

# THE FORGE

in our daily life

PATRIS MEI  
“THE GOD  
OF LIFE”

5  
Easter

# Patris Mei

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

### THE NATURE OF THE STAGE

The experience of fire in the symbolism of the Forge refers to the experience of God's love, maternally mediated by the immaculate Heart of Mary and by the action of the Holy Spirit pouring into us the gift of love.

The fire warms, cleanses, softens, glows. Our Fr. Founder often uses this symbol to speak of love and missionary zeal. The "men of God" have always their face glowing with fire, like Moses.

The *Patris Mei* stage expresses the relationship of Claret with God the Father. It condenses the experience of God's love that warms the cold iron and prepares it ready to receive a new shape. It is, in short, a call to be "in my Father's business" (cf. Lk 2:49).

- 1 The search for God  
(Advent)
- 2 The incarnation of God  
(Christmas)
- 3 The God of the Kingdom  
(Ordinary Time I)
- 4 The fatherhood of God  
(Lent)
- 5 **The God of life**  
(Easter)
- 6 The Word of God as the source of life  
(Ordinary Time II)
- 7 Faith as an answer to the love of God  
(Ordinary Time III)
- 8 Prayer as our encounter with God  
(Ordinary Time IV)
- 9 The Claretian experience of God  
(Ordinary Time V)

To help individuals, communities, Provinces and Delegations to be consciously aware of their present reality, rekindling their experience of Fire and missionary zeal following the methodology of the Forge.

### OBJECTIVES OF "PATRIS MEI" STAGE

- Moving from superficial attitudes to deeper attitudes.
- Growing up in the experience of the love of God as a foundation of our missionary lives.
- Studying the issue of the images of God that underpin our behaviour, and the experience of the God of Jesus as a profound experience of grace.
- Developing, theoretically and practically, the experience of prayer.
- Understanding more deeply the Claretian dimension of the experience of God as Father.

QUID PRODEST - 2011

**PATRIS MEI - 2012**

CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

SPIRITUS DOMINI – 2014




# 1. Introduction

After a fruitful experience of the Lenten season and Holy Week you are opening this booklet number 5 titled “The God of Life’s triumph over death.”

During those forty days, the life of penance and prayer would have helped you get in touch with your need for conversion. Your participation in the Holy Week should have made you wonderstruck by the silence of God in the context of the current unjust events of the society. The death of Jesus would have made you react to the imbalanced spiritualization of his death and have drawn your attention to the culture of death in various forms. The ultimate questions on life: is death the end of our life? What is the use of our commitment to live the values of Jesus? If evil has more power, what is the power of good? Does life end with frustration?







All these questions storm our minds searching for a remedy. Yes, it is so. The tragedies of life have no right to say that life ends with death. The resurrection of Jesus is the strength and inspiration to life. All our struggles are enlightened and influenced by this Lord. Life becomes a celebration and joyful event only because of the victory of Jesus over death. The followers of this risen Lord are the agents of life today to withstand and boldly fight against the agents of death.

The phase of the *Patris Mei* in this Easter season invites you to journey with some five personages who experienced the Risen Presence of Jesus. **Mary of Magdala** will help you walk towards the process of maturity in your God experience. **St. Peter** will remind your enthusiastic beginning of your God experience and will lead you to face the crisis of faith in God from the unconditional love of the Risen Christ. **St. John** will lead you to open your mystical eyes to see the invisible presence of Jesus as the most important need of your life in God. **St. Paul** will teach you fight till the end for your conviction in the God of Life. The





**Disciples of Emmaus** will teach you to understand the need to allow the voice of God to burn the hearts for a better listening and get moulded to see the Risen Lord through our brotherly sharing.

This season also invites you to pay attention to one of the important messages of the Risen Lord. His call, "Receive the Holy Spirit", reminds of the Pentecostal experiences seen from different New Testament authors. This will help you to discover the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life and his call to deepen your God experience.

During this season of Easter, try to walk with the Risen Lord who meets us in every sharp curves of our personal life situation reminding to moderate the speed of our life journey to explain the importance of life and fight against the elements of death. Pray to the Holy Spirit to accompany and enlighten you while reading this text and doing the exercises.





## 2. Reflection

### New Life in the Risen Lord

#### Mary of Magdala: a pilgrim from gratitude to love

Mary of Magdala occupies an important place in all the four gospels when they speak about the death and resurrection of Jesus. While Mathew and Mark place her in the first place in their list of the women who were present on the scene of the death of Jesus, Luke presents her as the first person in the list of those women who followed him from Galilee (cf. *Lk* 8:1-3). When they present the resurrection of Jesus, all of them coincide to present this woman as the first among all other women in their presentation. John's presentation of the resurrection narrative draws our attention to note this Mary not only as the first person but also as the only woman who moves around to spell out her personal encounter with the Risen Lord. Among all these gospel authors only Luke purports the reason and origin behind her accompanying and following of Jesus; he refers to the healing she received from the Lord - freeing her from the seven evil spirits (cf. *Lk* 8:2; *Mk* 16:9)- as the reason and her gratitude of supporting Jesus

and his disciples from her belongings. Her personal experience of this freedom should have certainly inspired her to make her option to follow Jesus till his death (cf. *Lk* 23:49) and converted her into his disciple.

Galilee and Jerusalem are the two phases of her God experience in Jesus. In Galilee she experiences a glorious Jesus with miracles and discourses. She herself undergoes a change in her life by his presence and becomes convinced of him as her Master who is compassionate and tender to manifest the loving presence of "His Father". In Jerusalem she undergoes a crisis of her God experience in the death of Jesus. She experiences and witnesses the silence and "death of God" himself on mount Calvary. During this dark night of her life, she knew nothing but to be seated before the sepulchre of Jesus, cry bitterly and search for his dead body. In his death she lost the hope and meaning of her life.



If the death of Jesus were to be her *Quid Prodest*, his resurrection leads to her *Patris Mei* God experience. In his death she underwent a bitter internal struggle and began to search for the meaning of her life without him. Although grief and sorrow overpowered her to ponder only on the death of her saviour, her love for him did not diminish from her heart. It was this longing of love that made her to remain alone and search for the Lord. These moments of her life remained as blessing in disguise to lead her to an in-depth God experience and hear her Master's Voice calling, "Mary". Her experience with the risen Lord led her to proclaim her New Life in Christ, "I have seen the Lord". Her meeting with him shows us the Living Lord as the meeting of point for the human being who searches God and the Father who searches the human being (cf. *Jn* 21:15).

Mary of Magdala is a model for our journey from the *Quid Prodest* of the experience of the self to the *Patris Mei* of the experience of God. Receiving favours from God, religious pomp and power, traditional and folkloric celebrations of the faith, attracting the crowd for religious ceremonies, etc may be some of the observations and means for God experience. These can be a starting point of our life of faith as in the case of Mary of Magdala. But what is more important for us is Mary's love for Jesus even in his absence

that makes her to bear the darkest moments of "God's absence and his silence" and persevere in her waiting for him. Her journey with Jesus was a following her Master's footsteps till his last moments and reliving his presence even after his death. Her journey with Jesus was a pilgrimage in search of a greater good that cannot be taken away (cf. *Lk* 10:42).

The death of her Master was a storm that shook her entire life and faced her own death and the meaninglessness of her life without Jesus. Her journey with Jesus was his accompaniment of love for her that is revealed and confirmed in his resurrection that remains as a meeting point of two searches: Mary searching for Jesus and vice versa. Her encounter with the risen Lord depicts a matured seeker of God who is called to be generous to recognize and accept the sorrows of life coming from the hands of God (cf. *Jb* 3:10) as a means to experience his love in daily events of life.

Father Claret lived this sort of matured *Patris Mei* God experience when he underwent the effects of love, "nothing daunts him: he delights in privations, welcomes work, embraces sacrifices, smiles at slander, rejoices in all the torments and sorrows he suffers, and glories in the cross of Jesus Christ" (CC 9).

## Exercise 1: My stories of grace

*In the light of these two personages of the resurrection of Jesus, you are invited to go through your God experience and find out whether there is an evolution towards a maturity in your way of living the presence of God.*

1. In the light of the experience of Mary of Magdala, try to write down all the graces you have received from the Lord. You may spend some fifteen minutes to chart down all those graces brought to your attention.

- How did you express your gratitude in different stages of your life: in your childhood, teenage period and adulthood. Write them down and try to observe the evolution and differences. What are the signs of maturity you discover in your sense of gratitude to God?
- What are your faith crises in the face of the silence of God? What are those events and who were the persons in search of you and you were in search of them?

2. In the light of St. Peter's experience with the Risen Christ, try to live the initial enthusiasm to do anything for God, even giving your very life for Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Try to write down those pleasant feeling you are undergoing now.

- Try to remember the fading of that initial enthusiasm in you because of certain particular situations. Try to write down those personal difficulties, weaknesses, failures, etc. Besides this, write down the social, communitarian and pastoral contexts that led you to these dark nights.
- Try to place on the record, those experiences that make you to repeat to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life," (*Jn* 6:68) and the meaning of these words of Peter for your personal conviction.





### Simon Peter: from superficiality to depth

Peter was a member of a group of men who shared the aim and life style of the Master in an itinerant activity throughout the villages of Galilee and the festive pilgrimages to Jerusalem. He was very close to Jesus who invited him always to join him with John and James to the important events of his life: to the house of Jairus (cf. *Mk* 5:37), to the transfiguration (cf. *Mk* 9:2-8) and to his agony in Gethsemane (cf. *Mk* 14:33). In a way, he was another favourite disciple of Jesus. He is representative of the group to speak to Jesus for them: in the healing of the woman with haemorrhage, he speaks for the disciple (cf. *Lk* 8:45); to pay tribute to the temple, Jesus speaks with Peter and pays it (cf. *Mt* 17:24); when speaking of his identity he speaks in the name of the disciples that Jesus is the Messiah (cf. *Mk* 8:29-30); to know who was the traitor of Jesus, he asks in the name of the disciples (cf. *Jn* 13:24). Peter was also a privileged addressee of the messages of his master's instructions: on the following of Jesus, on the importance of a washing from Jesus to his disciples, etc.

Although Peter confessed that Jesus was his only refuge and his words are life - giving source (cf. *Jn* 6:28), he was so much concerned about his earthly compensations for following Jesus (cf. *Lk* 18:28). Though he declared by the inspiration of the Father that Jesus was the Messiah, his understanding of messianism did not admit a suffering

and feeble saviour (cf. *Mt* 16:22). His enthusiasm to build three tents for Moses, Elias and Jesus on the mount (cf. *Mt* 17:4) is not seen when he was supposed to accompany Jesus in his agony in Gethsemane (cf. *Mk* 14:37-38). His readiness to lose his life for Jesus is shattered starkly by his denial of the Master due to fear to die (cf. *Mk* 14:19-31).

The turning point in his life began with his denial of Jesus that led him to a deeper crisis as his journey in the fire. In the light of our *Patris Mei* experience he resembles for us a dirty iron rod thrown in the furnace to be purified and moulded. The beauty and importance of his crisis is that he did not yield to frustration and on the contrary he longed for the Lord's forgiveness. The presentation of Peter in the resurrection narratives of the gospels show the Lord's special mention of his name and his attitudes. The risen Lord's special message to Peter on his risen presence in Galilee (cf. *Mk* 16:7), his personal and first apparition to the latter among the apostles (cf. *Lk* 24:34; 1 *Cor* 15:5), his encounter with him on the lake of Tiberius show his special and unconditional love and forgiveness for him. On the other side, the instant reactions of Peter's running towards the sepulchre and the shore of the lake as soon he heard the message of the Lord's resurrection and his presence respectively manifest his tender love for him. The love he had for Jesus before and pro-



fessed for the risen Lord led him to rise up from the shackles of his fallen state.

Peter is the paradigmatic image of all those who follow Jesus both in his spontaneous attachment as well as in the experience of crisis provoked by doubt and fear to follow a humiliated and suffering Jesus. In the light of Peter's experience, we can say that we resemble the seeds fell on the rocky ground (cf. *Mt* 13:20-21): enthusiasm to carry out an ideal and discouragement when facing difficulties are not less in our missionary life. You can remember the beginning of our missionary vocation. Do you remember your enthusiasm when you entered your postulancy to live only for the Lord and his Kingdom? But the monotonous and routine life should have made your first enthusiasm become cold. The personal crisis would have inspired you to re-read your original joy to be in touch with the realities of your life, to accept your limits and limitations to be for God alone. When comparing yourself with your lay companions and their status of life, you would have experienced a sort of regret of having left your own goals of life. In one way or other, all of us bear the syndrome of Peter in us: highly spirited in the beginning and getting dwindled in the face of challenges and crisis. This is not wrong. This is normal and natural in our process of maturity. In this context, Peter's experience with the

risen Lord is very much an eye opener one for us. His capacity to recognize the unconditional love of Jesus and allowing that love to free him from the crisis that leads him to have the richest experience of God. That's why he was able to bear witness to what he had, "I give what I have" (*Acts* 3:6). This experience of fire led him to challenge, "We cannot remain without speaking what we have seen and heard" (*Acts* 4:20).

### **St. Paul: a staunch fighting messenger of the God of life**

"Who are you, Lord?" (*Acts* 9:5) was the question of St. Paul to the Risen Christ as he began his God experience in Christ. The man, who was an ardent observer of his religion and persecutor of the Way, is captured by the death and resurrection of Jesus. His writings show that he was not interested in the biography of the historical Jesus, but his attention was very much concentrated in the double event of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is interesting to note that while Jesus announced the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God, Paul preached the death and resurrection of





Jesus as the most important events of history and that in Christ who died and rose again, God saves the human being. Though he recognizes clearly the role of the Father in the redeeming work of Christ, he highlights the centrality of Christ in the salvation by his self sacrifice (cf. *Gal* 1:4; *1Tim* 2:6;

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## As servant of the Word, you are called to live this identity as “Servants of Life”

*Tit* 2:14), for us (cf. *Gal* 2:2; *Eph* 5, 2.25). When Paul had to stand accused before the Sanhedrin he indicates the meaning and content of all his preaching, “with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial” (*Acts* 23:6). He continually repeats the same phrase in his letters (cf. *1 Thes* 1: 9ff; 4: 13-18; 5:10), in which he refers to his own personal experience, to his own meeting with the Risen Christ (cf. *Gal* 1:15-16, *1 Cor* 9:1). For him life becomes meaningless without the resurrection of Christ (cf *1Cor* 15:14-19).

“The Resurrection thus reveals definitively the real identity and the extraordinary stature of the Crucified One. An incomparable and towering dignity: Jesus is God! For St. Paul, the secret identity of Jesus is revealed even more in the mystery of the Resurrection than in the Incarnation. While the title of Christ, that is “Messiah”, “the Anointed”, in St. Paul tends to become the proper name of Jesus, and that of “the Lord” indicates his personal relationship with believers, now the title “Son of God” comes to illustrate the intimate relationship of Jesus with God, a relationship which is fully revealed in the Paschal event...(cf. *Rm* 14:9; and *2 Cor* 5:15) or in other words, our Saviour (cf. *Rm* 4: 25).” (*Benedict XVI*)

St. Paul’s claim on the resurrection of Jesus brought to him innumerable persecutions and death threats. He boldly fought a good fight till the end declaring that this message of resurrection as the only reason of accusation: “It is about the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial...” (*Acts* 24: 22); “This was why the Jews laid hands on me in the Temple and tried to do away with me” (*Acts* 26:21); “It is on account of this that

I have to put up with suffering, even to being chained like a criminal. But God’s message cannot be chained up” (*2 Tim* 2:8-9). The opposition against the resurrection of Jesus began as soon as the message of the resurrection came to light, and the enemies of the resurrection of Jesus began to spread their false propaganda against Life and support for death was brought out at once (cf. *Mt* 28:11-15).

St. Paul, on the basis of his experience in the Risen Christ challenges that the death is not our end at all. If it were to be so, then we are really a pitiable people and all our struggles to live as witnesses of Christ and his gospel become meaningless; he also warns the danger of being led astray due to this false end. The dangerous merry making and hedonistic agents of death will have an upper hand in our surrounding than the agents of life. Therefore he considers death as the final enemy against the humanity that has to be overcome to lead a life in Christ (cf. *1 Cor* 15:12-33).

In the light of the power of the Risen Lord, he explains the beginning of the baptism as a death and burial to our sins with Christ and a new life of resurrection with him (cf. *Rm* 6:8-11). To continue this reality of new life, he teaches a life in the Spirit through the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal* 5:22 ff).

As staunch messenger of the God of life, St. Paul stands as an invitation and inspiration for you to question God himself, “Who are you?” This search will help you to throw away an anonymous God and enter into a relationship with a familiar God whom you discover in your experience. As St. Paul discovered from his life experience that his God is the God of life in the Risen Christ who saved him, there is a need to experience his presence personally. The *Quid Prodest* experience calls you to meet this God of life and be strengthened to face the challenges to be alive for and in the God of the living (cf. *Mk* 12:27).

As servant of the Word, you are called to live this identity as “Servants of Life” (cf. *TMHL*, 4). You are aware of your surrounding and its realities of the culture of death: lack of respect for nature and the planet, disregard for human life from conception till death, violence against women and children, unjust economical world order, state sponsored violence, poverty, inhuman and unequal social structures, etc are all invitations to discern our commitment to witness the God of life, the Risen Christ (cf. *TMHL* 6-7).



### St. John: Man with mystical eyes

St. John's testimony of the Risen Lord invites his community members to believe in him even without seeing him. This capacity to believe in Jesus is very much vivid throughout his writings. He begins the gospel with the statement, "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (cf. *Jn* 1:18). The invisible God is revealed by Jesus in whom we are called to believe without seeing him at present. This is the call presented by St. John in his resurrection narratives where he presents the incapacity to recognize the Risen presence of Jesus by Mary of Magdala and Peter (cf. *Jn* 20:14; 21:4), while the disciple Jesus loved is capable of recognizing and believing in his resurrection (cf. *Jn* 20:8; 21:7). As the conclusion of his gospel as well as of the apparition to St. Thomas, he records that they were written to believe in Jesus (cf. *Jn* 20:31), not by seeing him externally alone, but by seeing him within oneself, by hearing and reading the gospels.

St. John is gifted enough with the mystical eyes and a specialist in perceiving the invisible realities of his faith that strengthened him to follow his Master till the last moment of his life. He shares with his community this gift of believing in Jesus without even seeing him. Hence, he concludes the apparition narratives with the beatitude, "Blessed

are those who have not seen and yet believe" (*Jn* 20:29). This call to believe in the invisible presence of Jesus is strongly prevalent in his gospel. Throughout his dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus leads him to perceive the importance of the invisible realities of a new birth through water and the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God and the movements of the one born of the Spirit. But he was unable to understand it (cf. *Jn* 3:2-8. 11-12).

Jesus' interpretation to the Samaritan woman of the water and living water, and his way of leading her to recognize that he is this living water (cf. *Jn* 4:7-14) show the aim of the author to form his community members not to be attached only with the external matters of the faith but to transcend them and worship God in Spirit and truth and become true worshipers (cf. *Jn* 4:23). Meanwhile, when the disciples returned with food for him, he tells them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about" (*Jn* 4:32) and the disciples did not understand his invisible food which is that of doing the will of the Father (cf. *Jn* 4:33-4). His discourse on the Eucharist is a call to have mystical eyes to go beyond the wheat bread and human flesh and understand his living presence as our eternal daily food for an everlasting life (cf. *Jn* 6). That's why, realizing the human difficulty



in believing without seeing, John points out Jesus telling, “Unless you see signs and portents you will not believe!” (cf. *Jn* 4:48).

The author of the fourth gospel was in a compelling situation of highlighting this need of believing in Jesus, because the community can no longer depend on the visible apparitions and miracles of Jesus to strengthen its life of faith. Therefore he makes use of the apparition to St. Thomas as an apt place to emphasize this need of believing and living the invisible presence of Jesus. His very presentation of Thomas is portrayed as a man limited to the peripheral level. When Jesus speaks about his journey to Jerusalem, Thomas expresses his concern of the danger of death which is for Jesus a means to fulfil the will of God and to glorification (cf. *Mt* 16:23; *Lk* 24:25). When Jesus tells that his disciples knew the way to eternal life, he expresses his ignorance of the invisible and mystical way where Jesus himself becomes the way, the truth and the life (cf. *Jn* 14:5). Now the climax of his crisis is to believe in the resurrection of the dead Jesus and so he demanded a proof of not only seeing the wounds and nail marks, but to place his finger in them (cf. *Jn* 20:25).

This is the context from where the post Pentecostal Christian generation is empowered to believe in the invisible presence of the Lord. This was the maturity that St Peter observed and appreciated in the members of his community when it was facing trials, “You have not seen him, yet you love him; and still without seeing him you believe in him and so are already filled with a joy so glorious that it cannot be described” (1 *Pe* 1:8).

St. John’s experience with the Risen Lord is a call to have mystical eyes to perceive and experience the invisible presence of God. Through the different characters of his resurrection narratives he singles out his uniqueness of looking at him by transcending the visible realities. In this context he is an inspiration to live our *Patris Mei* experience to make an inward journey within to meet God. He is a reminder for you to take care of the invisible roots of your God experience. Father Claret had the experience of being in touch with him in his inner most self through the mystical experience of

the conservation of the Eucharistic species in his heart day and night (cf. *Aut* 694-695). He understood this Holy of Holies of his intimate self as a Chapel where he would adore and worship God day and night (cf. *AEC* 681). He explains that this *fire of grace* “becomes cold by lukewarmness, by laziness in work, the fear of persecutions and the inconsistency of our resolutions; ... For this we need to fan it and fuel it with prayer, meditation,

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St. John’s experience with the Risen Lord is call to have mystical eyes to perceive and experience the invisible presence of God.”

spiritual reading, joy, vigilance of spirit, study and a major effort toward the virtues and we have to work singularly, watch over and obtain with greater diligence...” (*El Colegial Instruido*).

Therefore, to reach this transcendental level and discover God within yourself, it is good to be aware of those ailing symptoms that manifest the need to protect the hidden roots that seek the Living Water (cf. *Jn* 7:38). This is the time to identify those worms that are eating up these roots and remove them in a radical manner.



### Disciples of Emmaus: Burning Hearts

While the gospel of Mark makes a passing comment on the experience of the two disciples with the risen Jesus on their way to a village (cf. *Mk* 16:12), Luke explains it with details of this experience of Cleopas and his companion to the village of Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35). The author presents them as very disappointed and pessimistic to the point of being incapable to recognize the reality of the fellow traveller (cf. *Lk* 24:16). In the dejection of the two disciples because of the death of Jesus, the risen Lord joins them in their journey. The reason for their frustration which they share with Jesus was, “our hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free” (*Lk* 24:21).

Many of his followers not only wanted Jesus to be a social, magical and political messiah, but they too tempted and forced him to be so. Mathew clearly presents this attitude already in the beginning of the ministry of Jesus through the temptation scenario (cf. *Mt* 4:1-11): the temptation to convert the stones into bread shows a material or social messianism; the temptation of throwing himself down from the parapet of the temple (cf. *Mt* 4:5-7) shows magical and wonder working messianism; the temptation of attaining all the powers of the world at any cost (cf. *Mt* 4:8-11),

shows the political messianism. His own disciples forced him to go back to Capernaum to heal the crowds of people waiting for him. But Jesus reiterated his mission of announcing the Good News and doing the will of the Father (cf. *Mk* 1:35-37). Personally witnessing the miracle of feeding the crowd with five bread and two fish, the people wanted to make him a king. But Jesus left from the crowd and remained alone (cf. *Jn* 6:14-15). When the scribes and Pharisees tempted him to perform a sign for them, he rebuked them strongly and left them (cf. *Mt* 12:38-39; 16:4). When the people were incapable of believing in him, his brothers forced him to go to the feast of Jerusalem and perform his miracles there. But Jesus did not yield to their proposal, but made clear his mission of witnessing to the truth (cf. *Jn* 7:3-7). For Peter’s confrontation against his passion and death, Jesus did not even hesitate to tell him to get away from him and clarified that his thoughts are purely human and not from God (cf. *Mt* 16:23). When hanging on the Cross, he was challenged to come down from there to prove his messianism (cf. *Mk* 15:32).

But Jesus was very clear about his mission of bearing witness to the truth and his kingdom not belonging to this world, but to all those who listen



to the truth (cf. *Jn* 7:7; 18:37). Conversion is the only obligation to enter into this kingdom. That's why he had to fight against his followers' outlooks on the expectation of political or social messianism. His disciples were concerned about this sort of kingdom even till the last moment of his ascension to the Father (cf. *Acts* 1:6). It is because of this perspective they were unable to grasp the meaning of his death and they took it as a great failure and frustration of their hope. His sacrificial death was for the conviction and faithfulness to his Father and his kingdom. Fidelity to obey God will certainly result in the martyrdom that will open the doors of glorification. When Jesus began to explain the importance of enduring suffering to the point of death, the two travelling disciples undergo an eye opening experience.

Their personal encounter with the risen Christ leads them to a process of listening to him from their heart and getting away from their false images and perceptions of God. This personal and one-to-one dialogue with Jesus enlightens and clarifies the life journey. That's why he highlights the importance of getting into oneself to listen to the Father (cf. *Mt* 6:6). While he presented to the crowd the reality of the kingdom of God in parables, he explained to the disciples in private their meaning (cf. *Mk* 4:34). This personal meeting with the Lord converted Nicodemus, the Jewish leader, into his disciple to the extent of defending (cf. *Jn* 7:50) and accompanying him till his death (cf. *Jn* 19: 39). His personal dialogue led the Samaritan woman to realize everything she was and announce to her people that he was the Christ (cf. *Jn* 4:29). The same learning process is taking place in the discipleship of the Cleopas and his companion. The Master is explaining the Scripture and the Disciples do their duty of listening which leads them to experience the fire within themselves, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to

us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?" (*Lk* 24:32). All these personalities allude to human temptation of obliging God to fit into our moulds and designs. A mature listener of God allows God to be God and obeys his call to be a better human person.

The journey of these disciples invites us to revitalize our identity as Servants of the Word in our missionary journey with the living God: "Without the primacy of the Word, the Claretian community loses its reason for its existence" (*SW*, 7). The *Lectio Divina* represents our daily encounter with him. As these two men met the Lord with their struggle to accept Jesus and his presence, there are moments that question whether Jesus is with us or not. He invites us to listen to him and realize the importance of undergoing crisis with proper guidelines. When we allow the Word to enlighten our narrow minded spiritualities, "the road to Emmaus becomes the way of a purification and maturation of our belief in God: the encounter with the risen Christ gives us a deeper faith, one that is authentic, tempered, so to speak, through the fire of Easter, a faith robust because it is from the word of God and the Eucharist, not human ideas." (*Benedict XVI*).

Father Claret experienced his *Patris Mei* life in the Word of God. He listened to him and responded to him to become his ardent listener and Servant (cf. *Aut* 68ff). His sense of listening to him was born from his thirst to seek him in all the critical moments of his life (cf. *Aut* 674-700). He experienced the captivating power of the Word of God in his life (cf. *Aut* 113). Why don't you think your experiences of having faced the demands of the Word of God to convert your own attitudes for a better journey of life?

## Exercise 2: My Easter personalities

In the light of the above mentioned three Easter personalities, you may try to identify yourself with these different characteristics through the following exercises.

Easter personality	His experience of the Risen Lord	My experience of the Risen Lord	What I think about my Easter experience
St. Paul, a staunch fighting messenger of the God of life			
St. John, man with mystical eyes			
Disciples of Emmaus, burning hearts			

### Messages of the Risen Lord “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20, 22)

#### “The Johannine Pentecost” (Raymond E. Brown)

Already before this death itself, Jesus taught his disciples about the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth who will bear witness to him (cf. Jn 15:27). He promises his eternal presence with his disciples through this Spirit who will come to dwell with them and in them as the result of his petition to his Father (cf. Jn 14:16-17). They needed his accompaniment to remind them what all Jesus taught them (cf. Jn 14, 26) and to lead them to the fullness of truth (cf. Jn 16:13). Now after his resurrection, the fourth gospel presents us the Johannine Pentecost where it calls us to realize the importance of accompaniment of the Holy Spirit to live in and believe the invisible presence of the risen Christ.

His presentation of the coming of the Holy Spirit from the breath of the risen Jesus on the

apostles reminds us of God blowing his breath of life into man and giving him life (cf. Gen 1:7). As the breath of God brought life to the human person in the creation scene, the breath of Jesus converts his disciples into new creation. As the prophet Ezekiel spoke over the bones of the valley and gave them life, so too the risen Christ blew on his disciples – almost dead because of fear- and spoke “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:22) and gave them new life.

To receive something from somebody means an invitation and commitment to accept and make use of it a responsible manner. In this context of the Johannine Pentecost, receiving the Holy Spirit is an invitation to be deeply aware of his indwelling presence with ourselves and to be open to his reminders (promptings) about the truth of our life and to bear witness in the light of the Truth who is Christ. You would have certainly realized within yourself some internal movements that would have made you to seriously reflect your way of life and led you to find out the truth. The following exercise would be an aid to examine your life in the Spirit.



## Exercise 3: Characteristics of the Holy Spirit in my life

In the light of "Johannine Pentecost", go through the different characteristics of the Holy Spirit according to his gospel and check how you have experienced them in your personal, communitarian and pastoral commitments.

Characteristics of the Holy Spirit according to St. John	My experience: mention certain events of life in short notes	My challenges to live these calls of the Holy Spirit
The Spirit of truth (Jn 14:16) who will bear witness to Jesus (Jn 15:26-27).		
The Spirit who will come to dwell with the disciples (Jn 14:16-17).		
The Spirit reminds them what all Jesus taught them (Jn 14:26).		
The Spirit leads them to the fullness of truth (Jn 16:13).		

At the end of this exercise, in the light of the challenges to live these calls of Holy Spirit, write a short prayer in your Forge notebook.

### "The Lukan Pentecost"

The third gospel (cf. Lk 24:49) and the Acts of Apostles (cf. Acts 1:4) present the Holy Spirit as the promise of the Father and receiving him is being clothed with the Power from above. Beside this definition, the above mentioned texts present the advice of Jesus to receive the Holy Spirit. They are: to stay in the city, (not to leave Jerusalem) and to wait there for him. This advice to receive the Holy Spirit are to be translated as conditions for us to receive him.

*First condition:* to stay in the city (Jerusalem) and not to leave the place. As Jesus asked his disciples to go to Galilee to meet with his risen presence, now he asks them to be in Jerusalem to receive the promised power of the Father. Jerusalem is an emblematic place for Jesus and us. It is there that he reveals for the first time his main business of remaining in the house of his Father referring to the temple, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49). For Jesus, Jerusalem

is the place where he discovers his Father and his mission of living and dying for him. The gospel authors observe the active and restless movements of the presence of Jesus in Jerusalem. While Luke introduces the boy Jesus in the temple of Jerusalem for the first time discovering there his Father's house, John introduces him as an adult entering in the same temple to purify his Father's house converted into a market place and proposing himself as new temple of his Father (cf. Jn 2:16-19). It is the place where he fought and died for the rights of his Father (cf. Jn 5:18; 7:14-19).

In our *Patris Mei* experience, the Jerusalem of Jesus is a place to contextualize the presence of Our Father and recognize his face and respond to his call both within ourselves as well as in the outside. It is a challenge to be faithful till the end in our battle to save this "Holy Land" in us. As an individual, this call of Jesus to remain in his Jerusalem to receive the promised one can be translated into experiencing the presence of the Father within ourselves, fighting against our selfishness

that distorts his presence in us and converting ourselves into his temples. As missionaries, the call of Jesus to receive the Holy Spirit points out, “Our mission is more urgent at an historical moment when the name of God is hidden and considered banal, the rights of God’s needy children are violated and the survival of the planet is endangered” (MFL 36).

*Second condition:* “to wait for the promised one”. We cannot reduce the fact of receiving the Holy Spirit to some prayers and some spiritual practices alone as the means. What matters is not the amount of prayers and rituals we employ for the reception the Holy Spirit. What matters is whether we have learnt the “art of waiting” to receive the Holy Spirit. The third author of the synoptic gospels presents at the beginning of his gospel itself the need of this condition being fulfilled in that elderly Simeon who waited and enjoyed the indwelling presence of this Spirit in him; he experienced being inspired and moved by the Spirit (cf. *Lk* 2:25.26).

Generally the experience of waiting for someone is not usually pleasant one. It produces anxiety and uneasiness in the one who is waiting. The biblical orientations will help us to learn this art of waiting for the Holy Spirit. In this sense, waiting for the Promised One is (i) to be alert and to be awake for his arrival at any moment (cf. *Lk* 12:35-48). In this context Mother Mary is the master presence who teaches how to get into this awakened state to wait for the Holy Spirit. Her awakened state was marked by her “treasuring and storing up in her heart” the events that had taken place in her life through Jesus (cf. *Lk* 2:19.51). Her ruminating of her experience with God in Jesus is an invitation for us to drench the depth of our being with the thoughts of our experience with Jesus. The more one ruminates the actions of God in the internal self, the more ample possibilities there would be to grow in the love for him and to be impregnated with this presence. Only in this way, the spiritual practices and rituals will serve as means to receive the presence of this life giving Spirit.

(ii) Another aspect in waiting is to wait hopefully, as the night watchman is waiting for the dawn (cf. *Ps* 130:5-6). Experiencing darkness and loneliness around, being busy with his responsibil-

“**Mother Mary is the master presence who teaches how to get into this awakened state to wait for the Holy Spirit.**”

ity, being watchful till the day light, being hopeful of the arrival of the dawning light are some of the characteristics of this night guard. These may be some of the symbolic gestures of the one who is waiting for the Holy Spirit: dark nights in personal life, loneliness in the face of challenges, obligation of being watchfully committed to the task entrusted with, fighting to be fresh with the hope despite the discouragements, etc, are some of the aspects to long for the presence of Holy Spirit.





## Exercise 4: My stay in the Jerusalem of Jesus and waiting for the promised one

*In the following exercise, try to go back to your past life and discover answers for the following:*

Try to remember and write in the column on the right side the names of all those persons who have helped you to discern the presence of God in your life.	
Try to remember and write in the column on the right side the names of the persons who disturbed your God experience.	
Try to remember and write in the column on the right side the places where you have experienced and lived the presence of God.	
Try to remember and write in the column on the right side the places where you were tempted to overlook and did overlook the presence of God.	
Try to remember and write in the column on the right side the contexts you deeply felt angry and acted against to denounce the desecration of the divine presence in the human beings and sacred places.	

*At the end of this exercise try to spend sometime in your community chapel looking at its various aspects and their present status: the alter, alter cloths, tabernacle, reading stand, Missal, Lectionaries, candle stands, prayer books, seat arrangements, etc.*

- *Try to see whether there is cleanliness in the chapel and keep clean things that you use for the liturgy.*
- *Try to ask yourself how you are respecting and adoring the Eucharistic presence when you are there.*
- *Try to find out your difficulties to maintain silence and avoid talking unnecessarily in the chapel.*
- *Try to examine how you are celebrating the Holy Mass everyday and your attitude towards the mass intentions.*
- *Finally ask your self whether the chapel of your community is the House of Jesus or it needs any efforts to be converted into His House.*

## “The Pauline Pentecost”

St. Paul is the one who has developed more the theme of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. He explains the Spirit as someone “sent” (*Gal 4:6*); “poured” (*Rom 5:5*; *1 Cor 12:13*; *Tit 3:6*) “given” (*2 Cor 1:22*; *5, 5*; *Eph 1:17*; *1 Thes 4:8*) and “granted” (*Rom 8:15*; *1 Cor 2:12*; *2 Cor 11:4*; *Gal 3:2.14*). It is because of these various experiences of the Spirit in his life, that he convincingly advises the members of his community to “be filled with the Spirit” to fight against the power of sinful tendencies (cf. *Eph 5:18*). According to him one of the important effective missions of the Holy Spirit is “to pour out in our hearts the love of God” (*Rom 5:5*); because of this loving presence within us, he converts us into God’s children and he himself cries out to God for us from our hearts “Abba, Father (Mother)” (*Gal 4:6*); through his indwelling presence in us, we are introduced to the presence of God in an intimate and affective relationship with, as Father (Mother) and we, as his children (son or daughter).

Led by this Spirit, God does not remain anymore as an unknowable or anonymous one but as the one who is with us and so, we call him as Father (Mother). The communion between “Our Father (Mother)” and us is initiated and established by this Spirit through prayer. According to St. Paul, since we don’t know how to pray the Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for “we do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into word” (*Rom 8:26*).

The climax of Paul’s experience in the Holy Spirit is that because of his indwelling presence in us our entire being is converted into his temple and sanctuary (cf. *1 Cor 6:19*; *3:16*). Because of this fact the entire human person is intrinsically changed into his presence and is obliged to value not only his body but also the others’ as belonging to God. To grow in this commitment to live this sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit within us, he teaches to lead a “life according to the Spirit”

fighting against “the tendencies of the flesh” (*Rom 8, 5-14*).

Therefore, he writes: “Since we are living by the Spirit, let our behaviour be guided by the Spirit” (*Gal 5:25*). He too gives a list of the works of the Spirit to examine whether our behaviour is according to the Spirit. He says: “When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things... On the other hand the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control” (*Gal 5:19-22*). Thus the law of the Spirit leads a person to be internally free (cf. *Rom 8:2*) and when we live these fruits of the Spirit we enjoy freedom from within, because “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (*2 Cor 3:17*).

Paul’s teaching on the Holy Spirit does not end only with this indwelling presence. He insists that this indwelling presence of pouring the love of God in our hearts (cf. *Rom 5:5*) is manifested in various gifts granted for the good of the community (cf. *1 Cor 12:7-11*; *Rom 12:6-8*). Since love has to be revealed through some gifts, the Holy Spirit’s showering of God’s love in our hearts must be also manifested to us through various gifts. Paul’s observation of the existence of various gifts in his communities, reminds us of the active and creative power of the Spirit who showers out his goodness in the form of charisms on everybody according to our need and for the good of the community. The goodness of God has not left anyone without any gift. All of us are filled with different gifts for the good of the other so that our light may shine before others and give glory to God (cf. *Mt 5:16*). Through these gifts the Holy Spirit is leading us for the mission of being witness to Christ (cf. *Lk 24:48*; *Acts 1:8*; *Rom 8:16*).





## Exercise 5: Your life in the Spirit

Before getting into this exercise, kindly read the following text in an attitude of listening to the Holy Spirit. After reading, try to listen and respond to the movements taking place within you in the light of the text. The text for reading: Rom 8:1-17.

Taking into account each fruit one by one, try to write in your notebook the answers for each column in the light of your life experience.

Fruit of the Holy Spirit	With myself	With others	Challenges to live it	Steps taken to grow in it
Love				
Joy				
Peace				
Patience				
Kindness				
Goodness				
Trustfulness				
Gentleness				
Self-control				

### 3. Guidelines for the community meeting

The time for the meeting will be the one previously agreed upon by the community for community meetings for the purpose of the Forge.

The place can be set up in a way that will favour an atmosphere of prayer according to the taste and sensibilities of the community members. Preferably, highlighting more the symbols of light and life in the prepared venue. A bible maybe enthroned with the Paschal candle. A series of small candles may be placed to imitate symbolically a procession of lights

**Option A:** The Community can proceed to do the *Via Lucis* (text in the webpage).

**Option B:** A *Celebration of Light and Life*.

- Then this words can be read out:

“Let no one weep for sins; forgiveness is risen from the tomb. Let no one fear death: the Savior’s death has set us free. When it held him chained, he struck it down. When he descended to hell, he plundered it.” (John Chrysostom, *Paschal Homily*).

- An appropriate **Easter Song** may be sung together or better if a short adapted version of the *Exultet* may be used.

- **Opening Responsory:** a very soft and gentle instrumental music can be played in the background. Taize chants like *Veni Sancte Spiritus* or *Veni Creator Spiritus* may be appropriate for the sung responses.

#### Choir 1

*With the power of the green leaf  
unfolding to spring-time sunshine,  
unfold our souls to the radiance of Your light.*



## Choir 2

*With the power of the life of God  
made incarnate in the womb of Mary,  
make in the depths of our souls  
a place where the life of God can be planted.*

## Sung response:

*Veni Sancte Spiritus or Veni Creator Spiritus.*

## Choir 1

*With the power of wisdom,  
of understanding  
and the knowledge of God,  
fill our souls with awe in the presence of God.*

## Choir 2

*With the power of counsel and of might,  
empower our words and our actions  
that we may be prophets for our age:*

*Veni Sancte Spiritus or Veni Creator Spiritus.*

## Choir 1

*With the power that holds all creation  
in being, hold our lives  
in the safety of Your wings.*

## Choir 2

*With the power that brought divine life  
into the daily life of Nazareth,  
bring divine life into the life  
of our new Pastoral Area.*

*Veni Sancte Spiritus or Veni Creator Spiritus.*

## Choir 1

*With the power that inspired  
the early Christians to live in unity of heart,  
bless the communities of...*

## Choir 2

*With the power that shook the disciples  
out of their fear and complacency,  
shake our lives free of our fears,  
our doubts and our uncertainties:*

*Veni Sancte Spiritus or Veni Creator Spiritus.*

## All together

*Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful  
and enkindle in them the fire of Your love.  
Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created  
and You will renew the face of the earth.*

*Veni Sancte Spiritus or Veni Creator Spiritus.*

• **A time to read:** Reading from the Feast of the Ascension.

After the invocation, a member reads a Gospel text: Mt 16:15.

• **A time to reflect:** Some questions that may help:

What signs and wonders do you see today?

How do you make these signs

more intelligible?

What signs of faith?

What signs of faith expressed in deeds?

What signs of the forgiveness of sin?

What signs of the forgiveness of social sin?

What signs of reconciliation

between peoples and nations?

What signs of work for justice, peace

and the care for the earth?

• **A time to reap:** You may now share the fruits of your reflection. Own your words by using first person singular. Try not to "preach".

• **A time to symbolize:** After each has shared, the leader invites the group to sing a simple song while someone brings in the materials for the symbolic rite. Have a large bowl of water on which people can place a floating candle - a reminder of baptism and the gift of Pentecost.

• **A time to pray:** A person says his prayer and places a tee candle in the bowl. The community responds in the tune of "Lord hear our prayer".

- For all those who have fallen victim to hatred and inhumanity, for those loved ones who are left behind to mourn, for the souls of those whose hearts are cold, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

- For the children who are being born into this world of conflict and violence, for women and mothers who suffer needlessly, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

- For all those who have been forced into unemployment, who long to return to work, for all those who struggle to support their families, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

- For the soldiers who are misguided in thinking that their bullets will bring about peace, for those who feel called to conscientiously object to military orders, *Lord, hear our prayer.*



- For the children who cry in their beds at night and wonder 'what have I done?', for the mothers and fathers who must try to explain the unexplainable, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

- For all the children who have died before their time, for the soldiers who allow their uniform to strip them of their humanity, for the healers who are denied the opportunity to use their gifts, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

- For the redemption of souls of both victim and perpetrator, for those who commit themselves to the forgiveness of sins, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

#### • Closing Responses:

*Reader:* At the dawn of Time, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters,  
brooding under Her wings  
the newly-born universe.  
Age upon age, Creation unfolded  
and brought to birth our sun, our earth  
and all that lives upon her.  
And age upon age, Creation unfolded  
and human beings appeared on the earth.

*All:* BORN OF THE EARTH,  
CHILDREN OF THE STARS.  
MADE OF CLAY YET FILLED  
WITH THE DIVINE BREATH OF GOD.  
IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF OUR CREATOR  
STEWARDS OF EARTH IN ALL ITS FULLNESS.

*Reader:* At the dawn of human history,  
God entered into covenant with human beings  
setting His bow in the skies;  
promising descendants, numerous as the stars,  
to a wanderer in a desert.

*All:* GOD OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH,  
OF JACOB AND JOSEPH;  
GOD OF MOSES AND MIRIAM,  
ESTHER AND RUTH;  
GOD OF DAVID AND SOLOMON  
AND HEBREW KINGS;  
GOD OF ISAIAH, JEREMIAH  
AND ALL THE PROPHETS  
GOD OF ANCIENT KINGDOMS  
AND OF PEOPLE IN EXILE  
GOD OF ALL AGES - AND OUR GOD.

*Reader:* In the fullness of time,  
God sealed a New Covenant  
in the blood of His only Son;

so that all Creation and all peoples  
should come to perfection in Him.

*All:* JESUS ENTERED OUR HISTORY,  
A HUMAN CHILD,  
AND LIVED AND DIED AS WE ALL DO.  
YET GOD DID NOT LET HIS BELOVED  
KNOW DECAY  
BUT RAISED HIM TRIUMPHANT FROM THE TOMB.  
IN HIS RISEN BODY,  
WE SEE THE PROMISE  
OF OUR OWN FUTURE GLORY.

*Reader:* Yet Creation still groans for fulfilment:  
and human souls yearn for salvation.  
Again the Spirit hovers over human hearts,  
calling them to work with Her  
in the great work of the unfolding of Creation.

*All:* AND WE ARE WITNESSES TO THE SPIRIT,  
DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST  
AND CHILDREN OF GOD.  
WE ARE APPOINTED AS KEEPERS  
OF THE LIGHT OF THE COVENANT,  
CHOSEN TO BEAR THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT  
TO A HUNGRY WORLD.  
CALLED FROM OUR GENERATIONS  
TO BE LIGHT FOR THE WORLD.

*Reader:* Whom, then, shall the Lord send to bring  
His light to the world?

*All:* HERE WE ARE, LORD, SEND US.

*Reader:* Whom, then, shall the Lord call  
to build communities of faith  
founded in loving partnership.

*All:* WE HAVE HEARD AND ANSWER HIS CALL.

*Reader:* Whom, then, shall the Lord commission  
as his friends -invited to go out and bear fruit.

*All:* WE CALL UPON THE SPIRIT  
TO GIFT US AS DISCIPLES AND FRIENDS  
OF THE LORD,  
THAT WE MAY INDEED GO OUT AND BEAR FRUIT:  
FRUIT THAT WILL LAST.

*Reader:* And so may God bless us,  
lighting our way into the future,  
calling us to go out and bear his fruit:

*All:* THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.



*Reader: And as we go forth to build his Kingdom.*

*All: MAY GOD HOLD US IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND.  
AMEN.*

• **Closing Prayer:** An International Prayer for Peace

*Lord,  
Lead us from death to life,  
from falsehood to truth.  
Lead us from despair to hope,  
from fear to trust.  
Lead us from hate to love,  
from war to peace.  
Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.  
Peace, peace, peace.*

LOVE





## 4. Guidelines for the “lectio divina”

### Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Easter Sunday

- Acts 10:34-43
  - Ps 118
  - Col 3:1-4
  - 1Cor 5:6-8
  - Jn 20:1-9
- The tomb is empty ... “he saw and believed.” Jesus has risen, bringing new life to all. That God raised Jesus from the dead means that death does not have the last word – a truth that is far richer than our small minds can realize. In the resurrection of Him who exclusively dedicated his life to the affairs of the Father we find a clue to who God is: God is Life! This grounds our hope in God’s promise of everlasting life with Jesus in God.

### Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Monday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 2,14.22-23
  - Ps 16
  - Mt 28.8-15
- This is the Jesus that God has raised up and we are his witnesses. This wondrous act of God in history and in Jesus continues to demand for credible witnesses in our times. It is this lack of credible witnesses amidst the overwhelming signs of death that should be counted among the more serious causes of unbelief.

### Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Tuesday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 2:36-41
  - Ps 33
  - Jn 20:11-18
- “Why are you weeping? Who is it you are looking for?” They seem to be conventional questions. But addressed to a heart in pain and mourning that power of empathy communicated on Easter morning prepared the longing soul to an experience of the Risen Lord.

### Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Wednesday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 3:1-10
  - Ps 105
  - Lk 24:13-35
- I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have I give you! Sometimes, mission has been made synonymous with accumulating for and in the name of our mission projects – in the very name of the poor. And we gain the adulations for our missionary “success.” Too often forgotten is the task to build up persons and communities who go praising and proclaiming the experience of God in the Resurrection.

### Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Thursday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 3:11-26
  - Ps 8
  - Lc 24:35-48
- “Peace to you.” Consoling words as the disciples are faced with panic and fright. The same words come again to me today even as I come face to face with troubling events around me. It comes as a gift and at the same a content of the Easter Proclamation.

### Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Friday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 4:1-12
  - Ps 118
  - Jn 21:1-14
- The problem the institutional authorities have against the teaching and proclamation of Peter and John may not be so much because it runs contrary to their own beliefs. Rather, it is that which the teaching and proclamation engender in those who embrace it: hope, audacity, fearlessness, power in the Spirit. All these herald the change that is coming which can be fearsome!

### Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Saturday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 4:13-21
  - Ps 118
  - Mc 16:9-15
- “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation!” The resurrection of Jesus is a pre-figuration of the final restoration and redemption of the whole of creation. It is at the same time a promise and an assurance of the things hoped for. As a steward of creation, the power of the resurrection enables me to live in anticipation the blessings of the new creation by my care now for the earth and all that is in it.



## Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2012. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

- Acts 4:32-35 Fellowship is the shared experience of faith in the Risen Lord and is therefore relational. God shares fully in this our experience of fellowship. Relationship is of primary importance between all creatures and all creatures with God. The point of fellowship, i.e., our relationship with one another in faith, is to transform and be transformed by our experience of God in the Resurrection of Jesus.
- Ps 118
- 1 Jn 5:1-6
- Jn 20:19-31

## Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 4:23-31 Announcing the Prophetic Word with boldness, with signs and with wonders requires the power of the Holy Spirit. I need to be filled with the Spirit. For it is only in the Spirit that I can grasp the full power of the Resurrection and all that it enables me to do.
- Ps 2
- Jn 3:1-8

## Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 4:32-37 We are united with God in Jesus by being in compassionate solidarity with those who suffer. If God is there, resisting evil and willing life wherever people are being damaged, then the followers of Jesus must enter into the same solidarity. Suffering people are the privileged place where the God of compassion is to be found (*Elizabeth Johnson*).
- Ps 93
- Jn 3:7-15

## Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 5:17-38 "The Lord hears the cry of the poor," so the psalm's refrain goes. But how difficult is it to proclaim this truth! For many, even more difficult to trust in it! The overwhelming multitudes of those mired in inhuman existence would sometimes tend to make this truth unbelievable.
- Ps 34
- Jn 3:16-21

## Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 5:27-33 Bold words for the Apostles: "Better for us to obey God than man!" Easter proclamation is not about nice, genial or appeasing words that should not cause any stir. Nor should it be the opposite, either. But in these times, it often demands audacity and boldness to preach it even to those who, claiming to believe in the resurrection, are stumbling blocks to others – preventing others from experiencing in their daily lives the promise and fruits of the Resurrection.
- Ps 34
- Jn 3:31-36

## Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 5,34-42 "When human beings whom God loves suffer, God is present with them, compassionately loving them through the suffering, desiring life for them, and acting to bring it about when human forces have played themselves out."
- Ps 27
- Jn 6,1-15

## Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2012

- Acts 6,1-7 Jesus walking upon the water can be seen as emblematic of his mastery and dominance over chaos, evil, death and darkness. If I can only trust in the reassuring words of Jesus, I can experience and proclaim the God of Life through the Spirit so that I, too, can overcome death in its many forms.
- Ps 33
- Jn 6,16-21

## Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2012. 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

- Acts 3,13-19 "Peace to you," Jesus says. Real consoling words in those moments of despair and frustration for the disciples of Emmaus. Though put to death, God the Author of Life, raised Him from the dead. He has come back to life, to bring peace. A peace that human efforts alone cannot give. A peace that flows from the source of Life itself! A peace that can last till the end of time.
- Ps 4
- 1Jn 2,1-5
- Lc. 24,35-48



## Monday 23<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 6:8-15
  - Ps 119
  - Jn 6:22-29
- There is too often a perceived dichotomy, even an opposition, between the social and spiritual dimensions of Proclamation. It is sometimes even believed to be a choice of either one or the other. To escape from the social demand of the Gospel, there is an insistence on a hierarchy between the two – one of precedence and importance. But social to spiritual is like deeds to words. The social gives concreteness to what may seem to be abstract and out of this world truths while the spiritual brings in the transcendent values to which the social can only but indicate.

## Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 7:51-8,1
  - Ps 31
  - Jn 6:30-35
- Prophetic denunciation carries with it an inherent risk, including death. That is why I'd rather exclude it from my vocabulary or simply dismiss it as a radicalization of the Gospel. But prophetic denunciation is a call within the Easter Proclamation. I cannot reduce proclamation to mere inert tokens, symbols and rituals. For Easter itself radically shook the way I conceive, understand and live out life itself! Easter demands that I cast away death-causing structures, ways and relationships and bring about life-engendering alternatives.

## Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Saint Mark (Martyrdom of Fr. Andrés Solá and companions)

- Ws 7: 7-11
  - Ps 89
  - Heb 4:12-13
  - Mk 10:17-30
- The offer of salvation is universal. For this reason the Church goes to all the earth's bounds to proclaim the Good News. But how often do we overlook the neighbor around us who cannot make sense of this divine promise because they are locked down in the tomb or literally made to live hell on earth! There exists a challenge for us to help our brothers and sisters to come to an experience so that the promise of Life in the Resurrection is meaningful to their lives here and now. That in us and with us, the God of Life is carrying out this promise even in our times.

## Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 8:26-40
  - Ps 66
  - Jn 6:44-51
- I am the Bread of Life, says Jesus. How easily this is taken purely in its sacramental significance – in terms of Jesus' presence in the Eucharist. But in a world marred by extreme poverty, where one in six of humanity habitually goes day in and day out without anything to eat, how can these words be meaningful? How do we proclaim the promised bread and eternal life to an empty stomach?

## Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 9:1-20
  - Ps 117
  - Jn 6:52-59
- In situations of injustices, we are often faced with the dilemma of how to address the Gospel to the parties of the conflict. To the victims, we can be so quick to preach temperance, patience and forgiveness as Gospel imperatives. But how often do we dare to preach the Gospel demand for justice to persecutors and oppressors? How do we become Ananiases to the many Sauls of our time who are in need conversion?

## Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 9:31-42
  - Ps 116
  - Jn 6:60-69
- Community is both a gift and a task. The resurrection gathers us all to become one community of faith by the gift of the Spirit. But the task of building it, which is a work of justice in so far as it is about building right relationships, can really be daunting. So even as we strive for community-building, in so far as it is no mere social construct, we must have constant recourse to the Risen Lord who is the bond of communion.

## Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2012. 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

- Acts 4,8-12
  - Ps 118
  - 1Jn 3,1-2
  - Jn 10,11-18
- A Government official told me [Mother Teresa]: "Tell the truth, you would like me to become a Christian, you are praying for that? I answered him: "When you possess something really good you wish your friends to share it with you. Now, I think that Christ is the best thing in the world and would like all men to know Him and love Him as I do. But faith in Christ is a gift of God, who gives it to whom He likes." The gentleman went away satisfied.



## Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- Acts 11:1-18
  - Ps 42
  - Jn 10:1-10
- “That they may have life...” calls to mind the title of the document of the XXIII General Chapter. Recall how we affirmed then our passion for life, how we are to proclaim the Gospel of Life and how we become Servants of Life itself by having to “enter into life” (Mt 19:17) and live it fully! The very same commitments made then remain valid for us today more than ever!

## Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012

- Acts 11:19-26
  - Ps 87
  - Jn 10:22-30
- The diaspora that arose during the persecution because of Stephen have been an occasion to announce the Good News and built up the Church. Today, the diasporas of so many peoples from the world over bring them in contact with us and our faith communities. How do we seize this opportunity to witness the Resurrection to peoples of different faith and cultures? From the eyes of faith, are we able to see the phenomenon of immigration as a “kairos” moment for evangelization or a problem to be solved?

## Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012

- Acts 12:24-13,5
  - Ps 67
  - Jn 12:44-50
- “In you is the source of life and your light makes us see light.” The powerful light of the Resurrection dispels all darkness and all fear. It lifts the gloom that overshadows countless of human sufferings, wipes tears away for those who are weeping and brings hope to all of creation.

## Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012. Philip and James, apostles

- Eph 1:15-23
  - Ps 8
  - Lk 12:8-12
- Following Jesus is fundamentally at the heart of our Claretian vocation. Hence, there is a constant invitation to go back again and again to the Jesus of the Gospel lest we forget that the service of the Word is carried out by words and deeds; by love and service. Not by the measure of our convenience but by the inconvenience lived through by Him whom we follow.

## Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 13:26-33
  - Ps 2
  - Jn 14:1-6
- Polemics and divergences abounded among the early Christians. And Jesus says: “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places!” It is not necessary that everybody thinks in the same way. The important thing is that all accept Jesus, the revelation of the Father and that out of love for him, they have attitudes of understanding, of service and of effective love. Love and service are the unifying principles that help diverse communities (and persons) to become a Church of brothers and sisters in the service of Life.

## Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 13:44-52
  - Ps 98
  - Jn 14:7-14
- We contemplate the Father who sent His Son and raised Him from the dead. In sending His Son to the world and in raising Him up from the dead, the Father reveals to us His great plan of salvation. In Jesus we come to recognize the hand of the Father at work in our times. If we recognize this hand of God, in the signs of the times, we can participate in His saving work for His children and all of creation.

## Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012. 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

- Acts 9:26-31
  - Ps 22
  - 1Jn 3:18-24
  - Jn 15:1-8
- His commandments are these: that we believe and that we love one another. The experience of the Resurrection is not simply a nice consoling feeling but is fundamentally the transformation of our life and action. It’s not just about the end-time but more about the world today --the earth & creation, peoples, relationships, bounties and wants. If we believe in the Resurrection then we should expect to see and show some signs of it. Community is formed. Fear is dispelled. Reconciliation becomes real. The work of justice and peace takes place. Society is transformed. A new heaven and a new earth begins to dawn -- now.



## Monday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2012. (Canonization of St. Anthony M. Claret)

- Acts 14:5-18
  - Ps 115
  - Jn 14:21-26
- “We have come with Good News to make you turn from these vain things to the living God.” Here we see Paul reacting to the gentiles’ inappropriate response to the miracle they have just witnessed. How many times have we heard people living in material excess interpret it as finding God’s favor while looking at the misery of others as a merited divine curse? How can our proclamation shed light to very salient distortions of the message of the Resurrection?

## Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 14:19-28
  - Ps 145
  - Jn 14:27-31
- The solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist.

## Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 15:1-6
  - Ps 122
  - Jn 15:1-8
- It is imperative that no one ... would indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfill one’s obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one’s means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life.

## Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Eph 3:14-21
  - Ps 32
  - Lk 12:49-53
- Humanity is experiencing a new loneliness; it is not in the face of a hostile nature which it has taken centuries to subdue, but in an anonymous crowd which surrounds men and women and in which they feel themselves to be strangers. Urbanization, undoubtedly an irreversible stage in the development of human societies, confronts humanity with difficult problems. How are men and women to master its growth, regulate its organization, and successfully accomplish its animation for the good of all?

## Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 15,22-31
  - Ps 57
  - Jn 15,12-17
- There is a real risk in succumbing to a kind of minimalism in our relationship with God. Even greater is the risk of a penchant to putting in elements extraneous to true worship and doing so in the name of faith and God. The antidote is to be centered on the one commandment to love others in a way that is always open to its greatest and most sublime expressions. Only then can Christian faith be truly meaningful.

## Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 16,1-10
  - Ps 100
  - Jn 15,18-21
- Another world is possible. Despite the remains of death, darkness and violence that we still see post-resurrection, the transformation we are looking for has already come in Jesus’ rising to new life. A new world has begun. And it is to this new world that we are all called to belong.

## Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012. 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

- Acts 10,25-26...
  - Ps 98
  - 1Jn 4,7-10
  - Jn 15,9-17
- No greater love than to lay one’s life for one’s friends. Life totally given for love in fulfillment of the Father’s Will overcomes all forms of death and becomes powerfully life-giving for others and for ourselves. In this constitutes our sharing together in the Divine Life itself.



## Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2012. St. Mathias, apostle (Fr. Mariano Avellana)

- Eph 4:7-16
  - Ps 121
  - Lk 13:1-9
- The story of Lydia the merchant shows the importance of personal and small group encounters in our witness to the Resurrection. Proclamation is not only about speaking to big crowds and formal assemblies. Witness happens most of all in the informal exchanges and in the routine of day to day living. There are so many would-be believers who are just waiting for a credible witness to encounter them in the hallowed grounds of their homes and workplaces.

## Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 16:22-34
  - Ps 138
  - Jn 16:5-11
- It is agreed that in our time the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are acknowledged, respected, coordinated with other rights, defended and promoted, so that in this way everyone may more easily carry out their duties. For “to safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person, and to facilitate the fulfillment of each one’s duties, should be the chief duty of every public authority.

## Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 17:15,22
  - Ps 148
  - Jn 16:12-15
- Faced with people of different faith than that of his own, Paul transformed the aeropagus into a privileged place to witness to his faith in the Resurrection. We have our own vast and complex aeropagus in the social forums and concerns. Do I dare to take my place in this aeropagus to proclaim the Lord’s promise of a new heaven and a new earth?

## Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 18:1-8
  - Ps 98
  - Jn 16:16-20
- Sufferings are not all the same. There is a suffering that comes from man’s evil designs and this must be rejected in so far as it runs counter to God’s plan. But there is a kind of weeping and mourning that comes as a consequence to our witness to the values of the Kingdom. It is this suffering that we have to readily embrace with hopeful trust in the promise of a future joy.

## Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 18:9-18
  - Ps 47
  - Jn 16:20-23
- A human society is both alienated and alienating if its organization, production, and consumption make transcendence more difficult.

## Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 18,23-28
  - Ps 47
  - Jn 16,23-28
- “The symbol of the heavens refers us back to the mystery of the covenant we are living when we pray to our Father. He is in heaven, his dwelling place; the Father’s house is our homeland. Sin has exiled us from the land of the covenant, but conversion of heart enables us to return to the Father, to heaven. In Christ, then, heaven and earth are reconciled, for the Son alone “descended from heaven” and causes us to ascend there with him, by his Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension.” (CCC 2795).

## Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012. 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter (The Ascension of the Lord)

- Acts 1:1-11  
Ps 4  
Eph 1:17-23  
Mk 16:15-20
- The Resurrection and Ascension, is God’s affirmation of Jesus’ words and deeds. For the disciples, the resurrection was hope restored. For us and for all men and women Christ’s triumph over evil, death and darkness is the power and a promise of our sharing in his victory. Ascension is the assurance of our future homecoming to the Father.

## Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012

- Acts 19:1-8
  - Ps 68
  - Jn 16:29-33
- “Take courage! I have overcome the world.” Jesus fully understands the consequences of following Him hence all these assurances abound. Not only that we may not lose heart but so that we may be able to live our lives closer to His own. And following him closely, we too can overcome all that He has overcome.



## Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012

- Acts 20:17-27
  - Ps 68
  - Jn 17:1-11
- Jesus prays for unity. But whether the “world” (referring to all humanity) will actually come to believe in God depends on whether the strength of communion within the Church can communicate the communion within God (Father and Son, with the Spirit). That all may come to faith in the Father and the Son demands a corporate witness of the divine communion.

## Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012

- Acts 20:28-38
  - Ps 68
  - Jn 17:11-19
- Both for nations and for individual men, avarice is the most evident form of moral underdevelopment.

## Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 22:30; 23,6-11
  - Ps 16
  - Jn 17:20-26
- “Before the world began,” which refers to the cosmic totality, the Father’s love for the Son was already present. Love came first, and because of love, creation. Jesus’ prayer concludes with the petition that the primordial love of the Father for the Son “may live in them,” that is, in the community. The same love that created all that is (Creation) also creates the Church. It is this very same love that binds together the Creation-community and Church-community. Hence, care for creation is an ecclesial task.

## Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 18:1-8
  - Ps 98
  - Jn 16:16-20
- In any authentic encounter with Jesus this very same question is asked of us again: “Do you love me? Then we hear the commandment: Feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep. By His rising, Jesus is the Lord of life. He loves the world. Jesus is calling us into the world that He loves: to do and be for others what he has been and done for us.

## Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2012

- Acts 28:16-20
  - Ps 11
  - Jn 21:20-25
- Citizens, on the other hand, should remember that it is their right and duty, which is also to be recognized by the civil authority, to contribute to the true progress of their own community according to their ability.

## Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Sunday of Pentecost

- Acts 2:1-11
  - Ps 104
  - 1Cor 12:3-7.12-13
  - Jn 20:19-23
- As the Father has sent me, so I send you: receive the Holy Spirit. The experience of the Resurrection brings about communion, peace, joy and praise. This is only possible if we live according to the Spirit. It is this same Spirit that sustains and inspires all true expressions of our commitment to life.

## 5. Texts for further study

### Appendix I: An Excerpt from “The Violence of Love” by Oscar Romero

I am glad to see this people,  
come from all the community of the archdiocese  
and from beyond,  
come to inundate its hope,  
its faith,  
in the light of Christ.  
It seems St. Peter has written for us salvadorans  
that superb second letter  
from which is taken today's word of exhortation  
that we keep faithful to the teaching given us,  
based on the power and the glory of Christ  
and on the living witness of the apostles,  
who saw with their own eyes  
the Redeemer's transfiguration,  
a witness that confirms the witness of the prophets.  
There is found all the Old Testament in Moses and Elijah  
and all the New Testament in Peter, James, and John  
confronting the clever fables,  
the teachings of human beings,  
the false redemptions that humans promise,  
so that they can trust in him.  
And, says St. Peter, almost poetically,  
this faith,  
like a lamp burning in the night,

will light up the darkness until the morning star arises.  
It is the night of our history,  
it is the journey of our time,  
it is these difficult hours,  
such as our land is undergoing,  
which seem like a night without escape –  
until the sun of the transfiguration  
brings daylight and hope to the Christian people,  
enlightening our way.  
Let us be faithful to it.  
Dear brothers and sisters,  
the church knows it is God's lamp,  
light taken from the glowing face of Christ  
to enlighten human lives, the lives of peoples,  
the complications and problems  
that humans create in their history.  
The church feels obliged to speak, to enlighten  
like the lamp in the night.  
The church feels compelled to light up the darkness.

### Appendix II: The Deers Cry Anon (8<sup>th</sup> Century)

I arise today  
Through the strength of heaven  
Light of sun  
Radiance of moon  
Splendour of fire  
Speed of lightning  
Swiftness of wind  
Depth of the sea  
Stability of earth  
Firmness of rock

I arise today  
Through God's strength to pilot me  
God's eye to look before me  
God's wisdom to guide me  
God's way to lie before me  
God's shield to protect me

From all who shall wish me ill

Afar and anear  
Alone and in a multitude  
Against every cruel merciless power  
That may oppose my body and soul.

Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ in me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise, Christ to shield me.  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me.

I arise today



At the end of the section from Romans that I will discuss below, Paul writes: “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it in patience” (Rom 8:24-5). Christian hope for the resurrection of the body and a renewed creation is not something we can see or imagine, because what we see is the empirical reality that surrounds us and what we can imagine is based upon what we already experience. Again, according to Paul, God’s transforming act in resurrection involves a radical change in bodily existence. What is sown in the grave as perishable, dishonoured, weak and physical will be raised as “imperishable,” “in glory,” “in power” and as a “spiritual body” (I Cor 15:44). As a risen body is beyond the grasp of our minds, so a universe transfigured in Christ is beyond imagining. We hope for what we do not see.

A critical Christian theology approaches discussions of God’s future for our world with caution. It is all too aware of what we do not know. In fact, it insists, there are serious theological reasons that put limits on what we can claim to know. These reasons were articulated by Karl Rahner in a well-known article in the mid-twentieth century (Rahner, 1966, 323-46). In his work two fundamental principles can be found which can guide the interpretation of eschatological statements. The first is that the future of our world in God remains radically hidden to us. The Scriptures insist that God has not revealed the day when the end will come (Mk 13:32), and it is not simply the timing of the end that is hidden. The future has been announced and promised in Christ and his resurrection, but it is announced and promised precisely as hidden mystery. This future is nothing else than the coming towards us of the incomprehensible God. It is God who is our Absolute Future. The revelation of God’s promise in Christ does not mean that what was unknown is now made known, clear and manageable. It is rather “the dawn and the approach of mystery as such” (330). Because the future is the coming of God, it always escapes our comprehension. It is always a mistake, then, to interpret biblical images in literal terms as something like an “eyewitness” account of what is to come.

The second principle is that the future will be the fulfilment of the salvation in Christ that is already given to us. It will be the fulfilment of what we experience in God’s self-communication in Christ and in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Our knowledge of God’s future is based upon what can be

derived from what we experience in Christ and from what we can see as its fulfilment. We do not have supplementary knowledge of the eschatological future over and above what we have in the theology of Christ and of grace, but we can transpose these to their fulfilment. This means that all genuine theological knowledge of the future is an inner moment of the eschatological present.

For the Christian, who views the future as God’s self-bestowal, the future is truly unknown and uncontrollable, and this is something that leaves a great deal of room for freedom, for hope and for trust. Of course, we are inescapably tied to our imaginations and images have their proper place in expressing religious ideas. But it is fundamental not to mistake the image for the reality. The image might be the great wedding feast, or Paul’s angelic trumpet or Matthew’s sheep and goats. But the reality that the images point to is based upon the experience we have of the grace of Christ already at work in us and drawing us into a future in God.

For Rahner, the absolute future is nothing else but God’s self-bestowal. This is the consummation of the divine action of creation and redemption, a fulfilment promised and initiated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Christianity proclaims that the becoming of the universe will end, not in emptiness, but in the divine self-bestowal. Moreover, this absolute future is already at work within history. It is already the divine creative power at work in all things, the Creator Spirit immanent in every aspect of creation, bringing the universe to its fulfilment. The absolute future, this divine self-bestowal, has found its explicit and irreversible expression in Jesus. His resurrection is both the promise and the beginning of the absolute future, the transformation of human beings and the whole of the universe in Christ. Absolute future is another name for God. This absolute future not only comes towards us as the future of our world, but is also “the sustaining ground of the dynamism towards the future” (Rahner, 1969, 62). This is the God who is the absolutely incomprehensible mystery of love from which creation comes and to which it is directed.

## Appendix IV: Ecological Commitment and the Following of Jesus (Denis Edwards)

... In the limited and finite life of Jesus there is unleashed an explosive dynamism of compassion that knows no boundaries. This is evident in every aspect of Jesus' ministry, but it reaches its radical expression in the absolute dark night of his death and in the disciples' experience of Jesus as the risen one. In encountering Jesus beyond death, the disciples discover that the compassion of God manifest in Jesus cannot be contained by the tomb, but breaks free as a dynamic power of liberation and hope. In a way that remains ever mysterious, the utter humiliation, ugliness and brutality of the cross has become a spring of compassionate life flowing out into the whole world. What flows forth is nothing less than the dynamic Spirit of God.....

Through the ages, Christian saints and sages have recognized that this divine compassion does not stop with human beings. Paul told the first Christian community in Rome that the whole creation awaits its redemption in Christ (Rom 8:19-24). At the end of the second century, Irenaeus saw the whole of creation as recapitulated (summed up and transformed) in Christ and as destined to share in Christ's

victory over death. In the thirteenth century Francis of Assisi showed how the divine compassion embodied in Jesus reaches out to embrace individual animals and birds as brothers and sisters to us before God. In the early twentieth century, Teilhard de Chardin came to see the whole of evolutionary history as empowered by the risen Christ, the Omega who is the source and goal of the whole emergent process.

Christians who reflect on Jesus today, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, do so as participants in a human community engaged in the extinction of uncounted species of living creatures. This context challenges us to think again about the compassion of God revealed in Christ and its relationship to the non-human creatures of our global community. In this chapter, I will begin to take up this issue from what we know about Jesus' own attitude to creation. This will be followed by some reflections on the way that the first Christians understood Jesus in relation to creation, as the Wisdom of God in our midst. Then I will outline the notion of "deep incarnation" and bring the chapter to its conclusion by offering some thoughts on the meaning of Jesus Christ in the context of evolution.

## Appendix V: Eucharist and Ecology (Denis Edwards)

How do ecological issues, such as global climate change, impact on our celebrations of the Eucharist? How is Eucharistic worship related to ecological action and life-styles? What is it to live an ecological vocation before the God of Jesus Christ? What is the relationship between ecological practice and Christian spirituality? In this last chapter I will attempt a response to these questions, taking up, first, some suggestions for an ecological theology of the Eucharist, and then some reflections on spirituality and praxis.

### *Towards an Ecological Theology of the Eucharist*

The proposal advanced in this section is that, when Christians gather for Eucharist, they bring the Earth and all its creatures, and in some way the whole universe, to the table. I will explore this proposal by working through five steps: Eucharist as the lifting up of all creation, as the living memory of both creation and redemption, as sacrament of the cosmic Christ, as participation with all God's creatures in the Communion of the Trinity, as anticipation of the participation of all God's creatures in the life of the Trinity and as solidarity with the victims of climate change and other ecological crises.

### *The Lifting Up of All Creation*

John Zizioulas, a distinguished theologian and bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, has spelled out his ecological theology in a series of lectures given at Kings College London. He argues that the ecological crisis cannot be met simply by arguments based on reason.

While these clearly have their place, far more is required. Zizioulas insists that, if we hope to change priorities and life-styles, we will need a different culture and a different ethos. As a Christian theologian, Zizioulas is convinced that what is needed above all is a liturgical ethos. While ecological conversion can be inspired by many other sources as well as Christianity, I think Zizioulas is right in seeing the Christian community as possessing a unique foundation for a radically ecological ethos in its eucharistic spirituality.

Like many Orthodox theologians, he sees human beings as called by God to be "priests of creation." He distinguishes this priestly task from notions of sacrificial priesthood that he associates with medieval and Roman Catholic theology. He sees each baptised person as called to be, like Christ, a fully personal being. This involves being relational rather than self-enclosed, being able to go out of self to the other, in what he calls *ek-stasis*. Persons are always ecstatic, in the sense that they achieve personhood only in communion with others. Humans are relational beings. Their vocation is to relate in a fully personal way to God, to other humans and to other creatures of God. According to Zizioulas, humanity and the rest of creation comes to their completion in the life of God through each other.

When humans come to the Eucharist, they bring the fruits of creation, and in some way the whole creation, to the Eucharistic table. In the Eucharist, creation is lifted up to God in offering and thanksgiving. In the East, the central Eucharistic prayer is known as the *anaphora*, a word which means the lifting-up. The gifts of creation are lifted up to God and the Spirit is invoked to transform the gifts of creation, and the assembled community, into the Body of



Christ. The exercise of this priesthood is not confined to the ordained but is the God-given role of all the faithful. It is not restricted to liturgical celebrations but is meant to happen in the whole of life. It is meant to involve all human interactions with the rest of creation. The “lifting up” of creation is meant to be played out around the planet continually by every human being. Fundamentally this priestly task is nothing other than an authentic personal love for other creatures in all their specificity, a fully human feeling for them and celebration of them in God. Our stance towards the rest of creation, our personal engagement with it as fully relational beings, is a central dimension of our life before God and salvation in Christ.

The ecological crisis requires the deepest resources of the human community. With Zizioulas, I believe that in the Eucharist Christians have a profound source for an authentically ecological ethos and culture. Christian eucharistic practice, when understood and lived in all its depth, is capable of sustaining an ongoing conversion to a personal and loving stance before the rest of creation. It does not provide answers to the practical questions that confront us, but it does offer a motivation and a genuinely ecological ethos.

### *Solidarity with Victims*

The Eucharist always involves the memory of the cross. The theologian Johannes Metz speaks of this as a “dangerous” memory. The cross of Jesus is an abiding challenge to all complacency before the suffering of others. It brings those who suffer to the very centre of Christian faith. It challenges self-serving and ideological justifications of the misery of the poor and the victims of war, oppression and natural disasters. The resurrection offers a dynamic vision of hope for the suffering of the world, but it does not dull the memory of the suffering ones. They are always present, forever imaged in the wounds of the risen Christ.

This dangerous and critical memory provides an alternative way of seeing and acting. It leads to solidarity, to alternative life-styles and to personal and political action. The World Council of Churches, in its reflections on solidarity with victims of climate change, points to the many communities of people, especially in the Southern hemisphere, who are particularly vulnerable to climate change: “Though their per capita contribution to the causes of climate change is negligible, they will suffer from the consequences to a much larger degree.” Climate change and other aspects of our ecological crisis aggravate the social and economic injustice between rich and poor in our global community. To contribute to this destruction of lives, of homes, of livelihoods and of communities “is not only a sin against the weak and unprotected but also against the earth—God’s gift of life.”

The Eucharist, as a living memory of all those who suffer, calls the Christian community to a new solidarity that involves all the human victims as well as the animals and plants that are destroyed or threatened. Solidarity involves personal and political commitment to both of the two strategies that have been identified as responses to climate change, those of mitigation and adaptation. Adaptation will mean re-ordering society, budgeting in readiness for ecological disasters, training personnel and allocating resources. In a particular way it will involve, as a matter of justice, hospitality to environmental refugees.

When we Australian Christians gather for Eucharistic celebrations, we gather in solidarity with Christians who as-

semble for Eucharist in Kiribati, in Tuvalu, and in Bangladesh. We gather in solidarity with those who share other forms of religious faith in the Pacific, in South-East Asia, in Africa, and in all parts of our global community. We remember those already displaced from the homes and their heritage. We cannot but be painfully aware of the threat to many millions of other people. We are challenged to be mindful of Australia’s contribution to greenhouse, of our wealth created by coal, of our use of motor vehicles. We pray in solidarity with the global community, that the Eucharist that brings us into peace and communion with God, may “advance the peace and salvation of all the world” (Third Eucharistic Prayer). We commit ourselves again to discipleship, to an ecological ethos, lifestyle, politics and praxis, as people of Easter hope.

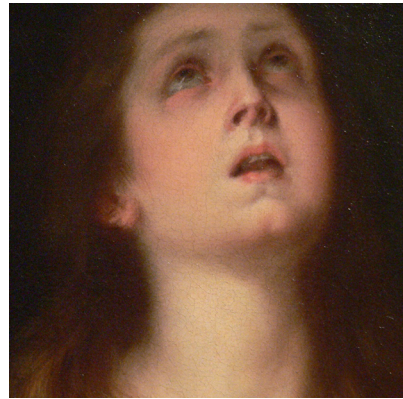
Peter Scott has said that in the Eucharist, “the Eucharistic community is bound in sociality to the wider ecological society, and interprets and clarifies it.” He describes the Eucharist as an event of divine hospitality and points out that this hospitality “has no ecclesiastical restrictions, and encompasses the non-human.” He sees the Eucharist as a powerful political resource that Christianity offers an ecological age. In every Eucharist, we gather in one place with all our ordinariness and limitations. We take up the fruits of the earth and the work of human hands. We encounter Jesus, in all the healing, liberating love poured out in his life and death and know again his presence as the risen one transforming all things from within. In the power of the Spirit, we participate in and taste the eschatological Communion of the Trinity. In the Spirit, the assembly is made one in Christ, in a communion in God that has no borders, but reaches out to embrace all of God’s creatures. Every Eucharist calls us to ecological conversion and action.

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# The Forge in Our Daily Life

**PATRIS MEI** - 2012

“

We need to fan it and fuel it with prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, joy, vigilance of spirit, study and a major effort toward the virtues and we have to work singularly, watch over and obtain with greater diligence” (Claret)