

ST CANICES LENT DISCUSSION GROUP
SECOND MEETING SUNDAY MARCH 17, 2013

JESUS' PASSION THROUGH JOHN'S GOSPEL

Materials attached

- *Ignatian prayer
- *John's Gospel chapters 13-17
- *"the Gospel of St John" (Jean Varnier) chapters 17-22

In our first meeting we looked at faith and spirituality and were particularly drawn by the statement in Gerald Hughes' book "Spirituality without some visible form is like a breath without a body. On the other hand a visible form(Church) without spirituality is like a body without a breath."

Keeping in mind what was discussed in our first meeting we look at Jesus' Passion in the Gospel of St John , and in particular:

- *Jesus washes the disciples' feet(13:1-20)
- *the new commandment (13:31-35)
- *the promise of the Holy Spirit (14:15-31& 16:5-15)
- *Jesus the true vine (15:1-17)
- *Jesus prays for the disciples (17:1-26)

Soul of Christ

Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.
May your body and blood be my food and drink.
May your passion and death be my strength and life.
Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.
May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.
Let me not run from the love which you offer,
 But hold me safe from the forces of evil.
On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.
Keep calling to me until that day comes
When, with your saints, I may praise you forever.

Amen.

(—*A favorite prayer of St. Ignatius,
as translated by David L. Fleming, S.J.**)

Part One**Introduction to
Christian Life Community**

* See Fr. Fleming's *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: a Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991), p.3. A more recent translation can be found in Fr. Fleming's *Draw Me Into Your Friendship: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), p.3.

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—
the King of Israel!"

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

"Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.

Look, your king is coming,

sitting on a donkey's colt!"

16 His disciple did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. 17 So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify.^o 18 It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. 19 The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.

21 They came to Philip, who was from Beth-saida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

Jesus Speaks about His Death

27 "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

29 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." 33 He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. 34 The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man

for a little longer? Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. 35 While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light."

The Unbelief of the People

After Jesus had said this, he departed and went to God,^a got up from the table,^b took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around his waist.^c Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."^d 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."^e 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet;^f but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he and spoke about him. 42 Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue. 43 For they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.

Summary of Jesus' Teaching

44 Then Jesus cried aloud: "Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness." 47 Do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.^g 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word I have spoken will serve as judge. 49 For I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, speak just as the Father has told me."

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

13 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to

40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart,^h so that they might not look with their eyes,

and understand with their heart; and turn—
and I would heal them."

41 Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke about him. 42 Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue. 43 For they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.

44 Then Jesus cried aloud: "Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness." 47 Do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.^g 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word I have spoken will serve as judge. 49 For I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, speak just as the Father has told me."

Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward."ⁱ 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."^j 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

Jesus the Way to the Father

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^k 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to

21 After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me."^l 22 The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. 23 One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him;^m 24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speak-

the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supperⁿ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,^o got up from the table,^p took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around his waist.^q Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."^r 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."^s 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet;^t but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he and spoke about him. 42 Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue. 43 For they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.

31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.^u 32 If God has been glorified in him, j God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.^v 33 Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 34 Give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.^w 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." 36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward."^x 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."^y 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

^a Other ancient authorities read with him began to testify that he had called from the dead

^b Other ancient authorities lack except for the feet

^c The Greek word for you here is plural

^d Ck slaves

^e Other ancient authorities read it

^f Ck I am

^g Ck dipped

^h Other ancient authorities read Judas Iscariot son of Simon; others, Judas son of Kainof (Kerith)

ⁱ Ck After the piece of bread

^j Other

myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4And you know the way to the place where I am going.”^a 5Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”^b 6Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”^c Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Who ever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’^d 10Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you on our way...

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid. 28You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.^e 29And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. 30I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me;^f 31but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

The Work of the Spirit

Jesus the True Vine

John 15:1-8

15 “I am the true vine,^g and my Father is the vinegrower. 2He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 4Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.^h 6Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.ⁱ 7If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. 9As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

12 “This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. 13No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command you.^j 15 I did not call you servants;^k I call you friends, because I have chosen you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

The World’s Hatred

18 “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. 19If you belong to the world,^l the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. 20Remember the word that I said to you: ‘Servants^m are not greater than their master.’ⁿ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. 21But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23Whoever hates me, hates my Father also. 24If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25It was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause.’

16 “When the Advocate^o comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

16 “I have said these things to you to

keep you from stumbling. 2They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. 3And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me. 4But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them...

The Work of the Spirit

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. 7Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your

but if I go, I will send him to you. 8And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment; 9about sin, because they do not believe in me; 10about righteousness, because I am not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Sorrow Will Turn into Joy

16 “A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me.” 17Then some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying to us, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’?” and “Because I am going to the Father?” 18They said, “What does he mean by this ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.” 19Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’? 20Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn; but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. 21When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world.^p 22So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice; and no one will take your joy from you. 23On that day you will ask nothing of me.^q Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.^r 24Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

Peace for the Disciples

25 “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when a Gk slave b Gk were of the world c Gk Slaves d Gk Hearer e Or ananach the world f Or will

the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

16 “A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me.” 17Then some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying to us, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’?” and “Because I am going to the Father?” 18They said, “What does he mean by this ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.” 19Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’? 20Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn; but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. 21When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world.^p 22So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice; and no one will take your joy from you. 23On that day you will ask nothing of me.^q Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.^r 24Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

Peace for the Disciples

25 “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when a Gk slave b Gk were of the world c Gk Slaves d Gk Hearer e Or ananach the world f Or will

you know, and the way you know. 5Other ancient authorities read if you had known me, you would have known. 6Other ancient authorities lack mine. 7Other ancient authorities read me kept my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25 “I have said these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. 7Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your

joy may be complete.

a Other ancient authorities read Where I am going you know, and the way you know. b Other ancient authorities read if you had known me, you would have known. c Other ancient authorities lack mine. d Other ancient authorities read me kept my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

e Other ancient authorities read When I am going you know, and the way you know. f Other ancient authorities read if you had known me, you would have known. g Other ancient authorities lack mine. h Other ancient authorities read me kept my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

i Other ancient authorities read if you had known me, you would have known. j Other ancient authorities read me kept my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

k Other ancient authorities read me kept my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

l Other ancient authorities read if you had known me, you would have known. m Other ancient authorities read me kept my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

n Other ancient authorities read me kept my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

o Other ancient authorities read the Advocate.

p Other ancient authorities read the joy of having brought a human being into the world.

q Other ancient authorities read nothing of me.

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yy Other ancient authorities read

NEW TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT

1012

John 16:26

15 Simon Peter and another follower of Jesus followed him. When they saw Jesus talking to the people, they were surprised. "What does he mean?" they asked. Jesus turned to them and said, "I have come to bring good news to all people. The time has come when God will judge everyone according to their actions. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

16 As Jesus was speaking, a man named Jairus came up to him. He was a leader in the local church and was very important. He knelt down at Jesus' feet and begged him, "My daughter is dying. Please help her!"

17 Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith." He took Jairus' hand and led him to his daughter's room. The room was filled with weeping and wailing. Jesus went in and said to the people, "Stop crying! The girl is not dead; she is sleeping." They laughed at him, but Jesus sent them away.

18 Then he took the girl by the hand and said, "Get up!" She got up immediately and began to walk around. The people were amazed at what had happened.

19 Jesus asked Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith." Then he turned to the people and said, "A woman here has given me some oil. Use it to anoint the girl's head." The girl got up and walked around, and everyone was amazed at the power of Jesus.

20 Jesus then turned to the people and said, "I have come to bring good news to all people. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

21 After Jesus finished speaking, he went back to Galilee. Many people followed him, including his twelve apostles.

Now I am coming to you, and I speak the things in the world because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world, 15I am not asking you to take the world, 16And for their sakes I sanctify myself so that they also be in us,⁹ so that they may believe truth.

20 "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21that they may have the truth. 18As you have sent them into the world, 19And for their sakes I sanctify myself so that they also may be sanctified; 20in you, my Father, are in me and I am one. As you, Father, are in me, so that they may be one, to the world, just as I do not belong from the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one, 16They do not belong out of the world, 15I am not asking you to take the world, 16And for their sakes I sanctify myself so that they also be in us,⁹ so that they may believe truth.

22The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may know whom I have sent me, 23in them and you in me, so that they may become completely one, 24Father, I desire that those who have loved me, 25"Righeteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me, 26I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that you have sent me, 27made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

18After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered; Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. 3So Judas brought Jesus from the chief priests together with soldiers who had been sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said, "I am he." And the soldiers and the chief priests read the Father's name on the scroll of destruction, "The son of God is he." Other ancients read the Father's name on the scroll of destruction, "The son of the Most High is he." Other ancients read the Father's name on the scroll of destruction, "The son of the Most High is he." Other ancients read the Father's name on the scroll of destruction, "The son of the Most High is he."

29 His disciples said, "Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure or of special words. After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son so that the Son may glory in You, 2 since You have given him authority over all people, 3 since You may know him. 3 And this is the eternal life, that they may live eternally to all whom you have given him by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 4 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had received from You; 5 for the words that You gave me I have known to them, and they have believed that You sent me. 6 I have made Your name known to those whom You gave me from the world, 7 now they know that they have kept Your word. They were Yours, and You gave me from them to me. 8 And now I am sending on their behalf, I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom You gave me, because half of them do not believe in the word, but they are mine; 9 all mine are Yours, and they are Yours. 10 All mine are Yours, and Yours are mine; and I have glorified in them what they say about You. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am not asking on behalf of them, because You have given me power over them. 12 While I was with them, I protected them coming to You, Holy Father, protect them until the day You will ask in my name. I do not say to You that I will ask the Father on Your behalf, 13 for the Father loves me and has believed You have loved me and have come into the world again, I am leaving the world, each one persecutes me, 14 have said this to You, so that in me You may have peace. In the world you face many difficulties, but take courage; I have queued the world."

uly seeking the truth and the glory of God
and the renewal of the group.

In this passage of the Gospel of John, leaders who believed in Jesus
are afraid to manifest this belief for fear of being rejected.
They seek to conform.

They love human glory more than the glory that comes from God.
Finally, we hear Jesus crying out in the Temple:

*"Whoever believes in me believes not in me
but in the one who sent me.
And whoever sees me, sees him who sent me.
I have come as light into the world
so that everyone who believes in me
should not remain in darkness."*

*"I do not judge anyone who hears my words
and does not keep them,
for I came not to judge the world
but to save the world."*

*Jesus, through his love and humility,
came to break down the barriers of security
that have been built around our hearts and our cultures
so that we may reach out to others who are different
and so bring unity and peace to our broken world.
The disciples of Jesus must have been surprised and shocked
to discover, little by little,
that Jesus did not come to bring freedom and dignity
only to the Jewish people
but to each person,
whatever his or her culture, origins or religious traditions –
even to the Greeks and the Romans!*

*He, too, can be surprised and shocked
as we discover the Holy Spirit
working in the hearts of people of different Christian traditions,
of different faiths
of no particular faith.*

Jesus and vulnerability

John 13:1-17



*Jesus kneels
at the feet of his disciples;
as a slave,
he washes their feet.*

*In this simple gesture
he reveals the face of God
and a new way for us
to exercise authority
to bring people to unity
and to work for peace.*

*This is the way of humility
and service.*

The work of a slave

This chapter of the Gospel of John, which marks the start of the second part of the gospel, begins in a solemn way:

*Now before the feast of the Passover Jesus,
knowing that his hour had come to depart from this world to
the Father,
having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the utter most.*

v. 1

Up until now Jesus has been the shepherd leading the flock. He has been strong and has performed miracles, standing his ground and defending himself in difficult discussions with religious leaders.

He has spoken with the power of truth.

The last and greatest of his miracles, raising Lazarus from death to life, brought many to believe in him.

He entered Jerusalem with the people crying out:

*"Hosanna!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord –
the King of Israel!"*

In 12:13

But Jesus has read the signs; his hour has come. He has announced his message of love and now he is going to offer himself up in humility, in weakness and in silence even to death.

He will no longer defend himself.

He will go to the very end of love, he will love totally and unconditionally, giving life, giving his life. He will reveal in a new way who he is and who God is.

The Prologue shows us a descending God who becomes flesh to lead us into the womb of the Father. Now, we see Jesus descending to his knees to wash the feet of his disciples.

The devil had already put into the heart of Judas to betray him.

During the supper, Jesus,

*knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands
and that he had come from God
and was going to God,*

got up from table, laid aside his outer garment,

*ti ed a towel around his waist, poured water in a basin
and began to wash the disciples' feet
and to wipe them with the towel
that was tied around him.*

In 13:2-5

In the Jewish culture, it was a slave's job to wash the feet of others: an inferior would wash the feet of a superior, a disciple the feet of the master, a lowly person the feet of a king. Never would a king kneel down in front of one of his subjects, nor a teacher before his disciples.

Peter and the other disciples cannot understand what is going on. They are unable at that moment to understand that Jesus is revealing a totally new vision –

not only about the relationship between God and human beings, but also between people of different backgrounds, cultures and races.

We admire and obey those who do great, brilliant things; we put them on a pedestal. But admiration is not love. Admirable people do not need us. Love implies proximity, mutuality.

When people love, they need each other and are vulnerable one to another. With the incarnation, the all-powerful One becomes the little, powerless one.

He needed his mother to feed him, love him
and be in communion with him.
He needed the Samaritan woman and asked her for water.
And we will discover that he needs each one of us.
He wants to dwell in each of us as a friend.
He is knocking at the door of our hearts,
begging to enter and to become our friend:

*"Behold I stand at the door and knock /says the Lord;
if anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in and eat with them
and they with me."*

The history of humanity has changed
since God has knelt humbly at our feet, begging our love.
We can accept or refuse.
Jesus is chained to our freedom.

Peter refuses

When Jesus came to wash Peter's feet, Peter reacted:

"Lord, you are going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered:

"You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Peter retorted: "You shall never wash my feet!"

v.6-8

Peter is so human, like us all.
He has his culture and his own ways of doing things.
Jesus is superior, the Lord and Master.
He should never wash the feet of his lowly disciples.
It is they who should wash the feet of Jesus,
while those inferior to the disciples should wash their feet,
and so on down the hierarchy of importance.

Peter cannot understand the meaning of this gesture.
He needs Jesus above him, not below him.
Jesus gives him security.
Jesus obviously has authority and power.
Isn't he the Messiah, the Son of God, the Holy One?
But Jesus wants to enter into a new relationship with Peter,
to call him to rise up and discover
that he is called to love others as Jesus loves him.

The model of the pyramid

All groups, all societies, are built on the model of a pyramid:
at the top are the powerful, the rich, the intelligent.
They are called to govern and guide.

At the bottom are the immigrants, the slaves, the servants,
people who are out of work, or who have a mental illness
or different forms of disabilities.
They are excluded, marginalized.

Here, Jesus is taking the place of a person at the bottom,
the last place,
the place of a slave.

(X)
For Peter this is impossible.

Little does he realize that Jesus came to transform
the model of society
from a pyramid to a body,
where each and every person has a place,
whatever their abilities or disabilities,
where each one is dependent upon the other.

Each is called to fulfill a mission in the body of humanity
and of the Church.
(X)
There is no "last place."

Jesus, revealing himself as the least one in society,
the one who does the dirty jobs,
the one who is in the last place,
calls his followers to be attentive to the least in society.

 God is not out of reach, in the skies.
God is hidden in the “heavens” of the hearts
of all those who are in the last place.
The gospel message is the world upside down.

Paul compares the Church to the human body.
In the body, each member is important and precious.
Each is needed for the good of the whole.
And Paul adds that those who are the weakest
and the least presentable —

those who are hidden away —

are necessary to the body of Christ
and should be so honoured.



Peter’s attitude is natural and normal.
It reveals the distance that exists
between the gospel message and our human attitudes
and the ways of all our cultures,
between the real Jesus and the image we have of him as a leader
and a king,
between the vision of God in the gospel
and our human way of seeing God.
We all have in our heads the model of a pyramid,
where authority has power and is on top.
Don’t we all seek to become friends
with the important people on top,
not with those on the bottom?

If it is easy to understand Peter’s attitude,
it is more difficult to understand Jesus’ response:
“Unless I wash your feet, you have no part with me.”

v. 8

In clear language this means “you are no longer one of my disciples.
We can no longer share together.”

Peter’s heart is loyal, good and generous;
he does not want to offend Jesus.

He just thought that to be a good and generous disciple
he should wash Jesus’ feet.

He reacts in a panic to Jesus’ threat and says:

“Not only my feet but my hands and my head.”

v. 9

cf. 1 Cor 12

He does not understand that Jesus’ answer
shows that the washing of the feet
is not a new ritual that we can follow or not
or that we should accomplish at certain moments.
It is an essential part of his message of love.
It is the revelation that in order to enter into the kingdom
we have to become like little children;
we need to be “born” from on high
to discover who God is
and who we are called to be.
It is only if we receive the Spirit of God
that we can understand and live
this message of littleness, humility and service to others.

You must do to others what I have done to you

Once Jesus has washed their feet,
he puts on his outer garment and sits down.
He then entreats them to do for each other
what he has just done for them.

“Unless I wash your feet, you have no part with me.”

“You call me Lord and Master –

and you are right for that is what I am.

So if I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet,

you also must wash one another’s feet.

I have set you an example,
that you also do as I have done to you.”

When Jesus calls us to wash one another's feet,
he is calling us to love, to serve and to forgive each other.
It does not mean we have to actually wash everybody's feet!
The washing of the feet is a powerful symbol.
And symbols are important: they signify something crucial.
The bread in the Eucharist is symbolic.
So, too, are the water in baptism and the oils in confirmation.
Symbols can and do become a sign.
Sharing the consecrated bread at the Eucharist
becomes a source of grace.
We are body, soul and spirit.
All three are important.
To actually wash each other's feet
can and does become a source of grace, a presence of Jesus
which gives us the grace, strength and love
to be truly servant-leaders.

At special moments in l'Arche and in Faith and Light,
we wash each other's feet as an expression of our love.

It is always very moving for me when someone with disabilities
washes my feet
or when I see a person wash the feet of their mother or father.
It is the world turned upside down.

In 1998 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches
in Geneva asked me to animate a day on spirituality.
I suggested that after my talk, all the members of this Central
Committee, representing some 230 different Christian churches,
be invited to wash each other's feet during a special liturgy.
It was particularly moving to witness an Orthodox bishop
kneeling down and washing the feet of an American woman
who was a Baptist minister.
Gestures sometimes speak louder and more lastingly than words.
It was a moment of both grace and unity.

Jesus gives his body to eat and washes his disciples' feet
In the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke,
we read of the "Last Supper",
where we see Jesus breaking bread, passing the cup,
giving his body to eat and his blood to drink.
It is a moment of intense communion through his body.
To receive communion is to be *in* communion with Jesus,
and Jesus tells the group:

"Do this in memory of me."

Lk 22:15

John does not speak of the institution of the Eucharist in his gospel,
but only of the washing of the feet that took place at the same event.
There is a deep link between these two realities.
The washing of the feet, too, is an intense moment of communion
through the body.

Jesus tells the disciples that he is giving them an example;
they are called to do for each other what he has done for them.
In the mind of John,
communion at the table of the Lord cannot be separated
from the communion lived in washing each other's feet.

Love at the heart of l'Arche

To wash a person's feet
is a gesture that creates and expresses a communion of hearts.
I became more aware of the importance of this gesture
when I left the leadership of my community
and lived a sabbatical year in one of our homes
that welcomes people with severe handicaps.
Among them was Eric.

We had met him at the local psychiatric hospital.
When he arrived he was a young lad of sixteen:
he was blind, deaf and could not walk or speak.
He was not toilet trained.
I have never seen so much anguish in a young person as I saw in Eric.

There was a desire in him to die;
he just would not keep down food in his stomach.

Many of those with disabilities
who are welcomed in our l'Arche communities
have a broken self-image.

They have been seen as a disappointment for their parents;
they are not wanted as they are,
so they feel that they are no good.

If people are not loved,
they can feel that they are in fact not loveable,
that they are somehow bad or evil.

Our hope in welcoming such people
is to help them transform their broken or negative self-image
into a positive one and find self-esteem.

The vision of l'Arche is to help people rediscover their value,
their beauty, their importance.

Only then can they begin to grow and do beautiful things;
they respond to love with love.

Someone who has a negative self-image will only want to do
negative things to themselves or to others.

But how could we help Eric make this transformation
when he could neither see nor hear nor understand?
The only way to communicate with him was through touch.
Through the way we touched, held and washed his body
with respect and love,
we were able to communicate and reveal to him
that he was precious.

Revelation of the love of Jesus

I can imagine with what tenderness
Jesus touches the feet of his disciples,
looks into their eyes,
calls each one by name and says a special word to each one.

When he speaks at the meal, he speaks to them all;
he does not have a personal contact with each one individually.
But as he kneels humbly before each one and washes their feet,
he has a *personal* contact with each one.

He reveals to each one his love,
which is both comforting and challenging.

He sees in each one a presence of his Father,
whom he loves and serves.

The love of Jesus reveals that we are important,
that we are a presence of God
and are called to stand up and do the work of God:
to love others as God loves them,
to serve others and to wash their feet.

By washing his disciples' feet, Jesus does not diminish his authority.
He affirms that he has authority, that he is "Lord and Master."
But he wants to reveal a new way of exercising authority
through humility, service and love, through a communion of hearts,
in a manner that implies closeness, friendliness, openness and humility,
a desire to bridge the gap that so often exists
between those "in" leadership
and those "under" their leadership.

Some leaders feel insecure,
and that can make them pompous, self-satisfied, aloof.
They tend to lord it over others and control them.
They hide their insecurity,
their weakness and their difficulties in dealing with relationships
behind symbols:
big desks, big cars, magnificent clothes,
all of which keep people at a distance.

Mahatma Gandhi was deeply influenced
by the life and message of Jesus,
especially by the Sermon on the Mount and the washing of the feet.
Even when he had great power as a leader of his country,
he took the humblest place in the ashram where he lived.

His role each day was to clean the toilets:
a sign that he wanted to serve others.

Model of forgiveness

To wash is to cleanse.
Jesus washes his disciples' feet as a sign of cleansing their hearts,
a sign of forgiveness.

It is never easy to exercise authority.

Those who routinely do exercise it —
parents, teachers, ministers, priests —
can either be too controlling
or too frightened of intervening,

frightened of conflict and other people's freedom.
Leaders can easily make mistakes.

When one is in a leadership position

it is not easy to be wise, compassionate and yet firm.

The Holy Spirit teaches us to be *servant-leaders* in truth.

Some people always seem to be in opposition to authority;
not everyone can be happy with all decisions.

That is why leaders are frequently criticized
and attacked verbally.

They are called to be models of forgiveness.

But how difficult it is to accept those who criticize or reject us!

We easily build walls to protect ourselves from those who oppose us.

We feel insecure and frightened of conflict.

We do not always want to wash their feet
as Jesus washed the feet of Judas.

Through the washing of the feet,
Jesus reveals a new way of exercising authority,
not from above but from below.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus exercises his authority *standing upright*:
he calls each one by their name
and leads them in the right direction, correcting them when necessary.

Here, Jesus *kneels* at their feet,
wanting to help them to rise up.
He is their servant.

Later he will exercise authority by *lying down*,
on the cross,
offering his life for those he loves,
giving life through the offering of his very being.

The difficulty of having power

Jesus, by washing the disciples' feet,
is saying something about the distinction so common in humanity
and throughout the history of humanity
between master and slave,

between those in power and the powerless,
between superiors and inferiors.
In many cultures, slaves did all the really difficult, strenuous,

hard manual labour,
and were forced to work horribly long hours.
They were the ones who built the pyramids
and the palaces of the emperors.

They were the ones on whose shoulders
industrial societies depended,
as they worked in inhuman conditions and for a pittance.

Then, as now, immigrants in Europe did the work that others refused,
just as factory workers in the South
provide designer-label products for consumers in the North.

Aristotle justifies it this way, saying that those with good heads,
the thinkers, should govern,
while those who are essentially "hand"-driven
should do manual labour.

For him, this was a natural distinction:
those with good heads were superior and closer to the gods.
Even so, Aristotle affirmed that superiors should treat slaves with justice
at a time when slaves were usually treated with disdain.

Very quickly, this distinction between the thinker and the doer, the intellectual and the labourer, the superior and the inferior, those who govern and those who are governed, became the basis of all forms of racism and sexism.

Jesus came to make things new.
For Jesus, each person is precious,
each one is loved by God,
each is called to become the “home” of God;
each has a gift to bring to others,
each one should be deeply respected.

Unfortunately, Christian communities often reflect the model of a pyramid
rather than the one of a body.

After the conversion of Constantine in the year 313,
Church and State became intertwined.
Kings and princes exerted a huge influence on the Church
and on church affairs.
Many bishops and abbots acted like princes and lords,
wielding a lot of power.
Building huge palaces and beautiful buildings
became more important than being attentive to the poor
and seeing them at the heart of the Church.

Christianity became magnified and projected
through architecture and the arts,
through philosophy, theology and all forms of creative expression.
Beauty and creativity certainly have their place.
Yet power can quickly corrupt, as the people who crave it
seek influence and honour.

The dominant cultures of society
slowly penetrated the life of the Church.

Those with power became the “important ones” and were magnified. Francis, the “Poverello of Assisi,” reacted in a strong yet simple way – as many other holy people have done throughout the history of the Church. He did not attack the institution, which included many good and loyal people caught up in the structures of the institutional church.

Instead, he took seriously the call to poverty found in the message of Jesus and his commitment to the poor. He chose another way. Men and women flocked to him and embraced his way of life. The institutional church, despite being caught up in its own culture, still encouraged him and his followers to walk the way of poverty.



Francis managed to bring back to life the gospel message *within* the Church:
a message of humility and service,
a message of peace and unity,
a message of washing each other’s feet,
a message of non-violence, poverty and commitment to the poor,
a message of prayer and of Providence.
In his Admonitions, Francis writes about the heads of his fraternities, whom he calls the servers:

And blessed is that servant
who does not place himself in a high position of his own will
and always desires to be under the feet of others.

Followers of Jesus will continually be caught up in the paradox. Shepherds, teachers and leaders are necessary. They have power, but how should they exercise that power in the spirit of the gospels? How should they give a clear message about the truth of Jesus’ message? How should they speak out against the powers of wealth? How should they be servant-leaders who humbly give their lives?

The need for power, acclaim and honours can undermine the message of Jesus and lead to a road of compromise with the values of society. We all imagine that if we had more money, more influence and more power, we would be able to set things right.

I am very familiar with this need to compromise, for it is something I sense in myself as well as in my own communities. It is sometimes easier for me to accept the experience of being acclaimed for a book I have written or a talk I have given than just to sit down, poorly and humbly, and share my life lovingly with my brothers and sisters in l'Arche.

How quickly at times I feel the urge to set things right, to control or dominate situations, rather than to wait humbly and find the right way of doing things. We all have to avoid getting caught up in the power game. In order to exercise authority humbly, in a spirit of service, as Jesus did we need the humble, loving force of the Holy Spirit.

The message of Jesus is clear: stay close to people, especially to those who are lonely, weak and in need; become their friend, their brother, their sister. Maybe we cannot all live with the disadvantaged of our city or be with the most oppressed, but each one of us can befriend a weak person, an elderly lady who has Alzheimer's or a young man with HIV/AIDS.

When the poor and the weak are present, they prevent us from falling into the trap of power – even the power to do good – of thinking that it is we who are the good ones, the spiritual ones, who must save the Saviour and his church. As we get closer to the poor and the weak

we begin to accept our own poverty and weakness; we learn how to become vulnerable to others, not to control them, and how to cry out to others and to Jesus: "I cannot do this on my own! I need your help."

As we get closer to the poor, we begin to live the beatitude of the poor. When St. Lawrence, a deacon in the church in Rome, was commanded at the point of the sword to give up the riches of the church, he arrived in front of the Roman authorities with all the poor and the lame of Rome. He said, "Here are the riches of the Church!"

St. Lawrence was burned alive, martyred for that action, in the year 258. His voice continues to speak throughout the centuries: the poor and the lame are the riches of the Church because they are a presence of Jesus. In their vulnerability they, like Jesus, are begging for our hearts, our love and our friendship.

After telling the disciples that they are called to wash each other's feet, Jesus says: "*If you know this, blessed are you if you do it.*"

The Greek word for "blessed" implies being "blessed by God." It also implies an abundance of joy, a beatitude, a participation in the joy of God. If we choose to take the last place, if we wash each other's feet and humbly serve one another, we receive a blessing from God. We are close to God and live in God's presence. We become like God and, our hearts overflowing with love, we transmit the love of God.

How do we react to love?

John 13:18-30



The betrayal

Having washed his disciples' feet, revealing to them his yearning for love, unity and communion, Jesus is troubled. He recalls the words of Psalm 41, which speak of a bosom and trusted friend,

*who ate of my bread
and lifted the heel against me.*

He is referring to Judas.

Judas, his disciple, his bosom friend.
Judas, whom he had trusted.
Judas, whose feet he had washed.
Judas, who had already betrayed him.
Is there anything more horrible than betrayal?

Betrayal is more than separation or rejection. To betray is to use the secrets of a person's personal life, thoughts confided to a "friend," and to turn against that person, to use their confided thoughts or words in order to hurt and defile them, to destroy a reputation.

Jesus can no longer contain his emotion and anguish.

*Having said these things, Jesus, in anguish
for troubled in his spirit testified:
"Truly, truly I tell you,
one of you is going to betray me."*

*The beloved disciple surrenders to Jesus' love
and becomes his intimate friend.*

*These three attitudes are in each one of us
at different moments of our lives.*

v. 18

Jn 13:21

The disciples are shattered by this statement but probably even more so by the emotion revealed in Jesus: his face, his eyes, his body. His hands must have quivered, his voice faltering and tear-filled.

What is happening?
Is it possible that one of the chosen ones is going to betray Jesus?
Who can it be?

We read in the Gospel of John:

*There was a disciple, the one whom Jesus loved,
who was reclining on the heart of Jesus;
Peter motioned to him, asking him to ask Jesus
of whom he was speaking.*

*He then, reclining on the heart of Jesus, said: "Lord, who is it?"
Jesus answered: "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of
bread dipped [in the wine]."*

*Then, Jesus took a piece of bread, dipped it
and gave it to Judas, son of the Iscariot.*

*After Judas had received it, Satan entered into him.
Jesus said: "Do quickly what you are going to do."
Judas, having eaten the bread, went out.*

It was night. *Wk. 23-27, 30*

To put into someone's mouth a piece of bread dipped in wine
is an act of intimacy and friendship.
Jesus continued to reveal his love for Judas.
But Judas is blocked, too broken and anguished
to continue this two-faced play.

He gets up and quickly goes out.
As the text says:
"It was night."
Yes, it was night, the time of darkness and evil.

There, in the midst of this scene filled with emotion,
are *Judas*,
the unnamed *beloved disciple*,
and *Peter*.
three men who have radically different relationships with Jesus.

Judas refuses the love of Jesus, is in opposition to him.
He has begun to hate Jesus.
The beloved disciple totally trusts and loves Jesus
and knows that Jesus loves him in return.
Peter? He is confused.

He refused to let Jesus wash his feet
because he did not understand Jesus.
He feels awkward in front of him
and does not dare speak directly to him.

These three men represent each one of us
at different moments of our lives.
Like Judas, at times we can be in revolt towards Jesus,
and want to be left alone, autonomous, not dependent on love.
Like the beloved disciple,
we may have moments of intimacy with Jesus,
surrendered in love, "*resting on his heart.*"

Like Peter, we can have moments where we are confused by Jesus
and by the way he lives and loves.
We may want to do things that are acceptable
on the social or political level,
or change things in an urgent and highly visible way.
In pursuing tangible, visible, instant results
we may turn away from a communion of love with Jesus.

Let us look more closely at these three men.

The "beloved disciple"

The beloved disciple is reclining on the heart of Jesus.
The Greek word *kolpos*, which is translated as "heart,"
really signifies "womb," the inner part of our being,
which is the source of life and fecundity in each woman.
In the Prologue of this gospel,
it is said that Jesus is in the "womb" of the Father.
It is because he is at the source of all life in the Father
that he alone can make the Father known.

Jn 1:18

By saying that the beloved disciple is reclining
“in the ‘womb’ of Jesus”
the author of this gospel is signifying that
the beloved is *dwelling in Jesus*;
he is an intimate friend of Jesus
so he can reveal to others the secrets of Jesus’ heart.

With his head resting on the heart of Jesus,
the beloved disciple must have sensed
the wounded, anguished heartbeat of Jesus,
his vulnerability, his littleness, his pain in the face of Judas’ betrayal.
Jesus is terribly hurt,
wounded by the rejection of his love.
The closedness and hardness of Judas,
the hate emanating from him, must have awoken deep anguish
within Jesus.

The beloved disciple must have wanted to comfort and console
the wounded heart of Jesus
by showing him his love and trust.

Can we, too, sense the pain in the heart of God –
the pain caused by all the hatred that exists in our world,
by people who do not want to receive God’s healing love?
Can we, too, remain close to the heart of God
to console our loving God?
The beloved disciple reveals to us that we are called
to be in communion with Jesus,
to be still, to be present to Jesus
and to receive in our hearts all that is in his heart,
the love and the pain:
to remain in him and he in us,
one in love.

Peter

Peter, on the other hand, is unable to understand the weakness,
vulnerability and humility in Jesus and in his message.

In Matthew’s gospel, when Jesus tells the disciples
that he is going to suffer greatly and be killed,
Peter takes him aside and rebukes him:

“God forbid it, Lord. This must never happen to you!”

Jesus retorts:

“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me.
Your vision is not of God but of human beings.”
Mt 16:22-23

These words apply to many of us,
especially when we are unable to understand Jesus
and what he is saying,
influenced as we are by the preoccupations of our culture and society.

Peter is very human and generous
and has a very human vision of Jesus and of his mission.

Later on in the chapter, Peter says to Jesus:

“I will lay down my life for you.”

He wants to save the Saviour!

Jesus tells him then that a little later on, “before the cock crows,”
Peter is going to deny Jesus three times.

Peter is a complex personality, both strong and weak at the same time,
divided in himself.
He will deny Jesus
but he will weep bitterly over that and ask for forgiveness.

He has to become more humble and to trust
even when he does not understand.
He needs to learn
to no longer count only on his own strength and resources
but to accept his own weakness,
and to depend upon the Holy Spirit.

Isn't Peter a sign of hope for all of us
who want to follow and serve Jesus,
yet who at the same time end up denying him again and again?
Even worse, we pretend not to know him.
We are sometimes frightened of love
and of the responsibility of an intimate relationship with Jesus.
We can say "yes" to a powerful Jesus who calls us to do big things –
as long as we remain in control.
On the other hand, to say "no" to a Jesus who is weak and calls for love
and a communion of hearts is much harder.
It is difficult to become like a child
and to trust unconditionally in love.
Like so many others, I like to hold onto
what I can exert power over and control.
Peter is indeed in me.
And in each one of us.

The relationship between Peter and John
is similar to the relationship between Martha and Mary.
Mary is clearly the loved one, the "beloved."
Martha, the elder sister, is a woman of faith whose declaration of faith
in Bethany is similar to Peter's in Matthew's gospel.
Martha, after having spoken to Jesus, goes and gets Mary,
probably feeling that Mary can influence him
to bring Lazarus back to life.
In this chapter of the Gospel of John,
Peter, the "elder brother," asks the "beloved disciple" to ask Jesus
who is going to betray him.
Peter has made such a fool of himself at the washing of the feet
that he doesn't dare ask himself.
Martha and Peter are obviously loved by Jesus but both of them,
good organizers and people of strong faith, act in a very human way.
They have their gifts and, as different as they may be,
they are both important disciples of Jesus.
They will eventually learn that what is most important
is to let themselves be loved by Jesus.

Judas

Then there is Judas.
Who is this bosom friend of Jesus,
chosen by Jesus,
who turns to hate him
and finally agrees to help get rid of him?
Who is this strange, complicated person
who appears three times in the gospel,
each time in opposition to Jesus?

Judas loses his trust in Jesus and starts to oppose him
when Jesus speaks of giving his body to be eaten
and his blood to be drunk
as a sign of friendship and intimacy.

"Wasn't it I who chose you, the twelve?
However, one of you is a devil," said Jesus.
He was referring to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot,
because he was going to betray him:
Judas, one of the twelve.

In Bethany, Judas becomes angry with Mary
when she covers Jesus' feet
with precious ointment and wipes them with her hair.
Is Judas angry because he steals money from the community purse?
Or is he angry with Mary because of the special relationship of love
that bonds her so closely to Jesus?

Is he angry at love and closeness,
a love and a closeness he craves
but can never find or knows he can never trust?

In this chapter we see that even before Jesus washes the disciples' feet,
the devil has already put into the heart of Judas the idea to betray Jesus.

Now the idea becomes a reality, a choice,
even after Jesus has knelt down at Judas' feet
in a gesture of humility and love,
after Jesus has put into Judas' mouth the piece of bread dipped in wine,
a gesture of love.

Satan enters into him and Judas leaves the table.

Judas, imprisoned in darkness,
filled with an anguish of self-hate,
cannot remain still.

He is unable to open up to Jesus;
he has to leave.

It is a night of inner darkness and hatred.
Some people hate love or are angry with love.

They want power, efficiency and affirmation
of their personal power, capacities, authority and identity.

Love appears to them as weakness, a horrible emptiness.

In love we submit to the one we love.

We even share our weakness with the friend.

We lose a certain freedom.

We offer ourselves and give ourselves to the beloved.

Some forms of love can distort themselves
into an unhealthy dependence
because we do not know who we are.

Our real self disappears in a form of fusion.
This is not love.

Love is an affirmation of our personhood.

Each person freely gives himself or herself and receives the other,
not out of fear or from a place of emptiness,
but out of love.

True love is a communion of hearts joined together in a fullness of joy.
It is the completeness of our humanity,
the fullness of a person.

Far from suppressing freedom and creativity, it enhances them.
We accomplish activities not from a place of fear or the need to prove,
His betrayal of Jesus leads him to take his own life.

but out of love.

This is essentially true when we become one in Jesus
and God dwells in us and we in God.
Our creativity flows from this oneness.

Judas seems to have hated love

To hate an unhealthy love that creates fusion, dependency
and the suppression of our inner person is normal and good.
We must separate ourselves from such attitudes.

But to hate a true, healthy love is dangerous.

This hate comes when a child has never been treated with respect,
has never been seen as unique and important,
has never tasted any real love but only indifference,
violence and abuse.

Such children have had to build thick barriers around their hearts
in order to protect themselves.

It is very difficult for them to recognize and accept real love.
This hate can also come when a person
has locked himself or herself up in pride,
when the person has decided not to submit to anyone
and to pretend that he or she is God.

If it is a conscious refusal of love because love implies openness,
sharing and humility
and that he or she is not God.

What is the source of this hate in Judas?

We do not know.

We do know, however, that Jesus wants to liberate Judas,
and each one of us, from fear.
Judas wants to be part of Jesus' group of chosen disciples
and enjoy power,
but he cannot accept to humbly open himself to Jesus
in a communion of hearts.

He wants spiritual power but not love.
His betrayal of Jesus leads him to take his own life.

Perhaps, just before he actually loses consciousness and dies, he remembers the loving and forgiving face of Jesus as Jesus washed his feet, and his heart opens to the love and mercy of Jesus.

The glory of God

Once Judas leaves the room, it is as if Jesus makes a cry of victory. He is no longer troubled by the vibrations of hatred coming from Judas.

He can speak from his heart:

*"Now the Son of Man has been glorified
and God has been glorified in him.
If God has been glorified in him,
God will also glorify him in himself,
and at once will glorify him."*

v. 1-32

We will see later in the Gospel of John that Jesus is the glory of God; the glory of God is the manifestation of who God is: it is God's almighty and love, it is God's littleness and humility, it is God's love and deep respect for each one of us. The glory of God is Jesus walking serenely towards the total gift of himself in love:

*"Little children, I am with you only for a little longer.
You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews now I say to you,
where I am going you cannot come."*

v. 33

Jesus calls the disciples "little children," because in a sense they really are little children still. They have been barely born in discipleship, they have known Jesus for only three years. They are still very immature. They will be asked to grow quickly in order to assure their mission to the world. These chapters are about growth in love.

From little children they will become friends of Jesus; more than that, they will become Jesus and the Temple of God.

Jesus is going to show these rather immature, generous men the road to wholeness and holiness, a road that will pass through wondrous joys and terrible pain, and end in a union with Jesus in glory.

Love one another as I have loved you

Then he leaves them his last instruction, his spiritual will and testament, the heart and soul of his whole message:

*"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.
Just as I have loved you, you should love one another.
All will recognize that you are my disciples.
by the love you have one for another."*

v. 34-35

In the Law of Moses, the Hebrews were called to love God with all their soul, heart, mind and strength and to love their neighbours as themselves. Here Jesus is calling his disciples not only to love others as they love themselves but to love as he – Jesus – loves them. That is what is new.

He is creating a holy, sacred covenant between them. That is what is new.

They are called to live in communion with each other, to share with one another, to serve one another in simple acts of love and caring, never judging or condemning but forgiving. They are called to love as Jesus loves. Jesus surprised and shocked these men by kneeling down and washing their feet. And now he shocks them even more by announcing that he is about to leave them.

Absence and presence

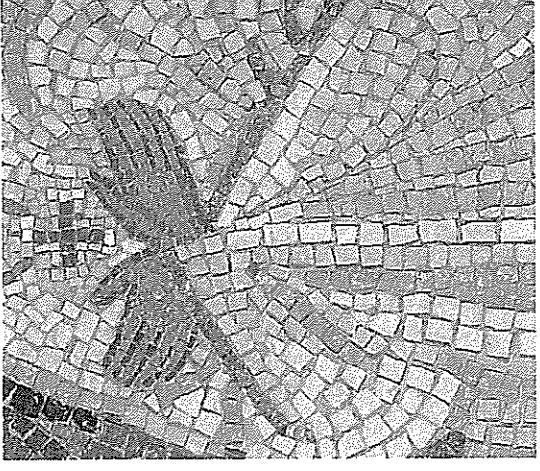
(X)

Today, many people, young and old alike, are seeking a spirituality that will give meaning to their lives and bring them to inner wholeness and a new communion with the universe, particularly with God.

John 14

Some do not find this experience within their own tradition; they may be attracted to gurus and spiritualities from other parts of the world that seem to offer them inner silence and even an experience of God.

Jesus, after having knelt down at his disciples' feet, is going to reveal to them the plan of God: he will be leaving them but he and his Father will send them the "Paraclete," the Spirit of Truth, who will always be with them and guide them. They together, as the first assembly of believers – the church Jesus is founding – will continue his mission: to reveal the compassionate face of God to people, giving them new life, liberating them from fear and leading them on the road to peace.



Other seekers, frustrated with the drudgery of life, the despair of the world, the hypocrisy of competitive, well-ordered societies where work and signs of wealth have become all-important, look for ways to break through all that is limited, to live exciting experiences, and to touch and feel the freedom of the infinite within them. They yearn to experience the thrills of life in all its forms. It is sad to see that our Christian churches have so often covered up the mystical life with morality, dogmatic statements and rituals. The Gospel of John reveals to us a spirituality that is not a flight from drudgery and pain, but a road to fullness of life and joy where we receive the love of God so that we can love others. It leads us to an experience of the love of God through a deepening love and friendship with Jesus.

After kneeling down and washing the disciples' feet during the Last Supper, Jesus says goodbye, and at the same time promises to see them again soon.

Announcing his departure and proclaiming his return seems to have another meaning, too: about the growth of each one of us in Love.



This growth takes a lifetime
and implies times of presence and absence, encounters and departures.
What is true in regards to human friendship
is particularly true in the friendship that bonds us to God.
The presence of someone we love brings joy.
We savour their presence.
But their absence requires trust, hope and fidelity;
it deepens the “well” of our being.
Absence hurts
but as the pain increases, the desire is strengthened,
so that the presence that will come will be even fuller and more total.
In order to live more deeply this friendship with God,
other desires that have taken up too much room
in our hearts and lives may have to be pruned or cut away.
But their loss can also be the prelude
to being filled in a new and deeper way with God.

Jesus: the way to God

Jesus then provokes a question by saying:

“And where I go, you know the way.”

Thomas reacts and asks:

“Lord, we do not know where you are going;
how can we know the way?”

Jesus answers:

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.
If you know me, you will know my Father.
From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

v. 4-7
The disciples still do not understand who Jesus is.
All they want is to *really* see the Father.
So Philip says:

“Show us the Father and that will be sufficient for us.”

Jesus answers in a plaintive way,
saddened by the lack of Philip’s understanding of who he is:

“Have I been with you all this time, Philip,
and you still do not know me?
Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father.
How can you say ‘show me the Father’?
Do you not believe that I am in the Father
and the Father is in me?”

v. 8-10
The heart of the gospel message is contained in these six words:
Jesus and the Father are one.
Those who see, hear and touch Jesus
see, hear and touch the Father!

Jesus is the Word-made-flesh. He is God.
There can be no other way to God except through
the Word of God, who is God.

What delicacy, gentleness and thoughtfulness! What kindness!
These words of Jesus imply that when he comes back
he will draw us into a long, loving embrace.

Before the Word became flesh, many people sought God, living their lives according to the laws of God as revealed through creation, through holy people, through prophets. Some even talked with God and heard God's voice; others received messages from God through dreams; still others received the light of God through and in their own conscience.

In all cultures, and at all times, people heard in some way the voice and word of God:

Noah, Abraham, the Hebrew prophets and holy people in Israel, but also such people as Socrates and holy people in India, China, the Americas and other cultures.

God never forgot God's people, never left them on their own. The darkness never overcame the light of God that continued to burn in people's hearts and minds.

Maybe some could not name God, but they sought the light of truth and the origin of all things. The word of God was the light for many people.

When the Word became flesh, Jesus brought to fulfillment all these different paths to God.

He does not destroy them: the Word is in each of these paths. But the Word-made-flesh becomes a new path for human beings precisely because Jesus has become one of us, the first born, and thus the treasure of creation.

He is the beloved brother of every man and every woman of all times.

His body is the body of God and gives meaning to the body of each person;

all who see and touch his body, or are in communion with him through his body, see and touch God.

This new way to God is not through a separation from our bodies, a struggle to become a pure spirit; it is in and through our bodies and in all that is weak and broken in us that we meet God.

Jesus is showing a simple way to union with God, a way of compassion, love, service and humility that is for all people: not just for the strong, the clever, the capable and the virtuous, but also for the weak and the humble.

All Jesus asks is that we come to him with humble and trusting hearts.

He will lead us little by little to a greater union with the Father, who is compassion and forgiveness.

This is the journey that we followers of Jesus are called to make.

You will do the works Jesus does

Then Jesus tells something to his disciples that must have surprised and shocked them:

*"Truly, truly, I tell you,
the one who trusts me will also do the works that I do,
in fact, will do greater works than these,
because I go to the Father."*

This is what Jesus is leading up to: his disciples will continue his mission and his works. But what is this mission?

It is to give life, eternal life, and to reveal the face and heart of God to people. It is to be a presence of God in the world where there is an absence of God.

God's works are not big miracles, which some heroic disciples may be called to do, but all those works of simple kindness and goodness which give people life and lead them to trust in themselves and in God.

v. 12

(X)

(X)

(X)

That is why disciples of Jesus must be audacious and ask to accomplish these works of God:

"*I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.*"

v. 13-14

If we trust God and ask to accomplish his works of love, we will give life, the very life of God.

But how is this going to be?

These disciples are very human men.

They do not really understand Jesus.

Sometimes, like Peter, they tell him off:
"No, you shall never wash my feet!"

Something will have to happen to change and transform them, so that they will be able to do the works of Jesus, and even greater ones!

Jesus tells them how this will be:

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father

and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever.

This is the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him because he abides with you

and he will be in you."

w. 15-17

That is the answer:
the disciples are going to receive another Paraclete,

the Spirit of truth, who will live in them and transform them. They will no longer be caught up

in a lot of very human queries and needs flowing from their fears, culture and education; they will be separated from the emptiness of the world and brought into the place of God.

Jesus reveals to them that they are not first of all going to do things, but God is going to live in them.

Later we will see that because the Spirit is in them, they will do the works of God.

Jesus is going to fulfill the prophecies of the great Hebrew prophets who had announced that the Lord God would send his Spirit upon his servant, the Messiah, but also upon a few chosen prophets and kings, and later upon all the people, as announced by Joel:

"I will sprinkle clean water upon you
and you shall be cleansed from uncleanness
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.
A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you.
I will remove from your body the heart of stone
and give you a heart of flesh.
I will put my spirit within you...."

Ez 36:25-27

Jesus is the one who will instill the reign of the Holy Spirit (X) in the hearts of *all* his disciples.

He has already told Nicodemus – and, through him, all of us – that in order to enter the kingdom of God we must be born of water and the Spirit, born from "on high," and thus become in a special way children of God, inspired by God. Those born of the Spirit are compared to the wind; they do not know where the wind is coming from or where it is leading.

So, too, with the Spirit: we do not know where it is coming from or where it is leading us.

Spiritus and Paracletus

Clearly, what is of the world is separated from what is from the Spirit. Jesus had already said to the Pharisees and Scribes:

"You are of below, I am from above.
You are of the world. I am not of the world."

Jn 8:23

Those “of the world” are closed to the ways and things of God.
They do not know God.

(*) The disciples will receive the Spirit, a new life, which will give them
a new inner force, a new heart, a new vision,
a new freedom that will separate them from the ways and influences
of the world
so that they will no longer be enslaved in fear and greed,
craving money and power – even spiritual power.

(X) The word “paraclete” is one of those rich Greek words
that are difficult to translate completely.

A paraclete is someone who defends and comforts,
and speaks up for and helps a weak person.

So the word “paraclete” can be translated as “advocate,” as well as
“comforter,” “consoler” or “helper.”

Eymologically, the word “paraclete” means
“the one who answers the call.”

What a beautiful name!

God is the one who answers the cry of the weak and those in need.
A mother is a “paraclete” for her child
when she answers the cry of her little one,
holds and loves him or her.

Every time we look after a person in need and answer their cry,
we become paracletes.
Jesus was a paraclete for his disciples.

The Paraclete is given
to those who are lonely and need the presence of a friend,
to those who are lost and poor in spirit
and who cry out to God.

“(Paracletus)” is different from “Spiritus.”

“Spiritus” implies movement; it is “wind” or “breath”;
it is an inner enthusiasm,
the enthusiasm of the prophets who speak and do wonderful things.
The Paraclete takes away the anguish of loneliness;
she brings presence, security, peace and communion.

Spiritus and Paracletus are two aspects of God who lives and acts in us,
who inspires us and urges us forward,
but who also holds us, loves us, carries us
and dwells in us as we dwell in God.

The Spirit “Paracletus” gives us a new strength and a new love
to do the works of God,
to do all those things that we seem unable to do by ourselves,
by the strength of our own willpower:
to love certain people, to forgive enemies,
to become the friends of those who are different,
to be open to those who have a different vision
and way of doing things.

Jesus and the Father will come

It is not only the Paraclete who will come
and be with and in the disciples,
Jesus himself will come and be with them:

(X)
“I will not leave you orphans.
I am coming to you.
In a little while the world will no longer see me,
but you will see me;
because I live, you also will live.
On that day you will know that I am in my Father
and you in me and I in you.”

vv. 18-20

This provokes Judas (not Iscariot) to ask the question:

“Lord, how is it you will manifest yourself to us
and not to the world?”

Jesus is not going to do wondrous acts
to convince everyone in the world
that he is the Messiah, the Son of God.
His plan is to live in his disciples – to begin with just a few:

*"If anyone loves me, he or she will keep my word
and my Father will love that person
and we will come and make our dwelling place
in him or her."*

v. 23

It is they, the Church, the community of believers who will continue his mission.
It is they who will manifest Jesus to the world.

(S) But the Paraclete, Jesus and the Father will only come if...
This is not a threat but a promise,
a promise that if we keep his commandments or his words,
the Paraclete will be given to us.

The "if" is a condition
and implies that we are called to struggle
against all those forces of egoism
that prevent us from keeping God's commandments.

(X) And these commandments, what are they?
Essentially they are all the commandments of love:
to serve each other,
to be compassionate,
to live in communion with one another,
not to judge or condemn but to forgive,
to love enemies,
to live the beatitudes,
to wash each other's feet.

The commandment of Jesus is that we love one another as he loves us.
This is his *way*, the *way* to God.
We are called to leave behind all the selfish attitudes of the world,
to no longer put all our energies into the pursuit of power,
wealth, honour and superficial friendships.
It implies struggles, moments of grief, purifications.
(X) We cannot be moved by the Spirit for the things of God
if we are seeking only the things of the world.

Our inner "home" has to be emptied, cleansed of all the mess and dirt,
free of all forms of selfishness and certain human needs
in order for it to become the dwelling place of God.
This takes time –
a whole lifetime!

In these passages, sometimes Jesus uses the plural "you,"
meaning *all of you, together*,
and sometimes the singular "you," *an individual person*.

(S) The Holy Spirit will be in the group, will live in the Church,
but the Spirit will make her home in each person "if" ...
each one of us keeps God's word and commandments.

God dwells in us

We have already seen that the body of Jesus is the new Temple
or dwelling place of God.
But as Jesus and the Father are coming to dwell in us,
we, too, become the Temple of God, the place where God lives.

We as church – that is, the assembly of believers –
but also we as individuals.
That is why Paul says to his disciples in Corinth:

*"Do you not know that your body
is the Temple of the Holy Spirit?"*

1 Cor 6:19

Jesus and the Father are with the Church,
guiding it through the upheavals of history.
They are with each one of us,
guiding us through the upheavals of our lives.

In other words, Jesus is telling his disciples:
"Do not be afraid. I am with you and I will be with you.
Listen to me.
Do not have your own agendas, which will prevent me from
living and acting in and through you.
Let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit living in you. ☩
And I will be with you if you love one another."

Jesus gives us peace

Before this chapter of the Gospel of John closes, Jesus tells the disciples that the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, will not only be with them and in them, but will teach them all things and will bring back to the memory of their hearts and minds all that he has taught them. This is true for all of us.

That does not excuse us from the need to study, to spend time with the word of God as it has been understood over the centuries.

That does not mean we shouldn't study theology, each one according to our call, needs and possibilities.

But it means that everything we learn must be viewed, reviewed and tested in the silent light of the Spirit and in a prayerful attitude.

It means that each of us has direct access to God, who is the centre and light of all things.

It is those who are poor enough, humble enough, crying out enough, who will receive the Paraclete and will be able to see the light and presence of God in the word of God and in all things. If Jesus and the Father are dwelling in us we will live a new and deeper peace, because peace comes from the presence of God.

"I leave you my peace.

I give you my peace.

I do not give it as the world gives it.

Let your hearts not be anguished nor afraid."

v. 27

The peace Jesus promises is not just a balance of forces or an absence of war.

It is not just a good feeling inside of us, a feeling of centredness, wholeness, quietness, stillness or inner silence. It is not merely an absence of inner conflicts or of desire, as early Greek philosophers taught. No, this peace is more than all of these things combined.

It is the trust that Jesus is there with us and in us.

For Jesus is our peace.

Peace is resting in the Beloved, having total trust in him.

It is the peace of a child resting in the tender arms of her mother.

20

Giving life to others

John 15

Jesus is the real Vine

The Word became flesh
in order to lead us into communion with God.
He came to bridge the gap
that separates weak and vulnerable human beings from God.
He came to live in Mary's womb
and to dwell in each one of us.

But he came not only to dwell in us | **(X)**
but also to act in and through us,
to give life to others, in and through us.
We are called to participate in the creative and loving activity of God.
We will bear much fruit if we dwell in God.
This mutual indwelling implies a friendship.
It is a process of growing towards greater oneness with Jesus.
To help us understand how this is to be, Jesus speaks of the vine:

"*I am the true vine and my Father the vinedresser.
He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.
Every branch that bears fruit,
he prunes so that it bears more fruit.*"

Vv. 1-2

*Jesus came not only to dwell in us
but also to give life to others
through us.*

The "home" of our hearts

*needs to be emptied and cleaned up
so that we can be filled with God
and so become
a fountain of life
for others.*



Jesus tells us that he *is* the Vine;
he is not separate from the Vine.
He is not separated from the people of God, but is part of them,
one with them.
Now that the Word has become flesh,
he is one of us and we are one with him.
We are of the same human race.
He is the first-born of creation.
All life flows from him and through him
and then through us, the little branches, to bear fruit,
just as the sap runs through the vine,
through the branches to produce grapes.

*"Those who abide in me and I in them
bear much fruit, because cut from me you can do nothing."* v. 5

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The fruit is the life we are all called to give to others.
But it is not just we who give life, nor is it just Jesus,
it is we and Jesus,
Jesus in us and us in Jesus.

We cannot distinguish what is of God and what is of us. (X)
It is the life of the Spirit flowing through each one of us,
coloured by our own particular gifts,
by who we are and our particular mission.
The magnificence of God is giving life in and through us.
God does not want to act only directly on the hearts of individual people:
God uses each of us as mediators and instruments for grace,
through our words, gestures, presence and prayer.
In this way we take part in the creativity of God giving life.
We give the life of God to each other
and we receive this life from one another.

When Jesus and the Father come and live
or make their dwelling place within us,
this is not something static.
They are living and acting within us.
We receive and give life in and with them.
This is another way of saying
what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman:
that whoever drinks from the waters of life that Jesus gives
will become a source, a spring of living water,
of divine life, for others.
The life-giving Spirit we receive will flow from us.
The life-giving words and gestures we give to others
will flow from the life of Jesus within us,
changing, opening and deepening the hearts and minds of others.

The need to be cleansed

To be this fountain or spring of life that transmits the Holy Spirit,
we need to be cleansed or pruned.
Our words and our gestures no longer
come from our compulsions and needs

to prove we are someone
or from our fears, brokenness and inner wounds.
Instead, they flow from the Trinity dwelling in us. (X)
This cleansing takes time.

Jesus comes to dwell in us little by little.
We have already seen that in order to receive the Paraclete
we need to keep the commandments of Jesus;
this can imply a struggle.
Now Jesus tells us of another, deeper purification:
the Father will prune all the branches that bear fruit
so that they bear even more fruit.
To prune means to cut off some of the branches
and that can hurt.
This new purification comes directly from the vinedresser, (X)
the Father, cutting the branches.

Accidents, sickness, failures, the loss of a job,
the death of someone we love – various unexpected events –
can hurt and wound life in us
and leave us in a state of grief and desolation.
We feel empty.
Life no longer flows through us;
we have lost our enthusiasm
and sometimes even all desires.
We are wounded in our energies of life.
Like the wounded vine whose branches have been cut off,
we have to wait for new life to flow in us.
We are pruned for something new,
for a life more centred in God and the things of God.
Before the pruning, we were perhaps too taken up with “things to do,”
maybe even good things, and had no time for God.
We were like the people in the parable
who were invited to the wedding feast of love
but did not accept because they were too busy.
When life is cut or pruned in this way,

Lk 14; Mt 22

we may have feelings of emptiness and anguish.
This emptiness can bring forth anger and depression,
but it can also prepare us for something new.

Our emptiness can become a cry to God.

We must wait patiently, sometimes in pain and anguish,
for this new gift of God.

Some pruning comes unexpectedly and violently.

Some comes gradually, as we grow older
and are less taken up by things to do
and the need for success, reputation and power.

We have more time for God and the things of God,
and can give more attention to the sacred space within us.

Some pruning comes because we want it,
ask for it, wait for it;
we yearn to have more time with and for God.

That is what Jesus means when he says to his disciples:

*"You have already been cleansed
by the word I have spoken to you."*

v. 3

All growth in love implies pain and loss

Choice implies loss.

To marry is to accept the loss of countless other potential partners.

Fidelity in love can cost a lot.

To grow in love we have to pass through pain and anguish.
It is the same in our relationship with God.

In order to be more present to God,
we have to be less present to other things.

This is a form of pruning that will take place.

There can be an even more violent cutting or pruning.

It will be to those parts of our being
that have led us to refuse to follow Jesus' commandments of love
and to remain locked up in selfishness.
These parts will be purified by a fire

that will burn away all the self-centredness that has grown in us.
This burning takes place after death, before we are totally transformed into God:

*"Whoever does not abide in me," says Jesus,
"is thrown away like a branch and withers;
such branches are gathered,
thrown into the fire and burnt."*

v. 6

The important thing is not to wait until our death
but to walk with God today,
to accept loss, grief and all the pruning
so that we can begin to abide in God.

*"If you abide in me
and my words abide in you,
ask whatever you wish
and it will be done for you.
By this my Father is glorified
that you bear much fruit
and so prove to be my disciples."*

v. 7, 8

It is the joy of the Father that we give life to others –
through our prayers, our words,
giving the gift of ourselves –
we give it abundantly.

The glory of human beings is not first and foremost
to do or produce things
or to build beautiful monuments or churches,
to write wonderful books
or to create new technology.
All these will pass.

The glory of human beings is to communicate life, 
pouring the oils of compassion on suffering people.
It is with Jesus and in him to transform others,
to help them move from inner death, sadness and aggression
to inner peace, joy and fullness of life.

To abide in Jesus and become his friend

What does it mean to abide in Jesus?

Here we have again the key word “abide” or “dwell.”

The first two disciples asked Jesus: “Where do you dwell?”

And they went to dwell with him.

Jesus had told the disciples that if they eat his body and drink his blood, they will dwell in him and he in them.

In this chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus reveals to us:

“As the Father loved me, so I have loved you.

Abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love,

just as I have kept my Father's commandments

and abide in his love. ”

v. 9-10

To abide or dwell in Jesus is to *make our home* in him and to *let* Jesus make his home in us.

We feel at home with him and in him.

It is a place of rest for one another and presence to one another.

It is a place of mutual indwelling and friendship.

This rest is also a source of life and creativity.

Abiding in him, we bear fruit, we give life to others.

We live a mutual indwelling.

This indwelling is friendship.

At one moment, Etty Hillesum found herself crying out to God

to help her and the many others in distress.

Then she realized that

“It is not I who need God but God needs me....”

God was waiting for her to open the door of her heart to let him in.

Jesus waits patiently for us to accept his friendship.

Even though we may be separated from a friend by distance,

we are held together by love,

we are one in love.

Love is a uniting force.

In human friendships, the other person abides in us virtually, intentionally, spiritually, not with a real presence. In friendship with Jesus, he abides in us, in a *real presence*.

We are with him and dwell in him.

Keeping the commandments of Jesus, then, is not like obeying in a military sense:

it is rather following the desire of the one we love; it is being pleasing to him, sensing what he desires for us.

Together we have one heart, one mind, one spirit; there is no discord or conflict or barrier between us.

This indwelling with Jesus can be on the level of a simple friendship, but it can also become a burning love as in the *Song of Songs*, which is often seen as a love poem between God and each one of us. Mystics like John of the Cross lived this burning love, seeing Jesus as the bridegroom of the soul.

The source of our friendship with Jesus is the oneness between him and the Father.

As the Father loves Jesus and gives himself to the Son, Jesus loves us and gives himself to us.

This love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is like a fire; it is total unity.

That is why it is so difficult to describe the friendship, love and unity we live with Jesus.

It is deeper than anything we can imagine because it flows from the communion that is God.

Jesus then says:

“*I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.* ”

v. 11

Jesus wants us to be filled with joy and fully alive.

His joy is our joy, our joy is his joy.

His joy is to be totally one with the Father,

and that is our joy.
There can be no greater joy than to know that we are valued,
precious and loved by God;
that we have at last found the place of total rest for our hearts.
There is no greater joy than to be with the Beloved of our heart,
transformed in God.

There is no greater joy than to love people abundantly
and to participate in the creative, life-giving activity of God
with a sense of divine life flowing through us.
The joy and excitement of giving life on a human level
is but a pale reflection
of the joy of giving eternal life to others in and with Jesus.

To love one another is to give our life

Abiding in Jesus and bearing abundant fruit
implies that we love with the love of Jesus
all those who are given to us:

*"This is my commandment,
that you love one another as I have loved you."*

And Jesus adds:

*"There is no greater love than this –
to lay down one's life for one's friends."*

v. 12, 13

To love people as Jesus loves them
is to wash their feet, to serve them in humility;
it is to help them rise up in truth and love.
Here Jesus is revealing something more:
to love is to lay down one's life for others,
to place their interests before our own.
It is to give them life.

That can mean accepting difficulties, danger and even death
so that they may live and grow in love.
To love is to live in communion with others,
to transmit to them the life and love of Jesus.

It is to reveal to them that they are loved,
loved by Jesus.
In this way we become their friend
because we are a friend of Jesus.

*"You are my friends if you do what I command you.
I do not call you servants any longer
because the servant does not know what the Master is doing;
but I have called you my friends
because I have made known to you
everything I have heard from my Father."*

v. 14-15

In this friendship nothing is hidden or secret.
Jesus has shared everything he has heard from the Father; all is given.
And Jesus recalls:

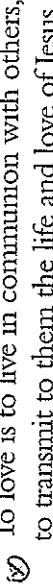
*"You did not choose me, but I chose you
and I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last,
so that the Father will give you
whatever you ask for in my name.
This I command you, to love one another."*

v. 16-17

The barriers that separated the finite from the Infinite,
the temporal from the eternal,
the human from the divine,
have disappeared.

At times it is necessary for us to live an austere life,
like John the Baptizer,
and to seek a certain separation from our bodies,
to strain to reach God through our efforts.
But God has appeared in the flesh, has become vulnerable in the flesh.
He has come to offer us his friendship,
to invite us to become his beloved.

He has become little and vulnerable,
to live a communion of hearts with us
and to join him in giving life to others.



(7) It is not a question, then, of striving towards God but of humbly opening the door of our hearts to God, who is knocking there.

This friendship with Jesus is something deep but simple, like other friendships.

(8) It is not a big, mystical experience or impressive apparitions; it involves living day by day with Jesus, walking with him, listening to him, following his desires, and being nourished by his words and by his body.

Jesus is in us and we are in Jesus.
As we talk, meet and share with others, as we accomplish work and try to live out projects, as we live with others in family, in community or as friends and companions, as we do little gestures of love, kindness, affection and forgiveness, especially to those who are weak or in need, we are with Jesus and reveal Jesus to others.

In the words of Cardinal Newman,

Shine through me, Jesus,
and be so in me
(X) that every soul I come in contact with
may feel your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me
but only Jesus!

To grow in friendship with Jesus takes time

This life with and in Jesus takes time to grow. It is a gift of Jesus that we can ask for, a gift that comes after many inner struggles and inner conflicts. Paul talks of our flesh being crucified so that we are no longer slaves to our compulsions for power, love, success; slaves to self-centredness and egotism.

We become free:

"It is so that we be free that Christ has set us free." Gal 5:1

Free to live simply this friendship with Jesus in the Spirit.

Jesus has already spoken of his leaving and his returning.

His leaving refers to his death; his return refers to his resurrection.

But at the same time he is referring to his presence and his absence in our lives.

There are times when his presence is more deeply felt, when we feel guided and held in his love and friendship,

when peace permeates our hearts.

At other times we feel lost, in anguish, as we struggle with inner pain.

Sometimes feelings of guilt and unworthiness rise up in us.

Faith and trust become difficult.

We struggle with ourselves.

These are all signs of our being pruned, stripped, purified by the Father.

Our faith and trust are being deepened.

The sails of our little boats are not filled with the winds of the Spirit.

We have to row hard,

sometimes against heavy winds of discouragement.

Jesus appears to be sleeping in the boat.

We must learn to wait for Jesus to wake up and to reveal once again his friendship and his presence to us.

21

Birthed in pain and in God

John 15:18–16:33

Blessed are the persecuted

The words of Jesus are consoling for all those who struggle for truth and justice today, who struggle against the powers of evil and oppression in our world, and are persecuted, pushed aside, sometimes crushed and killed.

Jesus calls his disciples “out of the world.” They are not “of the world,” but they will be sent “into the world” to be a presence of God and of love where there is an absence of God.

The “world” in the gospel of John has two meanings:

it is the cosmos, the universe, our “inhabited” earth, loved by God. It also means the place of the absence of God, where love is not present and is even feared.

This void of absence becomes indifference to others, fear of them, a refusal to share with others. It can become blatant selfishness, hate, greed and lies, people locked up in their ideologies and illusions. This absence is in a part of each culture and in a part of each one of our hearts.

This absence can be manipulated and filled with evil forces or filled by God.

Jesus came to witness to the truth in this world where God is absent and love feared – the truth of the love of God and of the value of each and every person. Some people were attracted to his message of love and believed that he was a messenger of God; others violently rejected him and wanted to get rid of him. He was as threat to them.



*To become
a friend of Jesus
is to become like him,
to live as he lived.*

*This can mean being rejected
and hated
as he was hated.*

*We will then be “birthed” in God
in a new way
and live
the fulfillment of joy*

They feared him.
Fear is always behind the need to persecute.
As Jesus confronted the powers of evil and hate
hidden in the culture and in the hearts of people,
these powers seemed to get the better of him.
He was condemned to death, eliminated.
But the powers of evil, however, did not win.
Jesus and the powers of love triumphed.

These powers of evil and hatred will also seek to eliminate
the disciples of Jesus:

*"If the world hates you,
know that it hated me before it hated you....
Remember the words that I said to you:
'a servant is not greater than the master'....
If they persecuted me, they will persecute you;
if they kept my word, they will keep yours also."*

*"I have said these things to you
so that [when] you are persecuted
you will not be scandalized....
The hour is coming when whoever kills you
will think that they are offering a service to God..."*

Jn 16:12

By telling his disciples that they, too, will be persecuted,
Jesus is revealing how they are called to become like him.
They too will accomplish the works of God.
Not just through powerful words and wisdom
but through their weakness, failure and even death.
They will give life as Jesus gave life.
They will conquer the world not in a visible way,
but through their littleness and poverty.
The "hour" of Jesus for which he came
was when he gave his life totally
and when he gave us life through his death.

So, too, all those who are called to give their lives for Jesus,
for truth and for justice, become like him.
They, too, live that hour of Jesus.
Their shed blood becomes one with the blood of the crucified Jesus.
In and through the death of Jesus they, too, give life to the world.
Their blood waters the arid land of our hearts
to bring forth new life.

Most of the members of that first group of disciples chosen by Jesus
were martyred.

Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome.

Paul was beheaded,
and tradition has it that Peter was crucified head down.
So many of the early Christians were martyred by the Romans,
who saw this little "sect" as dangerous,
undermining the authority and power of the Empire,
refusing to worship the emperor and the Roman gods.

The early Christians lived together in community,
sharing their goods with one another,
sharing their lives with those who were rejected by Roman society,
revealing that each person, no matter how poor or weak,
is precious to God.

The message of Jesus grew throughout the world,
because many men and women refused to cower
before insolent, dictatorial might.
They refused to adapt to the pervasive values
and the dominant culture of the times.

Although they experienced fear, they did not succumb to it.
They gave their lives in the name of Jesus.
They accepted being seen as different and strange
as they continued to give witness to the message of truth and justice
of the gospel.

(X) The message of Jesus has been passed on, generation to generation,
thanks to people who gave their lives for the truth.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, speaking out against the power of the Nazi regime, refused the culture of death, the extermination camps, and the “final solution” of the Jewish People. Oscar Romero said “no” to a military dictatorship aligned with the wealthy that was crushing the poor and the landless. Sr. Luzia Kautidia was assassinated in Mongwa while helping to transport someone to the hospital. Pierre Claverie in Algeria continued to proclaim a vision of peace and dialogue between Christians and Muslims. There have been many others like them throughout history.

In his book *Il secolo del martirio: I cristiani nel novecento [They Died for Their Faith]*, Andrea Riccardi tells of hundreds of thousands of men and women all over the world who have been martyred in the past hundred years. His book recounts the horrors of hatred and sadistic torture. Yet it is also filled with great hope as so many people have said “no” to lies, injustice and oppression and “yes” to freedom, truth and Jesus.

Different forms of persecution

Not all followers of Jesus are physically persecuted or killed.

⊗ There are many other forms of more subtle, hidden persecution.

There is the persecution of those who strive actively for the rights of every person, of every culture, for the rights of minority ethnic groups, of men and women on death row, of unborn children, of people with disabilities who are kept out of sight. There are those who struggle against organized crime and all forms of oppression. Those who side with the poor and the oppressed can quickly be pushed aside in public life and be seen as a disturbance.

Even within community life, family life, and at work, there are forms of persecution, where some people are rejected, looked down on, put aside. They live the martyrdom of daily pinpricks.

Nobody likes to be rejected, looked down upon, made fun of, seen as useless or stupid, or seen as a danger, a disturbance to the dominant religious or political order.

There are two dangers in this domain for the friends of Jesus. The first is the temptation to *make compromises*⊗ with a culture that marginalizes and crushes some people in order to avoid conflict and rejection. We are fearful of speaking out about Jesus or about justice and truth. We are afraid to rock the boat. We are frightened of what people might think or do to us if we disturb them or the cultural order. So we water down faith and the gospel message.

The second danger is the temptation to *like to disturb* this status quo. When we are rebels at heart and like to shock people, we can create a fight in order to be in the limelight. We can do some of these things unconsciously, experience rejection and then think that we are being persecuted like Jesus was.

The Paraclete will be with those who are martyred

Jesus reassures us:

“When the Paraclete comes,
which I will send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father,
he will testify in my behalf, and you also will testify
because you have been with me
from the beginning.”

"*I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go, I will send her to you.*"

Jn 16:7

Jesus must go away so that his disciples can grow in a new way in the Spirit. If Jesus remained present physically, they would depend on his physical and external presence, and the security he gave them. If he leaves, he will send the Paraclete who will live inside of them so that they may be guided, sustained, fortified by her and so become like Jesus.

What was true for these first disciples is true for us today. It is to our advantage that Jesus no longer walks this earth with us in a physical presence.

He sends to each one of us who so wants it this new force of love, which permits us to stand up and witness to the truth in the name of Jesus, in the face of difficulties and persecution.

A cry of victory: justice will prevail

Jesus will be judged and condemned to death during a false trial organized by the supreme religious authorities. Many of his disciples will also be judged and condemned by false trials organized by political, military or religious authorities. The false trial of Jesus will be turned around or vindicated by the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, whom Jesus will send. Behind this trial is sin, injustice and a false or evil judgment. There is sin because the people judging him refuse to believe in him, to listen to reality and accept it.

Justice will be rendered because Jesus will return to the Father in glory and there will be a true judgment, because the evil one, the Prince of the world, who inspired the condemnations and the killing of Jesus and of his friends, is and will be judged. This is the work of the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, to reveal the truth and to bring to light the evil ways and corruption of the world, the travesty of justice and the false condemnations. This is a cry of victory. Justice will prevail. Evil will not have the last word.

A new birth in God

The final victory, which for Jesus is the resurrection,  is for the friends of Jesus a transformation in God where they will know the Father as the Son knows the Father, where they will be with the Father as the Son is with the Father, where they will be able to say, "I and Jesus are one," as Jesus said, "I and the Father are one."

But the disciples are not yet prepared to bear this new and total identification with him. It is the Spirit of truth who will guide them into the final truth and lead them into a new and total experience of oneness with God. The Spirit will reveal to them in an existential way the unity that exists between Jesus and the Father. The Spirit of truth will reveal to them what specifically belongs to Jesus: that is to say, the unique, total love of the Father for him;

for he is the unique beloved Son.
Everything that the Father has and is belongs to the Son.
So, too, all will be given by the Spirit of truth to those friends of Jesus
who have been led to this inner transformation:

*"I still have many things to say to you
but you cannot bear them now.*

*When the Spirit of truth comes,
he will guide you into all the truth,
for he will not speak of his own,
but will speak whatever he hears and
he will declare to you the things that are to come.
He will glorify me,
because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
All that the Father has is mine.
For this reason I said that he will take what is mine
and declare it to you."*

vv. 12-15

Yes, all that the Father has belongs to Jesus.
And all that Jesus has belongs to his friends.

That is why John of the Cross was able to say in a prayer
conceived when he was totally one with Jesus:

The heavens are mine and the earth is mine;
the nations are mine; the just are mine;
sinners are mine; the angels are mine;
the Mother of God and all creatures are mine;
God is mine and for me because Christ is mine
and totally for me.

⊗ This total unity with God comes
after a greater experience of anguish, of loneliness, of pain,
of weeping and of mourning.
Here again Jesus is referring to his coming departure, to his death
and to his return in and through his resurrection.

He is also referring to a new and more radical aloneness
in the spiritual and mystical life,
a new and deeper purification of faith
that will prepare the way to a new transformation in God.
In order to reveal this new pain and total joy,
Jesus compares it to childbirth:

*"Truly truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn
but the world will rejoice;
you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.
When a woman is in labour,
she has pain because her hour has come.
But when her child is born,
she no longer remembers the anguish
because of the joy of having brought a human being
into the world."*

vv. 20-21

The Word became flesh in order to lead us into
the heart and "womb" of the Father.
There will be many stages on the road to oneness with God.
We begin as little children born of the Spirit,
born from "on high"
through water and the Spirit,
yet we remain very human,
with our prejudices and compulsions
for spiritual power and recognition,
and educated, formed and rooted in our various cultures.
Our journey in faith will be a growth in trust in Jesus
as he gradually leads us to live in the Father.
Just as we are called to grow in human maturity,
goodness and wisdom,
we are called to grow in union with God,
dying more and more to our self-centred needs.
Then we will live the final *birthing* that Jesus refers to here, ⊗
a birthing in the heart of the Trinity.
This will be at the time of our death
when all of us are set in God.

Jesus is referring also to a *final birthing* that some of his friends will live as they enter a final transformation in Jesus *in this life*, even before their death. Their utter loneliness will be transformed into a total presence of God.

"*So you have pain now
but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice
and no one will take your joy from you.
On that day, you will ask nothing of me.*"

v. 22-23

They are set in God. They will see then that the Father loves them:

"*The Father himself loves you because you have loved me,
and have believed that I came from God.*"

v. 27

In *The Dark Night of the Soul*, John of the Cross speaks about the different stages or steps of love. The "last step" of what he calls the "secret ladder" of love

assimilates the soul to God completely, because of the clear vision that a person possesses at once on reaching it.

This vision is the cause of the soul's complete likeness to God. John the Evangelist says that we know that we shall be like him (1 Jn 3:2) not because the soul will have as much capacity as God – this is impossible –

but because all it is will become like God. Thus it will be called, and shall be, God through participation.

On this last step of dear vision at the top of the mystical ladder, where God rests, nothing is any longer hid from the soul, and this because of its total assimilation. According to our Saviour exclaimed:

"*On that day you will not ask me anything.*" (Jn 16:23)

Jesus warns the disciples of his imminent, final loneliness, a loneliness that the disciples and each one of us will live before our own final union with the Father:

"*The hour is coming, indeed it has come,
when you will be scattered
each one to his own things
and you will leave me alone.*

Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me."

v. 32

Loneliness is the total emptiness of a human heart, the final and absolute purification in order to become the place where God resides. But even in this loneliness, God is present because Jesus is with us in agony and anguish, just as the Father is always with him.

"*I have said this to you so that
in me you may have peace.
In the world you will have distress,
but trust, for I have conquered the world.*"

v. 33

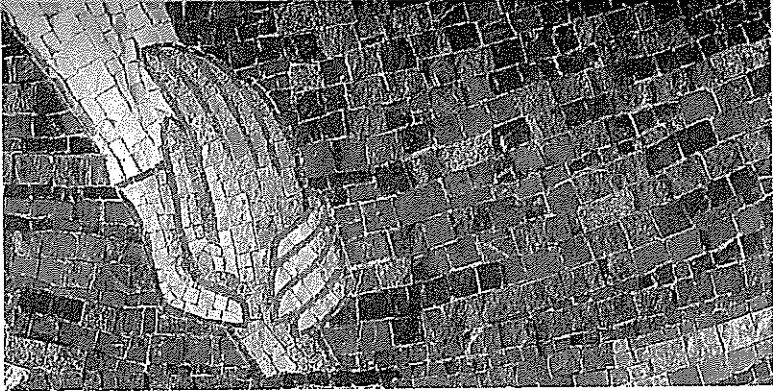
This is the final message of Jesus for each one of us, in all our loneliness, when we feel rejected and abandoned:

"*Trust, for I have conquered the world.*"

Yes, trust, for Jesus is leading each one of us to greater truth through the Paraclete. He is leading the whole Church through time to a deeper understanding of his message. He is leading each one of us into the new through much pain and many deaths.

To become one

John 17



The Word became one of us
to reveal
the face and heart of God
and to lead us all
into a loving communion
with the Father.

His yearning,
his prayer is that
we all become one in him:
each one different
each one unique
but together in unity
to the glory of God.

God's beautiful plan

Having knelt down humbly in front of each disciple to wash their feet, having revealed their journey and the journey of the Church, through pain and joy into the heart and ecstasy of God, Jesus stops.

All has been said.

There is no more place for explanation or discussion. It is now a moment of contemplation.

Jesus raises his eyes to heaven.

He no longer looks at the earth and at his disciples, but towards the Father.

He is *with* the Father and *in* the Father, contemplating the divine plan for creation and for humanity, a plan that appears to be fulfilled and becomes a song of thanksgiving. And yet the plan is not fulfilled. Jesus prays for its fulfillment: that people may be healed of their aggressiveness, hatred and fear and become one, one in God.

In the Prologue, John reveals the descending Word who became flesh and came into our world of conflict between light and darkness to lead all people to the light, to communion with God.

Some people did not want to walk the road that leads to the light. Jesus met fear and opposition. Many wanted to get rid of him. They clung to their security and power.

and refused change and openness.

But even through this opposition, the plan of God is being fulfilled:
Through his death, Jesus reveals his love to the very end.

Now, in this moment of contemplation,
Jesus reveals that the cycle is complete.

It is no longer God descending into flesh

but the flesh of humanity ascending into God.

It is no longer the Word who becomes a human being,
but human beings transformed into God.

All is complete.

The Word of God came from God
and now returns to God,
with all his friends, brothers and sisters in humanity united together.



Stars and planets millions of light years away.

Galaxies behind galaxies.

Life, the greatness and the littleness of life,
the multitude of different kinds of birds,
fish, fruits, insects and hidden plants,
all intertwined in one glorious whole.

As Gerard Manley Hopkins writes,

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.

Men, women and children in the beauty of their being
all reveal the power and greatness of the Word,
for all things were created by him
and without him no thing is.

cf. John 1:3

God reveals his glory through magnificent,
awe-filled events in history.

When God led the Hebrews through the Red Sea,
as the waters separated

Moses and the Israelites sang:

"I will sing to the Lord
for he has triumphed in his glory."

Ex 15:1

Jesus revealed his glory, who he was,
when he changed water into wine at Cana,
when he raised Lazarus from the dead.

"If you believe, you will see the glory of God,"

Jesus said to Martha.

This gospel is the gospel of the glory of God.
Here Jesus contemplates this glory and prays that we all may live it.

But what is this glory?

Glory is the manifestation of the majesty, power,
wisdom and infinity of God.
Creation sings and reveals the glory of God.

As Jesus kneels down at the feet of his disciples,
as he gives his body to eat and his blood to drink,
he reveals a God who becomes little
in order to dwell in us,
flow and act through us,

give life through us
and transform us into himself.
His humble love is the glory of God.

Jesus reveals that the Father is the Source of all things, all life.

Jesus is the One sent to reveal the Father.

Everything he does and says comes from the Father.

He accomplishes the work of the Father in unity with the Father.

"*Father, I glorified you on earth
by accomplishing the work you gave me to do.*

*So now, Father, glorify me in your presence
with the glory that I had in your presence
before the world existed.*"

v. 4:5

What is this work that Jesus has accomplished?

"*I have made your name known
to those you gave me from the world.*

"*They were yours and you gave them to me.
And they have kept your word.*

"*Now they know that everything you gave me is from you.
I have given to them the words you gave me
and they have received them,
and they know in truth that I came from you,
and they have believed that you sent me.*"

v. 6-8

Jesus is leading his friends into the glory of the life of God.
We, too, give glory to God
when we recognize that all that is beautiful in us
comes from God.
We, too, become the glory of God
as we bear much fruit,
as we make known the humble and compassionate God
through our words, our gestures, our lives together.



cf. Jn 15:8

Irenaeus, the first Bishop of Lyon in France, wrote at the end of the second century:
"The glory of God is the human person fully alive."
"Alive" with the love of God!

Jesus prays for his friends

Having affirmed and confirmed his friends,
whom he has chosen to found his church,
Jesus prays for them:

"*It is for them that I pray.
I do not pray for the world
but for those that you have given me
because they belong to you.*"

v. 9

"*Holy Father, keep them in your name.*"

v. 11

"*I am not asking you to take them out of the world
but to protect them from the evil one.*"

v. 15

"*Make them holy in the truth.
Your word is truth.*

*As you have sent me into the world
so I have sent them into the world,
and for their sake I sanctify myself
so that they also may be made holy in truth."*

v. 17-19

Jesus prays for those who will continue his mission
to reveal the Father and the gift of the Holy Spirit,
that they may be holy
as he is holy.

This holiness does not come as we stretch out towards God,
but as we welcome the Holy One
who comes to dwell in us.

To become holy

We human beings are a mixture
of the presence of God and the absence of God,
of light and darkness,
truth and chaos,
goodness and evil,
openness and closedness.

(X) No human being in himself or herself is holy or pure.
We become holy only through the holiness of God.

By ourselves we cannot bridge the gap that separates
the finite from the Infinite.
God reaches out to us and we become holy
as we welcome God who comes to us.

This implies that we gradually become emptied
of the darkness and selfishness in us,
and liberated from the walls around our hearts
that separate us from God, from others and from our deepest self.

This holiness is not something we can achieve; it is *given*.
It is not reserved for a few strong-willed people,

for austere seekers of God,
for those who have an official role in the Church,
or for those who preach and do advanced theological studies.
It is not reserved for those who are well-known mystics
or for those who do wonderful things for the poor.
Holiness is for all those who are poor enough to welcome Jesus.
It is for people living ordinary lives and who feel lonely.
It is for all those who are old, sick, hospitalized or out of work,
who open their hearts in trust to Jesus
and cry out for his healing love.
“Come, Lord Jesus, come!”

Welcoming God in order to welcome others

As we welcome the loving God in us,
we gradually become liberated from the walls that separate us from
others,
walls that protect us and prevent life from flowing forth in us.
(X) We begin to know and to love others as God knows and loves
them,

to welcome them as God welcomes them.

We become creative with the divine creativity of God.
We become “branches” who dwell in Jesus, the “Vine,”
and who bear much fruit.
Jesus prays for this final accomplishment of humanity,
where the walls of hate and conflict have fallen,
where there are no more divisions or separations,
and we will be *one* in God and with and in each other.

*“I pray not only on behalf of these,
but also on behalf of those who will believe in me,
through their word,
that they may all be one.
As you, Father, are in me and I am in you,
may they also be in us,
so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

*“The glory that you have given me, I have given them
and that glory is the holiness of God
so that they may be one as we are one,
in them and you in me,
that they may become completely one
so that the world may know that you have sent them
and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

w. 20-23

In this prayer, Jesus calls his disciples to the summit of love.
From the washing of their feet up until this moment,
we see a deepening in the call to love one another.

After the washing of the feet, he gave his new commandment:
to love one another *as he* loved them.

In that context he called them to abandon any rivalry or competition and to serve each other, to wash each other's feet, to help each other to rise up in truth and in the Spirit of God. A little later we see that to love each other is not just to serve, it is also to give our lives:

"There is no greater love than to give one's life for one's friends." *Jn 15:13*

In this prayer, the friends of Jesus are called to an even greater love, to become one with each other as the Father and the Son are one in the Spirit. It is something totally new, a unity that can in no way be achieved by human means. It is an openness and tenderness to each one, that flows from the deepening transformation in God. Friends of Jesus are no longer just walking towards God, serving one another, they are *together, one in God,* because God is *in them.*

We can understand service, washing each other's feet, for that is a very human reality. We can understand giving one's life for one's friends as a supreme act of love.

But what is this mutual indwelling in God? To love one another as the Father and Son love each other, are in each other and dwell in each other?

What analogy can we find that might help us understand this wondrous unity, this perfect oneness? First, this oneness is not the fusion of two people totally dependent on each other, not knowing the frontiers of their being, one wrapped up in the other and closed up in each other, fearful of losing the other, neither one nor the other knowing who they are.

No, it is the friendship of lovers, their wedding feast of love when the bride and beloved become one in the sharing of their lives, giving themselves to one another and together giving themselves to God and to others.

In love each one is unique and precious; each one has his or her place; each one receives and each one gives; each one has a grateful heart.

There are no more barriers; each delights in the other, each is a delight for the other because in each one is seen the face of God.

*Arise my love, my fair one
And come away;
For now the winter is past
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come....*

My beloved is mine and I am his.

Song 2:10-12, 16

Each one is different and each one is needed for the completion of humanity in God. We are bonded together: vulnerable, one to another, open, one to another. Together we reflect the infinite beauty of God, the unity in God. Together we cry out our thanks to God and to others.

We cry out together our desire for God to be glorified as the source and the end of all beings.

This unity, which comes from the inner life of each person,
is only possible when, stone by stone,
the walls around our vulnerable hearts come down.

Then we no longer judge ourselves as unworthy
and we no longer judge others as unworthy.

We see in them and in ourselves the light and love of God.
There is no longer a void or anguish or terrible loneliness,
but a new life, the very life of God, surging up from within us.
It is an experience of freedom and oneness with others,
an experience of a fullness of life

where one's very identity has mysteriously given way
to a new identity that flows directly from God.

This wondrous unity is a promise of what will be given to us
as we become transformed in God.

On earth we may live glimpses of it,
but most of the time we struggle against the chaos within.
We struggle to keep welcoming people,
to love those whom we do not like or who do not like us.
We struggle to love those who are different or who appear to be rivals.
We struggle to love our enemies, those who hurt us.
We struggle not to judge and condemn people.

Peace comes as we enter this struggle,
as we work for unity
in our family and community,
in our church and between all followers of Jesus,
and between all our brothers and sisters in humanity.

Peace comes as we no longer seek to prove that we are right,
as we live the truth of forgiveness and reconciliation
and accept the light and presence of God
within us and within others.

The Spirit of Jesus gives us the strength to continue on the road
and to love each person as God loves him or her,
so that each one, liberated from sin and fear,
discovers their real person,
precious and important to God, hidden behind their ego,
and the real person of others,
precious and important to God, hidden behind their ego.

Some blocks remain

There is still work to be done by me and by Jesus
in order that I may be free
on, as the writer of this prayer describes it, “disarmed.
These words by Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople
are words that I would like to make my own:

I have waged this war against myself for many years.
It was terrible.
But now I am disarmed.
I am no longer frightened of anything
because love banishes fear.
I am disarmed of the need to be right
and to justify myself by disqualifying others.
I am no longer on the defensive,
holding onto my riches.
I just want to welcome and to share.
I don't hold on to my ideas and projects.
If someone shows me something better —
no, I shouldn't say better but good —
I accept them without any regrets.
I no longer seek to compare.
What is good, true and real is always for me the best.
That is why I have no fear.
When we are disarmed and dispossessed of self,
if we open our hearts to the God-Man
who makes all things new,
then He takes away past hurts
and reveals a new world
where everything is possible.

Unity among Christians

Today, followers of Jesus from different faith traditions are divided. Divided in ecclesial structures, in theology, in models of authority and of the priesthood, and in forms of worship.

These divisions, many of which originated so long ago, continue to be horribly painful today.

Christians were torn apart, wars of religion broke out, people were massacred, burned at the stake.

Jesus, the One who prayed for unity, must have wept.

Today, people of different faith traditions are working to bring people and churches closer together.

Disciples of Jesus are walking towards greater unity and mutual love. Jesus reveals that full unity, however, can only come as God lives more fully in each one of us, as we become holy through having welcomed the Holy One within us, and as each of us together begins to reflect the presence of Jesus in our lives. We all have work to do to welcome the Holy One within us and to love as he loves.

Unity does not come from the acceptance of exterior structures or laws, dogmas or ways of worship.

It surges up from a life that flows within us and through us all together.

It is hearts and minds bonded together because they are bonded in communion with Jesus.

It is a song, a celebration of thanksgiving.

It is a sign of the glory of God.

Ecumenism, then, is not to entice people to belong to one particular church, but to encourage all, beginning with ourselves, to love Jesus more dearly and to follow more fully the charter of life given to us by Jesus in what is called the "beatitudes."

This unity is not only for those who explicitly follow Jesus, but for all men and women who are seeking to respect and love all those who are different and who seek to live according to the truth and they have perceived in their conscience.

This unity is for all those who are drawn to be close to the weak, the needy and the oppressed and to live the path of love and of non-violence.

This unity is a communion that binds hearts together – hearts formed in different religious traditions.

In these hearts beats the same yearning for peace, for truth, the same desire to be held in God. We are different and at the same time one in our hearts' desires.

Having prayed for all those who believe in him, from generation to generation, for all times, Jesus reveals his desire to be with us all, in love:

"Father, I desire that those also whom you have given me may be with me where I am, to see my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world."

v. 24

This is our final destiny, which opens the Gospel of John, when Jesus brought the disciples to the wedding feast in Cana, and which John the evangelist saw in Patmos:

Let us rejoice and exult and give the Lord our God the glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.... Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Rev 19:7, 9

Yes, Jesus yearns that we all experience the immense love of God.

*"Righteous Father, the world does not know you,
but I know you
and these know that you have sent me.
I have made your name known to them
and I will make it known
so that the love with which you have loved me
may be in them and I in them."*

v. 25-26

It will be with this love that flows from the Father
that we go forth to bring life and unity to the world.

23

The King of Love in chains

John 18:1–19:16



*Having prayed for unity
Jesus enters into the world of conflict.*

*Alone and vulnerable
in the face of worldly
and religious power, Jesus,
the one who came into the world
to proclaim the truth,
the God of love,
is arrested
and condemned to death.*

ST CANICES LENT DISCUSSION GROUP SECOND MEETING MARCH 14 2013

JESUS' PASSION THROUGH JOHN'S GOSPEL

Materials attached

*Ignatian prayer

*John's Gospel chapters 13-17

^{**}"the Gospel of St John" (Jean Varnier) chapters 17-22

In our first meeting we looked at faith and spirituality and were particularly drawn by the statement in Gerald Hughes' book "Spirituality without some visible form is like a breath without a body. On the other hand a visible form(Church) without spirituality is like a body without a breath."

Keeping in mind what was discussed in our first meeting we look at Jesus' Passion in the Gospel of St John , and in particular:

- *Jesus washes the disciples' feet(13:1-20)
 - *the new commandment (13:31-35)
 - *the promise of the Holy Spirit (14:15-31& 16:5-15)
 - *Jesus the true vine (15:1-17)
 - *Jesus prays for the disciples (17:1-26)