

## LESSON 19: The Risen Christ



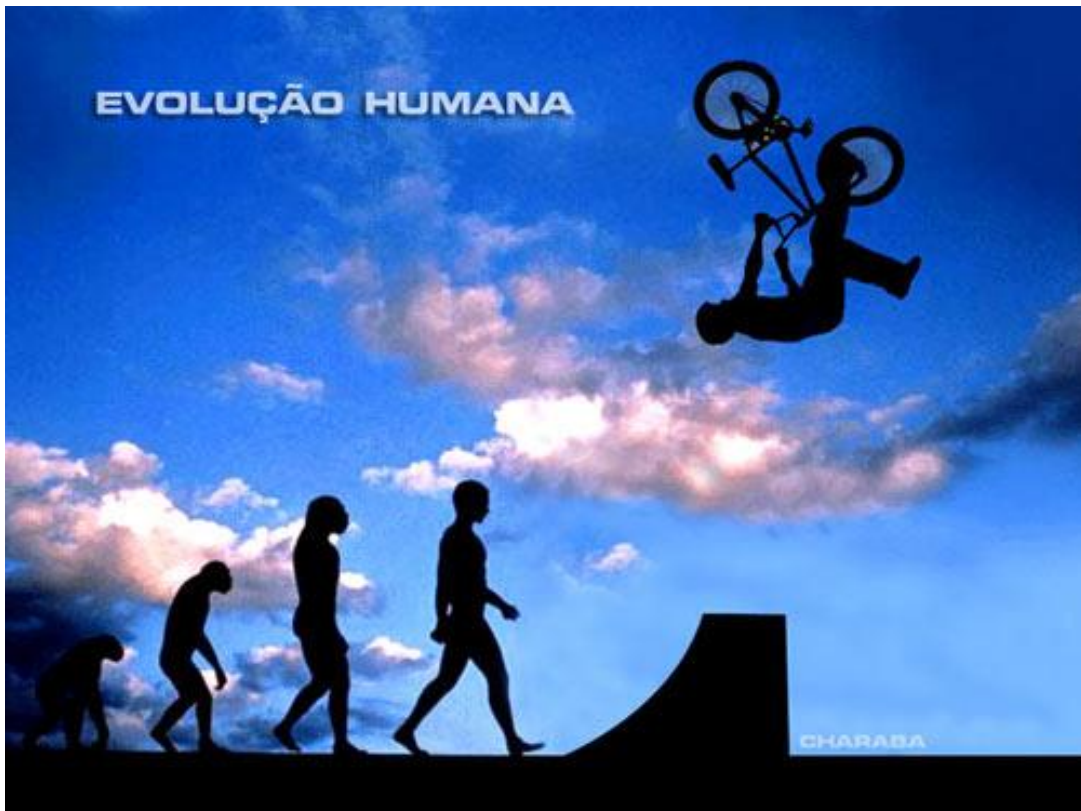
<b>FOCUS</b>	The Christ of Faith (Ascension)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 11, p.53-55)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Ascension, Pentecost, Assumption, Immaculate Conception, Second Coming

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### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒ 📖 ⇒ ⇒]

#### ⇒ Discussion

Present the picture below – or one that suggests the same message. It represents human evolution (evolução humana). Focus on the last figure on the right. What is happening? In some sense, what the person is doing expresses our desire to be able to transcend our limitations.



#### Text

Read the chapter.

⇒ **Response**

Learners search the following post-resurrection accounts from scripture to draw up a profile of the risen Jesus. In what ways is he like the Jesus who, before his death, walked and talked and ate with his disciples and others? In what ways is he different?

Matthew	28:9-10	28:16-20	
Mark	16:9-20		
Luke	24:13-35	24:36-43	24:50-53
John	20:11-18	20:19-29	21:1-14

⇒ **Discussion**

Perhaps after a second reading of the text, discuss: What is the meaning of Jesus' resurrection for the future of the individual person and for human society as a whole?

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## Lesson Materials



### The Risen Christ

Through his resurrection, Jesus entered a new existence beyond the limits of space and time. He achieved for human beings a new relationship with the material universe. And for the material universe itself, Jesus represents a new evolutionary stage in which matter is empowered by God's self-giving to transcend its limitations. The whole universe is now caught up into the eternal life of God.

Through their experience of Jesus beyond the grave, his followers began to recognise him as the Christ, or Anointed One of God, who would lead them into this same new life that he now enjoyed.

#### *✧ The Spirit of Jesus formed his disciples into a body*

The Risen Jesus appeared several times to different groups of disciples. Accounts of these post-resurrection experiences are found at the end of each of the four Gospels. While there may be much debate as to the actual nature of these experiences, their impact was such that the community of the early Church was re-gathered around a common experience of the Risen Christ. The good news that Jesus' life and teaching brought became underlined and strengthened by a firm belief in his resurrection (Acts 1:3).

Jesus sent his disciples out with the gift of the Spirit. This sharing of the Spirit of Jesus forms a group of people as Church (John 20:21-22), and manifests in human history the process whereby God brings the whole creation together under Christ, as head (Ephesians 1:9-11).

#### *✧ Jesus returned to his Father*

Jesus' death-resurrection-ascension is his return to the Father. The threefold distinction the Christian tradition makes signifies different experiences for the disciples, but not for Jesus. They were all part of one and the same experience for him. Note, for instance, that the **Ascension** in Luke (24:50-51) takes place on the same night as he rose from the dead, whereas in the two other New Testament accounts, it happens forty days later.

Jesus' going did not mean that he deserted his disciples: Jesus is really present all the time. It means that they learnt to experience his presence in new ways as they began to experience his Spirit living in them. As he said: "Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Matthew 28:20).

The disciples had a special experience of being given the power of the Spirit. It happened on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, so it is simply called **Pentecost**. It is presented in the New Testament as the birth of the Church. But, just as the existence of a human child predates birth, so the Church was already being formed as Jesus went about his earthly ministry.

It is interesting to note that Mary was present among the disciples at Pentecost. Mary is sometimes called Mother of the Church, and her **Assumption** is seen as a symbol of the Church's sharing in the destiny of Christ. So Mary's Assumption is a sort of epilogue or conclusion to the life of Jesus, just as her **Immaculate Conception** was a sort of prologue or introduction.

Jesus' Ascension signalled the return of humankind and the Universe to God. His life, death and resurrection bring about the reconciliation of all creation with God, making it possible for all beings to enjoy God's very life (Colossians 1:19-20).

His apparent going raises the question of his coming again. The Ascension story already talks about his return. Scripture refers to a **Second Coming** when Jesus will come again to add the final touch to the realisation of God's Plan. But, again, this coming does not mean a prior absence of Jesus, but a new way of experiencing his presence.

The final touch that Jesus adds will be a separation of what is all-mixed-up in our present experience, namely good and evil. Whatever is evil will be finally removed, and whatever is good will be finally affirmed and transfigured and brought fully into God, completing his Plan. There is great consolation in this prospect. Suffering and evil may seem to be very strong in the world right now, and we may seem to fail in our efforts to do good, but in the end all evil will be rooted out, and all that is good will be recognised and redeemed.

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### **Ascension**

The *Ascension*, celebrated 40 days after Easter, celebrates the event narrated in the Gospels (Mark 16:19, Luke 24:50-52) and the Acts of the Apostles (1:6-11). The picture of Jesus being lifted up and disappearing from sight reflects an ancient view of the world that placed God's 'home', or heaven, in the sky, while the place of the dead was within the earth. The importance of the Ascension lies in its meaning: that Jesus not only triumphed over death, but that he is now in possession of an entirely new kind of life in the presence of God. The Ascension to God's right hand, furthermore, signifies his dominion over the whole of Creation as Lord and Christ.

### **Assumption**

Belief in the *Assumption* of Mary grew from earliest times until it was solemnly defined by Pope Pius XII in 1950 as a revealed truth or dogma of the Christian faith, even though it is not specifically mentioned in Scripture. The definition was worded in these terms: "Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory." What does this mean? Just as in the case of the Ascension of Jesus, human language is incapable of expressing clearly a reality beyond space and time. What the belief affirms is that Mary has entered completely into the glorified life that Jesus enjoys. She lacks nothing of the fullness of existence that God intends for human beings.

### **Immaculate Conception**

In the Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of 8 December, 1854, Pius IX pronounced and defined that Mary "in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin." Mary, the mother of Jesus, was conceived in the natural way, but the manner of her redemption was her privilege. She was able to receive the Word in full cooperation and total freedom, unlike other human beings who struggle to receive it because of the sinful condition into which we are born, the condition called original sin. Mary, the one who is most perfectly redeemed, was filled from the very first with the Holy Spirit, and her whole surrender allowed God to realise the perfect work of his creation. In order for the Word to become incarnate, God needed the full cooperation of the human race, an unconditional "Yes" voiced in freedom, so that redemption would be an act of unconditional love, an invitation not a command, a gift and not some bargaining.

**Pentecost**

The Jewish festival of Shavuot (Seven Weeks) was celebrated on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Passover. It was thus given the name 'Pentecost' by Greek-speaking Jews. It is one of the three pilgrim festivals which every male Jew, no matter where in the world they lived, was obliged to attend in Jerusalem. This accounts for the great variety of peoples reported present on that day in the Book of Acts (2:5). The festival celebrates the giving of the Ten Commandments by God to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai 49 days after the Exodus. It also celebrates the harvest and first fruits in the land of Israel.

**Second Coming**

The New Testament refers in many places to a second coming of Christ. (See, for example Matthew 16:27, 24:3.) The Greek word used to signify this is *parousia*, which means "appearance and subsequent presence with". In the ancient Greek and Roman world it referred to official visits by royalty. It was used by the early Christians as a specialised term for Jesus' glorious appearance and subsequent presence on earth – primarily his final return at the end of the world. Modern theologians interpret the idea in a different sense. The *parousia* emphasises the saving presence of Christ to history, and the completion on a cosmic scale of the process begun in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. The *parousia* is not the return of an absent Christ but the breaking through of a presence that has been continuous throughout history, much like the sun after a daytime storm.

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## LESSON 20: The Body of Christ



<b>FOCUS</b>	The Nature of the Church (Communion of saints, Four last things, Four marks of the Church, Models of Church)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 13, p.58-63)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Purgatory, Tradition, Communion of Saints, Indulgences, Judgement, Eschatology, Creed, Heaven, Hell, Catholic, Apostolic

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### NOTE

This chapter of the book contains a wealth of new concepts relating to the Church and to the traditional 'last things'. It would not be wise to try to cover it in a single session. Here, we divide it into two parts.

### LESSON SUGGESTIONS

#### PART ONE [⇒📖⇒]

##### ⇒ Organisation

The chapter has four sections. Divide the class into four groups, giving each group a number. Each will study a section.

##### 📖 Text

Groups read their allocated section:

1. As Christ's Body, the Church continues his role in the world
2. The Church is a communion of saints
3. The final stage of God's Plan has already begun in Christ
4. The Church is a Sacrament of God's Reign

##### ⇒ Discussion

Groups discuss their section, referring to the glossary where suggested. After sufficient time, the groups formulate three questions that had emerged in the discussion as a response to the text. Help the groups in this formulation where necessary. They write these questions clearly on a piece of paper with their section heading.

#### PART TWO [⇒📖⇒]

##### ⇒ Organisation

The same groups are now renumbered so that each group has a different number to the one they had in Part 1. For example, 1 becomes 2, 2 becomes 3, 3 becomes 4, and 4 becomes 1. Each group will study a new section of the text corresponding to their new number.

 **Text**

Again, groups read their allocated section:

1. As Christ's Body, the Church continues his role in the world
2. The Church is a communion of saints
3. The final stage of God's Plan has already begun in Christ
4. The Church is a Sacrament of God's Reign

⇒ **Discussion**

Now, the questions from Part I, corresponding to the sections, are handed out. The groups now discuss the questions that have come from another group and formulate a response., either in writing, or orally, if time allows.

⇒ **Extension**

Allocate some of the ten questions below to different learners as a written home exercise.

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## **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- How would you answer someone who says, "I don't need a Church. My faith is in the person of Jesus?"
- What practical effect should the image Body of Christ have on the life of Christians and on the activity of the Church?
- A young man or woman has just been killed in a motor accident. What would you say to the parents? Would your words or gestures be any different if the young person had died after a long illness?
- What do you say to a child who asks, "What is heaven like?"
- Do you believe in hell? What do you make of it?
- On what basis do you think God will judge you after your death? Does God judge you now?
- What questions do you have about the future? About death? Life after death?
- What emphasis does your church give to questions of hope and eschatology? In what ways are these teachings helpful or not helpful to you?
- How does African culture interpret death? The ancestors? Life after death? How do these insights influence your personal beliefs?
- What do you hope for?

## Lesson Materials



# The Body of Christ

Remembering that a sacrament is a *visible* sign, if Jesus was, as we have described, the original sacrament of God's Reign, and Jesus has returned to the Father, what now is the sacrament of God's Reign in the world today? This question brings us to a discussion of the Church. What, then, is the Church, and what is its part in the unfolding of God's Plan?

*✂ As Christ's Body, the Church continues his role in the world*

At this stage we can already glimpse the full picture by looking at three points.

- ❖ Firstly, by sharing his Spirit with his disciples, the Risen Christ makes them his Body in the world. We call this Body the Church.
- ❖ Secondly, in the Church, Christ continues to have a Body in the world – that is, to be visibly present in the world. So Jesus' role of being the Sacrament of God's Reign is continued by the Church in all times and all places.
- ❖ Thirdly, the Church has the role of an intermediary in God's Plan. The mission of the Church is to proclaim and actualise what is already revealed and fulfilled in Christ. This is because the Church mediates Christ, the beginning of perfected Creation, to the world, which is the rest of Creation on its way to becoming whole. Because of this intermediate position, the Church shares in the perfection of Christ, and shares in the imperfection of the world. We need to remember both of these sides, or we will never develop a true understanding of the Church.

The Reign of God is the goal towards which the Church works. It is the goal towards which the Spirit directs it. It comes about in the three stages we identified in Chapter 7:

- A. The **BEGINNING** was the emergence through God's creative Word of humankind called to walk in friendship with their Creator towards the Kingdom.
- B. The **MIDDLE** was the manifestation of the Kingdom in Jesus.
- C. The **END** is the Church's continuing manifestation of what Jesus brought to light, culminating in the bringing of all things into harmony with the Father in Christ.

If we compared this to planting seeds in a field (**BEGINNING**), cultivating the crop (**MIDDLE**), and harvesting it (**END**), we wouldn't be very far from some of the parables of Jesus (Matthew 13:24-32).



## The Church is a communion of saints

God's Reign is already established, but it is the Church's task, powered by the Spirit, to see that it grows and spreads. To understand this fully, we need to be aware that the Church lives in three states, which are:

- ❖ The Church in heaven are those fully alive to the presence of God because they are fully transformed in Christ. This normally refers to those who have gone before us in death.
- ❖ The Church in **purgatory** are those in need of purification so as to become capable of experiencing God's love fully. **Tradition** holds that there must be an experience of purification for those who have died because Scripture says that nothing unclean can enter heaven. Some describe this experience as the cleansing fire of love when the person's truth is revealed in coming face to face with Christ. However purgatory is first and foremost a process, and not a place, and we on earth engage in it through prayer, penance and our effort to be good. Purgatory should be seen in a positive way: it is a state of growth, the growth of God's Reign in the person, by purification from the grip of sin. If there is pain involved, it is a growing pain, the pain of love struggling to break out of its selfishness.

What the creed calls the **communion of saints**, means that all members of the Church, regardless of their state, can be in communion with each other. This makes prayer for those of the dead who may be in this process of growth and purification, a meaningful practice. This tradition goes back to the Hebrew Scriptures: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be released from their sins" (2Maccabees 12:46). Another common practice related to this belief is the veneration of saints as models for living and their invocation for protection or some other favour.

There is a close point of contact between the communion of saints and the traditional African practice of venerating the ancestors or 'living dead', though there is an important difference in the powers ascribed to each. S E Serote explains:

*The Christian ancestors are what the church regards as the triumphant host, the cloud of witnesses. These can never be regarded as alternates to Christ, nor as objects of worship with power attributed to them. With the ancestors put and seen in correct perspective, meaningful Christian worship will take root.*

And, of course, the first of this triumphant host is Jesus, who is the ancestor *par excellence*, the initiator of the resurrected life.

- ❖ The Church on Earth are those who have the opportunity to help transform our world by spreading the Reign of God in all sorts of ways, great and small. It is a good idea to see life as a bundle of countless opportunities that can be used to advance God's Kingdom in ourselves and in all that we touch.

**Indulgences** can be understood as the Church pledging to act with us or to intercede for us in our efforts to purify ourselves already during our earthly life. Here the Church acts rather like a sponsor who says: "We'll help you to build your building. For every brick you buy, we'll sponsor another nine bricks".

## The final stage of God's Plan has already begun in Christ

Because we can't see very clearly into the future, we can't say very much about the final shape of God's Kingdom. But there is one thing we *do* know for sure: the final stage has already begun in Christ. His entry into glory (the body-and-soul fullness of life) was signalled by his resurrection and ascension. And his state of glory is shared by all who accomplish the Father's will in their lives. This is the significance of the Assumption of Mary, the mother of Jesus. It wasn't some sort of isolated arbitrary privilege given to her. It was the fulfilment of the promise of what God plans for all of us.

At death, the reality of our life's option stands as a **judgement** of us before God. It is not "a verdict imposed... from the outside, but a disclosure of the personal self as he or she has developed throughout life in encounter with the ultimate truth". Death, judgement, heaven and hell have traditionally been known as the four last things, and the branch of theology which studies them is called **eschatology**.

Eschatology is a study of the hope that Christians have for the fulfilment of their individual lives and of the Universe as a whole. Using the word 'last' is, in some respects, misleading, since what the Christian hopes for is already fully present to him or her in the Risen Christ. Yet, considering the great age of the Universe human history may well be regarded as having entered its 'last days', even if this means, in fact, a few million years or more. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews echoes the biblical vision when he speaks of "our time, the last days", in which God has "spoken to us in the person of his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the ages." (1:2)

Talking of 'the four last things' suggests that time comes to an end, and that eternity is static and unchanging – for change needs time. If that is how heaven, or the life of God is, who would want to live it? Eternity is neither the abolition of time nor its indefinite continuation. One cannot talk of a time before the world existed, nor of a time after it ceases to exist. The world we live in has time as one of its qualities or dimensions, but it does not exist in time. To use an analogy: our bodies contain water as an essential for life, but we do not live in an ocean, the ocean is within us. Karl Rahner speaks of eternity as 'the fruit of time' or 'the time of God'. This connects nicely with the image of history as the womb-time of the Kingdom, which we used earlier. The child in the womb has little or no idea of what lies beyond birth. We cannot, without prior knowledge, predict the shape, colour and taste of a tree's fruit, from the seed as we plant it. Nor can theology give a factual picture of life as lived in 'the time of God'. This is why eschatology does not and cannot describe the future, as many mistakenly believe. It describes our present, but in the light of the future made possible by the promises of God. This future becomes present inasmuch as it has the power to influence us, to draw us forward to our fulfilment. Our pictures of the 'four last things', therefore, are stretches of our imagination based on our actual experience, which is either past or present.

Death, in a commercial, materialistic world loses all sense of meaning. African thought however concurs with the Christian vision when it sees death as a rite of passage, just like birth, initiation, and marriage. One has to go through all of these to become fully human, an ancestor, or member of the 'living dead'. The Asante of Ghana carry out special rites on the sixth day after death – the 'day of rising'. It is said that 'death has gone back and life forward.'

The Christian creed states: “We believe in the resurrection of the body”. This doesn’t mean mere resuscitation, so it can’t be talking about our mortal bodies as we know them. It is talking about the kind of risen, incorruptible body of Jesus that the early witnesses to the Resurrection experienced. The **Creed** also states a belief in “life everlasting”. What this means is that, like Jesus, Mary, and the countless many who have gone before us, we are destined to share in the life of the eternal God, the fullness of life that is called **heaven**. It is because of our freedom to opt out of this that the opposite, **hell**, is a real possibility. Whether hell is a permanent condition of the individual or not can be argued. One strand of tradition gives eternal existence beyond death to all as a matter of justice. Another strand, stressing God’s mercy, understands the experience of hell as the horror of seeing how sin can completely destroy one. But this destruction will be complete, and the individual will exist no more.

### *The Church is a Sacrament of God’s Reign*

In the footsteps of Jesus, the Church makes God’s Reign present and visible. In other words, the Church continues Christ’s role of being a Sacrament of God’s Reign – a sign that the Kingdom is real, and an instrument that helps to make it come true.

What Jesus did as an individual in one place and one time, the Church is called to do as a community in every place and time. So Jesus is the original sacrament of God’s Reign and the Church the universal sacrament.

The Church is in the end stage of the coming of God’s Reign, as we have seen. The Kingdom is already present in the Church, but not yet fully present. It has already begun, but it is not yet fulfilled. For this reason, there is an ‘already-but-not-yet’ paradox about the Church too. Consider the traditional four marks of the Church and what they tell us in view of the Church’s sharing in both the perfection of Christ and the imperfection of the world.

- ❖ The Church is one (united) in a very real sense, yet it is also divided and in need of a more complete unity.
- ❖ The Church is holy (whole, freed from sin), yet it is also broken by sin and constantly in need of reform.
- ❖ The Church is **catholic** (universal, all-embracing) in that it can influence all cultures and spheres of life, yet it is also liable to misunderstand cultures and confuse the Good News with a particular one.
- ❖ The Church is **apostolic** (faithful to its roots) in a way that is sometimes clear, yet it is also plagued by deviations from Jesus’ example and teaching.

If we want to have a balanced understanding of the Church, it is very important to keep in mind this ‘already-but-not-yet’ paradox. Some people see only the negative aspect and think the Church must be a fraud. Other people are only prepared to see the positive side, and cannot handle the negative things at all. The separation of good and evil will only happen when the world comes to its completion. Until then, negatives will stay mixed up with positives – and there is wisdom in that! (Matthew 13:24-30) The point is that despite

the negatives which evil introduces, the positives are also there because of the action of the Spirit.

Another point of balance one needs to hold about the Church is in respect of the models we use to describe it. The Church can be seen for example as an institution, a community, a herald, a servant, or a pilgrim. Each of these gives a picture of some aspect of the Church's reality. But if we make any one of them – or others – an absolute, then we arrive at a caricature. To hold the balance, to hold the mystery called Church, we need to keep all the facets together, and constantly be open to new ones.

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### **Apostolic**

When we describe the Church as apostolic, we mean that the Church is faithful to its roots: it can trace, through its mission, its teaching, and its bishops a continuous succession from the Twelve Apostles that Jesus chose.

### **Catholic**

The word 'catholic' means 'universal' or 'all-embracing'. The New Testament speaks of the Church as "the fullness of Christ who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). The Church is of universal significance, and has the mission of communicating Good News to all the peoples of the world.

### **Communion of Saints**

Since the Body of Christ has overcome death, it is no longer divided by space or time. It is present to the whole Universe, and so all its members can be in communion with one another. The Church identifies the pilgrim members on Earth, the members blessed by the totality of God's Presence, and those who have died, but still on the way to completeness. What is important to note is that all are saints, that is, they enjoy a measure of the life of God, called grace.

### **Creed**

A creed may be simply seen as a statement, which summarises the belief of a religious community, but, in practice, it has a deeper, symbolic significance. To recite a creed in a liturgical setting is a confession of faith, and a commitment to live accordingly. Furthermore, while a creed cannot state every detail of belief, it does symbolise the whole content of that faith. In the early Church, the baptismal creed, which we know today as the Apostles' Creed, was known as the *Symbolum Apostolicum* since it functioned as a password or sign or token whereby members of the Christian community could recognise one another.

### **Eschatology**

Eschatology is a branch of theology that focuses on the destiny of the human individual, and on the collective destiny of the world. Its language is typically symbolic as it tries to give an account of the traditional four last things, namely death, judgement, heaven and hell. One cannot predict the shape, size and colour of a plant's leaves, flowers and fruits by studying its seed. Just so, eschatological statements are imaginative interpretations of the potential of human experience. They do not provide information concerning the future, do not predict events to come, and do not deal with any scientifically provable reality. "What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualise; all that God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9). A child in the womb cannot grasp earth; a person on earth cannot grasp what comes hereafter. Having said that, we have one main clue: Jesus is a seed that is planted and growing. "The resurrection of Jesus is the acorn of the oak tree to come." (Dermot Lane. *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p 341)

### **Heaven and Hell**

'Heaven' and 'hell' are eschatological concepts. They are not subject to scientific observation, though they are used in popular discourse as if they denoted geographical realities. Heaven is the place of the living, God's abode in the sky. Hell is the place of the dead, a God-forsaken land of shadows beneath the earth. From a theological viewpoint, we can see heaven and earth as states of being. In heaven we experience the fullness of life with God. Hell is the subjective experience of the absence of God, an existence devoid of faith, of hope, and of love.

**Indulgences**

While a sin may have been forgiven, the damage it has done is not thereby eradicated. Repairing the damage done by sin to another or to self, or to the community as a whole, can be willingly shared among its members. This is the principle out of which the practice of indulgences arose in the early Church as a way of helping its members on whom public penances had been imposed. Through an indulgence, the penance was wholly or partially remitted. An understanding of indulgences beyond this concrete instance has grown in the Church to include the whole of the communion of saints, whether the living or the dead. Abuses in the medieval Church, ranging from a mechanical and superstitious application of the principle to a monetary trade in indulgences, were high amongst the causes that led to the Protestant Reformation.

**Judgement**

The Christian creed speaks of the Lord, Jesus Christ, who will “come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.” The term ‘judgement’ today carries a largely negative significance. But this is only, at most, half the story. ‘In glory’, means that all will be revealed, and ‘the living and the dead’ refer to those who have chosen life, and those who have not. Here is a positive judgement from the Book of Daniel: “Those who are wise will shine as brightly as the expanse of the heavens, and those who have instructed many in uprightness, as bright as stars for all eternity.” (12:3)

**Purgatory**

Generally, in Western theology, purgatory has been described in negative terms as a punishment due to sin that must be paid by a person beyond death. And so arose the description of a place in medieval cosmology called purgatory wherein those who were in debt were purified. Eastern theology, on the other hand, saw purification in more positive terms as a process of maturation and growth in the contemplation of God. Most modern interpretations incline towards this latter view.

**Tradition**

Tradition is that which is transmitted or handed down in a community from generation to generation. Tradition serves as a memory of the past, enshrining as it does the values whence that community draws its strength and sense of identity. But tradition is a living thing, and part of the task handed down is to allow the tradition to grow through internal self-reflection and through external dialogue with others.

## LESSON 21: Temples of the Spirit



**FOCUS** The Holy Spirit (Grace, Theological Virtues, The Body of Christ, People of God)

**REFERENCE** *The Christian Story* (Chapter 14, pp.64-66)

**GLOSSARY** Grace, Body of Christ, Faith, Hope, Charity, People of God

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### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒⇒📖⇒]

#### ⇒ Reflection

Open the lesson with an exercise in slow, deep, rhythmic breathing. Help the learners connect with the idea of breath as life, and the experience of calm that conscious breathing produces.

Next, link the idea of breath with spirit, through words such as ‘inspiration’ and ‘expiration’, or through scripture passages, such as John 20:22 – He breathed on them and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Finally, consider the idea of the Holy Spirit as being the breath of God.

#### ⇒ Discussion

Invite discussion around the idea of a temple. Have some pictures of famous temples to stimulate the discussion.

- What is a temple?
- What do you expect of a temple – what it looks like, what you’d find inside it?
- What happens in a temple?

Consider then what Paul says: “You are God’s temple and the Spirit of God is living within you” (1Cor 3:16).

#### 📖 Text

Read the chapter.

#### ⇒ Discussion

In the first discussion above, the focus was on God’s indwelling of the individual person. Now look at the communal aspect. Each person is animated by the breath of God (the Holy Spirit) but only as a member of a body. Jesus said: “I am the vine and you are the branches. Cut off from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Similarly a cell or member of a body only has life when it is joined to the body. Invite learners to discuss this question: What does it mean to be a member of the Body of Christ?

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### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Do you think the term People of God adequately expresses the nature of the Church? What of the image Temple of the Spirit?

## Lesson Materials



### Temples of the Spirit

#### *The Holy Spirit animates Christians*

According to Christian faith, the human being finds completion and fulfilment in following Christ in order to become as fully human as he was. But what attracts people to Christ and motivates them to follow him? Where does the energy come from? And where does it lead?

If you have a piano and a guitar, try this: play the note A on the piano – you will find that the guitar replies to the piano's A by vibrating its own A-string and making its own A-sound. What the guitar is doing is resonating. Christians, similarly, resonate to Christ, that is, respond to him by imitating his way in theirs. What is the 'Christ string' that vibrates in response to Christ? It is God's Spirit which lives within them.

The Spirit is experienced in the impulses that animate and renew the Church, uniting its members with one leader and one goal. The Spirit is experienced in the energy that motivates and moves its members, that empowers and extends them, that challenges and affirms their growth. However, it's not some kind of force, but God himself helping them, strengthening them, uniting them, empowering them, motivating them, directing them, moving them to love him and live for him. The Holy Spirit is a living person to whom one can appeal for help. As the faith of the Christian grows, he or she learns not only to recognise the signs of the Spirit but also to feel God's personal presence within.

Whenever you think of the Spirit, think of life and you'll be on the right track. The Spirit is God's life. That's why you'll often hear the Spirit spoken of as breath – and that, indeed, is what 'spirit' means. The Spirit's life-giving presence, which is called *grace*, is what transforms a whole collection of lives into one life, the Body of Christ. This grace comes individually and in community, in all sorts of ways – in free-flowing ways as well as through the channels of Church structures. The key visible ways are the seven sacraments which are celebrated in the liturgy. When we say the Spirit sanctifies or makes holy, we are talking about this life that the Spirit gives to enable God's Plan to come to fruition.

In Part I, grace was described as the gentle thrust of the Spirit in the direction of God's Plan. Responding to grace means actively co-operating with this thrust by moving towards God and our neighbour. Sin, on the other hand, means actively opposing this thrust by moving away from God and our neighbour. Conversion means actively joining this thrust by turning to God and our neighbour.

Another way of understanding grace is to see it as the relationship between God and ourselves, nourished and affirmed in prayer and sacramental action.

#### *The Spirit forms Christians into the Body of Christ*

A body is made up of many different parts animated by one spirit and therefore sharing one life (1 Corinthians 6:19). As it is the one Holy Spirit that lives in all Christians, we can

think of the whole Christian community as making up one body in the world, the **Body of Christ**. And that is how St Paul describes the Church (1Corinthians 12:12, 27). And he calls Christ the head of this body (Colossians 1:18). The mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ is very rich, but for the present let us look at just three basic points.

- ❖ Firstly, having in them the same Spirit that was in Jesus, Christians together continue his presence, his life, and his work in the world. What Jesus was and did in one time and place, the Body is and does in all times and all places, guided and directed by Christ the head, and moved by the Holy Spirit who is its life principle.
- ❖ Secondly, the Church is not over here and Christ over there. The Church is a union between Christ and Christians. Jesus Christ himself made this point very strongly when he spoke about the vine and the branches (John 15:1-17).
- ❖ Thirdly, because Christians are incorporated into Christ's Body, they share in his destiny. This means that they too are destined to rise from the dead (1Corinthians 15:20-23).

### *✠ The Spirit constantly gives life to the Church*

The New Testament often mentions the indwelling of the Spirit. St Paul describes the Christian as 'the temple of the Holy Spirit' (1Corinthians 3:16). What does it actually mean to say that the members of the Church are 'temples of the Holy Spirit'? It means that they are not limited to their own powers and capacities, because they are empowered and extended by grace, the Holy Spirit at work in them. It's something like catching a wave on the beach: you are swimming slowly towards the shore when suddenly a wave picks you up and carries you much more powerfully ashore. It is the power of the Spirit that enables a person to be and act like Jesus.

The three basic powers that flow from the life of the Spirit within the human person are **faith**, **hope** and **charity**. These are called the theological virtues because they are life-habits or virtues that grow from the ordering of all things in relation to God. When faith, hope and charity shine through our ordinary abilities and natural virtues, they light them up with a new radiance.

Although faith, hope and charity are singled out as the key gifts of the Spirit (1Corinthians 13:13), Scripture mentions several other gifts. Some, like the gift of healing or the gift of teaching, are given to particular individuals. Other gifts are given to all Christians. Tradition lists seven such gifts: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Courage, Knowledge, Piety, and Reverence for God.

### *✠ The Church continues the biblical tradition of a People of God*

The Hebrew Scriptures record how God formed a people of his own, Israel, in preparation for the fulfilment of his plan. The New Testament uses the same description, **People of God**, to talk about the Christian community (1Peter 2:9-10). We see continuity between Israel and the community through which God's Plan is now unfolding. The link between Israel and the Church is God. It is the same Father who looks after his People as they develop through the ages. It is the same Spirit who moves in them. And the incarnate Son Jesus, together with his mother Mary, represents not only a flowering of the Jewish people but also the budding of the Church.



### **Body of Christ**

The description 'Body of Christ' used for the Church emphasises its unity in Christ. This unity is symbolised and made effective by the Church's members sharing in the Eucharist, the sacrament of Christ's Life, or Body-and-Blood. The description also points to the Church as the visible presence of Christ in the world.

### **Charity**

Greek philosophy distinguishes between three kinds of love: *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*. *Eros* refer to passionate love, an intense desire for something. *Philia* refers to a fondness and appreciation of the other, whether friend, family or social group. *Agape* or charity (*caritas* in Latin) refers to the love of God. Charity is a gift (a charism) that God freely offers to human persons enabling them to love as God loves. Charity does not contradict *eros* or *philia*, but seeks to transform them so that the person's love becomes universal as God's is. Through charity, the human person becomes the face of God in the world: he or she reflects the nature of God, who is love.

### **Faith**

Faith, hope, and charity are called theological virtues because they not only direct us towards God, but they come as gifts from God to enable us to make life's journey from a sense of restless incompleteness to shalom, the experience of fullness in union with the Mystery of Life, who is God. Faith, in particular, is the ability to give one's total assent, in trust, to God, the revealer of truth, who, in turn, is absolutely faithful.

### **Grace**

Grace is God's help or favour. But it is not something external to God that can be contained or measured. Grace is the very life or energy of God that is made freely available to human beings. Gratitude – the word comes from the same root as grace – is the appropriate response to God's loving, generous, free and totally unexpected and undeserved relations with human beings.

### **Hope**

To hope means to look forward to some future good which, though hard to attain, is nevertheless possible. Hope is a fundamental human disposition, the "will to live", which holds that there is some sense to life, and some reward for honest search and effort. Hope, in the sense of a theological virtue, enables us to look forward to the fulfilment of God's promises, which lie beyond our vision and experience. Hope is an energy which gives us strength to move forward towards our goal, even when the way points, as it did for Jesus on the Cross, to a contradiction.

### **People of God**

This is a biblical term popularised by Vatican II as an image of the church, and by extension the whole human family. Based primarily on a text of Ezekiel (37:26-27): "My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The council gave the people of God image an entire chapter in its "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" and placed it before the chapter on the hierarchy to emphasize that the church is a community first, with a hierarchical structure, not primarily a top-down structure with individuals as subjects. The image is not as popular today as it was then, because it is difficult to think of the Church as a people in the sense that Israel was. It is also an image that has an exclusive connotation, which implies that the rest of the world are not God's people.

## LESSON 22: Liturgy



<b>FOCUS</b>	Liturgy (Worship, Liturgical Year)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 16, pp.71-75)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Liturgy, Paschal Mystery, Liturgical Year, Eucharist

### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒ 📖 ⇒ 📖]

#### ⇒ Reflection



Consider a magnifying glass. What does it enable one to do? Learners will identify two main ideas:

- It enables us to see the finer details of an object.
- It concentrates or focuses energy such as in the sun's rays.

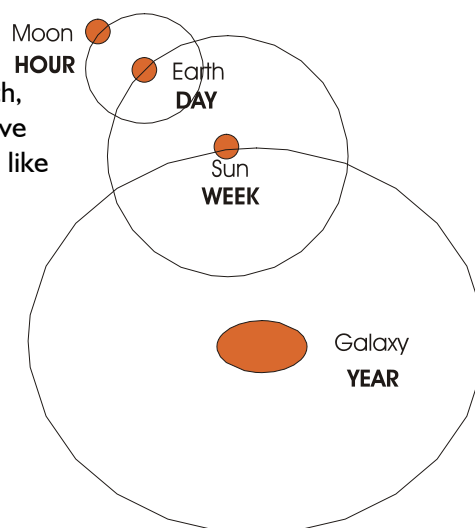
Direct learners to the middle of page 72: "Any real celebration does two things: it *expresses* something that's already there; and it *deepens* this." A celebration acts like a lens or a magnifying glass: it expresses the details clearly, and empowers what is being celebrated.

#### 📖 Text

Read "The source and summit of Jesus' life is worship", "The source and summit of the Church's life is liturgy" and "In liturgy, the Spirit forms, conforms, and transforms."

#### ⇒ Reflection

Present a diagram such as the one below which represents cycles within cycles: the moon cycles earth, earth the sun, and the sun the galaxy. Similarly we have yearly, weekly and daily rhythms in our life. Liturgy is like that too.



#### 📖 Text

Read "The Church follows the rhythm of the Paschal mystery."

### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What happens when we do not believe what we act out in the liturgy? What happens when we do not act out what we believe?
- If you belong to a church or other faith community, how does community worship influence your images of God?

## Lesson Materials



### Liturgy

The Spirit is constantly at work giving life to the Church, helping it to grow more and more into what it already is, but what it is not yet fully: the presence of Christ in the world. What is in fact growing is its union with Christ. As in any relationship, this everyday growing together is celebrated on special occasions, which can themselves be special moments of growth in being together. In its relationship with Christ, these special times are its prayer, and the highpoint of its prayer is the liturgy.

*✧ The source and summit of Jesus' life is worship*

To really understand *liturgy*, the Church's official public worship, we need to go back to the Trinity and the Incarnation. When we think of worship we tend to think that it means bowing the body and giving praise to God. But real worship (worth-ship) is an attitude of love, and a recognition of worth. It means bowing one's whole being and giving one's whole self to God. And that is the ultimate meaning of the Reign of God, and the sort of worship that the Son eternally offers the Father. Jesus offered the same worship in his life on earth. Indeed, out of this worship he drew all the power and inspiration for his life. And his every word and deed confirmed it. We can say that worship was the source of Jesus' life, and its summit. Look hard at the words of the prayer that he left us: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven". What Jesus did in offering this eternal worship through living a completely real flesh-and-blood life for God, was to bring the Reign of God into every corner of human existence. At the same time his life brought humankind into contact with this eternal worship. For us, then, worship means, first and foremost, dedicating ourselves to God's work of creation and linking ourselves with it in order to complete the world through our toil and exploration.

*✧ The source and summit of the Church's life is liturgy*

The same Spirit that breathed in Jesus, now breathes in his Church. That is what makes the Church the Body of Christ in the world today, continuing his presence and his action. So the Spirit unites all our good efforts to Christ's achievement. This means that when we worship the Father with our whole lives – by letting the Kingdom come, in and around us – we are united to the Son's eternal worship.

Church liturgy may be seen as a lens which focuses or concentrates what Karl Rahner calls the 'liturgy of the world', or Peter Phan, the 'liturgy of life'. When we take time to bring the offering of our lives to a focus, we express and renew it in concrete acts of worship. There are countless ways of doing this, all of them valuable. But the Church has specially cultivated certain actions that clearly express and renew the union of its members' lives with Christ's life; of their sufferings with Christ's suffering; of their worship with Christ's eternal worship.

Any real celebration does two things: it *expresses* something that's already there; and it *deepens* this. Think, for example, of a Golden Wedding celebration: it expresses the faithful love that has kept two people growing together for fifty years; and it confirms and renews

this faithful love. Or think of a simpler everyday celebration, a kiss: it only happens because there is a relationship to be expressed; and it's an opportunity for the relationship to grow. This is true of liturgy as well. It expresses and deepens the union with Christ that the Church lives from day to day, especially the union in self-sacrifice; it brings to a focus the Reign of God in and around us. So 'the liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the fountain from which all her power flows'.

### *✠ In liturgy, the Spirit forms, conforms, and transforms*

Nowhere else is the Church more visibly alive than in the liturgy – or so it should be. That's why we say liturgy is the *summit* of the Church's life. And, of course, that aliveness is the presence of the Holy Spirit, inclining the members towards God and neighbour, a presence that we've called grace. And that's why we say that liturgy is the *source* of the Church's life. It's instructive to compare liturgy with sexual expression in a marriage. Nowhere is the relationship more intensely expressed than in this activity. Sex strengthens and cements the relationship, and it has the power to produce new life – in the relationship as well as in the wonderful form of a baby, an addition to or enrichment of the human family. Sex can be called the summit and wellspring of the married relationship's life, just as liturgy is in the relationship between Christ and his followers. In liturgy, the Holy Spirit keeps *forming* Christ's followers into his Body the Church, giving them new and increased life, keeps *conforming* the Church to Christ, and keeps *transforming* the world touched by the Church.

If people want to give you a present, they can do it on any day of the year. But probably most of your presents come to you on your birthday, because it's a natural and obvious occasion for gift-giving. It's the same with God's gift of grace. God can and does share his life with us on all sorts of occasions in daily life, but the most natural and obvious occasion is the liturgy. It is basically in community that the following of Christ is lived out, so it is basically in the community celebrations of Christian life that the Church's members are strengthened by grace.

Let's return to that comparison between liturgy and sexual expression. Just as it would be hollow and dishonest to have sex when there is no committed bond to express and deepen, so too liturgy is only meaningful if the worshipper brings to it a genuine effort to live Christ's way and a genuine openness to grow in it. The lens we spoke of earlier does not create the sunlight, but it can focus it into something very powerful.

Liturgy is not a consumer product, like beer or insurance policies or television programmes, which needs to be made attractive so that people will buy it. Instead it is a reality that needs to be entered and lived. This is not to say that liturgy should not be made attractive: indeed, it should strive to reflect the beauty of God. Any effort we put into preparing and participating in liturgical celebrations should aim to help us enter this reality. This is the real meaning of participation.

Because liturgy is based on word and symbol, it always has a power to teach. Look, for instance, at the excerpt from one of the Eucharistic prayers given below. You will soon become aware of the many theological statements being made there. An ancient saying puts it this way: the rule of prayer forms the rule of belief - in Latin '*lex orandi, lex credendi*'.

*Father, we acknowledge your greatness:  
All your actions show your wisdom and love.  
You formed us in your own likeness  
And set us over the whole world  
To serve you, our creator,  
And to rule over all creatures.  
Even when we disobeyed you and lost your friendship  
You did not abandon us to the power of death,  
But helped us all to seek and find you.  
Again and again you offered us a covenant,  
And through the prophets taught us to hope for salvation.  
Father, you so loved the world  
That in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Saviour.  
(From Eucharistic Prayer IV)*

But liturgy does not only teach by word. It needs “the joyous song and the scintillating movement of Africa’s dance” to express the depth of faith that cannot be verbalised.

### The Church follows the rhythm of the Paschal Mystery

You must have noticed how music with a good strong beat gets you moving physically in time with the rhythm. The movement may be as gentle as the tapping of a foot or a nodding of the head; or the rhythm may get into your body so much that it sets you dancing. In a similar way, the Church uses a sort of rhythm to get it to move to the ‘music’ of Christ, to dance to his tune, to get in step with his **Paschal Mystery**. This rhythm consists of patterns that repeat every year, every week, and even every day.

Every year, the Church traces the pattern of the Incarnation of Jesus, from the preparation and waiting for his coming, all the way through to his glorification as Summit of all Creation. This tracing is called the **Liturgical Year** (or the Church’s Year). It starts with Advent, a season of looking forward to Christmas, and ends with the feast of Christ the King. The highpoint is Holy Week, prepared for by a season of growth called Lent. Holy Week celebrates the greatest-ever demonstration of the Paschal Mystery: Easter Sunday coming out of Good Friday. The pattern of Jesus’ life is the pattern of the Church’s life, so by tracing this pattern in the liturgy year after year, the Church lets the lives of its members absorb the rhythm of Jesus’ life. What we said earlier about the liturgy’s power to teach is of special significance here. The liturgical cycle instructs the whole community about the central aspects of the Christian faith as it goes through an informal, though full, annual course in theology and scripture for those who are attentive.

Every week, the liturgy emphasises the main feature of Jesus’ life-pattern: on Friday the Liturgy of the Hours focuses on the Cross, and the Sunday **Eucharist** celebrates the Resurrection. Again, the idea is to move in time with the rhythm of the Paschal Mystery.

Every day, the rhythm of nightfall and daybreak, of falling asleep at the end of a day and awakening to a new day, is a natural reflection of the same rhythm. Night Prayer in the Church’s breviary picks up this symbolism. Some Christians even use the rhythm of their breathing – out and in, out and in – to catch the rhythm of the Paschal Mystery. And, of course, it is everyday life that provides the opportunities to live the Paschal Mystery, to move to its rhythm.

**Eucharist**

The usual meaning ascribed to the word 'eucharist' is 'thanksgiving'. The Eucharist in Christian liturgy is, in fact, a thanksgiving meal, commemorating the action of Jesus who "took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them." (Luke 22:19). But the word also has a connection with our word 'gospel'. In Greek, gospel is *euangelion*, or 'good news', while 'eucharist' means 'good favour' or 'good grace'. In this sense, Eucharist is the fulfilment of the promise implied in the Gospel of Jesus.

**Liturgical Year**

The calendar used almost all over the world was introduced by the Roman emperor, Julius Caesar in 46BC, and revised by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. This is a secular calendar which begins with the month of January, named after Janus, the Roman god of gates and doorways, who is depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions. More significant to religious communities are their specific liturgical calendars which mark the seasons and festivals according to their particular history. So, for instance, the Jewish year begins with Rosh Hashanah in September, while the beginning of the Muslim year which is based on the cycles of the moon, moves backward with respect to the secular calendar by 10-12 days annually. The Christian liturgical calendar begins with the season of Advent in December, and culminates with the celebration of Christ the King in November.

**Liturgy**

Liturgy is what the People of God do when they come together to worship God and celebrate the mystery of Christ, and their story of salvation. The term is derived from two Greek words, *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work). Because the liturgy of the Church is its official worship, it has common and universal elements. The process of inculturation allows people to experience these elements within the framework of their own culture.

**Paschal Mystery**

Pasch is another name for Passover. The Paschal Mystery refers in the first place to the experience of Jesus in his death and resurrection to new life – his Passover from the world of space and time to the 'new heaven and earth'. Christians are initiated into this mystery through their baptism.

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## LESSON 23: Prayer



<b>FOCUS</b>	Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours, Paraliturg)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 17, pp.76-77)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Prayer, Prayer of the Church, Paraliturg

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### NOTE

This lesson could be very closely linked with the lessons in the Prayer Education section.

### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒📖⇒]

#### ⇒ Reflection/Discussion

Distribute a copy of the Morning Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours given below. Invite learners to study the form and content. Allow time for their observations. You could also go to the website given at the end of the prayer for the current day's prayer.

OR

#### ⇒ Experience

You might prefer to give the class an actual experience of this form of prayer, though you will need to find a simplified version or adapt the given one.

#### 📖 Text

Read the chapter.

#### ⇒ Response

Invite groups to use the format of the liturgical prayer to create their own prayer service.

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### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Is it possible to be a good Christian and not pray?
- When you pray, what names do you use for God? What names would you not use today? Why?

## MORNING PRAYER: FRIDAY

### Introduction

O God, come to my aid.

*O Lord, make haste to help me.*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,

world without end.

Amen. Alleluia.

*A suitable hymn may be inserted here.*

### Psalm 50 (51): 'God, have mercy on me'

*Lord, you will accept lawful sacrifice on your altar.*

Take pity on me, Lord, in your mercy;  
in your abundance of mercy wipe out my guilt.

Wash me ever more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know how guilty I am:  
my sin is always before me.

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

Know this, so that you may give just sentence

and an unbiased judgement.

See, I was conceived in guilt,  
in sin my mother conceived me;

but you love truth in the heart,  
and deep within me you have shown me your wisdom.

You will sprinkle me with hyssop, and I will be made clean;

you will wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

You will make me hear the sound of joy and gladness;

the bones you have crushed will rejoice.

Turn your face away from my sins  
and wipe out all my transgressions;

create a pure heart in me, God,  
put a steadfast spirit into me.

Do not send me away from your presence,  
or withdraw your holy spirit from me;

give me again the joy of your salvation,  
and be ready to strengthen me with your spirit.

I will teach the unjust your ways,

and the impious will return to you.

Free me from the guilt of bloodshed, God,  
God my saviour,

and my voice will glory in your justice.

Open my lips, Lord,

and my mouth will proclaim your praise;

for you do not delight in sacrifices:

if I offered you a burnt offering, it would not please you.

The true sacrifice is a broken spirit:

a contrite and humble heart, O God, you will not refuse.

Be pleased, Lord, to look kindly on Zion,  
so that the walls of Jerusalem can be rebuilt,

Then indeed you will accept the proper sacrifices, gifts and burnt offerings;

then indeed will bullocks be laid upon your altar.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,

world without end.

Amen.

*Lord, you will accept lawful sacrifice on your altar.*

### Canticle - Isaiah 45: 'All peoples, turn to the Lord'

*In the Lord all descendants of Israel will receive justice and glory.*

In truth you are a hidden God,  
the God and Saviour of Israel.

They were dismayed and ashamed, all the makers of idols,

all of them fled in dismay.

Israel has been saved by the Lord, saved for ever;

you will not be dismayed or ashamed,  
to the end of time.

For thus says the Lord, the God

who made the heavens,

who made the earth, shaped it, set it firm –  
he did not make it to be empty,

but to be full of life –

"I am the Lord, there is no other.



I have not spoken secretly,  
in some dark corner of the earth.  
I have not said to the children of Jacob, 'seek  
me in vain.'

I am the Lord who speaks justice, who  
proclaims uprightness.

"Gather together, come, approach me  
all you who have been rescued from the  
Gentiles.

They were ignorant, who raised up wooden  
idols

and begged favours of a god without  
power.

Announce it – come, ponder it together –  
who was saying this from the beginning,  
who foretold this from the start?

Am I not the Lord?

Is there any other God but me?  
Do you seek a just God who will save you?

There is no other.

"Turn to me and you will be saved, all you  
ends of the earth;

for I am God, there is no other.

"I have sworn by my own being,

I have decreed a judgement that will not be  
revoked;

for every knee will bend to me,  
every tongue swear by my name."

"Only in the Lord," they will say,

"are there justice and strength!"

All who resisted him will come to him, and  
be dismayed;

but in the Lord all descendants of Israel  
will receive justice and glory.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to  
the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever  
shall be,

world without end.

Amen.

*In the Lord all descendants of Israel will  
receive justice and glory.*

### **Psalm 99 (100): 'Enter the Temple with joy'**

*Come in triumph before the face of the  
Lord.*

Rejoice in the Lord, all the earth,  
and serve him with joy.

Exult as you enter his presence.

Know that the Lord is God.

He made us and we are his

– his people, the sheep of his flock.

Cry out his praises as you enter his gates,  
fill his courtyards with songs.

Proclaim him and bless his name;

for the Lord is our delight.

His mercy lasts for ever,

his faithfulness through all the ages.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to  
the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever  
shall be,

world without end.

Amen.

*Come in triumph before the face of the  
Lord.*

### **Short reading: Jeremiah 30:21,22**

The Lord says this: Their prince will come  
from Jacob, their ruler come from their own  
people. I will let him come freely into my  
presence and he can come close to me. And  
you shall be my people and I will be your  
God.

### **Short Responsory**

Over you, Jerusalem, the Lord will dawn.

– *Over you, Jerusalem, the Lord will dawn.*

His glory will be seen in you.

– *Over you, Jerusalem, the Lord will dawn.*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to  
the Holy Spirit.

– *Over you, Jerusalem, the Lord will dawn.*

### **Canticle – Benedictus: 'The Messiah and his forerunner'**

*Behold, he will come, God and man, from  
the house of David, to sit on his throne.*

*Alleluia.*

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
for he has come to his people and brought  
about their redemption.

He has raised up the sign of salvation  
in the house of his servant David,

as he promised through the mouth of the  
holy ones,

his prophets through the ages:

to rescue us from our enemies  
and all who hate us,  
to take pity on our fathers,  
to remember his holy covenant  
and the oath he swore to Abraham our  
father,  
that he would give himself to us,  
that we could serve him without fear  
– freed from the hands of our enemies –  
in uprightness and holiness before him,  
for all of our days.  
And you, child, will be called the prophet of  
the Most High:  
for you will go before the face of the Lord  
to prepare his path,  
to let his people know their salvation,  
so that their sins may be forgiven.  
Through the bottomless mercy of our God,  
one born on high will visit us  
to give light to those who walk in darkness,  
who live in the shadow of death;  
to lead our feet in the path of peace.  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and  
to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever  
shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*Behold, he will come, God and man, from  
the house of David, to sit on his throne.  
Alleluia.*

### **Prayers and Intercessions**

God the Father decreed that his Son should  
show his glory to man. Let us joyfully cry:  
– *Glory to your name, O Lord.*  
Let us learn, Lord, to support each other,  
just as Christ, by supporting us, gave  
honour to God.  
– *Glory to your name, O Lord.*

Let our belief in you fill us with joy and peace  
so that we may walk in the hope and the  
strength of the Holy Spirit.

– *Glory to your name, O Lord.*

Give help to all, Lord of infinite mercy:  
when people seek you without knowing it,  
let them find you.

– *Glory to your name, O Lord.*

You call your chosen people and set them  
apart:

raise us sinners up, to be crowned with  
eternal happiness.

– *Glory to your name, O Lord.*

Our Father, who art in Heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

Show forth your power, O Lord, and come.

If you protect us, we will deserve to be

rescued from the danger of our sins;

if you free us, we shall be saved.

You live and reign with God the Father in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit,

God for ever and ever. Amen.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all  
harm; and may he lead us to eternal life.

AMEN

<http://www.universalis.com/lauds.htm>

## Lesson Materials



### Prayer

Within the liturgy, we find certain sacramental actions which are special public moments in the Christian's relationship with God. Someone has described them as 'God's kisses'. But no relationship consists only of kisses: the special moments grow out of the ordinary communication and give meaning to it. In relationship with God, the ordinary communication is **prayer**. We shall discuss the meaning and practice of prayer here before going on to consider the significance of the sacraments.

#### *✠ The Prayer of the Church is an extension of the liturgy*

There is one form of prayer that is called the official **Prayer of the Church**. It used to be called the Divine Office, and the book in which it was found, the Breviary. But the name that best describes it is the Liturgy of the Hours. It is regarded as part of the liturgy because it provides the worldwide Church with a way of sharing throughout the day in the prayer of Christ in the Eucharist. It consists basically of Scripture passages for praying or reflecting, notably the Psalms, which are prayers that Jesus surely used and made his own. It is prayed in solidarity with Christ by communities and individuals throughout the Church at various times of the day, especially morning and evening. This Prayer of the Church is part of the everyday life of priests and members of religious communities. But it doesn't belong to them alone. More and more, lay people are participating in it, as individuals and in parish groups.

#### *✠ Informal prayer enriches life and liturgy*

Apart from the formal Prayer of the Church, there are countless informal ways of praying. Some ways suit some people better than others, just as, in human communication, some people prefer to talk face-to-face than to phone, and some people enjoy writing letters while others never do it. But whatever ways of praying one finds helpful, it is always the Spirit who moves the person to pray. And it is always in the direction of God's Plan that the Spirit moves one in prayer. So informal prayer is important because it opens one to grace right in the middle of the everyday experience of life, at whatever moment is chosen. One can pray at the beginning or ending of a day; approaching an occasion or coming away from it; when feeling joyful or when in need of healing; when quiet and reflective or when busy and pressured. In prayer, the Plan of God touches one's life just where one is, and one is drawn towards the will of God. As one grows in prayer, one become more and more concerned about the will of God, whatever it costs. In short, prayer enriches one's everyday life with grace as it strengthens and deepens one's relationship with God.

The individual prayer of Christians also enriches the community's liturgy because it strengthens their union with Christ. And this is what is celebrated in liturgy. And it is in prayer that the liturgy takes root in the depths of one's being. This is especially the case when personal prayer takes the form of praying with the scriptures.

What, then, is the difference – and the connection – between liturgy and informal prayer? Liturgy is what has evolved out of the worship of the whole Body of Christ, whereas informal prayer or worship is more spontaneous and individual. Liturgy has a basic shape, which acts as a guide for informal prayer. But liturgy also has plenty of room for

spontaneity, and that's how individual prayer enriches liturgy and continues its evolution. So informal prayer both flows from and leads to liturgical prayer.

Group prayer is particularly close to liturgy, so it is often called *paraliturgy*. Some well-known examples of paraliturgical prayer in the Catholic tradition are Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Vigils, Bible Services, the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, Processions, and Prayer-Group Meetings. Paraliturgy can also take completely original forms as the Spirit works through the uniqueness of the individual or group and in unique situations. Paraliturgies can be anything from a simple couple of minutes to a closely-planned few hours.

Personal prayer is to spiritual life what breathing is to physical life. Think about it. Unless we breathe, we can't keep walking or running or speaking or singing or working or playing. Unless we pray, we can't keep believing and hoping and loving. The breath that we breathe physically is air. The breath that we breathe in prayer is the Spirit. You may remember that we described the Spirit as 'God's breath in us'. How do we learn to pray? This too is like breathing. We learn to breathe by breathing, and we learn to pray by praying.

*The most perfect prayer breathes in a heart that remains silent before God and knows how to listen to God.*

(Augustine Ichiro Okumura. 1994. *Awakening to Prayer*. Washington: ICS Publications, p 37)

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### **Paraliturgy**

While liturgy is an official, common and universal activity – “what the people of God do when they come together to worship God and celebrate the mystery of Christ and their story of salvation.” – paraliturgy, on the other hand, exists alongside liturgy as an unofficial mode of worship that is easily adapted to particular concerns and situations.

### **Prayer**

On the surface, we understand what prayer is – communicating with God. But what, in fact, is a person doing when he or she prays? A parallel can be drawn between the act of breathing and the act of praying. Just as breathing - especially in sleep - is an unconscious activity, so is the continual praying of the Spirit in us. Becoming aware of our breathing, and exercising it from time to time, is beneficial: just so the conscious practice of setting aside times for prayer. St Augustine says: The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realise it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours.

### **Prayer of the Church**

The Prayer of the Church is divided into 'hours', that is, formal prayer that takes place at particular times of the day. It is a way of sanctifying time, or threading the act of prayer through the different hours of the day. It is linked with the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year as well as with the natural rhythms of the day, especially the alternation of light and darkness. There is Morning Prayer (at sunrise or in the early morning), Daytime Prayer (either at midmorning, midday or mid-afternoon, depending on circumstances), Evening Prayer (at sunset), and Night Prayer (at bedtime). There is also what is called Office of Readings, a meditative hour of reflection on Scripture and the writings of the great spiritual authors, at a time chosen by the community or individual.

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