

# **THE KEY TO EVANGELIZATION**

## **Jesus Christ is Lord**

A new and revised edition of  
**The Key to the Good News**

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The first edition of this book: *The Key to the Good News*, was published by Dove Publications, Pecos, New Mexico 87552, in 1975.



## Summary

The good news is that Jesus Christ is Lord. The three titles of Jesus (*Jesus*, *Christ* and *Lord*) summarize the three aspects of his unique mission, namely salvation, sanctification and union. As the three titles are extended, the richness of the gospel unfolds.

The key to the good news is Jesus himself. He invites us to ask for his own Spirit from the Father to accomplish in us the ongoing work of salvation, sanctification and loving-union.

## Foreword to the First Edition

JESUS CHRIST IS THE LORD!

Since August of 1970, every time I am expected to proclaim the gospel I start with these words. That is one indication of the impact that *The Key to the Good News* had on me. This booklet is an expansion of a talk that Father George Kosicki gave on a retreat that I attended. I have been insisting ever since that he publish his discovery. That talk still remains with me, has had a powerful influence on my life, and is the most influential single teaching that I have ever experienced. I rejoice that it is now available to all and advise the reader to prayerfully dispose himself before reading and reflecting on its contents.

*The Key to the Good News* came as an answer to many questions that I was experiencing. What is the theme of the church? How can I integrate the teachings of the gospel? How can Jesus become a real person who influences my daily life? Is our faith really complicated? Isn't there a simple approach for simple people like me? Why doesn't the word of God have a deeper impact on my life? Is there a formula that will assist me in discerning good, sound teaching? How can I love the real church? I found the answer to all these basic questions in that one talk.

Over a three-year period I found a new taste for prayer, more insights in the scriptures and more power in preaching as I tried to assimilate this teaching. I know Jesus in a clearer, balanced way as a result. The dynamics of a spiritual life that is centered in the Lord and increasingly filled with praise and thanksgiving for all three persons of the Trinity flowed from applying this teaching to prayer life. This is the key that helped me realize that through his body Jesus continues his liberating, healing, reconciling, enlightening, empowering, enlivening, loving, uniting, and transforming work.

If the reader finds himself lost in detail as he studies this booklet, please recall the three themes presented, i.e., Jesus, the saving one; Christ, the anointed-anointer;

and the Lord, the *Kyrios* of the kingdom. These themes are the core of the message. The operative words in our response are: “I repent, I yield, I abide in you.”

“You can tell a tree by its fruit” (Matt. 7:20). The fruits of this teaching can be very powerful if you give it serious consideration. One such fruit is the recognition that at the very center of our faith-life is the good news about Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the Lord!

*Bishop J. C. McKinney*

## Introduction to the Revised Edition

Why a new edition of *Key to the Good News*? In order to put an even stronger focus on the person Jesus who is the Christ and Lord. It is not just a question of a clearer and stronger teaching on who Jesus is (called catechesis) in order that we have a better understanding of Jesus, BUT it is a question of establishing a *relationship* with Jesus. It is a question of experiencing this relationship in a way that changes our lives – changing our priorities, our desires, our commitments, our will, our thoughts and emotions – our very life-style. It is a question of the basic conversion of our lives by which we are made children of the Father, with Jesus our elder brother, and Mary our mother, by the work of the Holy Spirit. This relationship with Jesus by the “christing” of the Holy Spirit makes us members of the family of God; it establishes Jesus as Lord of our lives. This is a covenant relationship with the Triune God and is the foundation on which His Church is built.

The focus of this new edition is on establishing first and foremost the *foundation of “Jesus Christ as Lord”* in order to then build the house with its walls and roof. The foundation must be laid prior to building or else it is built on sand.

The establishing of the foundation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ begins by the *proclamation* of Jesus as Lord. He is the power of the Gospel (see 1 Cor 1:18). When Jesus is proclaimed as the Christ and the Lord, something happens to the listeners. On the day of Pentecost, the listeners were cut to the heart (Act 2:37). Something happened that needed explanation.

The proclamation of Jesus as Lord – THE Good News – is to announce the victory we have in the Lord Jesus: Jesus beloved Son of the Father and born of Mary by the Holy Spirit, who suffered, died and was buried – on the third day He rose from the dead, victorious over sin, suffering, Satan, and death and now reigns at the right hand of the Father, giving us His promise of sharing in His victory and eternal life. Proclaiming Jesus as Lord is the power of the gospel.

God's invitation to each of us is to *receive* His gift of victory and eternal life by our faith in Jesus, by our radical trust in Jesus, by turning from our sins and dead works and by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and His gifts in Baptism. These gifts are sealed in Confirmation, and brought to fullness in the Holy Eucharist. This receiving of the victory of Jesus and eternal life is experienced and manifested in a way that was recognized in the early Church by the bishop who then sealed the gift of the Holy Spirit, received by anointing the forehead of the candidate with holy oil.

It is this initial experience of the Holy Spirit that needs to be continually nurtured by teaching and by the support of a living Christian community in order to bring it to maturity. It is this initial experience of the Holy Spirit that makes Jesus present as Lord, that is the Key to Evangelization and the Key to Power and the foundation on which the life of His Church is built.

Unfortunately, all too often, this foundation of the relationship of Jesus Christ as Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit – all to the glory of the Father – is missed, assumed, neglected, or by-passed! I have found this true in the training of many seminarians and in the formation programs of religious communities. This relationship established by the proclamation of Jesus as Lord is the initial focus of the revised edition. The foundation must be laid prior to building the walls and roof.

It is worth doing a self-examination of our own training and of the present training of those who are to be the teachers and leaders of the next generation. Does the training assume a committed relationship to Jesus as Lord and to His Church? Does the training program focus first on teaching in order to understand intellectually and then hopefully experience the fundamental relationship to the Lord? Does the formation program for our next generation build on sand? Or does the formation prepare for a committed relationship to the Lord Jesus by a thorough proclamation (kerygma) leading to the experience of the presence and the power and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, then matured by teaching (catechesis) and living of the Christian mysteries (mysticogia)?

The “New Evangelization” called for by Pope Paul VI and by Pope John Paul II is a call to evangelize by the power of the Holy Spirit and the witness of our lives. It is a call to all in this world trapped in the spiral of violence and hatred – to learn to forgive. It is a call to experience personally the regenerating experience of God’s gift of His tender mercy (see John Paul II, Mercy Sunday, April 10, 1994 and April 23, 1995).

This new edition includes new chapters: “Assume Nothing,” focusing on the experience of the relationship to Jesus Christ as Lord. The chapter “Key to Suffering” looks at the mystery of suffering transformed by love. The chapter, “Key to the Church” looks at the various models of the Church. The whole text has been edited, adding new insights over these past two decades. It concludes with the question of “What can I do?”

## Foreword to the Revised Edition

JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!

For the past 25 years I've started every homily with those words. It assures me that there is a focus and the Gospel is preached. When Fr. George asked me to write a new foreword for his revision of the original book, I reread the original. It's as true today as it was then. That theme brings clarity to every facet of my life; my prayers, many meetings, my preaching, my activities, my crosses, my apostolic efforts, my travels, ... all have that focus and it is a constant reminder of whom I represent and answer to.

There are some new insights. The "my" is much more an "our" now. Jesus energizes the community with his gift of the Holy Spirit and his revelation about Abba. The development of God's Kingdom is a wonder that calls for thanks and praise. It is clearly a work of God. I find a simple story about a soldier in Korea to be a great motivator. I don't remember the source of the story but it still tickles my heart especially when I see the light in the face of people who hear it.

The American soldier stopped at a bakery to get some goodies to take back to the men at the base. As he enters the store he sees a girl in orphan clothes looking with wonder in the window. He completes his purchase by buying a separate bag of four sweet rolls and hands them to the girl as he leaves the store. With eyes wide with wonder she questions, "Mister, are you God?" "No" responds the soldier "but I am God's son."

The Holy Spirit is without a face but he often uses our face. That's the insight of "Icon" theology. There is diversity in humanity. There is something of God in each of us. He must increase and I must decrease. Our openness to the Holy Spirit brings the light, life, and power of Jesus into our faces. The constant reminder in this new text to be aware of pelagianism is the insight most needed today. We are a "do it yourself" people. It's too easy for us to squeeze God out. The more we can overcome that

tendency in favor of “magnifying” the Lord as Mary did, the more we experience the reign of God. That is the activity of all Christians who are anointed with the Holy Spirit. God is with us, God is within us. We do not act in our own name but in the name of Jesus. As he manifests his saving power in us we experience the glory of God and we notice it in others. That is our new life in Jesus ... Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Mary models that glory and we strive to be like her, each one of us in our unique way.

We are all part of the Body of Christ and together we experience and give increase to the reign of God. Jesus Christ is Lord!

+ Joseph C. McKinney

September 6, 1998

## 1.

### **Assume Nothing:**

#### **On Making Assumptions Explicit in Renewal**<sup>1</sup>

There is a sign in our local bank that says, “Assume Nothing.” In my reading of articles on renewal I am becoming more conscious of the need to check out the author’s assumptions. I now test out the articles with several questions in my mind. Do the authors reflect an experience of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and an experience of living in a Christian community? Do their attitudes toward the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church increase my faith, my commitment and my reverence for the Lord and his Church?

From my reading of recent reviews on renewal of religious life and the priesthood and from the study of various renewal programs being offered, as well as from personal contact with many priests concerned with the renewal of religious communities, my concern is about making assumptions very explicit. The key word here is *explicit*. I find that assumptions are made that laity, religious, and priests are in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and are in a committed relationship to his Church. My experience is that neither of these assumptions can be made. In this chapter, I want to look at three areas of renewal where I find assumptions are being made implicitly. The approach I am taking is experiential, that is, approaching the assumptions basic to our Christian life through what we experience. The main experience I will share is my own because it is the only experience I have. I will also speak from my communal experience of a small community of priests striving to live out explicitly the assumptions as described in “Renewed Religious Life: The Dynamics of Re-discovery” (G. W. Kosicki, *Review for Religious*, January 1976). In addition I want to share some teachings of Pope Paul VI on the need for an explicit renewal.

### **Three areas of assumptions**

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Review for Religious*, September 1977, Volume 36, Number 5.

Three areas of assumptions concern me: 1). conversion to the Person of the Lord Jesus, 2). charismatic power, 3). committed relationships. I find that in all three areas assumptions are made without making them explicit and yet the very essence of renewal is renewed conversion, renewed charisma, renewed community.

### **1). Conversion to the Lord Jesus**

Many renewal programs assume the necessary step of conversion to the Lord Jesus. At least I hope they assume it, because either they do not deal with it at all or else they begin with talking about “conversion of heart” as a good thing and then quickly move on to their “real issues.” My experience has proved to me the need of dealing explicitly with personal and communal sins. Turning from sin and false idols to the living God is not a process we can assume. Conversion is continuous and needs to be repeated over and over again.

There is human weakness which is always with us and there is also sin with the resulting sins. We all experience sinfulness, weakness, sickness and dying but we also experience explicit sins of sensuality, resentment, jealousy, and injustice. All of us carry around the weaknesses of poor self-images, fears, anxieties, depressions, and inadequacies but we also carry around with us real sins. Both weaknesses and sins are matters for salvation. But weaknesses and sins cannot be matters for salvation unless we deal with them explicitly. Communities will continue in their weaknesses and sins and continue to die until they explicitly repent, that is, acknowledge their weaknesses and sins, confess them to the Lord and to one another, praying for one another, forgiving one another, turning from self and idols to the Lord for healing, forgiveness and deliverance.

My first point is that *conversion has to be explicit* – explicit confession of sins, turning to the Lord for forgiveness, deliverance and healing; asking for the prayer and support of community. Conversion is an act of faith in Jesus as Son of God, an act that continues, an act that makes it possible for us to walk in the light; an act that confesses the lordship of Jesus in all

things. “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you find healing” (Jm 5:16).<sup>2</sup>

This kind of explicit confession of sins and prayer for healing assumes explicit faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus as *the* Lord of the universe and as *the* Savior, *the* Way, *the* Truth, and *the* Life cannot be assumed; it must be explicit. This faith cannot be just “faith,” a kind of wishful thinking or a circumlocution but must be a faith *in Jesus* as Son of God. Jesus is the *only* Lord and Savior, not one among many possible “saviors,” e.g., psychology or group dynamics. Our faith in Jesus as Lord becomes explicit when we come to know him in a personal way, in an experiential way: through an explicit act of faith in him as Lord and Savior. This act of faith is an invitation asking Jesus to come into our hearts, to take over our lives and be the Lord and Savior of our whole being. This faith in Jesus is a continuous receptivity to him, an accepting of the gift that he is and a submitting of our whole lives to him that he might possess us and guide us.

There is no escaping this explicit conversion which brings us to the experience of his person, power and presence. In this way *the* Lord becomes *my* Lord and *my* Savior (see Ph 3:8).

This faith in Jesus as Lord is sustained in the community of believers by mutual confession of both our sins and the lordship of Jesus. In this way the *my* Lord of each is the *our* Lord of the community – and this is the work of the Spirit.

It is the confessing community that is the witnessing community. When Jesus is confessed as Lord and Savior in community through praise, preaching, forgiveness, and service, then those in need will experience forgiveness, healing, unbinding, and loving support. It is my experience that the explicit sharing of the lordship of Jesus through communal praise of the Lord, confession of sins and forgiveness, sharing our hearts’ desires for growth and union with the Lord, sharing his word, serving one another, supporting one another and breaking his bread are all needed to make explicit the lordship of Jesus among us, and the greatest surprise to me is that it works:

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<sup>2</sup> All scriptural texts are from the *New American Bible*, © 1970, by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC, and used with permission.

When we freely and explicitly share the lordship of Jesus among us, we are free and filled with his joy – we are renewed.

## 2). **Charismatic Power**

I continue to see assumptions made about the power needed to renew communities and the priesthood. Some of these assumptions are made as though there were no second law of thermodynamics which states that there is no work done without external energy input. The energy to do work (power) has to come from outside. If we work at renewal only with our own internal energy, this is outright Pelagianism. If we rely only on God's energy, this is Illuminism or Quietism. But if we cooperate with God's energy in accomplishing the work of renewal, this is *charismatic power*.

God's power is operative in man through a variety of ministries such as those listed in the First Letter to the Corinthians:

There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge. Through the Spirit one receives faith; by the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing and still another miraculous powers. Prophecy is given to one; to another power to distinguish one spirit from another. One receives the gift of tongues, another that of interpreting the tongues. But it is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills (I Co 12:4-11).

and in the Letter to the Romans:

Thus, in virtue of the favor given to me, I warn each of you not to think more highly of himself than he ought. Let him estimate himself soberly in keeping with the measure of faith that God has apportioned him. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all the members have the same function, so too we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us. One's gift may be prophesy; its use should be in proportion to his faith. It may be the gift of ministry; it should be used for service. One who is a teacher should use his gift of teaching, one with the power of exhortation should exhort. He who gives alms should do so generously; he who rules should exercise his authority with care; he who performs works of mercy should do so cheerfully (Rm 12:3-8).

My second point is that laity, religious, and priests need *explicit surrendering to the power* of the Holy Spirit. They need to *yield explicitly to the Holy Spirit* – to let go of their own control of things and let him take over. They need to yield *explicitly to the charisms* of the Holy Spirit. Charisms are his gifts and they are not optional for the Church. We need only consider the loss

of vocations, the dissensions and divisions among us to realize that the Church today needs the new stress of healing, deliverance, discernment of spirits, preaching in the power of the Spirit. We cannot set aside the tools the Spirit has bestowed on his Church, nor can we assume that they become operative by an indirect method such as osmosis.

If we want to live as Christians in the power of the Spirit, there is no avoiding the explicit surrender to the Holy Spirit by which we live baptized in the Spirit. To live baptized in the Holy Spirit is the goal of the Christian life – not just of the charismatic renewal. The charismatic renewal teaches a *way* to come to experience the power of being baptized in the Spirit. In no way should we let something like the charismatic renewal prevent us from experiencing the heart of Christianity, namely living baptized in the Spirit of Jesus. This is the meaning of: “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful. Enkindle in them the fire of your divine love. Father, send forth your Spirit and they shall be recreated and you shall renew the face of the earth!”

Of all the dimensions missing in the renewal of communities and the Church I would venture to say that what is missing most is power. We are so tainted with Pelagianism that we want to save ourselves by our own power and we want to renew ourselves by our own power.

One way to make explicit our need for power is to ask for it. The power of the Holy Spirit is available for the asking. But we need to *ask*, explicitly, expectantly, and persistently. Asking for the power of the Spirit is the issue. By asking we express our need, our dependency upon God’s power, our submission and surrender to his will. “How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Lk 11:13).

### **3). Committed Relationships**

The foundation of community life is a commitment to be in a special relationship with specific persons. To be a Christian community the commitment needs to be explicitly a common relationship to Jesus as Lord and to one another as brothers or sisters in the Lord. This relationship is fundamental and prior to all other roles and functions in the community and the Church. The extent and details of the commitment depend on the type of community but the basic relationship is common; we are brothers and sisters in the Lord. The relationship is based

on commitment to each other – to be related to each other in a special way. It is a relationship between specific brothers or sisters who agree to take on a mutual responsibility for each other's life as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Such committed relationships are not based on mutual likes or compatibility or convenience nor are they a matter of just psychology or communication skills. They are also the fruit of the Holy Spirit and must be asked for. We need to ask explicitly for “the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force” (Ep 4:3). It is not, however, a question of either/or; either a natural or a spiritual relationship. Rather both dimensions are needed. But it is my experience that we cannot assume the existence of the spiritual dimension of a relationship; it must be made explicit and prime.

Committed relationships need to be made explicit in mutual agreements. Relationships in families, in religious houses, and rectories are all too often based on non-spoken agreements which are either wrong or non-existent. The effect of these fallacious assumptions is seen in relationships that are based on convenience or on the lowest common denominator just to avoid hostility. The resulting malaise of family and community relationships cannot be resolved just by acquiring communication skills or by techniques of group dynamics. The resolution of the malaise will be found in explicit committed relationships to the Lord and to one another as a priority commitment.

Committed relationships confront us with the place of order and the nature of headship and submission to one another in family and in community. There is no escaping the whole area of authority, obedience, submission, explicit care for, support, responsibility for, by assuming it exists or by avoiding the issue. There is no escaping taking responsibility for one another's life as brothers and sisters.

My third point is that laity, religious, and priests need to *experience* committed relationships that are explicit that we are brothers and sisters in the Lord. This means in practice to submit to one another and to a head with authority over our lives and also to take responsibility for each other's life. It is not just a convenient arrangement of finances and rules

for good housekeeping in order to live out our individual life, rather it is a common relationship of brothers and sisters in the Lord. In practice this means death to self. The experience of union with God and one another can only come through death to self and so life in Christ. In the Body of Christ we are confronted with the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus who emptied himself and now challenges us to be emptied so that he might fill us with his love. To be the Body of Christ there is no escaping the Paschal Mystery. In our daily life together it means love, service, concern, taking responsibility for each other, dying to self-concern to be concerned for the other, speaking the truth in love, sharing our lives, our prayer, our faith, our weaknesses, our sins, the hopes and the desires of our hearts. In practice it means to be brothers and sisters in the Lord – I am not my brother's keeper, but I am my brother's brother.

### **Renewal of Hearts**

The three-fold point I am making is that the *renewal of the hearts of the laity, the priests and religious* will come about in an explicit *conversion*, the explicit *use of charisms*, in an explicit *committed* community. To be Christian, there is no escaping any of them. Conversion is essential to discipleship; Charisms are essential to the apostolate; committed relationships (community) are essential to brotherhood (sisterhood) in the Lord.

If we want the hearts of the laity, priests and religious to be renewed, it must be the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot avoid the heart of the issue. And is not this what the charismatic renewal is about: the *renewal of the heart of the Church*? The charismatic renewal has been teaching us about the need of making explicit the work of the Spirit in renewing hearts. I think there is no way to escape the explicit yielding to the Holy Spirit. Any circumventions or circumlocutions will delay reaching this goal: the renewal of the hearts of the laity, the priests, and religious and so the heart of the Church.

### **Paul VI's Explicit Exhortation**

To my delight and surprise I discovered one of the major methodologies of Paul VI's messages. I used to look carefully to the detailed reasoning of his presentations and then would skip over very lightly the sections of exhortations all too easily lost in the lofty style of Vatican documents. But then it occurred to me that the very exhortations themselves, the appeals and

implored statements, are the heart of his message. With this new awareness I re-read some of his major addresses with new insight.

One of the origins of making our assumptions explicit arose from the study of the documents of Pope Paul VI. In his first encyclical (*Ecclesiam Suam*, Aug. 6, 1964), the one outlining the program of his pontificate, Paul VI exhorts us to make an *explicit* act of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord that we might *experience* Christ in us (emphasis mine):

And thus we invite all men to make a living, profound and conscious act of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . Why do we have the boldness to invite you to this act of ecclesiastical awareness? To this *explicit*, though interior act of faith? . . . The Church needs to feel the throb of her own life. . . . She needs to *experience* Christ in herself, according to the words of the Apostle Paul: "May Christ find a dwelling place through faith in your hearts" nn. 23, 24, 25. And further: "The Holy Spirit is still ready, if we *implore* him and listen to him to fulfill without fail the promise of Christ: 'The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send on my account, will in his turn make everything plain, and recall to your minds everything I have said to you'" (n. 26).

In his later exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, Paul VI teaches the need of evangelization with both a witness of life and *explicit* proclamation of Jesus as Lord:

Nevertheless this witness always remains insufficient in the long run if it is not explained, justified – what Peter called always having "your answer ready for people who ask you for the reason for the hope you all have: and made *explicit* by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The good news proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son on God are not proclaimed (n. 22).

### **Assumptions Made Explicit**

In the very writing of this article there are underlying assumptions that need to be made explicit:

- 1). That salvation in Jesus Christ is *total*: body, soul, spirit, society and the universe.
- 2). That Jesus is *the way, the truth and the life*.
- 3). That the good news of the Lord Jesus is to be proclaimed by the witness of our corporate life that is *both seen and heard*.

- 4). That a community of faith, hope and love is the living Body of Christ that needs to be experienced in order to be preached effectively.
- 5). That the people of God and especially the leaders: bishops, priests, and all committed ministers of the gospel need *explicit* conversion, Charisms and community.

The basic assumptions of the renewal of the people of God, namely, our continued conversion to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit, and the commitment to his Church, have to be made explicit and be renewed continually. There is no foundation on which we can build other than the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Co 3:11).

## 2.

### **The Need to Proclaim the Good News**

Today more than ever we need a simple and straightforward way to proclaim and explain the gospel. In recent decades the presentation of the gospel has varied from a social gospel, to a psychological gospel, the a gospel of all men as brothers. Nevertheless, in the midst of all the new attempts to proclaim the *good* news, the very *bad* news of war, poverty, injustice, immorality, and sin continues to be more rampant than ever.

The good news is the announcement that we have a *new* Lord, Jesus Christ, who is our savior. Jesus is the good news and the good news is Jesus. He alone can save us from all the evil around us and in us. A real problem, however, exists in our times: deafness. Men no longer seem to hear the word of God. Paul VI put it well:

A burning question of the present day preoccupies us: how can the message of the gospel penetrate the world? What can be done at these levels in which a new culture is unfolding, where a new type of man is emerging, a man who no longer believes he needs redemption?

(Paul VI, *Renewal of Religious Life*, July 1, 1971)

What can be done to penetrate the world with the good news? We must give witness in the midst of the world through our deeds, prayer, and action, which means living the message of love, justice, and peace as well as proclaiming it. In addition to living the God news, we must

make it heard. The preaching of the good news is what this presentation is about. Unless men hear it, they cannot call upon the Lord. “Faith, then, comes through hearing, and what is heard is the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). Unless the word of Christ is preached, men will not hear, will not believe, and will not change their hearts.

One tool that we need is a clear and simple way to explain who Jesus is and how he is good news to mankind. The explanation must be as *simple* as a-b-c so that children can easily grasp it, and it must be as *profound* as the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ so that theologians and mystics can be enriched. The explanation must be *universal* enough so that preachers, teachers, catechists and students can make use of it. Yet it must be simple enough so that Christians without education can grasp it quickly and remember it. It must be succinct and catchy so that it may be used as a motto or theme for proclaiming the good news to all men. But, above all, the explanation must be as *true* as sacred scripture itself. The good news of Jesus must be based on his revelation. The gospel needs to be proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit in such a simple and penetrating way that men are able to hear it, open their hearts, and so change their lives.

I have discovered that there is a simple way to summarize the gospel and explain who Jesus is and what he wants to do for us. It is to use the three basic titles of Jesus: *Jesus Christ is Lord.*

To one seeking to know what the message of Christianity is about, an explanation of the gospel could go something like this:

Christianity is a message of good news. The good news is that we have a savior from all the bad news around us. *Jesus* is the good news.

Who is Jesus?

**Jesus** is savior. He is the Son of God who came down on earth, becoming man. He took on all our sin and died to it in obedience to God the Father.

**The Christ:** Jesus was anointed (christed) by the Holy Spirit and was raised from the dead, becoming the source of the Holy Spirit for all who believe. He now anoints (christs) us that we too may rise with him from sin and in the future rise from death itself.

**The Lord:** By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was proclaimed Lord, giving him the full status of the Son of God which he had before he dwelt among us. He is now reigning as our older brother, pleading for us at the throne of God the Father. We are called to be brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Or again: *What does the good news mean for each of us? What does Jesus want for us?*

**Jesus** wants us to be saved. He wants us to experience his salvation from sin, death, and Satan. He wants to wash us clean and reconcile us with the Father. He wants us to believe and accept his gift of himself, his own Holy Spirit poured out in love for each of us and for all men. He wants us to turn to him and away from sin and self-centeredness. He wants us to change our way of life, away from all that is not of him, and to turn towards him. He wants us to live in faith and be filled with his peace.

**The Christ** wants to anoint us. Jesus, himself christed, wants to christ us with the same power that raised him from the dead. He wants us to yield to that power so that he, in and through us, can continue the work of the Father. He wants us to live and walk in his Holy Spirit. He wants us to have hope in his power and live in joy.

**The Lord** wants to be our Lord, to reign in our hearts, to be the center and focus of our whole lives. He wants us to open our hearts to his love, to be united with him, our elder brother, and thus united to one another. He wants us to live as brothers and sisters in him. He wants us to be loved and love in return. He wants his reign, his kingdom, to come in us. He wants us to be his body.

### **The Good News Is Jesus**

Jesus is the good news. This message needs to be announced anew from every pulpit, lectern, and rooftop. The world that is filled with bad news needs to *experience* the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord. The people of this world have searched for other saviors and made for themselves other lords. Now they need to hear the clear, precise, and loud proclamation: *Jesus Christ is Lord!*



### 3.

## **The Key to the Good News**

### **Search for a Key**

Over the years I have had a strange longing to summarize the gospel message. I wanted to put the good news into a formula that would be simple to understand and easy to remember. This desire arose from my training in biochemistry where formulas and periodic tables are a great help to research. Unfortunately, there is a danger in searching for formulas or keys, because they can over-simplify and give the impression that the answer is totally contained in the formula. This is especially true in regard to the gospel, which is a message that goes far beyond an easy answer. And yet the challenge was there, and it lingered in my mind. Fortunately the key to the good news that I am presenting does not eliminate the grand mystery of God's plan but rather points out the exact central point – Jesus Christ. In this person lies the answer and the challenge to ever deeper search.

One Sunday evening I was at the home of an evangelist friend for an evening of prayer and sharing. As I was leaving, he pointed to a sign over the mantelpiece that read, "Jesus Christ is Lord!" He then said, "That summarizes the whole gospel." On the way home and through the late hours of the night, the phrase kept going through my mind incessantly. "Jesus Christ is Lord . . . That is the summary of the gospel!"

In the days that followed, many elaborations of this basic proclamation arose from my prayer and reflection on the scriptures. One of the first such developments occurred while I was reading Peter's conclusion to his proclamation on the day of Pentecost:

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

(Acts 2:36 – RSV)

Here the triple aspect of the gospel was presented under the three titles of *Jesus*, *Christ* and *Lord*. I saw that it was a summary of the sermon he had just delivered: Jesus died, rose by the power of the Holy Spirit, and reigns as Lord at the right hand of the Father. And further, Peter then repeated this compendium of the gospel, reflecting the triple title used, when the people asked what they should do:

*Jesus* – Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;

*Christ* – and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Lord* – For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.

(Acts 2:38-39, RSV)

During the weeks that followed, many such “trilogies” came to me during prayer. Nearly every time I spoke about this key to the good news, a new trilogy was added to the list. The accompanying description of trilogies is a collection of some that were developed over the last four years. I am sharing them with you that you too might have a tool to explain and to remember the gospel in many different ways. Each trilogy reflects the basic one of *Jesus Christ is Lord* and is itself a summary of the gospel. I’ve used many of the trilogies as a basis for sermons and talks or for prayerful meditation on the word of God.

In the June, 1972, issue of *New Covenant*, Bishop Joseph McKinney describes the use of this key as a theme of his life. He goes on to suggest that the theme for the church is: Jesus Christ is Lord!

The search for a key to teach, understand, and remember the good news is not something new. The early church used just such a key in the symbol of the fish. The word “fish” in Greek (IXTHUS) spelled out the first letters of “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior.” Under these titles the gospel message was reflected; so much so that the image of a fish became a sign for a Christian. An even more succinct key to the gospel is: *Jesus Christ is Lord* (Jesus is the Christ and the Lord: Acts 2:36, II Cor. 4:5, Phil. 2:11, Luke 2:11).

## Jesus Is Lord

The shortest form of the key is: Jesus is Lord. It means that Jesus is by the power of the Holy Spirit the Lord, and thus it includes the Christ dimension implicitly.

The word “Lord” has a special meaning. It is the English for the Latin word *Dominus*, for the Greek word *Kyrios*, for the Hebrew words *Adonai* and *Yahweh*. Jesus is the Son of God.

This title “Lord” means that Jesus is *the* Lord (Phil. 2), the Son of the living God through whom all things were made. He is the Alpha and the Omega. It also means that Jesus is *my* Lord (Phil. 3). He has condescended in love to lower himself and enter my life and change it so that he may be the center of my being. And it further means that Jesus is *our* Lord (Phil. 2). As each of us yields to his presence and power we are united in him. If Jesus is Lord of each of our lives and we share this, we are community. If Jesus reigns as Lord of our hearts, this is the kingdom of the Father.

**J E S U S**

IS

OUR

THE

**L O R D**

MY

## Pattern of Presentation

The pattern of presenting this key will be in sets of three. The triplets of events and actions presented will correspond to the three titles: *Jesus, Christ, Lord*. The triplets are based on the meaning of these titles, their extensions, related insights, and fascinating associations. The key is also presented in table form at the end of the book (like a periodic table) giving just the essential words so that by prayerful reflection further relations can be discovered. This table can be read

and compared both horizontally and vertically to open up a greater wealth in the good news. The presentation is by no means exhaustive; rather, it invites continued search.

There are several reasons for presenting the good news in such a pattern. First of all, it is an aid to teach and remember the heart of the gospel. Also, our spiritual life, theology, and scripture can be compared in multiple ways through the triple key. The key can be thought of as a diamond which reflects a beam of light thrown on one facet. One facet of the jewel can never be illumined alone; by internal reflections the light flashes in all directions and the whole diamond is illumined. In similar fashion, one triplet recalls another and another so that this key to the good news is like proclaiming “Jesus Christ is Lord” in five dozen different ways.

### **How to Use the Key**

This systematic key can be used in many ways. As a prayer, any triplet can lift our hearts to the Lord. As a preaching aid, any triplet can proclaim the fullness of the gospel. As a teaching method, any triplet can be related to another. As a study help to sacred scripture, any triplet can enrich our understanding of the word of God. As a guide to our growth in the life of the Spirit, any triplet reveals a balanced gospel message.

The words of this key, taken from scripture, can come alive if we reflect on them and ponder them in our hearts. It takes time for words to come alive in the Spirit. Like a blueprint, this key is an idea on paper which comes to life only with time and effort.

One special triplet of *body-spirit-soul* occurs several times, and it is important to grasp its significance. This triplet emphasizes that the three aspects of man, body-spirit-soul, are one whole unity. It has been revealed that the one God is three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit; so too it is important to realize that man is one whole person – with three relations of body, soul, and spirit. As flesh (body), man shares with and is related to creation; as soul (living, self-identity as human), man shares with and is related to all living things; and as spirit (innermost being, power, breath of God), man is oriented to communion with God and finds his completion in God. Man created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27) reflects the Trinity itself. In the fullness of the new creation, man will share in the one Christ, sharing his body, soul (life) and spirit (I Thess. 5:23; I Cor. 15; and I and II Peter).

## **Experience of the Lord**

The prime issue in this presentation is to bring the searching soul to a deeper *experience* of the power, the presence, and the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This experience can be deepened by a prayerful reflection on the Lord Jesus who is presented in these multiple lights. The Lord Jesus is a person who lives and loves us. He wants to enter our lives and change them, making us a new creature. But he can only enter if we freely open our hearts and invite his Holy Spirit to take possession of us. Only then can the fruit of this new life – peace, joy, and love – become evident. How this growth of the new life takes place can be appreciated more fully if we understand the richness and the power of the gospel proclamation.

The key to the good news is Jesus Christ himself. If we do not actually experience the power, the presence, and the Person of the Lord in our lives, we can turn to Jesus to open our hearts so that we might know him. He is the key. He unlocks our hearts and minds. He wants to enter into our lives and do his work within us, but we must invite him. We can ask him to give us his own Spirit from the Father to accomplish in us the work of healing, empowering and loving-union.

#### 4.

### **Know Jesus; Know Yourself**

The purpose of the *Key to the Good News* is to bring people to know Jesus in three fundamental dimensions; as Savior, as Christ, as Lord. By knowing Jesus we know more than Jesus himself. In knowing him we come to know ourselves in an extraordinary way, and we come to know the Father whom Jesus reveals; also, we come to know others. The knowledge of Jesus is a mystery that is beyond anything we can imagine.

I discovered this reality in a deeper experiential way on a thirty-day Ignatian directed prayer retreat. Day after day as I meditated and contemplated Jesus in the various scenes of the gospel, I came to know Jesus as a person, as a man, as savior, as giver of the Spirit, as Lord. As I entered into the mystery of Jesus, I was confronted with the person of Jesus in a variety of situations: in his humble birth; in his baptism in the Jordan, when he took upon himself the mission of a suffering servant; in the desert as he was tempted not to be a man; in his rejection by the Nazarenes; in his public ministry as he blessed the poor, forgave sinners, and healed the sick; in the garden as he accepted the cup of the passion; and in his resurrection appearances to his disciples. As I confronted Jesus, Jesus confronted me; he pointed out where I was not like him and where I was reacting like some of the disciples, or even the Pharisees. As he indicated areas in my life not in conformity with his, he would also reach out and touch them and heal them. In knowing Jesus, I came to know myself more deeply.

As I came to know Jesus more clearly, I came to know his Father as well. In knowing the Son, we also know the Father. Jesus is the way to the Father: to his love, to his mercy, to his goodness. Seeing Jesus so obedient to the Father, I was drawn to be obedient to him too; seeing Jesus do all to please the Father, I was drawn to please him more; seeing Jesus drink the cup of the Father's will, I too could drink the cup offered to me. As I saw the love of Jesus in the passion, I began to appreciate the love the Father has for us in sending his Son that we might have salvation. As I saw Jesus reaching out with this very love in forgiveness and healing, I knew that he wanted to forgive and heal me too. With the sick man, I could pray: "Lord, you can heal me if you want." And Jesus replied: "Of course I do." As prodigal son, and as the son who

stayed home as well, I could turn to the Father and both expect and accept forgiveness and healing.

As I began to experience the knowledge of Jesus in this real way, I came to experience his love not only for me but also for all men. This love he pours out on me through his Holy Spirit is not just for me but is meant to overflow to others. Jesus desires and longs to love men so that they might experience his forgiveness and healing and come to new life with the Father. Jesus in his love wants to use me and you as his hands and arms to reach out to all who call upon him. His salvation is for all men. As I experienced knowing and loving Jesus, I was moved with a great desire to serve my brothers and sisters.

The song “Day by Day” from *Godspell* came to mind – that in knowing Jesus more clearly, I could love him more dearly and so follow him more nearly in serving others.

Knowing Jesus in this way of prayer is not a theological or an exegetical exercise, but an experiential encounter. In making ourselves present to Jesus, we let him touch us in whatever way he chooses: loving, empowering, teaching, forgiving or healing us. In entering into the mystery of his life on earth, the event is made present to us. We are present to him in a very real way; and he is present to us with the same love and power that touched his disciples. This is the mystery of Jesus, the Son of the Father. The more deeply we enter into knowing him, the more we discover to our amazement how much there is to know and how much greater his love is for us. This is the kind of knowledge Paul spoke of when he left everything he had treasured and considered his pride and joy to consist in knowing Jesus:

But those things I used to consider gain I have now reappraised as loss in the light of Christ. I have come to rate all as loss in the light of the surpassing *knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ* . . . I wish to know Christ and the power flowing from his resurrection; likewise to know how to share in his sufferings by being formed into the pattern of his death. Thus do I hope that I may arrive at resurrection from the dead.

(Phil. 3:7-11)

There are three basic dimensions of Jesus that we can seek to know, and in knowing them we will be enriched in a very real way. We can know Jesus as *Savior*, as *Christ*, and as *Lord*.

### **Knowing Jesus As Savior**

As we come to Jesus with our hearts and minds open to him in prayer, he can reach out with salvation. He can forgive and heal us. It is an amazing fact that Jesus loves to be savior; he really loves to forgive and heal us. The most loving thing we can do in response is to let him be savior! Let him love you! Let him save you!

Jesus wants to reach out with the full gift of his love which he poured out on the cross. He wants us to accept his act of love. His greatest frustration is the rejection of him by men. Jesus can only be my savior if I let him – we need to know this.

Unfortunately we offer so many obstacles: Our lack of belief rejects his love; our independence prevents him from being the way of salvation. We seek so many saviors other than Jesus; we look to our own methods, as though we could save ourselves from the quicksand of sin, confusion, depression, and anxiety. Jesus alone is savior as he uses men to reach their fellow men.

Fortunately one of the requirements for Jesus to be our savior is that we are sinners. That is the easiest of the requirements. Jesus loves sinners and comes to save us. So there is no need to be discouraged because we are weak, but rather we can rejoice that Jesus is our strength.

So many people are living a life of frustration, confusion, and darkness as though they had no escape or no way of being freed. The good news is that we have a victory in Jesus. He is more powerful than our weakness; he is more powerful than sin, than Satan and even death itself. In faith we accept Jesus as savior into our lives to do a work of salvation. He is our liberator.

Faith is the other requirement for Jesus to be our savior. Without faith it is impossible to be saved. By faith we accept the love of the Lord by which we are forgiven, healed, and liberated. Faith is the channel for the flow of the Spirit of Jesus. Faith is the acceptance of the saving death of Jesus into our lives.

**Knowing Jesus as the Christ: The Anointed One Who Anoints Us:                      The Baptizer  
in the Holy Spirit**

When we come to know Jesus in his own baptism in the Jordan, we come to appreciate what happened to Jesus on that occasion. The Spirit came down upon him and the voice of the

Father proclaimed: “This is my Son; my favor rests on him.” Jesus was identified as the suffering servant, anointed by the Spirit to announce the good news. Jesus was identified as the one who would baptize us with the Holy Spirit.

This is the Spirit by which Jesus did marvelous signs and cast out demons. By this Spirit he was raised from the dead to sit at the right hand of the Father. Far above every dominion and power. This same Holy Spirit is at work in us. This is our hope. We too are to do the works of the Father, and we look forward to our own resurrection.

Jesus wants us to share in and live by this same power. Only if we rely on his power can he work in and through us. In knowing Jesus as the Christ, we realize the true source of power to be the Holy Spirit sent from the Father – the power by which we are begotten as sons of the Father, the power by which we are to do the work of the Father.

In knowing Jesus as the Christ, we recognize that the Spirit is the power by which we are sent to proclaim the good news of Jesus. By the power of the Spirit, the kingdom of Christ Jesus is proclaimed and his body built up and united.

In knowing Jesus we realize that through this same Spirit, the Father and Son dwell in us. We no longer belong to ourselves or any other power. We are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We are sons of God with Jesus as our older brother.

Jesus wants to be our Christ. He longs to anoint us with the Holy Spirit, so that we too might be holy as the Father is holy. In order to accomplish this in us and in his body, each of us must hope. Hope is a requirement for working and living by his power.

Another requirement is that we ask for his Holy Spirit, that we freely say “yes” to his indwelling presence so that he might transform us. Unfortunately, many do not invite the Holy Spirit to dwell within them and transform them, either out of ignorance or fear. There is no need for fear, because it is the love of God that is poured into our hearts by the gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Our ignorance can be dispelled by the truth and “the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). It is this Spirit that Jesus promised to give us. We have a right to ask for the Spirit and a right to expect the Spirit to do even greater works than Jesus did (John 14:12).

Fortunately, Jesus longs to “christ” us, to anoint us. His desire is greater than ours, and he honors even our feeblest attempts to seek him. Jesus longs to love us, to dwell in our hearts and to transform us.

In knowing Jesus, we begin to know the mystery of his gift, the Holy Spirit.

### **Knowing Jesus As Lord**

As we come to know Jesus in his divinity, we come to know humility:

Though he was in the form of God,  
he did not deem equality with God  
something to be grasped at.  
Rather he emptied himself  
and took the form of a slave,  
being born in the likeness of men. (Phil. 2:6-11)

Because of his humility, even to the accepting of death on the cross, Jesus was raised up to the Father and proclaimed Lord. Jesus as man was lifted up to the Father and in his humanity proclaimed Lord. We now have a brother who has “made it!” One of us, knowing our weakness, tempted as we, having died and risen, is now interceding for us.

The mystery of the Lordship of Jesus is the mystery of re-creating and uniting all things in Christ Jesus. The Father’s plan is that Jesus be Lord of all: Lord of all men’s hearts, Lord of creation and Lord of all angelic powers. Jesus is the first of many brothers in a plan that is beyond all comprehension, and yet:

God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ, to be carried out in the fulness of time: namely, to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ’s headship. (Eph. 1:9-10)

Jesus needs us for this plan. He wants to use us, human and sinful as we are. Jesus calls out to each of us to cooperate with him in fulfilling his Father’s plan of re-establishing the kingdom. Here is the challenge of the gospel: “Come, leave all, and follow me; join me in the spiritual warfare.” In leaving all and following Jesus we become rich beyond measure.

Unfortunately, many men want to live their own way with no Lord over them. So many continue to live in the kingdom of darkness, sin, hatred, jealousy, murder and war. And yet Jesus longs to be our Lord. But he cannot be our Lord unless we open our hearts and lives to him so that he might reign.

Men need to hear again and again the good news that Jesus is Lord. No longer do we need to be bound in sin and fear. We have a victor who is stronger than sin, than Satan, than fear. Unless we choose to live in the reign of God, however, we continue to live in the kingdom of darkness. God will not violate our freedom and be our Lord by force. We must freely invite him to reign and do this over and over again. Men need the Lord; and yet in his plan, the Lord needs men.

In knowing Jesus as Lord, we come face to face with mystery. God becomes man so that man can become son of God. To know Jesus is to enter into mystery:

How deep are the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable his judgments, how unsearchable his ways! (Rom. 11:33)

### **To Know Jesus**

To know Jesus is to know him as the savior, as the Christ, and as the Lord. Knowing him in these ways, we come also to know our need of his salvation, power and headship. In knowing Jesus we come to know his desire for men, his desire to wash us, to anoint us, to feed us. In knowing Jesus we come to know the Father as the one who loves us and sent his only Son so that through the Spirit of his Son in our hearts, we might cry, "Father," and proclaim Jesus as Lord. In knowing Jesus we come to know his body and that when we love and serve on another, we love and serve him.

## **The Complete Good News: Conversion, Charisma, Community**

The good news can be presented with different stresses. In fact, in the history of the church we can find many examples of how cultural emphasis on one dimension of the gospel actually fostered excesses. For example, certain spiritualities concentrated on our sinfulness and how Jesus suffered and died for our sins. The approaches led to extremes of bodily mortification, and people lived as though there were no love. In the recent past, the emphasis on being a resurrection people led some into a Christianity of no sin and therefore no need of a savior. Others have stressed love so exclusively that it brought about an imbalance: we are all brothers and all we need to do is realize it. This brought us to a Christianity with no faith. Still others have stressed the need of man striving and working for a better world with such conviction that it led to a social gospel which proclaimed in practice that man is the savior and lord of this earth. Such a reliance on man's power has led to a generation without hope, a generation that has not relied on God's power.

The good news cannot be presented in a single dimension. The gospel is not one dimension – just faith, or just hope, or just love. The gospel calls for faith *and* hope *and* love. “There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love” (I Cor. 13:13). Possibly the richest single-dimensional way to present the gospel is in the person of Jesus: Jesus is the good news. But, even so, Jesus is also one of three persons in the Trinity. Any presentation of the gospel need to reflect the Trinity. The very essence of the gospel is Trinitarian.

The key can be a very practical tool to check on the completeness of a presentation of the gospel. I have used it in analyzing various teachings and have thus been able to supply elements that were missing.

Every presentation of the good news need to include the three dimensions of conversion, charisma and community in order to be complete. They can be expressed in different ways and include a variety of elements:

### **Conversion**

This dimension includes the saving death of Jesus which on our part expresses itself in faith, repentance and baptism. The result in our lives is salvation, forgiveness, healing and peace.

Conversion is continuous. The salvific death of Jesus continues to work in our lives as we turn away from sin and all that is not of Jesus and turn to him.

Conversion is total. Even as Jesus emptied himself for us, we to are called to empty ourselves in love and service.

Conversion is a service. Even as Jesus took the status of a servant and laid down his life as the suffering servant, we too are called to turn and serve one another, even to the point of laying down our lives.

### **Charisma**

This dimension includes the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus and in ours. It includes the gift of the Holy Spirit himself and also his gifts of ministry. He is the source of our hope.

Charisma is gift. We are given the Holy Spirit himself, by whom we are sons of God. God's love has been poured into our hearts by the gift of the Holy Spirit. By this gift we are holy.

Charisma is power. It is the power of new life; the power of resurrection; the power of sanctification; the power to cast out evil spirits; the power to witness to our faith. This power is the hope of our own resurrection.

Charisma is the gift of ministry. Gifts of ministry are for serving one another for the upbuilding of the body of Christ.

Charisma is the gift of truth and love by which we can live as Christians and so witness to the risen Lord.

### **Community**

This dimension includes the love of the Lord which is the sign and the unity of Christians. This unity is based on a common commitment to the Lord Jesus.

Community is a common-union in the one Lord. It is a covenant of love by which we are bound to the Lord Jesus as our elder brother and to one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord as the family of God.

Community is eucharistic: in the word of God it lives by, in the bread of life it breaks, and in the daily love and care of the body.

Community is the kingdom. Jesus reigns as Lord among his people. Where the Spirit is, there is the kingdom to the glory of the Father.

### **A Complete Picture**

There are many complete ways to capsulize the gospel:

<i>Jesus</i>	<i>Christ</i>	<i>Lord</i>
conversion	charisma	community
death	resurrection	kingdom
salvation	sanctification	glory
faith	hope	love
service	witness	community

All of these ways to proclaim the complete gospel are pervaded by the presence of the person of Jesus, the power of the Spirit, and the glory of the Father.

Only in Jesus do we discover all three dimensions of the gospel. As we come to know Jesus, we come to experience him as savior, as Christ, and as Lord; we come to experience in ourselves salvation, sanctification and union; we come to know the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### **The Church is Like John the Baptist**

In February of 1971, at a prayer meeting in Detroit, a woman stood up and shared with us a prophetic teaching that she had received during the week. She felt it was to be shared at the prayer meeting, but she did not understand it. She said simply, “The church is John the Baptist,” and sat down. This word stayed in my mind, without understanding, until September of that year when I attended a week’s symposium on the nature and mission of the church. During the week the speakers kept focusing on the foundation of the gospel: *Jesus is Lord*. On the morning of the closing day, the speaker became eloquent and said by way of summarizing his presentation: “The church is like John the Baptist; it must point to Jesus.”

At this my mind started to whirl! I immediately recalled the prophetic teaching and also the text of John 1 where the Baptist points to Jesus. I was to give the homily at the closing Mass with the seminary students, staff, and participants of the symposium. I turned to John 1 to check out the whole incident. To my delight I discovered that John points out Jesus in three different ways. Each of his descriptions emphasizes a new dimension of Jesus.

#### **Lamb of God**

The next day, when John caught sight of Jesus coming toward him, he exclaimed: “Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

John points to Jesus as the sacrificial lamb who takes away our sin. Jesus is the suffering servant led like a lamb to the slaughter as an offering for our sin (Isaiah 53:7). John points to Jesus as our savior. And so we, the church, are to point to Jesus as the savior. Like John, we must continually point out to the world that only Jesus can take away our sins. This is the fundamental task of the church – to bring people to Jesus for healing, forgiveness and salvation. The church must be constant in its witness to Jesus as the savior and expose the folly of turning to other “saviors” that cannot bring salvation.

#### **The Baptized Baptizer**

John gave this testimony also:

“I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from the sky, and it came to rest on him. But I did not recognize him. The one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘When you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, it is he who is to baptize with the Holy Spirit.’”

(John 1:32,33)

John further points to Jesus as the one who is both baptized in the Holy Spirit himself and also the baptizer with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Christ, the one anointed by the breath of the Spirit (*Messiah* in Hebrew) and also the “christer.” Jesus is now the source of the Holy Spirit, which is poured out from the Father who “christs” us. We are Christians because we are “christed” by the Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus.

The church is to point to Jesus as the baptizer with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the giver of the Spirit from the Father. He alone gives the power that transforms us and will transform the world. No earthly power will bring about resurrection, but only the power at work in us that raised Jesus from the dead. Only by this power can we be witnesses to the risen Lord. The church must be a constant witness to the risen Lord if men are to be transformed. This witness means that each individual, myself included, must be experiencing this resurrection at work in him.

If we need power to heal, to liberate, and to transform, we need to turn to Jesus and ask him for the power. But we need to ask him with persistence and a total “yes,” expecting in simple faith that he will do what he longs to do. Jesus longs to fill us with the Holy Spirit sent from the Father. There is much more that he wants to give us, but we need to ask him.

### **The Chosen One of God**

Now I have seen for myself and have testified: “This is God’s chosen One.”

(John 1:34)

John points out a third dimension of Jesus. Jesus is the chosen One of God, the Son of God. In John 3:29, John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the bridegroom. These titles already foreshadow the exclamation and proclamation of Thomas when he saw the risen Jesus: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Jesus is Lord. By the power of the Spirit that raised him from the dead to the right hand of the Father, Jesus was proclaimed Lord to the glory of the Father (cf. Phil. 2).

The task of the church is to build its foundations on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He alone is Lord and our one foundation. The Church is to point out to the world that the Father wants Jesus as Lord of our hearts and of the world – and there are to be no other “lords” in our lives.

### **John Came as Witness**

There was a man named John sent by God, who came as a witness to testify to the light.

(John 1:6)

John came as a witness, as one who saw, knew, and spoke out in prophecy. Part of the prophecy was positive and part of it negative. In positive prophecy he pointed to Jesus as the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord. In negative prophecy he pointed out what was not of God – to the Pharisees and to Herod. It cost him his head.

The church, too, is to be a witness to the risen Lord and point to Jesus – in both positive and negative prophecy. We are to point out to the world what is of Jesus and also point out what is not of Jesus. It may well cost us our heads. For this reason witnesses are called “martyrs” in Greek.

The church must be like John the Baptist and point to Jesus. And its greatest prophetic statement for my spiritual growth is: “He must increase, while I must decrease.”

## **7**

### **Initiation into Christ: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist**

The pattern of the church’s practice of initiating candidates into the church need to be reexamined. At present, there are inadequacies which do not reflect the theology of initiation or the teaching of scripture. Initiation into Christ’s body needs to be understood as a process of

three continuous, interconnected steps. Yet a person is incorporated into the Roman church by a series of sacramental actions which in practice seem unrelated.

Various traditions have emphasized other and different features of incorporation. A table presented below points to the practical aspects of incorporation emphasized by three traditions and provides an overview of incorporation in three steps. This table is a summary of practice and emphasis and is not a summary of a theological stance. It should also be pointed out that a table such as this is automatically a simplification.

In the Roman church our practice of incorporation has emphasized water-baptism. The actual element of incorporation has been the action of pouring water over the person’s head with the accompanying words: “I baptize you, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Careful attention has been paid to the action of pouring and saying the words; in fact, the emphasis was on the objective action. This could be called an objective attention given to the sign of the sacrament. The person who administered the sacrament was usually a priest or some representative of the church. This practice might be summarized as:

<b>Tradition</b>	<b>Element of Incorporation</b>	<b>Agent</b>	<b>Objective Attention to</b>
Roman	water-baptism	church	sign

Some four hundred years ago the Protestant Reformation emphasized that this is not the way a person is incorporated into Christ; rather, the way is that which scripture points out. The scriptures teach that as a person calls on the name of the Lord in faith, he is saved. As the word of God is proclaimed, the faith of an individual is built to the point where he can cry: “I believe.” His belief is reckoned as his justification. This position led the Protestants to pay as objective an attention to the Bible as we have paid to the sign of the sacraments.

<b>Tradition</b>	<b>Element of Incorporation</b>	<b>Agent</b>	<b>Objective Attention to</b>
Protestant	faith	individual	scripture

Some seventy years ago, a third tradition, the Pentecostal, emphasized that the way a person is incorporated into Christ is neither of the above. The word of God says that we are incorporated into Christ by Spirit-baptism. Jesus himself will baptize us with the Holy Spirit, and we will know when it happens by the manifestation of his power and gifts. They ended up paying objective attention to the experience of the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. This position could be summarized as:

<b>Tradition</b>	<b>Element of Incorporation</b>	<b>Agent</b>	<b>Objective Attention to</b>
Pentecostal	Spirit-baptism	Jesus	experience of power

The purpose of presenting these three traditions is to point out that in fact *all three* features are involved in full incorporation into Christ. Jesus, through his body, the church, baptizes the individual. As the word of God is proclaimed, the faith of the individual is built to the point that he believes. This faith is sealed by the covenant action of water-baptism, which is the pledge and guarantee of adoption as sons of God by God. This seal of faith is completed by the gift of the Holy Spirit Son so that the person might have power to witness to the faith.

The Holy Spirit acts in all three of these steps. In terms of faith, the Spirit, like light, illumines a person with the word and prepares for faith. The Spirit seals this faith and gives new life as the person enters the death-resurrection of Jesus through water-baptism. Then the Spirit empowers the person to witness to the faith by his gifts. This fuller picture could be summarized as:

<b>Tradition</b>	<b>Element of Incorporation</b>	<b>Agent</b>	<b>Objective Attention to</b>	<b>In Terms of Faith</b>
Roman	water-baptism	church	sign	seal of
Protestant	faith	individual	word	prepares for
Pentecostal	Spirit-baptism	Jesus	experience of	power to

The steps of incorporation into Christ do not exist in isolation. The proclamation of the word, which is a eucharistic action, leads to water-baptism for the forgiveness of sins, which in turn leads to Spirit-baptism (confirmation) which leads to the eucharistic incorporation by the “breaking of bread” into the life of community.

The local Christian community is eucharistic: in “breaking the word,” in “breaking bread” and in “breaking lives” together. It is the eucharistic community that draws men to be incorporated into Christ; that is, it draws men to be incorporated into itself.

### **Breaking the Word**

Faith comes from hearing the word of God proclaimed and seeing the word of God lived: “Faith, then, comes from hearing, and what is heard is the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17).

In our recent scriptural renewal we have come to experience more fully the power of the word of God. Some have compared this power in preaching to an eighth sacrament. We have come to experience that:

Indeed, God’s word is living and effective, sharper than any two edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart.

(Heb. 4:12)

The word of God is a power that is effective in working out what it promises. But we have much more to learn about the mystery of the word that makes the Lord present to accomplish in us the work of salvation, sanctification, and union. It is a word of life.

When the word of God is “broken,” shared and lived out in the daily lives of the people, it is eucharistic. The living word is what draws men to the Lord. When men can see, hear, and touch the reality of the word made flesh in community, then they will know that the Lord is alive and good. When men “eat” this living word, their faith will grow and they will be drawn to believe in the Lord Jesus and to repent.

The word of God draws us into the three-step pilgrimage of the spiritual journey: “I repent,” “I yield,” “I abide.” These three steps are made visible and tangible in the sacraments of initiation.

### **The Sacraments of Initiation**

The sacraments are the visible sign of the invisible action of God in our lives. Through them we can “taste and see” the love God has for us. Through them we can receive grace in a tangible way. The sacraments are God’s way of reaching out to each of us with graces of salvation, sanctification and union. Through them the mystery of God was made incarnate in us in a personal way.

The three sacraments of baptism (by water), confirmation, and Eucharist are sacraments of initiation. All three together initiate us into Christ, each being a step in a process of continual growth. Each sacrament is a channel of grace for this growth. The three sacraments, though they may be separated in time, are not separate actions but rather related and complementary to one another, even as the left foot follows the right in walking. Each sacrament is the first step of growth, like a door that opens up new ways. The initial action of the sacrament is renewed in repeated actions that reflect the first sacramental action. For example, the initial cleansing action of baptism is renewed in the confession of sin in the sacrament of penance.

In the New Testament the word “baptism” is used in both a full sense and in a restricted sense. In the full sense it includes the whole process of incorporation into the body of Christ. That is, it includes proclamation of the word, baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. In the restricted sense it refers to baptism by water. In the full sense of the word we can see in the three sacraments the three graces of salvation, sanctification, and union which are the graces of the basic stages of spiritual growth.

### **Baptism**

By the waters of baptism we are washed clean. Our sins are forgiven. The bondage of Satan is broken, and we are given a new birthright as sons of God and enter the family of God. We are begotten anew by water and the Holy Spirit. As we enter into the waters, we enter into the saving death of Jesus; as we emerge, we rise anew with the risen Lord. We die and are born again.

Through the living water the Holy Spirit begets a new life in us – life as the sons of God and brothers of Jesus.

The action of baptism is the beginning of new life; we are born but we still need to grow. The initial cleansing and healing action is renewed during growth as needed in the sacraments of penance and healing. When we sin, we again can turn to the Lord for forgiveness. When we are sick, we can turn to the Lord for healing. The desire of the Lord Jesus is to wash us clean. We need only allow him to love and forgive us. He has provided many channels for his forgiveness and healing. By this cleaning he prepares for himself a pure image of himself. He wants no obstacle in our lives to our full calling as sons of the Father. He wants no spot or wrinkle in his bride. We need to be open to the action of the Lord in the sacrament by a continual “yes” to what he wants us to do. We can confidently ask him to cleanse us and heal us as he has promised to do. He wants us to have the expectant faith of an eager child.

### **Confirmation**

By the action of confirmation we are anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit. We are given new “spiritual senses” and new gifts to do the work of the kingdom. The Holy Spirit anoints us with power to be witnesses to the faith.

Some are given “spiritual senses”: new eyes to see the Lord’s plan, new ears to hear his word, a new tongue to speak his praises. Each is given different gifts of ministry to build up the body of Christ:

To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge. Through the Spirit one receives faith; by the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing and still another miraculous powers. Prophecy is given to one; to another power to distinguish one spirit from another. One receives the gift of tongues, another that of interpreting the tongues. But it is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills.

(I Cor. 12:7-11)

The Spirit that anoints us is the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and proclaimed him Lord. This same Spirit unites us into the body of Christ and empowers us to do the work of the Father.

## **Eucharist**

Jesus longs to feed us with spiritual food that we might live his life. This gift of love is given in a visible and tangible way so that we can see his love and touch him. “Taste and see how good the Lord is” (Ps. 34:9).

The Eucharist is both food and covenant. As food it nourishes our faith and strengthens our hope that we might work with love. As food it is also healing and forgiving. It is the source of peace and joy and love that we can share with others. It is full of life-power because it is the flesh of the Lord and his life-blood.

As covenant the Eucharist is a seal of our union with the Lord; he is our God and we are his people. As covenant the Eucharist is the sign of our union with one another; we are members of one another and members of the Lord’s body:

Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

(I Cor. 10:16-17)

The Eucharist is the sacrifice of praise by which the people of God can give adequate thanks to God and become a people of praise. In remembering the “death of the Lord until he comes” the church offers again glory to the Father. In remembering the Lord Jesus, we thank him for what he did for us sinners.

The Eucharist is a sign of common faith and is also a sign of a common headship. In participating in the Eucharist, we profess our faith in the Lord Jesus and also profess our submission to the order of the community as expressed in its pastors. This sacrament is a real

sign of union: a union of faith, a union of members with one another, and a union of members with their head.

For a candidate entering the local community, the reception of the body and blood of the Lord is a sign of full membership; when we break bread together, we are members of one another. The participation in the Eucharist is the completion of the initiation into the body of Christ; at the same time it is the beginning of a lifelong journey. The first communion is the beginning of a eucharistic community life.

If we are to rediscover the power that draws men to Christ, we will need to rediscover the power of the eucharistic community. It is in that community's "breaking of the word," "breaking of the bread," and "breaking of their lives" that men's hearts will burn within them and they will recognize the Lord Jesus and Son so follow.

## Spiritual Growth

### A Key to Growth

There are three phases in the spiritual life – death, resurrection, and kingdom – each of them reflecting an aspect of the gospel. These three aspects are events in the life of Jesus that call out to us to respond in various ways.

**Death:** By his death on the cross, Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world, and calls out to us to accept the effect of his death which is salvation. Jesus invites us to repent, to turn from our own ways, to die to self, and change our way of life in order to follow him. This turning to Jesus is a continuous event in our lives.

**Resurrection:** By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was raised from the dead to a new life. He has promised that we too would receive the gift of his power. Through this power we already begin to share in the new life. The Holy Spirit that dwells in us teaches and reminds us of what Jesus taught. The Spirit reveals Jesus, even as Jesus revealed the Father, and makes us sons of the Father. The invitation is always there to accept more fully the gift of the Spirit by yielding our whole being to his presence and power.

**Kingdom:** Jesus reigns as Lord in the kingdom of the Father. His reign begins in our own hearts, for he wants to be in, live in, abide with us and Son so do the works of the Father in and through us. He invites us to accept the gift of his love which unites us with him in the new life as sons of the Father. This call to a loving union with God is always there, like a hunger that only he can satisfy.

All these aspects play an important role in our spiritual life, with different aspects in greater prominence at different times of our life.

## **The Stumbling Block**

The real stumbling block in spiritual growth is the cross of suffering, which looms up before us as an obstacle. “But if we are children of God, we are heirs of God, heirs with Christ, *if only we suffer with him* Son so as to be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). At times the cross of suffering may be a tense situation, or a boredom with the circumstances that I find myself in. The cross can be the irritation at someone’s slowness in thinking, or the impatience felt at someone’s talking on and on about their own problems. The cross is the obstacle that is preventing the free and gracious flow of the Spirit at this very moment. Whatever form they take, each of us has crosses to face up to.

What have I been able to do about it? I think that the important thing for me is to look squarely at the reality of the cross in front of me and to reach out and embrace it. It is like stepping out in faith, realizing that all is in the hands of the Lord, that God is working through this particular cross, and thanking him for it. In thanking and praising him for this cross, I embrace it and acknowledge that God is Lord and master of this situation. There are no accidents. I know in faith that the Father is pruning me or teaching me Son so that I might grow and he be glorified.

My experience has been that in embracing the cross with faith, I do in fact learn and I am healed, or else someone in the body of Christ is healed. Oftentimes before a workshop or retreat that I will be giving to priests, I find that I am confronted with the cross. I experience such an emptiness and an inadequacy to take on the work that I can only cry out: “Father, I can’t do it any more! I’m empty and depressed and I have nothing to say. If anything comes of this session, it has to be your work!” In faith I know that the Lord is preparing the hearts of the priests. The spiritual warfare is for the hearts of his priests.

I have begun to realize, but not yet to put into gracious practice, that the periods of spiritual struggle prepare for the victory to come. “Yet in all of this we are more than conquerors because of Him who has loved us” (Rom 8:37). Even yesterday I spent an agonizing afternoon, trying to pray, trying to praise the Lord, trying to rest in the Lord but with no relief. In the evening the labor paid off. I had the occasion to share with a priest who for years shielded himself behind an

armor of toughness. Through this period I was supported by the word of the Lord: “Bear with me.”

### **Jesus Came to Teach Us to Die**

The real trick in knowing how to live is knowing how to die. I feel that the lesson Jesus taught us and made possible for us was how to die in the right way in order that we might truly live. The living part is easy if we know how to die.

To me, dying means to die to destructive self-centeredness. It means to let go of the things I hold on to so tightly: my own way, my own reputation, the respect of others, resentments that eat away like cancer. To die means to let go of what hinders us in order to be free to follow Jesus. “Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:24). To die is to displace the self from the throne of our being and enthrone the Lord Jesus. This is also what it means to live. As we are emptied of ourselves, we can be filled with the Spirit of Christ Jesus. It is a dispossession in order that we may be possessed by the Holy Spirit.

In practice, this kind of dying to self and turning to the Lord is often like turning on a light switch. When the switch is flicked on, the darkness is dispelled. The gesture of flicking the switch is a simple one. And so it is often that the turning to the Lord is such a simple gesture: calling his name, being aware of his presence, seeking him. The actual turning to the Lord is what is asked of us; it is a sign of our faith in him and desire to seek his will.

Again the triple aspect of the spiritual life is present: we die to self so that by the power of the Holy Spirit we might live.

### **Living the Spiritual Life is a Growth**

The process of living the spiritual life is like the growth of a plant. The plant grows from the seed, changing its form and function as it draws energy from the sunlight. But for growth to

continue, the environment must supply water, mineral from the soil, and carbon dioxide and oxygen from the air; also the temperature must be within a certain range. Even when the conditions are right there is another factor that controls the growth: time. Cycles of time govern the pattern and rate of growth of the plant. There is no way effectively to speed up the process of cyclic growth as it passes through multiple seasons. If the pattern of growth is interfered with, the plant develops in a distorted way and will bear no fruit. Fruit appears only in due season.

In the spiritual life the pattern of growth also depends on the environment to supply its needs. This is one of the roles of Christian community – to be an environment of love and forgiveness where men can pray and share together, and thus grow.

Time is a very important factor in the spiritual life. God has to be patient with us and we have to be patient with God. Only at the proper time can the Lord prune without destroying our delicate life. We cry out in complaint so quickly at the first sign of something wrong.

Stages of growth are evident in spiritual life. Traditionally these have been called purgative, illuminative, and unitive. At each stage of development different activities in our lives are highlighted. In the *purgative* stage the process of conversion is prominent. By our repentance we focus upon the removal of all that is not of Christ. In the *illuminative* stage the emphasis is on the workings of the Holy Spirit guiding us through his gifts. In the *unitive* stage the dominant feature is union with God, where the abiding love of God absorbs us. Of course, all three of these activities are present to some degree all the time, but one dominates at any given moment.

The process of growth seems to be by “sneak previews.” The Lord allows us to experience a union of love with him to give a preview of what lies ahead. Then he allows us to pass through the valley of darkness that we might be purified of any obstacles that might prevent us from experiencing the union with him in a fuller way.

### **Spiritual Growth is Like a Waltz**

I see that spiritual growth consists in a repetition of three steps, like the repeated steps of a waltz. We are drawn into the dance by the experience of faith being lived out in Christian

community. When the word of God is lived out and celebrated in unity, men are drawn irresistibly to confess, “I believe.” When a man believes, he can repent of his sins and turn to the Lord for mercy. When he has repented, he can yield to the gift of the Holy Spirit, receiving the power to be a witness to the Lord. When a man accepts the gift of the Holy Spirit, he accepts the gift of loving union which brings us into fellowship with God and man.

The basic three-step that continues is; “I repent, I yield, I abide.” Each of these steps of growth is repeated. We cannot merely repent once, but rather we must repent continuously and ever more deeply as we are drawn to the Lord through an increasingly fuller yielding to the Holy Spirit and abiding in the love of the Lord.

The basic attitude that is sustained throughout the process is one of trust. Trust is a believing-repenting-yielding-abiding relationship with the Lord: “We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his decree” (Rom. 8:28).

Jesus is the Lord of the dance; he calls out and leads us ever on.

### **Suffering is a Mystery of Learning and Healing That Reflects the Gospel**

Over the years, in prayer, certain insights into suffering have come to me in key words: mystery, learning, healing. Suffering is a mystery – a mystery in the sense that the more we enter into it, the more there is to understand and experience. Those who have entered into the mystery of suffering can share deeply.

Suffering is also a learning experience. Through it we can be taught many things if we are open. As we learn the lessons of suffering, we are healed, or someone in the body is healed. It has been helpful to me to go down a checklist of things that I could learn from suffering.

One form of suffering could be God’s way of teaching me not to break his laws. I will suffer if I carry a resentment against another, or if I murder my brother. If, however, I stop and repent, then I will learn that God’s laws are to be obeyed and I will be healed.

Or it may be that I am suffering because I am breaking the laws of nature. I will suffer if I insist on jumping out a third story window. If I learn the lesson, I will be healed.

Or it may be that I am suffering because the Father is treating me as a son and pruning me until I learn. St. Paul cried out three times to be relieved of his thorn in the flesh; but the Lord taught him that in his weakness, he was strong. Jesus, even though he was Son, learned obedience through suffering and Son so healed us all (cf. Heb. 4:7).

Or it may be that I am suffering because of the attacks of the evil one. He can be cast out in the name of Jesus and I will be freed.

Or it may well be that I am carrying the troubles of others Son so that they might be healed. “Help carry one another’s burdens; in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6-2). Jesus himself took on our weakness that we might be saved.

Suffering is a precious mystery of learning and healing that should not be wasted. We should encourage each other in the spiritual warfare, Son so that we support one another. I have experienced that people who are sick in the hospital want to hear the good news that their suffering is not in vain. The simple words, “Join your sufferings with those of Jesus for the sake of your friends,” is a message that gives hope and courage.

### **Desolation-Revelation-Consolation**

If in our lives at any given moment we experience desolation, we should not be upset. Our feelings of desolation are no reason for guilt. God never promised us immunity from trouble, but he did promise always to be with us. In the midst of desolation we can be consoled because God is with us and is working as powerfully as he works in consolation.

Desolation is only one step of a process. It leads to a revelation, a teaching which leads us on to consolation. If we understand that desolation is but one step of three, we can more easily rejoice always. Paul encourages us in his words to Timothy: “Bear hardship along with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (II Tim. 2:3).

The experience of death in our lives is not without hope. Because of the power at work in Jesus that raised him from the dead, we too have the hope of resurrection. It is this power of resurrection that brings us to newness of life.

Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, Son so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed. While we live we are constantly being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, Son so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh. Death is at work in us, but life in you.

(II Cor. 4:10-12)

<b>Key:</b>	<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Christ</b>	<b>is</b>	<b>Lord</b>
Events:	death	resurrection		life
Stages:	purgative	illuminative		unitive
Description:	desolation	revelation		consolation
Process:	"I repent"	"I yield"		"I abide"
Mystery:	suffering	learning		healing

## 9

### Key to Suffering

We all have suffering in some form. It can be sickness, physical or emotional pain, anxiety, fears, guilt, and the list goes on. Another common experience is that we all want to get rid of suffering by any means available to us: medicine, healing, or escape. But there is another response to our suffering, and that is transformation.

Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter, *The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*, teaches that Jesus, out of His love for us, transformed suffering into salvation. Now Jesus invites us to join Him in this transformation of our suffering into salvation for others. Transformation by the power of His love, the power of His Holy Spirit, is the key to responding to suffering and transforming it into a source of life and joy.

The mystery of suffering can be expressed in a three-part equation that summarizes the response:

$$\text{Suffering} + \text{Love} = \text{Joy.}$$

This equation reflects the three-part key of “Jesus Christ is Lord.” Jesus in His flesh suffered and died. Then by the Christing love and power of the Holy Spirit, He was raised from the dead and was proclaimed Lord of the everlasting kingdom of joy. By love Jesus transform suffer into joy.

“For the sake of the joy which lay before him he endured the cross, heedless of its shame. He has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God” (Hebr 12:2).

God so loved the world that he gave his only son (Jn 3:16).

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (Jn 15:13).

St. Paul makes a very strong condition for our being children of God in terms of suffering.

The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God, heirs with Christ, *if only we suffer with him* so as to be glorified with him. I consider the suffering of the present to be as nothing compared to the glory to be revealed in us (Rom 8: 16-18).

What a powerful statement: we are children of God *if only* we suffer with Christ. This means that if we are not suffering we are not children of God, and it also means that if we are suffering with Christ we are co-heirs with him and await His glory in us.

St. Peter also teaches us not to be surprised by suffering but to rejoice:

Do not be surprised, beloved, that a trial by fire is occurring in your midst. It is a test for you, but it should not catch you off guard. Rejoice instead, in the measure that you share Christ’s sufferings, when his glory is revealed, you will rejoice exultantly (1 Peter 4:12-13).

This equation, Suffering + Love = Joy, focuses on the suffering we all have, and on the joy we all want, and on the one element we all need: God's *love* to transform. The missing element is love. And so the real and effective response to suffering is to love. John Paul II pointed out (ibid) that Jesus taught us to do two things with suffering: one, to do good *to* the suffering and two, to do good *with* the suffering. Both of these are responses of love.

This is the formula for saints! This is the call to all of us, to stand together in Christ and support each other in our suffering with Christ:

Even now I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh, I fill up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church (Col 1:24).

Blessed Faustina in her diary describes this three-part equation also in terms of "if only:"

Oh, if only the suffering soul knew how it is loved by God, it would die of joy and excess of happiness! Some day, we will know the value of suffering, but then we will no longer be able to suffer. The present moment is ours. (Diary, 963)

Her diary is like an extended lesson on how to suffer:

Suffering is the greatest treasure on earth; it purifies the soul. In suffering, we learn who our true friend is. (*Diary*, 342)

True love is measured by the thermometer of suffering. (*Diary*, 343)

Blessed Faustina learned that love transforms suffering and suffering transforms love.

The KEY question is "How can we grow in the love of God, the essential element in the equation of suffering. Again we find in the diary of Blessed Faustina that Our Lord taught her to grow in love by meditating on His passion. She not only meditated on the Lord's passion but also shared in it. She also asked for greater love and asked for greater knowledge of God that leads to love of God. She grew in love by glorifying God's mercy through her works of mercy by deed, word, and prayer. She offered her life of suffering as an oblation in union with the passion of Jesus for the sake of souls.

Blessed Faustina makes a fascinating comment about the value of suffering:

If the angels were capable of envy, they would envy us for two things: one is the receiving of Holy Communion and the other is suffering. (*Diary*, 1804)

In terms of the Key to Evangelization we are to *remember* the passion and death of Jesus, *proclaim* His resurrection by the Holy Spirit, and *await* with joyful hope the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Key to Suffering: Jesus Christ is Lord!

## Disciples, Apostles, Brothers

### A Tripolar Solution

Oftentimes we seek solutions to the problems of living as Christians in dipolar tensions. We balance two extremes or poles in a tension, such as the divinity and humanity of Christ, action versus contemplation, grace and free will.

The solution to living the Christian life, however, is tripolar. The tension is a balance of three poles, leaning on three legs like a tripod. In living the full Christian life, we need to stand on the three legs of discipleship, apostolate and the brotherhood. Many communities could resolve their problems if they would emphasize all three of these dimensions of the gospel life. We cannot have one without the others.

### Jesus Calls, Sends, Unites

A summary of the gospel arises from these three terms that recur in the New Testament: disciples, apostles and brethren. These three aspects of Christian living reflect the basic message that Jesus Christ is Lord.

He then went up the mountain and summoned the men he himself had decided on, who came and joined him. He named twelve as his companions whom he would send to preach the good news; they were likewise to have authority to expel demons.

(Mark 3:13,14)

Jesus called to himself *disciples* who were to follow him with a commitment of laying down their lives in loving service even to the cross. Jesus as the Christ sent them as *apostles* with power of the Holy Spirit to cast out demons, to teach and to heal. Jesus the Lord unites them as *brothers* with his love that they might be a sign to the world and a support to one another.

### Disciples

We are called by Jesus to follow him and come to know him. It is a call to be with him, to learn from him and to imitate him. It is a call to carry our cross daily and daily to repent. No work, no activity, no fellowship has meaning without this personal closeness to and knowledge of the Lord.

### **Apostles**

We are sent by Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit to do the works of the Father. To do his works, we need his power and his gifts. He gives us power to cast out Satan and his evil spirits. The Spirit teaches us and reminds us of the teachings of Jesus. It is the power of love that heals, forgives, and unites and thus proclaims the kingdom of God.

Without this dimension of power, the Christian life is turned in on itself. Power flows outward with healing love to the needs of men.

### **Brethren**

The unity of men and women living together, sharing their lives, is a sign to the world of Jesus alive among us. But the community of Christians leans heavily on the two legs of discipleship and apostolate.

In our times attempts are being made to renew community independently of the need for continual repentance, for discipleship, and for the ever-baptizing Spirit empowering us. These attempts will lead only to further frustrations. Renewal of our communities will flow from a continual emphasis on all three dimensions of the gospel.

### **The Call to Be His Disciples, His Apostles, and His Brothers**

Jesus wants us to be his disciples, his apostles, his brothers. These three dimensions of the gospel are clearly brought out in the call of the first four disciples:

As he made his way along the Sea of Galilee, he observed Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me; I will make you fishers of men." They immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers. Proceeding a little farther along, he caught sight of James, Zebedee's sons, and his brother John. They

too were in their boat putting their nets in order. He summoned them on the spot. They abandoned their father Zebedee, who was in the boat with the hired men, and went off in his company.

(Mark 1:16-20)

Here we can see the frustration of the men doing their work. Simon and Andrew were “casting their nets” but with no success – an empty apostolate. Then Jesus called to them: “Come after me; I will make you fishers of men.” Follow me as disciples and I will make you real apostles. Discipleship is prior to the apostolate.

James and John were also frustrated in mending the nets, trying to hold on to what they had – being brothers. But Jesus called them and they left their father and community of workers to be his disciples and to discover real brotherhood.

The foundation of the gospel is Jesus Christ the Lord. On him we must stand as with the three legs of a tripod: disciples, apostles, brothers. The gospel demands all three – not just one or the other. Jesus calls us to follow him in service, even to the cross as his disciples. Jesus also sends us with power as his apostles. Jesus furthermore unites us with love as his brothers. Our stand on Jesus is with all three demands of the gospel. To be *his* brothers, we must be *his* disciple. To be *his* apostles (doing the works of the Father, casting out and healing) we must be *his* disciples. In any renewal we cannot renew one dimension without renewing the others.

What binds this triple structure together? What is the *apex of the tetrahedron* founded of the Lord Jesus? The binding unity is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit in us unites, empowers, and prays. The prayer in the Spirit is the flowing force that binds together all those filled with the Spirit. “At every opportunity pray in the Spirit, using prayers and petitions of every sort” (Eph. 6:18).

## 11

### **Last Supper: Remember the Lord Jesus Christ**

In our modern culture we have difficulty in remembering the Lord and his goodness to us. We are removed from direct and obvious dependence on nature and Son so easily overlook God's providence in providing our needs. We forget that God is our Lord, and we rely only on our own ingenuity and stocks of supplies. When disaster strikes or when supplies are depleted, only then do some come to their senses and remember. Only when we remember can we render thanks to God who is our savior and Lord.

The celebration of the Lord's supper is a thanksgiving. It is a celebration of remembering what the Lord has done for us: saving, forgiving, healing, and loving us by giving us his own Holy Spirit. In this celebration we give thanks to God our Father for the gift of Jesus. We remember that Jesus Christ is Lord and give thanks.

The last supper which Jesus shared with his disciples before his death was a very special occasion of remembrance. It was a time when Jesus once again took his disciples aside to remind them, to teach them, and to express his love.

At the last supper Jesus taught by summarizing the gospel message in a variety of succinct ways, Son so that the disciples would remember him and what he did. This passover supper was the traditional memorial of what God had done for the Israelites and was celebrated each year Son so that the people would never forget God's goodness to them. Jesus added a new dimension to the remembrance: he promised his own Spirit to teach and to remind his disciples. Jesus was deeply concerned that the disciples would not forget him and commanded them to remember him in this "breaking of the bread."

The last supper was the occasion for an extraordinary outpouring of love. It is as though Jesus wanted to give his disciples all he could possibly give. In a gesture of love, Jesus washed the feet of the disciples as a repentance ceremony to prepare for the supper. Then during the supper itself, he told them of his love and promised to send his Holy Spirit to dwell in them. Finally, as a sign of his love, he gave himself under bread and wine as spiritual food and drink, the effects of which are described by John and the event by the other evangelists.

The discourse and events of the last supper are capsulized in a series of triplets. Some appear obviously, while others are reflected in the text and events. The following triplets are presented as summaries of the last supper.

- a) In forgiving-love Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.
- b) Jesus said in the beginning of his discourse: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”
- c) Throughout the discourse the three virtues of faith, hope, and love are presented as a gift, as a power, and as a way of life.
- d) The fruits of the Spirit – peace, joy, and love – form the backdrop of the discourse.
- e) In promising the Paraclete, Jesus said: “When he comes he will convince the world of sin, of justice, of condemnation.”
- f) In his concluding prayer, Jesus prayed to the Father: “Protect them, consecrate them, that they may be one.”
- g) In the Eucharist Jesus gave his all: his body, his blood, and his Spirit.

Jesus gave us his all in gesture, in act, in word, and in promise Son so that he might continue to live in our hearts and we would remember and give thanks to God our Father.

#### **a) MERCY: FORGIVING LOVE IN CHRIST**

He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end. ...

After he had washed their feet, he put his cloak back on and reclined at the table once more. He said to them:

“Do you understand what I just did for you?

You address me as ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’

and fittingly enough,

for that is what I am.

But if I washed your feet –

I who am Teacher and Lord –

then you must wash each other’s feet.

What I just did was to give you an example:  
as I have done, Son so you must do.”

(John 13:1, 12-15)

Mercy is one of the central characteristics of God as he is portrayed in the old covenant. Over and over again, God is described as being merciful, as being loving and kind. In English the word “mercy” has a somewhat limited meaning. It has come to mean God’s forgiveness, which indeed is part of God’s mercy; but forgiveness doesn’t convey the other aspect of mercy: God’s love.

In the new covenant God’s mercy has been poured out in Christ Jesus. In Christ we are both forgiven and loved. In him we have been reconciled with the Father and our sins have been blotted out – removed from the record book. Because Jesus has been anointed with the Holy Spirit and reigns at the right hand of the Father interceding for us, we have the way to the Father open to us. The forgiveness we have received in Christ Jesus removes the obstacle separating us from the Father. This is God’s gift to us. And since it is a gift, we cannot earn it or become worthy of it; but we can ask for it. We are forgiven because God loves us. It is in Christ that this love has been revealed. Jesus, the beloved Son of the Father, came to tell us about and give to us the Father’s love. The Father loves us and wants us to be united to him in love.

But this is only part of the story of the good news. Yes, in Christ we have been forgiven and loved; we have received mercy. In addition, though, we too, even as Jesus, have been anointed by the Holy Spirit; we have been christed. And now in that christing we too can forgive and love one another. Not only is it now possible, but this is what the good news is about: Forgive! Love!

### **Forgive in Christ**

Forgiveness is a two-way interaction – it must be both given and received. Oftentimes when a wrong is done, we tend to pass off the apology with, “Oh, that’s nothing,” while in reality we bury it like a seed that grows into resentment. In true forgiving we acknowledge the wrong done as real, but indicate that our love is greater than the wrong. Pope John Paul II teaches us to “ask for forgiveness and mutually forgive.”

Sometimes people will say, “I forgive but I can’t forget!” This is why real forgiveness is possible in Christ. We can ask for the Spirit of Jesus not only to forgive, but also to heal and erase the memory. “... It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.” (CCC # 2843)

Forgiveness must be extended to all – to everyone who has helped to make us what we are. The person we usually forget to forgive is the one we should forgive first – God. Yes, we need to forgive God for the way we are. Some feel disadvantaged because of their personality or situation. Forgive God, he loves you! Likewise forgive yourself. Forgive yourself for the things you have done or left undone. God’s love has forgiven and will heal even the scars of the past if we allow his soothing love to be poured over our wounds. Sometimes it is difficult to accept his healing love because we would rather wallow in self-pity. Accept God’s forgiveness. Also we need to forgive those who reared us – our parents, our teachers, our culture. This forgiveness must be continued into the ever-present moment. Forgive one another!

The condition for receiving God’s forgiveness is that we forgive one another. This condition is expressed in the Lord’s prayer and then repeated immediately afterward (Matt. 6:14, 15), Forgiveness is specified as the only condition for God’s hearing our prayer and receiving our gifts at the altar (Mark 11:25). In responding to Peter, Jesus taught us to forgive our brother without limit, even seven times seventy times (Matt. 18: 21, 22).

Now – and this is daunting – this outpouring of mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven those who have trespassed against us. Love, like the Body of Christ, is indivisible; we cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother or sister we do see. In refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them impervious to the Father’s merciful love; but in confessing our sins, our hearts are opened to his grace.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2840)*

The first gift of resurrection is the Holy Spirit who makes it possible for us to forgive – a gift of mercy. On that Easter Sunday night, Jesus, appearing in the upper room, proclaimed peace-reconciliation and empowered the apostles, even as he was empowered. He breathed on

them, giving them the Holy Spirit, making it possible for them to fulfill the command he issued:  
Forgive one another!

“Peace be with you,” he said again.  
“As the Father has sent me, Son so I send you.”  
Then he breathed on them and said:  
“Receive the Holy Spirit.  
If you forgive men’s sins,  
they are forgiven them;  
if you hold them bound,  
they are held bound.”

(John 20:21-23)

Without the triumph of Christ Jesus we could not be forgiven, nor could we forgive. But by his victory on the cross and by his resurrection, Jesus reconciled us with the Father and gave us true peace – his peace. He gave us this peace in the gift of his Holy Spirit. In the Spirit we too can extend the peace of the Lord to one another. We can forgive one another because the Father has forgiven us.

### **Love in Christ**

In Christ Jesus we have received God’s mercy – his loving forgiving-kindness. There is no limit to this mercy. There is nothing that can separate us from the love that overflows from the Father (Rom. 8:35-39) except our refusal to receive his love by our holding on to sin. It is difficult for us to receive because we resist being loved. To accept a gift and especially a gift of love is embarrassing, especially to men. We tend to feel awkward when loved and would much rather express love to others by caring for them. We find it easier to wash someone else’s feet than to have our own feet washed by another. And yet this is what our Christianity is about: first to accept God’s love and then to love our neighbor, both giving and accepting his love. In Christ we have received forgiveness and love; we have received mercy. By the same christing by the Holy Spirit, we are to forgive and love; we are to have mercy.

### **b: I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE**

During the discourse at the last supper, Thomas asked Jesus; “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (John 14:5) Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” In this loving and beautiful way, Jesus describes himself.

### **I Am the Way**

Jesus came from the Father to show us the way to the Father. Without him we would be lost in sin and darkness, but he has opened the door to a new life and light. He is the way the Father has chosen that we might reach him. Jesus longs for us to allow him to be the way. He invites us to open our hearts to him, Son so that he might enter in and show us the Father. His desire to be our way is greater than our own desire. He waits upon us that he may lead us. He invites us to take his hand and follow.

Our response is a turning to him, saying *yes* to him, not just once, but over and over again. We say *yes* with our heart, with our voices, with our actions. Our *yes* to his leading us is varied: a gentle trusting in him, an enduring, a peaceful patience, a loving response to a brother or sister in need, a song of praise.

Jesus is *the* way to the Father. He himself is the WAY and not just a road map or a road sign showing us the way. Jesus points to himself as THE WAY to the Father.

Jesus is the ONE way. He alone is savior, and there is no other in this world. We may have many medicines but only one divine physician. If we turn to other saviors – our own self-reliance, our own powers – he cannot be the way. Nevertheless, he also wants us to do our part. When we do whatever is possible, he cooperates by doing whatever is impossible for us. He wants us to do the possible, but also to ask him to do the impossible. For example, in times of sickness he wants us to conform to the laws of nature by following the reasonable direction of doctors. He uses many instruments for his saving actions (such as medicine and doctors), but he also may act directly when we ask him for healing.

In our times we are becoming acutely conscious that the world needs salvation. There are so many ills and evils that we are overwhelmed. Our own efforts do not seem able to remedy the situation, but rather to worsen it. Jesus came to liberate us; but our inner man must be liberated first, Son so that our outer man can be free. Changing the environment touches only the

outer man, while the inner man remains imprisoned. Who will liberate us from this prison? Jesus – for he alone is the way. He longs to set us free.

Jesus, you came to give liberty to captives; free us, free the world.

### **I Am the Truth**

Jesus is the source of the Spirit of Truth that he sends from the Father. The Spirit will lead us to all truth, and that truth will set us free. When the Son sets us free, we will be really free (see Jn 8:32).

Jesus, who is the full revelation of the Father, has revealed the fullness of truth in giving us his Holy Spirit, who will teach us and remind us of all he said (see Jn 14:26). So we can turn to the Spirit and ask for his teaching when we are in need. He will teach us many things: about our relationship with Jesus and the Father, about ourselves, about our relationship with others, about himself. When he teaches, he does so in varied ways; through scripture, through teachers, through study, through inspiration. He is the teacher *par excellence*, and he responds readily to specific questions. This seems to be the way he operates. I have found that when I need an insight into a question that is on my mind, I can request a teaching on the subject and he responds very faithfully. I ask and then expect an answer through a teacher, or through a book that comes along, or through passages in sacred scripture, or by the sharing of a brother. The Lord is faithful and he has promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach and remind us and lead us to complete truth.

Lord Jesus, send us your Spirit of Truth to make us free.

### **Jesus the Life**

Jesus is our elder brother! He has given us a new life by re-creating us as sons of God. With him we died and now rise to new life. We really are sons of God. This is the plan of the Father, that we be his children, that we be members of his family.

This new life grants us the inheritance that Jesus has already received. By the gift of the Holy Spirit we have the first pledge of this inheritance. We are to share in the glory of Jesus our

Lord. At present we are experiencing only the first fruits of this life, and what is yet to come is still to be revealed (1 Jn 3:2).

Lord, teach us to live by dying to ourselves. Teach us that it is no longer we that live, but you (see Gal 2:20).

### **c) FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE ARE GIFT, POWER, AND LIFE**

Faith, hope, and love capsule the gospel. Paul says that “there are in the end three things that last: faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love” (I Cor. 13:13). He rejoices that the church at Thessalonica is living the gospel in faith, hope, and love: “... for we constantly are mindful before our God and Father of the way you are proving your faith, and laboring in love, and showing constancy of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 1:3).

Faith, hope, and love have in common three dimensions: each is a gift, a channel of power, and a way of life. But in a special way faith is primarily a gift; hope is related to power; love is a way of life.

#### **Faith**

Faith is a *gift*. Through the mercy of God revealed in Christ Jesus we have received the gift of salvation – a gratuitous outpouring of his mercy which has reconciled us with the Father and has established peace. Faith is *accepting* the gift already given. To be men of faith we need to accept the presence, the power, and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since faith is a gift, we do not earn it, but rather allow the Spirit to continue his work of salvation in us.

Faith is *power*. If we accept the gift of God, his power can work in us. We are instruments of his power, and we can *expect* him to work. He wants to work and will work if we allow ourselves to be transparent to him. We are the channels through which the Father can touch men with healing forgiveness and love. Unwittingly we block the Father’s will by not expecting him to act, not asking him to work.

Jesus rejoiced when he found faith, because then the power of the Holy Spirit flowed out to heal. What glorious works he would do today if we supplied the same atmosphere of expectant faith.

Faith is *life* – a way of living in a daily faithfulness to the Lord, believing in him, trusting in him because he is God and loves us. “... let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith” (Heb. 12:2). The holy man lives by faith because he knows God loves him.

## **Hope**

Hope is *power*. The power that was at work in Jesus to raise him from the dead (cf. Eph. 1:19). This power of the Holy Spirit is the hope of our resurrection. What hope we can enjoy because we have the promise of God himself to bring us new life! What we experience is but the first fruit of what is yet to come. Christ in us in *the* mystery and our hope of glory (cf. Col. 1:27).

Hope is also a *gift* and a way of *life*:

We know that affliction makes for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue, and tested virtue for hope. And this hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:3-5).

Paul continues to relate hope to power: “At the appointed time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for us godless men” (Rom. 5:6), and to love: “It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

## **Love**

Love is *life* – a way of life that surpasses all others (cf. I Cor. 12:31). Love is a way of living that covers a multitude of sins and fulfills the whole law. This way of living is made possible because God first loves us. The greatest truth is: God who is love, loves me. He loves me Son so much that he has given me his own life Son so that I too may live in love and love my brothers and sisters.

This love is only possible because love is a *gift*. God has Son so loved me that he has poured the gift of his Holy Spirit into my heart (cf. Rom. 5:5). Because love is a gift, we need to accept it. I need to accept God's love and let him minister to me. I find this difficult and struggle with it. I know the Lord wants to minister to me and wash my feet, and yet I would rather serve and wash the feet of others. Lord, wash my feet!

If I allow God to love me, I become a channel of *power* to love others. When God's redeeming love flows through me, then my brothers and sisters are really loved and healed. This love is a power that is forgiving and healing and transforming. But again I must learn to accept this kind of love from others. Lord, teach me to accept love.

"There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love" (I Cor. 13:13). Where there is love, Jesus Christ truly is Lord.

#### **d) PEACE, JOY, AND LOVE**

Peace, joy, and love are the most important fruits of the Spirit. Where these fruits abound, there is Christian life. When all three are present, the fullness of the gospel is being lived.

##### **Peace**

Peace is the right order between God and man, and between man and man. Peace is not just a good feeling, but a relationship to God and man that is in good order. God's peace is the fullness of God's blessing.

Jesus gave us the gift of peace when he reconciled us with the Father, setting things in right order between God and us. On Easter Sunday night he blessed us with his peace. He gave us this gift when he breathed his Spirit upon us and made it possible for us to live in peace. Peace, however, needs to develop and grow.

This growth is not always "peaceful" (as the world judges), but may be disturbing because the peace of Christ is a two-edged sword. Anything that is not of Christ may have to be cut away and pruned. I have a banner that illustrates this well: it says: "May the peace of Christ disturb you profoundly!"

Growth in peace is very much a factor in our relationships with one another. Over and over again, Paul teaches and exhorts the local communities of Christians to live in love, forgiveness, meekness, humility: “Christ’s peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace” (Col. 3:15).

Peace is a sign that Jesus is our saving Lord. In the midst of trials and weakness we have a savior who establishes the right order with men and God.

Peace stems from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Joy**

Joy is the fruit that wells up from within us because we have been anointed with the Spirit; joy is an overflow of what has been poured into our hearts. Jesus rejoiced when filled with the Holy Spirit, he saw the power of the Spirit casting down Satan: “At that moment Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said: ‘I offer you praise, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children’” (Luke 10:21).

Joy is the overflow of hope. Because of the hope we have, we can rejoice both in adversity and prosperity. We can rejoice because our hope is rooted in the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

## **Love**

Love is a gift that enables us to bring forth the fruit of love. Because God loves us, we can love one another even as he loves us. Love is the overflow of the love of God poured into our hearts. Where there is love for one another, there is God among his people.

This kind of love is not a mere feeling of being attracted to another, or a love that expresses itself only erotically, but rather it is a Christian love—a committed love that cares for another by serving. The real issue in Christian love is commitment. Because Jesus loves each of us, we have a commitment to love and serve one another as brothers and sisters.

Committed love goes beyond loving a person what he is or for what he does; it is a love of a person as brother or sister with a concern and care that has no limit. Such love is only possible because God loves us first. So, on our part, accepting his love is most important. Since we tend to resist being loved and cared for because it puts us in a position of being obliged to another, we need to ask God to teach us how to accept his love. By accepting his love we allow him to reign as Lord of our lives.

Where peace, joy, and love abound, there Jesus Christ is Lord.

### **e) SIN, JUSTICE, CONDEMNATION**

During a workshop on prayer for priests of the Grand Rapids diocese, Bishop McKinney and I were discussing the key to the good news. He pointed out that if the key is valid as a teaching technique, it should spark insights into some difficult passages of sacred scripture. One such passage that was a concern to him was John 16:18 where Jesus says: “When he [the Paraclete] comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin, about justice, about condemnation.”

We turned to John 16 and read the whole section, reflecting on its meaning. The three dimensions of the action of the Paraclete came to light with a new brilliancy:

#### **About Sin**

“About sin – in that they refuse to believe in me” (John 16:9). Our sin is forgiven as we accept the Spirit of Jesus into our hearts. If we reject him, if we refuse to believe in Jesus, we remain in our sin. Jesus has come to forgive our sin, but this forgiveness is conditioned on faith. Faith in this context means allowing Jesus to enter into our hearts by the gift of the Holy Spirit. He, the Paraclete, points out our sin and is the source of healing-forgiveness. Only Jesus reconciles us with the Father. There is no other savior. The Spirit proves to the world that only Jesus takes away sin. Only Jesus is the savior of all men.

#### **About Justice**

“About justice – from the fact that go to the Father and you can see me no more” (John 16:10).

Justice is the righteousness or holiness by which we are made perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Only the Holy Spirit is the source of this justice. When Jesus went to the right hand of the Father, he sent that Spirit to those who would accept him. Therefore we no longer see Jesus in his flesh, but we do see the “Word made flesh” in ourselves and in our brothers and sisters. Unless Jesus had gone to the Father, we would not have been sent the Holy Spirit.

It is the Spirit who proves to the world how wrong it is about holiness. He is the source of holiness, not we. We are not holy because we do good things, but rather because “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5). We do not become holy by our self-perfection. We are not holy because we are whole persons. We are holy, however, because we are “whole in Christ.” We are holy because we are christed by the Spirit of the Father and Son and Son so transformed into a new life, a new creation. We are re-created and made holy by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

When the holiness of God dwells in us and fills us, it radiates to the world as a light witnessing to the power of the resurrection. This power is the source of liberation, of the healing that the world so sorely needs. This healing light is the true salvation which is the real good news.

We are but the channels of this power and not its source. The Paraclete convicts the world of its misuse of power. The world will not be brought to self-perfection by human skill and strength, but rather to a transformation by the power of the Spirit. Lord, open our hearts, remove the obstacles that hinder your Holy Spirit from radiating your healing light. Send forth your Spirit, enkindle our hearts, and renew the face of the earth.

### **About Condemnation**

“About condemnation – for the prince of this world has been condemned” (John 46:1 1). The Holy Spirit proclaims Jesus as Lord of heaven and earth. The prince of this world, Satan, is no longer prince, no longer lord. Now Jesus is Lord by the victory of his death and resurrection. Satan has lost dominion over the world that was given to him by our sin.

The Spirit proves to the world that Satan is condemned by the victory of Jesus in our hearts. As we invite and allow the Spirit to proclaim Jesus as the Lord of our lives, men will see

the power of the resurrection at work in us. As our hearts center on Jesus, our lives are transformed more and more into his image. When Jesus is our Lord, Satan is cast out and condemned. But if men rely on their own power for victory, Satan remains as prince of the world.

We need the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **f) PROTECT THEM, CONSECRATE THEM, THAT THEY MAY BE ONE**

When Jesus prayed to the Father for his disciples and us at the last supper, he spoke in imperatives (John 17).

#### **Protect Them!**

“Protect them with your name which you have given me” (John 17:1 1). Jesus was very much aware of the need of protection for his disciples. Whenever we seriously commit ourselves to the Lord, we need to be defended from the assaults of the evil one. This is a pattern in the spiritual life. Jesus himself, after his own baptism in the Holy Spirit, was tempted by the devil for forty days and sought protection in the word of God. Peter exhorts the faithful to bow down humbly before God, but also to stay sober and alert because “Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith . . . “ (I Peter 5:9). James is aware of this pattern when he says, “Therefore submit to God” and immediately adds, “Resist the devil and he will take flight” (Jas. 4:7). The prayer of Jesus for protection from the evil one is the same prayer he taught his disciples to pray: “Subject us not to the trial but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13).

When we experience darkness and confusion, it is good practice to cry out to Jesus who said: “I am Light, I am the Way.” In the midst of temptations that appear as lies, we can call out to Jesus who is the truth. When in fear, it is Jesus who is our life.

When we need protection, we have a helper at our side. The Holy Spirit is our shield in need. He is our witness, revealing the truth, the light and the way. The name Jesus gives the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, that is, one who stands by us in need, especially when we are being accused by the evil one.

The Holy Spirit protects us from the world in order that we may not be identified with it and become one with it. He guards us by proving the world wrong about sin, about justice, about condemnation (John 16:8). Jesus alone is the source of true justice. The reign of Jesus in our hearts expels the reign of the prince of this world.

### **Consecrate Them!**

“Consecrate them by means of truth – ‘Your word is truth’” (John 17:17). Jesus prayed that we be made holy. This too is the work of the Holy Spirit. We are holy because Jesus gives us his Spirit of holiness from the Father. Jesus promised: “When he [the Spirit] comes, however, being the Spirit of truth he will guide you to all truth” (John 16:13).

The prayer of Jesus dispels the notion that holiness is something we earn by our own merits. Holiness is achieved by way of consecration, which is the setting apart from profane use for sacred use. Consecration is an action of calling down the Holy Spirit in the name of the Lord in order that he transform us by his power. This is the action of the Eucharist:

And Son so, Father, we bring you these gifts. We ask you to make them holy by the power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eucharistic Prayer, Number 3).

It is good practice to call down the Holy Spirit upon ourselves frequently that we too be made holy, that we too be the living mystical body and blood of the Lord. Our holiness is a gift and we must ask for it. The Father is good and greatly desires that we be holy like himself. The Father longs to give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke 11:13). We can repeatedly ask him to fill us afresh with his Spirit because we need to be continually filled. Like cracked earthenware vessels, we leak!

Come, Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of the faithful. Consecrate us with truth.

### **That They May Become One**

Jesus prayed that we would be one with him and his Father Son so that the world would know that Jesus was sent from the Father and would know the love the Father has for men.

This unity can only be achieved by the protection and consecration of the Holy Spirit. By his action we are shielded from the forces that prevent us from coming together. We are also made holy and drawn together by that same Spirit.

The prayer Jesus prayed for us: “Protect them, consecrate them, that they may be one,” should be our own. It expresses what is needed to glorify the Father: that we be one in his Son, Jesus the Lord. When Jesus reigns in our hearts as Lord, we are one and we do give glory to the Father. When the Lord reigns in our hearts, the world will know how much the Father loves us.

And Son so we too pray: Holy Father, protect us, consecrate us, Son so that we may be one.

### **g) EUCHARIST: GIFT OF BODY, SPIRIT AND BLOOD**

The Eucharist is the visible manifestation of the love Jesus has for us. It is the gift of love that we can taste and see.

The Eucharist is a mystery of many dimensions; but three aspects of the Eucharist highlight the mystery: body, Spirit, and blood.

#### **Body**

The broken body of Jesus, now risen, has been given us that we may be saved. By his wounds and stripes we are healed. This flesh-dimension points out the dramatic extent of his love for us: the Father handed over his Son to the death of the cross that we might be reconciled and live. It is in this body that we have our reconciliation and our way to the Father, because the humanity, the flesh, of Jesus was lifted up to the status of Lord at the right side of the Father.

#### **Spirit**

By the Spirit, Jesus was raised and proclaimed Lord. By the Spirit the bread and wine became our spiritual food. By the same Spirit we become sons of the Father. The Spirit is the giver of life. He is given to us that we may have life and have it more abundantly.

On the cross Jesus breathed out his Spirit that we might breathe by the same Spirit. In the Eucharist, a spiritual food, a food of the Spirit is given us that we may continue to live and breathe by the Spirit.

## **Blood**

The lifeblood of Jesus was poured out as a new covenant. The Lord God has pledged himself to dwell in the hearts of men who believe. Jesus shed his blood to seal that pledge. When we drink of that blood we seal our response.

What greater love is possible? God has given us his Son – body, soul and Spirit – that we too might be his sons. God continues to give us this gift in a way that enables us to be witnesses:

This is what we proclaim to you:  
what was from the beginning,  
what we have heard,  
what we have seen with our eyes,  
what we have looked upon  
and our hands have touched –  
we speak of the word of life. (I John 1: 1)

What greater promise is there?

“Let me solemnly assure you,  
if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man  
and drink his blood,  
you have no life in you.  
He who feeds on my flesh  
and drinks my blood  
has life eternal,  
and I will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:53,54)

And on the night before he died he gave his all to his disciples:

During the meal Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. “Take this and eat it,” he said, “this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. “All of you must drink from it,” he said, “for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matt. 26:26-28)

Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we remember the Lord and proclaim his death until he comes! (cf. I Cor. 11:23-26)

### Father, Son, and Spirit

A test of the validity of any Christian teaching is its trinitarian character. The epistles repeatedly reveal the trinitarian aspects of the gospel. The teachings of the Fathers of the early church were explicitly trinitarian. The councils of the church have developed a trinitarian creed. The prayers of the church have also been trinitarian, addressing the Father in the name of Jesus, the Son, through the Holy Spirit.

The key to the good news is also trinitarian. The three dimensions of *Jesus Christ is Lord* are reflections of the action of the Father, Son and Spirit. The three aspects of the person of Jesus are reflections of the action of the Trinity, and so they give an insight into each of the persons of the Trinity.

#### Jesus

The *Jesus* dimension points to the creaturehood of the savior. Through the Holy Spirit the Word took flesh from Mary and shared in our humanity. By taking on flesh, Jesus shared in our human, created condition and took on a relationship to all men and to all matter as well. It is this created humanity that became the instrument of our salvation. It is this created humanity that reflects the Creator. As creature, Jesus reflects the Father as Creator. And so all of creation is to participate in the redemption: “Indeed, the whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19). In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes this saving action in a trinitarian way:

In his own *flesh* he abolished the law with its commands and precepts, to create in himself one new man from us who had been two and to make peace, reconciling both of us to God in one body through his cross, which put that enmity to death. He came and “announced the good news of peace to you who were far off, and to those who were near”; through *him* we both have access in one *Spirit* to the *Father*.

(2:15-18)

Jesus became like us in all things but sin. He knew our weakness and our temptations and so could be merciful with us. Through his mercy he revealed the Father's mercy, his loving-forgiveness for us. Jesus called us to that same mercy with one another. He did not reject our weakness but transformed it so that in our weakness his power could reach perfection (cf. 11 Cor. 12:9). It is because we are earthen vessels, cracked and dried up, that his power in us can work (11 Cor. 4:7). It is the Spirit of Jesus at work in us that can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine (cf. Eph. 3:20).

Because we are created, we reflect the Creator. The more we reflect Jesus, the more the Father is glorified. We reflect Jesus more and more as we accept the *gift* of God, the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit by which we are made sons and transformed (11 Cor. 3:18). As we accept the gift of God, we accept the person of the Spirit, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of truth, and we are re-created into the new man.

## **Christ**

Jesus is the Christed one and by his death and resurrection he became the Christ. Jesus in his humanity was gifted by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and so Jesus became the giver of the gift of the Spirit from the Father.

Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit so that his disciples who believed in him could share in the same *gift*. Jesus wants us to share his life as Son and so glorify the Father. Jesus wants us to share his intimacy with the Father so that we can live in his presence as sons.

The gift of the Holy Spirit doesn't make us aware of the Holy Spirit himself but rather makes us aware of Jesus and so of the Father. The Holy Spirit is transparent like the wind and serves to point to Jesus and so to the Father. The Holy Spirit is a witness who reveals Jesus, tells us all about Jesus, proclaims that Jesus is Lord.

## **Lord**

Jesus is Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father. The gospels reveal that Jesus of Nazareth, who walked among us, taught us about the Father, performed signs

to prove his authority, and was crucified, died and was buried – this Jesus also rose from the dead to ascend to the right side of the Father. There the Father gave Jesus a new name, the name reserved for God himself: Lord. And so we come to understand that Jesus of Nazareth was “God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, one in being with the Father by whom all things were made” (Nicene Creed).

Jesus invites us to share in this life with him. He is our older brother who “made it.” Now he calls out to each of us: “Follow me” (John 21:19). This is our calling:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us  
in letting us be called children of God!  
Yet that is what we are.  
The reason the world does not recognize us  
is that it never recognized the Son.  
Dearly beloved,  
we are God’s children now;  
what we shall later be has not yet come to light.  
We know that when it comes to light  
we shall be like him,  
for we shall see him as he is.

(I John 3:1,2)

## **Father-Son-Spirit**

The *Father* is the almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. He is God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavens (Eph. 1:3). The Father is the source of the Spirit that Jesus now sends. As we come to understand and experience the love the Father has for us in Jesus, we can begin to live as new creatures, as “beloved of the Father,” as his sons. The Father calls each of us by name to live this new life in Christ Jesus.

The *Son* of the Father, the Word of the Father, took flesh of the Virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit. For our salvation the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. He became all man, taking on our weakness and sin and dying to it so that we might have salvation. Jesus came down among us in order to reveal the Father’s love and forgiveness, that we might have salvation. Jesus taught us how to live by the Spirit and how to be taught by the Spirit so that we

may walk as children of the Father. Jesus as Lord has gifted us with his own Holy Spirit and shared his life as Son of the Father in the kingdom which will have no end.

The *Holy Spirit* is the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. We have new life because we have been gifted with new life-power. Begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are born again (in baptism) to live as members of the body of Christ, led by the Spirit. “Since we live by the spirit, let us follow the spirit’s lead” (Gal. 5:25). The Holy Spirit is *the* Gift of God; we need to open our hearts to this person who gives us to Jesus and so to the Father. By this Gift our sins are forgiven; we are born to a new life and receive the pledge of resurrection and everlasting life.

### **How Can This Be Done?**

How can we live a life that is Trinitarian? How can we live a life that is “filled with the Spirit”? Is it possible to live filled with the Spirit of Jesus on a day-to-day and moment-to-moment basis? Yes, it is possible. Like Mary, we too can be overshadowed by the power of the Most High. Like Jesus, we too can be anointed with the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit.

I have come to discover two texts of Paul that over the years have helped me to live out the key to the Good News in a moment-to-moment way.

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus regarding you all.

(I Thess 5:16-18 Confraternity Edition)

Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and inspired songs. Sing praise to the Lord with all your hearts. Give thanks to God the Father always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Eph. 5:18-20)

We can *rejoice* always because the Spirit of Jesus is with us. As we allow the Spirit of Jesus to be present to us and to proclaim Jesus as Lord of our lives, we can come to experience his intimate presence and rejoice. Rejoicing and singing are the response to the loving presence of the Lord. Paul in writing to the Philippians says, “Rejoice in the Lord always! . . . The Lord is near” (4:4,5). The church’s greeting, “The Lord be with you,” is an invitation to joy.

We *pray* without ceasing because the Spirit is always with us. It is the Spirit of Jesus that prays within us. The Spirit groans with intercession to the Father. The Spirit praises the Father by proclaiming Jesus as Lord of our lives. The Spirit cries and prays within us:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.

We can always *thank* the Father in Jesus because we have been given the of all gifts, the Spirit of Jesus. Because the Spirit is always with us, we can and should always give thanks. The antidote to forgetfulness and pride is thanksgiving. If we render thanks to God for his Gift and gifts, we remember his goodness and acknowledge his Lordship over us. As we thank the Father in all circumstances, “We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his decree” (Rom. 8:28). Each eucharistic celebration reminds us: “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give him thanks and praise.”

### **Poverty, Obedience, Celibacy**

The society around us is broadcasting bad news rather than good news. Blaring from radio, movies and television, and printed in our newspaper and magazine ads is the message of more and more goods, more and more independence, more and more pleasure. This message of the mass media is not good news, but rather perpetuates and nourishes the bad news so prevalent around us. It forms a shield of darkness: pride, jealousy, lust, hatred, anger, violence and war. Men's hearts and minds are so filled with this message of darkness that they do not even consider other alternatives.

One way to break through the shield of darkness is the witness of men and women living a message that goes counter to that of the society around us. When men and women freely choose to live in common a poor life rather than a rich one, an obedient and submissive life rather than an independent one, a chaste celibate life rather than a promiscuous one, a message of light penetrates the darkness. The life of a poor, obedient, and celibate man or woman is a contradiction to the values of modern society.

In our time we need to rediscover the power of such a consecrated life. It is based on a total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and to one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord. The heart of the power is the Lord Jesus Christ. No form of consecrated life can survive without this continued commitment. Religious communities in our time may need to rededicate themselves in an explicit way to the Lord Jesus Christ, because so many other allegiances have weakened their power. The challenge of a life totally committed to Christ is what will penetrate the darkness of the world. It will also draw men and women to follow in a similar commitment.

The vows of poverty, obedience, and celibacy have been made by countless Christians seeking to follow the Lord Jesus. These three vows have been a traditional way of totally giving oneself to the Lord. They have a negative aspect to them – emptying oneself – and also a positive aspect – being filled. The three vows capsule the gift of oneself. They are a living proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord.

## **Poverty**

The ideal of the life of poverty is to dispossess ourselves of all that would in any way possess us and prevent us from freely serving the Lord. It is to be poor both in spirit (detached) and in fact. This is the negative dimension of the vow. There is also a positive dimension which seeks the possession of the Lord and his richness. In this sense the vow is to be rich in the Lord.

The vow of leaving all things, selling what we have and giving to the poor must always be completed by following Jesus. Without him, the vow of poverty becomes barrenness and destitution. Jesus became the model of poverty when he emptied himself and took on the condition of our humanity (cf. Phil. 2). He walked among us as a poor man, having no place to lay his head. He laid down his life, giving us his all.

For me, poverty has been difficult; and yet I realize that the poor man in our day is the sign of contradiction which is needed to preach the gospel. In a real sense the poor man who prays is the man of power. He relies on the power of God and not on the power of material things.

Poverty in our day may express itself in many ways. We have become possessed by so many different kinds of things. Material goods are the most obvious, but there are other things that we need to let go of to follow in the steps of Jesus. He calls us to a total renunciation in order to follow him and this may well include the renunciation of relationships with people that prevent us from coming more fully to the Lord. It may further involve setting aside attitudes that are not of the gospel. The renunciation of material goods for one person may be very easy, but what he may need to renounce is political and competitive attitudes in his work. Another may have to set aside his desire for privacy or break a sinful relationship. The call of the Lord to sell all and follow him is unique for each person.

## **Obedience**

The ideal of obedience is to be open to the voice of the Spirit expressed in our own hearts and expressed through our brothers and sisters in community. God speaks to our hearts, but in silence, and so we need to be attentive to his voice. In the negative sense, obedience is the setting

aside of our own will and plans, so that in a positive way we might be filled with his Holy Spirit which speaks to us of the Father.

It is possible for us to be obedient because the Spirit within us reveals the Father's will by his gentle promptings and because he also gives us the power to accomplish his will.

In community, obedience expresses itself in right order. In the body of Christ some serve by determining the order, others by subordination. When there is subordination to those in authority, the right order of the body flourishes.

Jesus set us the perfect example of obedience that brought about right order. Because Jesus was obedient to the will of the Father, he laid down his life for us so that he might be raised up again. Jesus listened to the voice of the Father and submitted to the plan of the Father in obedience, even to the point of accepting death on a cross. "Because of this God highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9).

By his obedience Jesus established right order with the Father and became the source of right order for all who obey him (Heb. 5:9). He trusted in the Father, like the lily in the field, and his trusting obedience has brought us all eternal salvation.

Obedience in our day is not a popular concept. Various religious communities have attempted to modify it, emphasizing greater personal responsibility. Some groups, however, are being drawn to an ordered and committed life in which headship and active submission to one another is at the center of their relationship. To be the body of Christ, the members must be in right order to each other. Paul says: "Defer to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). In our day we need to rediscover this active subordination which makes each member of a community really a member of the body of Christ. This body of Christ is the most powerful witness that the Lord is among us.

## **Celibacy**

The call to a life of consecrated celibacy is a unique way of following the Lord. (I intend no comparison or contrast here to the married way of following the Lord, which is also a unique way.) From the earliest times in the church individuals have been called to voluntary and

perpetual celibacy within the Christian community, whereby they dedicate themselves completely to the kingdom of God:

Some men are incapable of sexual activity from birth; some have been deliberately made so; and some there are who have freely renounced sex for the sake of God's reign. Let him accept this teaching who can.

(Matt. 19:12)

This vow of celibacy has the negative aspect of abstention from sexual activity, but it also has the positive aspect of being committed to the Lord in a special way. This life is not a life of isolation, but rather one of union. In a very real way the Lord himself is the bridegroom. If the Lord is our full portion and cup, then we can live a full life. When we are married to the Lord in this manner, we can draw spiritual, psychological, and physical strength and sustenance from him. Living in this way, however, is only possible when we grow in an intimate and personal relationship with the Lord. Intimacy is necessary for us, and if we do not find intimacy with the Lord in this celibate life, we will be tempted to satisfy the longing in other ways which contradict our commitment.

Celibacy is for the sake of the kingdom so that the Lord may be proclaimed in a direct way. The person committed to live a life singly given to the Lord is a sign to the world that Jesus is Lord; it is a sign that points to his coming again in glory.

The life of celibacy is not intended to be a life separated from our brothers and sisters. Celibates need to find support to live this committed life in communities of brothers or sisters as part of the full community. By daily contact in loving and caring for one another, such a community is a corporate witness that Jesus is Lord.

The community that is living a poor, obedient, and celibate life is one of the most powerful signs that Jesus Christ is Lord.

### **Mary: Mother of the Word Made Flesh**

Mary is the model of *how* to live the life of the Spirit in the Lord Jesus Christ. She can teach us how to yield our whole being to the Spirit, even as she did, so that we too can experience the power and the presence and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary has a special charism for showing us how to respond and carry out whatever Jesus tells us. If we are not sure how to accomplish the will of the Father, we can turn to Mary. She will show us how: “Go to Jesus; take his hand; trust in him; rejoice in him.”

Mary has many unique charisms that give her a special role in our lives. She has the special charism of *drawing down* the Spirit sent by Jesus from the Father. She drew down the Spirit upon herself with her humility and total “yes,” and Jesus was conceived. She drew down the Spirit upon the disciples and the church was born. As our mother she continues to draw down the Spirit as we ask, so that Jesus might be alive to us.

Mary has the charism of *anticipating* the time of God’s plan. She conceived Jesus prior to the knowledge of Joseph; she ordered the stewards to follow the orders of Jesus prior to his appointed hour; she has experienced bodily resurrection before the rest of the saints. As a specialist in anticipating God’s will, she is anxious to come to our aid as well. Mary has a mother’s concern for our welfare:

Seeing his mother there with the disciple whom he loved, Jesus said to his mother, “Woman, there is your son.” In turn he said to the disciple, “There is your mother.” From that hour onward, the disciple took her into his care.  
(John 19:26-27)

Mary has the charism of *humanity*. She gave flesh to the Word and continues to remind us that Jesus was truly a man and not an abstraction. In her intimate role of giving flesh to the Word, she continues to teach us that we are saved by the flesh of Jesus and that the Word continues to take flesh in us. She reminds us that we are human.

### **The Word Made Flesh**

An examination of the incarnation reveals the mystery of God's plan of salvation. In taking flesh of the Virgin Mary, the Word became man to save man and so give glory to the Father:

The Word became flesh  
and made his dwelling among us,  
and we have seen his glory:  
the glory of an only Son coming from the Father,  
filled with enduring love.

(John 1:14)

The phrase, "Word became flesh," is a succinct summary of the gospel. Each word capsulizes a dimension of the Lordship of Jesus Christ: The word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was made flesh in the womb of Mary.

### **The Word Took Flesh from Mary**

God truly took on our humanity, our flesh, in the sense of our whole being as created. In taking on the stuff of humanity, the Word lowered himself to the position of a slave. He thus humbled himself to serve us by laying down his life for us.

In dwelling among us Jesus was true man, *all* man, in everything but sin. He took on our human condition with its weakness, emotions, suffering, and effects of sin. Then, in dying, he buried all this so that we too might die to our sins. Finally, in rising from the dead he gave us the victory over sin, death and Satan, giving us the promise and hope of our resurrection.

Because Jesus dwelt among us, he knows our human nature and is compassionate. Since he suffered our weakness and temptations, he wants to save us and heal us. He wants us to acknowledge our human condition and call upon him for salvation.

This human dimension of Jesus is one that we easily neglect. We tend to relate to Jesus as though he really is not human. And yet it is precisely in this humanity that we are saved. It was by his body broken, his blood poured out, that victory has been won for us. It is this human dimension of Jesus that was lifted up to the right hand of the Father and proclaimed as Lord. Mary is the bright reminder of the humanity of Jesus.

### **By the Power of the Holy Spirit**

The Word was made flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. This dimension is hidden and often overlooked and so becomes a problem in understanding the incarnation. If we consider only the two dimensions of the incarnation, the Word (divinity) and flesh (humanity), our emphasis will oscillate between the two. At times we may stress the humanity of Jesus and at other times the divinity of Jesus. The only way to achieve a real dynamic balance is to consider the third dimension – the Holy Spirit. Incarnation is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit, and so our understanding is only possible in light of the action of the Holy Spirit.

The action of the Holy Spirit upon Mary in the incarnation is reflected in the action of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist. The Spirit comes down upon the creation (flesh) of bread and wine and it becomes living Word. The pattern of the action of the Holy Spirit descending upon creation is the pattern of our own sanctification. As we offer our whole being as created (flesh) to the Spirit, we are transformed into the sons of God.

### **The Word of God**

The Son of God, the *Logos*, the Word, is the full expression of the Father, who eternally breathes this word – “Son;” the very sound of the Word and the breath by which it is spoken is the Spirit. The Father eternally speaks Truth in Love.

This Word of the Father emptied himself, humbling himself to become a servant, even to the point of death. “Because of this, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name” (Phil. 2:9). Jesus was proclaimed Lord, thus giving to him the full status of the Word. The whole of Jesus was proclaimed Lord.

Jesus, who became one of us, was lifted up (by the Spirit) to the right hand of the Father. Now one of us, our elder brother has been exalted and pleads for us at the throne of the Father. In Jesus we have been lifted up and given a promise that is beyond what we could ask or imagine. We are called sons of God now, and what is yet to come?

The gospel is that the “Word became flesh” in order that our flesh could become word. Jesus Christ was proclaimed Lord to the glory of the Father, and we glorify the Father as we allow the Word to become flesh in us, even as Mary did.



### **Jesus Christ is Lord: A key to the Church**

The three titles *Jesus*, *Christ* and *Lord* can serve as a key to summarize the gospel. This key can also be used to analyze the various models of the Church. In this chapter I will use this key to analyze the Church as Bride in a covenant with Jesus the priest, prophet and pastor and extend this analysis to the *Models of the Church* by Avery Dulles, S.J., Doubleday, 1974.

**Thesis:**        *The Church as the Body of Christ should reflect the characteristics of Jesus himself.*

**The Key:**      *Jesus Christ is Lord.*

The simple creed that “Jesus Christ is Lord” is a key to who Jesus is and a key to the meaning of the Gospel. This same key also opens up for us an understanding of his Church. The key capsulizes the three basic characteristics of Jesus’ life; namely that, he died, rose and now reigns, under the three titles of *Jesus*, *Christ*, and *Lord*:

*Jesus*, the Savior, the suffering servant, the visible manifestation of the Father who took on our humanity and our sins and died to them, now is calling us to conversion.

*Christ*, the anointed one, the one on whom the Spirit descended, empowered to do the works of the Father, raised up by the power of the Spirit and now the source of the Spirit for those who believe and obey (Acts 2:33-38, Acts 5:32),

*Lord*, the son of the Living God, proclaimed Lord, now at the his kingdom as brothers and sisters in union with him.

#### **Analysis of the Church (Table I)**

Using the key of Jesus Christ as Lord, Table I lists the principle characteristics of the Church as a Bride in a covenant relationship with her Bridegroom. Table I also lists the traditional characteristics of the Church in her priestly, prophetic and pastoral role. Each of the characteristics of Jesus himself: Jesus (died), Christ (rose), Lord (reigns).

**Analysis of the Five Models of the Church (Table II)**

Avery Dulles describes five models or paradigms of the Church, pointing out their chief assets and also their major liabilities. He likens the Church to (1) An Institution, (2) a Mystical communion, 3) a Sacrament, (4) a Herald and (5) a Servant.

Using the key of Jesus Christ is Lord, Table II lists the principle characteristics of each of the five models of the Church as they reflect who Jesus is.

**Table I Analysis of the Church**

<b>Key:</b>	<b>Jesus <i>Died</i></b>	<b>Christ <i>Rose</i></b>	<b>Lord <i>Reigns</i></b>
<i>Church as:</i>			
<i>Bride of Bridegroom</i>	called, given-giving	anointed-anointing	loved-loving
<i>Covenant: People</i>	The Mystical Body of Christ	consecrated by Christ	chosen and called by the Lord
<i>Priest: Intercessor</i>	suffers as victim	“Consecrated in truth”	Intercedes
<i>Prophet: Charismatic</i>	calls to conversion	acts with power to heal to cast out to preach to prophesy to teach	calls to new life new relationship
<i>Pastor:</i>	compassionates lays down life	anoints protects heals	shepherds unites feeds
<i>John the Baptist: points to the</i>	Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world	Anointed – Anointer with the Spirit	Chosen one of God Bridegroom

**Table II Models of the Church**

<b>Key:</b>	<b>Jesus <i>Died</i></b>	<b>Christ <i>Rose</i></b>	<b>Lord <i>Reigns</i></b>
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**Models:**

**Church as:**

<i>Institution:</i> perfect society	Sanctifies	Teaches	Rules
<i>Mystical Communion:</i> people of God	Reconciles	Sanctifies by grace	Unites
<i>Sacrament:</i>	signifies by visible sign	gives grace	invisible Kingdom (divine)
<i>Herald:</i> Kerygmatic	calls to repentance (Metanoia)	gives witness of the word (Martyria)	announces the Kingdom assembles the believers (Koinonia)
<i>Servant:</i>	service (Diakonia)	-----	prepares for the visible Kingdom

**Reflections on Tables I and II**

- A. No single model is adequate to describe the Church. This conclusion of Avery Dulles is further confirmed by this analysis using the key (Table II) and by the analysis of the additional characteristics of the Church as Bride in a covenant with Jesus the priest, prophet and pastor (Table I).
- B. The Church as *Bride* (Table I) emphasizes the covenant union of Bride and Bridegroom through which the two come to be like one another. The Church takes on the characteristics of Jesus as priest, prophet and pastor through its union with him. The Church as Bride is the Mystery of God's love for man by which his creative blessing is lived out in the mystery of "two-in-one flesh." (Eph. 5:22-33). See also John Sheets, *The Mystery of Sexuality and Revelation*, Review for Religious, Jan., 1977.
- C. The Church as *Bride* or *Covenant-people* (Table I) also emphasizes the dimension of the Church as coming from God's call. God initiates the covenant by his choice, his calling, and continues his part of the covenant by his loving-kindness and faithfulness. He enables the Church to respond to his calling by consecrating it in Christ and making it possible for the Church to call upon the name of the Lord. This description of the Church is given in the words of Paul in addressing the Church of Corinth. "Paul, called by God's will to be an

apostle of Christ Jesus, and Sosthenes our brother, send greetings to the Church of God which is in Corinth; to you who have been *consecrated* in Christ Jesus and *called* to be a holy people, as to all those who, wherever they may be, *call* on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord and ours.” (I Cor. 1:1-2).

This picture of Church as Bride shares some aspects of the model of Church as Sacrament (Table II) with the added emphasis on the consecration by the Holy Spirit who is the seal and pledge of sonship. It also shares in the picture of Church as priest-intercessor in that we are empowered to *call upon* the name of the Lord.

- D. The Church as *Priest-Intercessor* (Table I) stresses the role of the Body of Christ in union with Jesus interceding before the Father. As Jesus consecrated himself for the Church by laying down his life (A. Feillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers*, Doubleday, 1975) so the Church is consecrated in Victimhood. The Church is suffering its poverty, its brokenness, its sinfulness and cries out for the consecrating Holy Spirit to transform it to be the bride of Christ. The Church cries, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Come now and prepare us for your final coming.

The Church as priest-intercessor is implied in the model of the Church as Institution (Table II) but needs to be re-discovered. The work of intercession is the work of the whole Church in union with the risen Lord Jesus.

- E. The Church as *charismatic prophet*, (Table I) adds the dimension of charismatic power. The charismatic power is an explicit power of the Holy Spirit working in and through the members of the Church with ministries for the building up of the Church. The explicit power is manifested in such ministries as healing, casting out evil spirits, miracles, prophetic utterances and discernment of spirits, teaching with authority all of which reflect the charismatic power of Jesus. For further development of this dimension of charismatic power see James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, Westminster, 1975, and M. Scanlon and A. T. Shields, *And Their Eyes Were Opened: Encountering Jesus in the Sacraments*, Word of Life, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1976.

The Church as charismatic prophet is related to the model of Herald in its kerygmatic dimension (Table II) but adds the dimension of power. The call to conversion and “Kingdom living” is made possible by the power of the Spirit.

Like a herald the Church is to point to Jesus. She is to point to Jesus in his three-fold mission as did John the Baptist:

Look! There is Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, He is the Savior.

Look! There is Jesus the one baptized in the Spirit who is to baptize with the Spirit. He is the Christed one, who Christs us.

Look! There is Jesus, the chosen one of God. He is the Lord. He is the bridegroom. (See John 1:29, 33, 34 and John 3:29).

- F. The Church as *Pastor* (Table I) reflects the characteristics of Jesus as Shepherd caring for the flock. The care is to be tender and total, even to the point of laying down one’s life. The flock belongs to the shepherd and he knows each of the sheep, loves them, feeds them, protects them and when and where needed he anoints and heals them. Above all, the Pastor unites the flock and sees that the sheep are not scattered or lost. The Church as Pastor emphasizes the dimension of compassionate love, service and commitment that is so needed in the Church today.

This view of Church as pastor stresses some aspects of the model of the Church as Servant (Table II) but adds the needed dimension of submission and headship in order for the flock to be united.

- G. In the ideal, the Church as Bride of Christ (Table I) should reflect the characteristics of Jesus Christ the Lord who is priest, prophet and pastor. In the past, the Church has striven to be this by being of one heart, one mind and one Body,” (Acts 4:32, Eph. 4:1-5) but she has always had to be called back to this first love (Rev. 2:4) even from the earliest days (e.g. Phil. 2:105, I Cor.: 1 Thess).
- H. Using the key to analyze the five models of the Church of Avery Dulles in Table II, the *Christ* dimension is found to be inadequate. The five models as described do not consider

the necessary *power* to accomplish the work of the Father. Without this Christ-power the Church will continue to be trapped in Pelagianism (or semi-Pelagianism). Another way of saying this is that the five models do not adequately show the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The use of the term grace to describe the working of the Holy Spirit, if not understood in a personal way, can conceal the person and the workings of the Holy Spirit.

The *power* of the Holy Spirit is the life of the Church and is described in the words of scripture:

The Lord continued to work with them throughout and confirm the message through the signs which accompanied them” Mark 16:20.

Grant to your servants, even as they speak your words, complete assurance by stretching forth your hand in cures and signs and wonders to be worked in the name of Jesus, your holy Servant. The place where they were gathered shook as they prayed. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak God’s word with confidence. The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. None of them claimed anything as his own; rather, everything was held in common. With power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the lord Jesus” Acts 4:29:33).

### **The Charismatic Renewal and the Church**

In our times, the Church is once again being called back to be what she should be, the Bride of Christ and this time by a charismatic renewal. In this vein Pope Paul VI addressed the Congress of Charismatic Renewal in the Church: “You are striving in union with the whole Church for renewal – spiritual renewal, authentic renewal, Catholic renewal, renewal in the Holy Spirit.” (Paul VI, May 19, 1975, Rome)

The Superior General of the Basilian Fathers, Rev. F. James Hanrahan, C.S.B., wrote of the Charismatic Renewal:

We can hardly be indifferent as to whether this is of the Holy Spirit or not. If it is not, then we are witnessing mass delusion on an alarming scale. If it is, then God is speaking to his People in a striking way that cannot be ignored” (Basilian Newsletter #18, Nov. 17, 1976).

What is happening in the Charismatic Renewal needs to be seriously considered in the analysis of the Church. Here before us we are witnessing the *power* of the Spirit needed to renew the Church so that she may be the Bride of Christ, one in mind, one in heart and one in body. People are experiencing renewed hearts and minds and are coming together as one body to call upon the name of the Lord. Is this not the work of the Holy Spirit?

### **Hungry Hearts Cry: Come, Lord Jesus**

The gospel can be summarized in the one cry: “Come, Lord Jesus.” This cry of the church expresses the longing for the coming of the Lord Jesus in his glory. He has already come among us as a man; he is coming now to save us and transform us; and he is still to come in the fulness of his glory. Would that he would come today!

When we pray for the advent of the Lord into our hearts and into the world, we are praying for his reign among us; we pray that Jesus Christ be our Lord. When we pray for his kingdom, we pray that we may be prepared for it. The New Testament counsels us to prepare for his coming and hasten it:

The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and on that day the heavens will vanish with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and all its deeds will be made manifest.

Since everything is to be destroyed in this way, what sort of men must you not be! How holy in your conduct and devotion, looking for the coming of the day of God and trying to hasten it! . . .

So, beloved, while waiting for this, make every effort to be found without stain or defilement, and at peace in his sight. (11 Peter 3:10-14).

We prepare ourselves for the day of the Lord and hasten it by praying: Jesus, come, Lord.

#### **Jesus!**

Jesus, our savior, save us! Wash us clean and heal us! Jesus, our redeemer, forgive us that we may be at peace in your sight. You alone, Jesus, are our savior. You died on the cross and rose again that we might be cleansed and ready for your coming.

#### **Come!**

Come, Spirit of Jesus, and anoint us afresh. Come, Spirit, christen us that we may be truly sons; give us the fulness of the new life in Christ Jesus. Come, Spirit of the living God, proclaim Jesus as the Lord of our lives and of this world. Come, Spirit, and enkindle the hearts of the faithful; and the Father shall renew the face of the earth, with Jesus as Lord.

## **Lord!**

Lord Jesus, you are the beloved Son of the Father. You are the Lord, the King and center of our hearts, and we long that you be Lord of all the earth.

Lord Jesus, by your victory, you are proclaimed Lord of all glory. To you, Lord Jesus, belongs all glory, dominion, and power forever and ever. Amen.

Could it be true that if enough people on earth were to confess with all their hearts and cry with their lips, “Come, Lord Jesus,” that indeed he would be here?

## What Can I Do?

### Evangelize by the Power of the Holy Spirit

All of us are called to be evangelists. We are called to proclaim the good news (that's what the word "evangelize" means). The good news we are to proclaim is that *Jesus Christ is Lord!*

This proclamation that Jesus, crucified and risen, is Lord can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 2: 2-5, see also Rom 10:9, 1 Jn 4:2, Acts 2:36). When Jesus is proclaimed and lifted up, He will draw all to Himself. By this proclamation, He will cut to the heart the listeners as on the day of Pentecost when Peter explained what was happening – that Jesus whom they crucified, God has made both Christ and Lord (see Acts 2: 36-37). He explained to them that what they saw and experienced was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In response to their question, "What are we to do, brothers?", Peter answered, "You must repent, be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, and then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

This is the first and main thrust of evangelization. By proclaiming that Jesus, crucified and risen, is Lord, there is a power that is released and cuts to the heart. "Something happens" to the heart of the listener and this "something" can then be explained by subsequent teachings. The experience of the good news that Jesus is Lord must be experienced first and then explained as on the day of Pentecost. Something happened that day that demanded an explanation.

Unfortunately, we get caught up in explaining and teaching prior to any experience, assuming that "something" will happen. Too often, we have tried to explain to the heads of our listeners what they have not experienced in their hearts.

We need to proclaim Jesus as Lord by the example of our very lives – by our deeds, by our words, and by our prayer. St. Augustine put it beautifully: by all means we are to evangelize and if you have to, use words. We begin by prayer, asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit into the

hearts of our listeners because “the Holy Spirit is the *principle agent of evangelization*” (Pope Paul VI, *On Evangelization in the Modern World*).

In this marvelous document, Pope John Paul VI exhorts us to evangelize by the power of the Holy Spirit – to be possessed and guided by Him! – proclaiming the fundamental message that the Father loves us in Christ Jesus, bringing salvation and eternal life to all who accept Him as Lord of their lives (see John 3:16).

In order to evangelize by the power of the Holy Spirit, we must both *live* the message and *explicitly proclaim* it – that Jesus is Lord!

What does it mean to live the message of the Lordship of Jesus? It means we believe that He is the Lord God, who became man, born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, was crucified, died and was buried and on the third day rose again, sending His Holy Spirit into our hearts through faith and baptism. It means that Jesus lives at the center of our hearts and is our first priority: we love Him and trust in Him to the glory of the Father. It means that we have received Him as the Savior of our lives, forgiving our sins and giving us eternal life – all as a gift of His mercy.

What does it mean to explicitly proclaim that Jesus is Lord? It means that we state and proclaim who Jesus is to us and to all who accept Him. We cannot assume that people have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord in all its dimensions – that He died for us, that He anoints us with His Holy Spirit (makes us other “christs”) and is the son of the living God through whom and for whom all things were created.

Pope Paul VI beautifully describes the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization:

It must be said that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization: it is he who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is he who in the depths of consciences causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood. But it can equally be said that he is the goal of evangelization.

(Pope Paul VI, *On Evangelization in the Modern World*)

The “real goal of evangelization” is that the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts and makes Jesus *present* as Lord of our lives. This is what makes us “Christians” (Acts 11:26). He makes us other “christed” ones – doing the work of Jesus: proclaiming the Kingdom of God, by deed, word, and prayer.

“Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ!” with the response, “Now and forever!” should be our common Christian greeting and prayer to remind us to evangelize with our whole lives throughout the day.

## Conclusion

This key to the good news opens many doors. The key confronts us with the heart of the gospel, Jesus Christ the Lord, in whatever dimension we are experiencing him:

It is a key to *sacred scripture*. By it we are confronted with the most important questions: Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus to me? Who is Jesus to us? To each of these questions the key answers: Jesus Christ is *the* Lord; Jesus Christ is *my* Lord; Jesus Christ is *our* Lord. Scripture comes alive for us if we know that Jesus is the good news and the good news is Jesus.

It is a key to Evangelization and to *preaching*. If Jesus be lifted up, he will draw all things to himself. To preach is to proclaim that Jesus is savior, the giver of the Spirit, and the Lord. To preach is to call men to respond in faith to the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord.

It is a key to *liturgy*. In liturgy we celebrate the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord. By word and ritual the good news is made present and visible. In liturgy we can “taste and see” that the Lord is good.

It is a key to *community*. In community we share the common Lordship of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is our Lord by the one Spirit, we are in fact brothers and sisters in the Lord.

It is the key to the *Church*. We are called and gathered together by the Lord and consecrated to be covenant members of his family – to be the mystical presence of the Bridegroom.

It is a key to *new life*. Jesus alone is the savior; he alone is the source of the Spirit of life; he alone is Lord. There is no other name by which we can be saved. Jesus is the life.

It is a key to the *world*. Christ in us is the hope of glory. The world has no other hope. Without him we remain in our sin, darkness and confusion. The world needs salvation that it may be delivered from its bondage. The world needs to acknowledge its Lord. The world needs to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord.

It is a key to *prayer*. The powerful prayer of the closing to the book of Revelation is: “COME, Lord Jesus!” In this cry we summarize the gospel: Come, Jesus, send your Holy Spirit and reign in our hearts and in the world as Lord to the glory of the Father.

Summary Table

GOOD NEWS:	JESUS	CHRIST	IS THE LORD
<b>Jesus: Key to Kerygma and to Catechesis</b>	Died to sin and death	Rose victorious	Reigns as Lord over death, sin, and Satan of heaven and earth
<b>Jesus came to</b>	Reconcile Forgive	Give his Holy Spirit	Reveal the Father's Mercy
<b>Jesus</b>	Saves Heals Delivers Forgives Washes Redeems	Teaches Guides Illumines	Fills Anoints Adopts Empowers Enlivens Unifies Loves
<b>Jesus sends us to</b> <i>(Luke 9,10,11)</i> <i>(Mark 3,6,11)</i>	Heal  Cast out by the power of his Spirit		Proclaim his kingdom
<b>Peter professes</b> <i>(Matt. 16:17)</i>	You	are the Christ	Son of the living God
<b>Jesus is</b>	Priest/Victim	Prophet	King
<b>Jesus is Merciful by</b>	Sacrifice/Prayer	Word	Deed
<b>Jesus is</b> <i>(John 14:6)</i> <i>(John 8:12)</i>	The Way	The Truth	The Life The Light
<b>Jesus invites:</b> <i>(Acts 2:38-40)</i>	Repent  Be saved	Be filled with	Be Loved the Holy Spirit  Be one
<b>Peter proclaims:</b> <i>(Acts 2:27-40)</i>	Repent  Be baptized For forgiveness	You shall receive	This promise the gift of the Holy Spirit  is for everyone the Lord God

calls to himself

**GOOD NEWS: JESUS CHRIST IS THE LORD**

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**Mercy:**

since we are  
so we are to  
(*Eph. 1,2*)

Forgiven in Christ  
Forgive in Christ

Loved  
Love

**Grace**

we are given  
we are called to  
(*Eph. 2, Rom. 8, I Cor.6*)

Salvation  
Conversion

Sanctification

Common-union/glory  
Charisma

Community/Church

**Spiritual Warfare**

to Jesus belongs the

Glory

Power

Kingdom

**Mary**

(*Luke 1:26:45*)

Gave flesh  
to the Word

Conceived  
of the Holy Spirit

“Mother of my Lord”  
“Blessed among women”

**I respond:**

I repent!

I yield!

I abide  
I say “yes!”

love  
trust  
listen

**I too am to**

(*I Peter*)

Die to sin

Rise

Reign with Christ

**Jesus**

(*Mark 1: 14-20*)

Calls us to  
follow and serve  
as his *disciples*

Sends us with  
power to witness  
as his *apostles*

Unites us with  
love as his  
*brothers*

**Community**

Jesus prayed  
that all be one  
(*John 17:21*)  
(*Eph. 4:2*)

One faith  
one body

One hope  
one Spirit

One love  
one Lord

**The Church**

like John points to the Lamb of God  
(*John 1:21, 33, 51; 3:21*)

takes away sin

Anointed-Anointer

Chosen one of God  
Bridegroom

**The Church**

as bride

is called

is consecrated

is loved

**GOOD NEWS: JESUS CHRIST IS THE LORD**

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<b>The Church evangelizes proclaims</b>	His salvation his crucified love his death	His life-power his Spirit his freedom his truth	His love life as sons union with God
<b>The Word of God</b>	The Word was made <i>flesh</i>	By the power of the Spirit	God speaks the <i>Word</i> , "Son" Listen to him
<b>Jesus acts in the sacraments of initiation</b>	Baptism	Confirmation	Eucharist
<b>Growth in the sacraments of community</b>	Penance Sick	Orders	Eucharist Marriage
<b>Eucharist</b> <i>(1 Cor. 11:23)</i> <i>(1 John 5:5)</i>	Body: broken given <i>(Luke 22:19)</i>	Spirit: handed over <i>(John 19:30)</i>	Soul: lifeblood shed new covenant
<b>Proclamation of faith</b>	Christ has died	Christ has risen	Christ will come again
<b>Jesus is the Key to Time and History:</b>	Past Amnesia Epiclesis (Remembrance)	Present Theosis (Invocation)	Future (Divinization)
<b>Key to Suffering</b>	Suffering	Love	Joy
<b>Pray:</b> <b>me/us, I/we</b>	Heal me/us	Empower me/us	I love you
<b>Lord Jesus</b>	Save me/us	Fill me/us	Love me/us
<b>Come, Holy Spirit</b>	Wash me/us Forgive me/us Deliver me/us	Enlighten me/us Guide me/us Teach me/us	I praise you I thank you Intercede for me
<b>Our Father</b>	Have mercy on me/us	Bless me/us	Unite me/us

**GOOD NEWS: JESUS CHRIST IS THE LORD**

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<b>Jesus prayed:</b> <i>(John 17)</i>	Protect	Consecrate	Unite	
<b>Vows of the Evangelical life</b>		Poverty	Obedience	Celibacy
<b>Steps in following the Lord:</b>		Desolation Purgative I repent	Revelation Illuminative I yield	Consolation Unitive I abide
<b>Jesus is</b>	Priest	Prophet	King	
<b>Fruit:</b> <i>(Gal. 5:22)</i> <i>(John 14-17)</i>		Peace	Joy	Love
<b>Faith, hope and love are</b>		Gift	Power	Life

**JESUS CHRIST IS THE LORD!**

**The Key to:**

**Sacred Scripture:** The most important question is: Who is Jesus to me?

**Evangelization:** We proclaim Jesus as the Christ and the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father.

**Church:** We live and share Jesus Christ as our Lord.

**Liturgy:** We celebrate that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

**The world:** Christ in us is our hope of glory.

The key to the good news can be summarized in the powerful prayer of the conclusion to the book of Revelation: **Come, Lord Jesus!**