes of poverty and promoting integral development alongside daily acts of solidarity.

We have a choice to refuse to accept a moral deterioration of the present and to follow the path of the prophets – to find the courage to echo those who spoke the voice and vision of God for the world.

Through his ministry in San Salvador Oscar Romero enfolded or 'made incarnate' the option for the poor. During three dramatic years as archbishop, Romero became visible to the wider world through his legendary preaching to a nation engulfed in explosive tensions and violence. In a country wracked with human rights abuses, enveloped in lies and cover-up and edging every day closer to civil war, Archbishop Romero fearlessly spoke the truth. He listened to the poor tell their stories. He took on the wealthy landowners for their exploitation of seasonal workers. He took on the military for their torture, killings and terrorisation of the rural population. This brought down persecution on the Church and six priests and dozens of catechists were killed prior to his own assassination.

Parallels have been drawn between Romero's three years as archbishop and the three years of the public life of Jesus. The preaching, the teaching, the prayer and solitude. The closeness to the poor, the tender love of the vulnerable and destitute, the courage and resolution, the insults hurled, the pharisaic plotting against him, the doubts and the fears, the death threats and the public execution.

In 1977 there was a Gethsemane experience for Romero. As he prayed beside the body of the murdered priest, Rutilio Grande, he realised that if he were to follow this through to its final consequences it would, as he wrote, "put me on the road to Calvary". And he assented; he made a fundamental option for the poor and it took him to his martyrdom.

Romero was once asked to explain that strange phrase, 'option for the poor'. He replied: **"I offer you this by way of example. A building is on fire and you're watching it burn, standing and wondering if everyone is safe. Then someone tells you that your mother and your sister are inside that building. Your attitude changes completely. You're frantic; your mother and sister are burning and you'd do anything to rescue them even at the cost of getting charred. That's what it means to be truly committed. If we look at poverty from the outside, as if we're looking at a fire, that's not to opt for the poor, no matter how concerned we may be. We should get inside as if our own mother and sister were burning. Indeed it's Christ who is there, hungry and suffering."**



Romero spoke about his death and those around him tried to persuade him to have protection or a bodyguard. His response was simple: "Why should the shepherd have protection when his sheep are still prey to wolves?" The threats became so intense; a fever existed. Romero knew he was going to die. He accepted it with great equanimity. He prepared himself and went like a lamb to the slaughter.

Following his assassination the war became unstoppable and during twelve years claimed over 70,000 lives.

What should remembering Archbishop Romero mean today? From a Christian point of view 'remembering' means something active. The fundamental Christian model is 'Do this in memory of me'. For the Church to remember Archbishop Romero must first mean to continue his work and imitate that option for the poor which he embraced and his life and ministry epitomised. And like him to struggle with the paradoxes and conflicts that such commitment throws up for us.

<http://www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/themes/community-participation/stories/oscar-romero-option-poor/>

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

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

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.*

*This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.*

*We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.*

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

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

*We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.*

Amen.

- St Oscar Romero, Archbishop of El Salvador