

CALLED & SENT

LIVING OUR BAPTISM TODAY



NOVENA PRAYER

Mother of Perpetual Help,
with the greatest confidence
we come before your holy picture
to be inspired by the example of your life.
We think of you at that moment when,
full of faith and trust,
you accepted God's call
to be the mother of his Son.
Help us, your children,
to accept with joy our own calling in life.
When you learned that your cousin
Elizabeth was in need
you immediately went to serve her
and offer your help.
Help us, like you,
to be concerned for others.
We think of you, Mother,
at the foot of the cross.
Your heart must have bled
to see your Son in agony.
But your joy was great
when he rose from the dead,
victorious over the powers of evil.
Mother of Sorrows,
help us through the trials and
disappointments of life.
Help us not to lose heart.
May we share with you and your Son
the joy of having courageously faced up
to all the challenges of life.
Amen.

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

O Mother of Perpetual Help,
with grateful hearts we join you
in thanking God
for all the wonderful things
he has done for us,
especially for giving us
Jesus, your Son, as our Redeemer.
O God, our Creator,
we thank you for the gift of life
and all the gifts of nature:
our senses and faculties,
our talents and abilities.
We thank you for creating us
in your image and likeness
and for giving us this earth
to use and develop,
to respect and cherish.
Despite our failures,
you continue to show your love for us today
by increasing the life of your Spirit in us
at the Eucharistic table.
Finally, we thank you, loving Father,
for giving us Mary,
the Mother of your Son,
to be our Mother of Perpetual Help.
We are grateful for all the favours
we have received through her intercession.
We pray that those past favours
may inspire us
to greater confidence in your loving mercy
and to seek the aid
of our Mother of Perpetual Help.
Amen.

Introduction

In October of this year, an event is taking place that promises to have a major impact on the future of the Irish church. It's a National Synodal Assembly of the Irish church, and its purpose is to consider the major challenges and opportunities facing the church in Ireland today.

Organisers have decided to focus on seven priorities identified through the ongoing synodal pathway of the Irish church. They have decided to examine these priorities through the lens of baptism, since baptism "remains the foundational paradigm for understanding, energising, and sustaining the life and mission of the Church."

It's through baptism that we become members of the church; it is because of our baptism that we are called and sent to live and preach the Good News. Baptism is key. The seven priorities are: Belonging; Co-responsibility and Lay Ministry; Family; Formation and Catechesis; Healing; Women; Youth.

The organisers point out that these priorities, rooted in baptismal dignity and mission, are not ends in themselves but beginnings. They point towards a renewed church in Ireland; one that is healing and welcoming, participatory and missionary, faithful to Jesus Christ and open to the Spirit's leading.

Our novena, entitled 'Called and Sent,' focuses on these seven priorities. Over the nine days, we will look at each of them in the context of our baptism. It is an opportunity for us to think about the church in Ireland as it is today and to dream of what it would look like if these priorities were fulfilled. To envisage and then to act. It's an opportunity for us to take greater ownership of our church.

We know that serious challenges face the church in Ireland. But we know, too, that the Holy Spirit is with us to help and guide us towards a new springtime for our church. We all have a part to play.

May Mary, our Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for us and help us on our way.

What baptism means



The word

In the course of his preaching, John the Baptist proclaimed, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and untie the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

It was at that time that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you with you." Mk 1:7-11

The context

It's probably safe to say that almost all of us making this novena do not remember the day of our baptism. Because we were infants at the time, we have absolutely no recollection of the event. Even though we were at the centre of the drama that day, the entire celebration went over our heads.

We didn't choose to be baptised. We weren't consulted about it. Our parents made that decision for us.

And that's a major disadvantage of infant baptism. Precisely because it's something that happened so long ago, our baptism can be something we don't think about very much or very often.

Until recently, almost every newborn child in Catholic Ireland was baptised. Parents just took it for granted. Within days or weeks of the birth, the family and godparents of the newborn gathered in their local church to formally initiate the child into the Christian community. The child's name was added to the long list of names in the parish baptismal register as the newest member of the church.

Today, some parents choose not to have their child baptised. It's a very deliberate decision. For one reason or another, they want no formal association with the church. Instead, many organise a 'naming' ceremony for their child; an opportunity to introduce their newborn to family and friends and to formally announce the choice of name. The name is not inscribed in the parish baptismal register, thus breaking the link with the generations that have gone before.

Baptism, properly understood, isn't a religious version of a naming ceremony or an excuse to party. Nor is it just about maintaining a tradition, a kind of rite of passage, without much thought for its deeper meaning. Baptism is a serious commitment, a public statement with profound implications. Through baptism, we become part of the Body of Christ, the church, called and sent to preach the Gospel. Baptism is nothing less than a way of life.



"Baptism is the door of faith,
the moment we are born
into a new life with Christ."

That is why those preparing for the assembly of the Irish church have placed such emphasis on the importance of baptism. "Every initiative, ministry, and encounter of welcome, formation, and service in the church," they say, "is rooted in the grace and calling received at baptism." Everything starts with our baptism.

The challenge

We all know the date on which we were born. We celebrate it every year. It is recorded in our passport, driver's license, PPS/social security card and other official documents. But do you know the date of your baptism? Do you know it without looking it up?

Pope Francis often said that the date of our baptism should be celebrated like a birthday. Baptism, he said, is a new birthday, because it is the day we become members of the church and receive the greatest gift of all: the gift of faith.

Baptism is the foundation of our life as Christians. Through baptism, we are welcomed into the Christian community as members of the church. We symbolically die to sin and rise to a new life in Christ. It marks the beginning of our journey of faith and discipleship.

Baptism is the sacrament of belonging because it makes us part of the church, the Body of Christ. We are no longer individuals

but members of the community of faith, called to play a full and active part in the church's life and mission. Belonging brings caring, mercy, compassion and love. It is at the heart of who we are.

The significance of the sacrament is powerfully symbolised during the baptism ceremony when the priest or deacon anoints our head with oil, saying, "As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life." All the baptised share in the priesthood, prophetic mission, and kingship of Jesus.

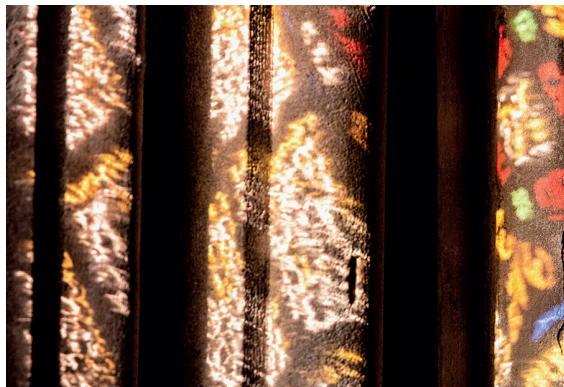
We share in the priesthood of Jesus through our life of prayer, worship and participation in the life of the church. We share in the prophetic mission of Jesus by witnessing to the Gospel with courage and conviction in all we do and say. We share in the kingship of Jesus through our concern for the poor, the sick, and those in need.

Living as priest, prophet, and king affects every aspect of our lives as Christians. Through baptism, we are called and sent with courage and energy to build God's kingdom and make a difference in our world.

The connection

Baptism is the door of faith, the moment we are born into a new life with Christ. It is the foundation of the Christian life, of all that we are and do.

Open hearts, open doors: Being a welcoming church



The word

An expert in the law tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Mt 35-40

The context

It's extraordinary how much our country has changed in recent times. The social fabric has been transformed. Globalisation has impacted towns and villages. We are no longer insular and isolated. Our population has become more diverse as people from around the world have settled here.

These have brought significant social and economic benefits. Think of all the foreign-born workers in the health and service economy and the jobs and tax revenues generated by the tech and pharmaceutical industries.

The church has also benefited greatly from this change. Families and individuals from

India, the Philippines, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas have brought new life, energy, and gifts to the Irish church at a time when these are badly needed.

Of course, not everyone is happy. Across the Western world, increased immigration has fuelled a rise in racism, xenophobia, and extreme nationalism. We see what racism is doing in the United States today (masked ICE agents terrorising people because of where they come from). We see what has been happening in the Middle East.

We see it here, too. Anti-immigrant demonstrations. Attacks on buildings housing refugees. Riots in Ballymena and Larne. Social media platforms spewing hateful messages, prompted by far-right populists. Many immigrants are left feeling unwelcome and uncomfortable.

Our church can seem unwelcoming, too. Due either to personal circumstances (divorce and remarriage, sexual orientation or identity, etc.) or because of where they come from, some Catholics feel they receive not so much the warm hand of acceptance and inclusion as the cold shoulder of exclusion and rejection.



"Belonging: fostering a church of welcome, inclusion, and safety where each person finds a home in community and in Christ."

The challenge

At World Youth Day in Portugal in 2023, Pope Francis spoke to half a million pilgrims from throughout the world. Scrapping his prepared speech, he spoke from the heart. "Friends, I want to be clear with you," he said. "In the church, there is room for everyone. Everyone. In the church, no one is left out or left over. There is room for everyone, just the way we are."

"Everyone, everyone, everyone," he repeated. Then he asked the young people to repeat it in their own languages. With rising enthusiasm, they cried: "Everyone, everyone, everyone."

That message summed up Francis's papacy. Open church, open hearts. Days after his election, Pope Leo said the same: "We must be a church with open arms for everyone, open to all who need our presence, dialogue, love."

Pope Francis often described the church as a big tent and not a small chapel that holds only a few, and repeatedly stressed the importance of welcome and inclusion. Inclusion reflects God's mercy, he said, and God's mercy embraces everyone. Christians must mirror God's mercy by

opening our hearts to others without judging or excluding anyone based on status, race, ability, or background. Inclusion, he emphasised, must go beyond rhetoric and be reflected in daily life. It should create a "culture of social tenderness."

To be Christian is to welcome and include. It is the opposite of them and us. For Christians, there is no them and us - only us, everyone together, as Pope Francis told those enthusiastic young people.

The connection

The book of Genesis tells us something extraordinary - that God created everyone in God's own image and likeness. No matter who we are, where we come from or what we look like, God makes no distinctions between us. We are all the same in God's eyes. Baptism celebrates this sameness. It unites us with Christ and with each other, making us one family of sisters and brothers. It is the sacrament of belonging.

The synod priority

Belonging: fostering a church of welcome, inclusion, and safety where each person finds a home in community and in Christ.

Called to serve: Being a co-responsible church



The word

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, though some hesitated. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, yes, until the end of time." Mt 28:16-20

The context

In the 1960s, the world's bishops gathered in Rome during the Second Vatican Council to consider the great issues affecting the church. The Council introduced a deeper understanding of baptism and of the church's mission in the world. Baptism makes us the People of God, it declared, all sharing in the priesthood, prophetic mission and kingship of Christ. Although it is a hierarchical church, all Catholics share a fundamental equality rooted in baptism, and all participate in the church's mission. No longer is it just the priest's duty to preach and celebrate the liturgy. As the People of God, it is everyone's duty. We do this through active

participation in our parish community and by the example of our lives.

Vatican II emphasised that, through baptism, we all have ownership of the church. Every one of us is co-responsible for the church, called to do our bit to build up its life and mission.

We know that fulfilling our baptismal duty isn't easy today. Society has become increasingly secular. Many have given up on religion. To say you're a Christian is often to invite scorn. We can be tempted to keep our heads down.

Life is also busier now. We have so much to do, so many commitments, we can struggle to find time even to go to Mass. There is also the danger that we compartmentalise our lives, separating the 'God' bit from our day-to-day activity, as if the secular and sacred have nothing to do with each other.

Clericalism is another obstacle. We can put bishops and priests on pedestals, thinking they alone have access to the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis spoke frequently about the danger of clericalism. He described it as a mindset that places bishops and priests above lay people, fostering attitudes of superiority, privilege and entitlement rather



"By virtue of baptism, every Catholic shares in Christ's mission. All are full participants in the church's mission because baptism calls every believer to preach the good news."

than service. Clericalism undermines the shared mission of all the baptised, he said, because it undervalues the role of lay people, dampening lay initiative and evangelisation. A priest or bishop who falls into this attitude does immense harm to the church, he warned. Ordinary Catholics can fall into this attitude, too.

Pope Francis repeatedly urged Catholics in dioceses and parishes throughout the world to put co-responsibility into practice. Pope Leo has taken up that call. He wants the whole People of God, in the spirit of Vatican II, to take genuine ownership of the life and mission of the church.

The challenge

As the People of God, we have a common calling: to preach the Gospel, to be evangelisers. This is more urgent now than ever. There are fewer priests and fewer religious vocations. Ageing priests feel obliged to keep going for as long as they can. The church urgently needs the active involvement of all its members.

Pope Francis stressed that for the church to carry out its mission effectively, clergy and lay people must cultivate an ethos of co-responsibility through practices of

shared discernment and decision-making. Irrespective of whether or not there is a shortage of priests, all the baptised have a duty to work together for the good of the church.

All of us - lay, clergy, and religious - must bring our own gifts, charisms, and experiences to the life of the church. Lay ministry includes formal roles, like lector, catechist, and eucharistic minister, but also many other roles inspired by the Holy Spirit: charity work, support to families, care for the marginalised, and witness in secular environments. In all these ways, we accept co-responsibility for the mission of the church.

The connection

By virtue of baptism, every Catholic shares in Christ's mission. All are full participants in the church's mission because baptism calls every believer to preach the good news.

The synod priority

Co-responsibility and Lay Ministry: empowering all the baptised, women and men, to share responsibility for leadership and mission through new models of ministry and decision-making.



Family of families: The domestic church

The word

[Jesus said to his disciples], “Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Mt 18:19-20

The context

Family is a beautiful thing. It’s also a complex thing. Family is our greatest joy, but it can also be our greatest sorrow. It is where we feel safe, but also where we can feel most vulnerable. It is where we experience unconditional love shared through every heartbreak and accomplishment, and where we can experience the deepest pain of betrayal and disunity. Family is where the faith is nurtured and handed on through the generations, and where the faith can be easily weakened and lost. Family is the most important and most precious commodity in the world.

Vital though it remains, we know that family life in 2026 is more complicated now than in the past. Not only are there many different types of families today - blended families, lone parent families, couples living out of

wedlock, same-sex families, single people living alone - but society is also more secular and complex.

An Irish priest once famously said, “The family that prays together stays together.” But the myriad pressures and challenges that parents and families face today make it harder for them to find time for God or even to practice the faith. Often, it is anxious grandparents who take it upon themselves to pass on the faith to their grandchildren. Without regular prayer in the home or regular contact with the local church, faith and family quickly grow apart. Without the opportunity to spend good quality time together, families struggle and can find it hard to grow in love.

Christian families need the support and encouragement of the entire parish community to help them flourish and grow in the faith.

The challenge

What does it mean to say the Christian family is the domestic church?

It means, first of all, that the family is the teacher of the faith, the first and



"Christian families need the support and encouragement of the entire parish community to help them flourish and grow in the faith."

most important teacher of the faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: "The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason, the family home is rightly called 'the domestic church,' a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity."

Even in the early days of the Christian church, the family home was viewed as the place where children learned to be good followers of Christ. We teach the faith through a life of prayer that includes all family members; praying every day - if only for a few minutes - before going to bed, before starting on a journey, before each meal. We teach it by having religious objects in the home and by knowing what they represent: a Bible, a holy water font, rosary beads, religious icons, and pictures. We teach it by going to church together and celebrating our faith with the larger Christian community.

Second, it means doing our best to live the Gospel. The family is the teacher of the faith, but to make this a reality in our day-to-day interactions with our children, we need more than words and prayers. We need practical example, concrete love in action. It's easy

to say, "I love you." Harder to show I love you. It's easy to buy chocolate and flowers. Harder to empty oneself for another in love and service. Parents hand on the faith not only by what they say but, even more, by how they treat others inside and outside the home, and by how they treat each other. The domestic church grows in holiness through the daily choices we make and the concrete example we give.

The connection

When we are baptised, we are no longer simply part of our own blood family, sharing a common DNA, but of the wider Christian family, united by water and the Holy Spirit. That is why Pope Francis described the church as the family of families. Every family is a microcosm of the church, a mini church. It is in the context of our family that we come to know God and grow in the faith.

The synod priority

Family: supporting the domestic church as the primary place of faith transmission and belonging, and strengthening its connection with parishes and schools.

Gotta have faith: Knowing more about our religion



The word

It happened that as he drew near to Jericho there was a blind man sitting at the side of the road begging. When he heard the crowd going past he asked what it was all about, and they told him that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by. So he called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me."

The people in front scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, "Son of David, have pity on me."

Jesus stopped and ordered them to bring the man to him, and when he came up, asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Sir," he replied, "let me see again."

Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you." And instantly his sight returned and he followed him praising God, and all the people who saw it gave praise to God. Lk 18: 35-43

The context

People of a certain age will remember the Penny Catechism. That little book contained questions and answers about the deposit of faith that the Catholic Church holds and teaches. Young Catholics and new converts could turn to the catechism to find a summary of church teaching. Those preparing for first holy communion and confirmation learned the catechism's questions and answers by heart. Children

could list the different types of grace and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, even if they didn't always fully understand their meaning.

The advantage of the old catechism was that it provided a simple yet comprehensive introduction to the faith. You knew the doctrine of the faith, even if some of its language and concepts were difficult to grasp.

It's different today. The old catechism has been replaced. The rote learning of the past has been abandoned. It's possible to leave school - even schools with a strong Catholic ethos - with little real knowledge of the faith. Many younger Catholics have a poor understanding even of the basic rituals of their religion.

Pope Francis spoke often of his sadness that so many children don't know how to make the sign of the cross. He urged parents and catechists to teach children how to bless themselves and to explain its meaning.

At the end of his visit to Ireland in 1979, Pope John Paul II praised the resilient faith of the Irish people. "Ireland, semper fidelis," he said. Ireland, always faithful. The enormous crowds that greeted him during those three days, and the boundless enthusiasm that surrounded his visit, suggested he was correct.

How times have changed. In 1979, most Irish Catholics, raised on the Penny Catechism, had a decent grasp of the faith. They knew



"To live our baptism, we need to know what we believe. We need to know our faith so we can live our faith."

the main elements of church teaching. They had a clear sense of what it was about. That's no longer true. Two generations after the pope's visit, even many who consider themselves good Catholics struggle to explain the creed or answer basic questions about what it is they believe.

That is why there's an urgent need for a good religious education, and why it is one of the priorities identified by those preparing for the Irish synod. As priest numbers decline, lay people will require a better knowledge of their faith if they are to take on greater responsibility for the life of their parish community.

The challenge

Lay Catholics, Pope Francis said, need a solid religious education so they can participate in the church's mission. All baptised Christians, he emphasised, share in the work of evangelisation. That means we need a good knowledge of the faith if we are to hand it on. We need a good knowledge of the faith if we are to witness to it in an increasingly secular society. We need to know and understand what it is we believe if we are to defend it from those who would attack it.

That is why religious education - what we believe, how we pray and worship, how we conduct our lives - isn't just a requirement for church professionals, like bishops and priests. It is necessary for all of us because

we are all called to preach the Gospel. It stems from our understanding of the church as the People of God, where laypeople and pastors walk together.

We grow in knowledge of the faith through catechesis, scripture and spiritual reading, as well as through participation in the liturgy and sacramental life of the church. We must be careful not to treat religious education like a classroom lesson or a purely academic exercise, Pope Francis said. Rather, it should lead to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ that transforms our lives and leads us from church to world to proclaim the Good News.

The connection

Baptism makes us part of the community of believers. To live our baptism, we need to know what we believe. We need to know our faith so we can live our faith.

The synod priority

Formation and Catechesis: deepening faith through lifelong formation that is Christ-centred, experiential, and equips the baptised for discipleship in today's world; rooted not only in learning but also in liturgy and sacramental life, so that prayer and worship become living sources of faith, understanding, and mission.

Healing hands: Creating an environment where all feel safe



The word

[Jesus said], “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Mt 11:28-30

The context

The fallout from the Jeffrey Epstein scandal continues to escalate. The horrific details of the abuse and exploitation of hundreds of girls and young women by Epstein and his friends have sent shock waves throughout the world of politics, entertainment, business, and royalty. That the abuse went on for so long and involved so many powerful and wealthy people is deeply disturbing.

Sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and its cover-up is another scandal we are all familiar with. The revelations of widespread abuse left people feeling angry and betrayed. Even though church leaders have apologised profusely for the hurt caused and have put strong safeguarding protocols in place, trust in the church has been badly shaken. In the eyes of many, it will never recover.

Sexual abuse is now recognised as a major global problem. The UN reports that one in three women and girls has experienced physical and/or sexual violence, mostly by

intimate partners. Six per cent of women globally report non-partner sexual violence, and 15 million girls aged 15–19 have reported rape. UNICEF estimates that 1 in 8 children globally (12.7%) are sexually abused before their eighteenth birthday. Men and boys experience abuse too, though it's hard to know the numbers because many are too ashamed to report it.

Abuse takes many forms - physical, emotional, psychological, bullying, trolling, stalking, neglect, exposure to danger. The child who is malnourished or dirty, who witnesses parental conflict, who is allowed stay up all hours or has unfettered access to the internet, who is left home alone or in questionable company, may be a victim of abuse just as much as the one who shows obvious signs of harm.

The dependent person who is left unattended, the care home resident who receives few if any visits, the elderly parent or grandparent who is shouted at or beaten or left without money - these also suffer abuse. And it happens to a frightening number of vulnerable people.

In *The Joy of Love*, Pope Francis highlights the problem of domestic violence. “The verbal, physical, and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal

The synod priority

"Healing: acknowledging wounds, especially those caused by abuse; committing to accountability, justice, and reconciliation; and ensuring safe spaces for survivors and all who carry pain."

union," he writes. That's why the church encourages separation in situations that are violent or unsafe.

In the film *Spotlight*, about a newspaper investigation into clerical sexual abuse in Boston in 2002, a victims' advocate tells the team of reporters: "If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to abuse one." In other words, each of us has a duty of care to the young, old and vulnerable. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Each of us must keep a watchful eye for any signs of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of any other person.

Pope Francis regularly used the image of a field hospital to describe the church. The church, he said, must be like a field hospital that heals and cleans wounds. It must be a place where all feel loved, protected, safe and secure.

The challenge

Today, we are more aware of the reality of abuse than in the past. We know it's far more common than was previously thought. And we know the damage it does. Every organisation dealing with children or vulnerable people now has safeguarding procedures in place, and the law requires it to follow them.

It has been a steep learning curve for all of us. We are far more conscious now

of the dangers children face online or unsupervised. Social media companies are being required to make their platforms safer. We're aware of how at-risk the old, sick and vulnerable can be even in their own homes, and of the horrors that can happen behind closed doors. Now more than ever, we are conscious of the need for vigilance.

Pope Francis repeatedly acknowledged the pain caused by abuse – especially sexual abuse by clergy – and asked forgiveness for it. He recognised that healing requires more than apologies and encouraged the church to undertake acts of reparation, penance, and spiritual healing. Pope Leo has acknowledged that the abuse scandal remains a 'crisis' for the church, and that survivors need more than financial reparations to heal.

The church must listen to survivors, learn from them, and accompany them on a path of healing, supporting their recovery. Abuse should be seen not only as a past wrong but as a call to transform the church so that it protects the vulnerable.

Pope Francis often spoke about the need for respect. Christians must always respect the dignity of others, never using our power to control, intimidate, hurt or dominate. Every person - young, old, female, male, family member or stranger - is a temple of God's Holy Spirit. When we see other people's bodies as temples of God's Holy Spirit, then we will treat them with love, care and reverence. We will never turn a blind eye when abuse or neglect may be taking place. We will always offer a helping, healing hand.

The connection

Baptism makes us one family, called to treat every person with love, dignity, tenderness, and care.

Shared responsibility: Creating a church where women feel at home



The word

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed, indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her." Lk 10:38-42

The context

There's no doubt that women's position in society and the church has improved substantially over the decades. Women exercise more real power and influence now than ever before. Still, we live in a world built mainly by and for men.

Look at your smartphone. It's designed for men's larger hands. Cars are built to accommodate men's larger frames, which is why women are 47% more likely than men to be seriously injured in a car accident. Most trials of drugs are conducted on men, so a doctor often ends up prescribing a

medication that's wrong for the female body, which has a different metabolism from men's. Most public buildings lack sufficient bathrooms for women. Unfortunately, we are still living in a world designed for men.

And in some ways, things are getting worse. The last decade has seen a rising misogyny among boys and young men, promoted online and by far-right politicians. Misogyny is about containment and control, putting women back in their place, keeping them there, the insistence that male supremacy is the natural order of things. It's about enforcing strict gender roles. Online propagandists like Andrew Tate preach a message of toxic masculinity, encouraging boys to see women as subordinate to men and to treat them as such.

The result is that women end up spending money and energy keeping themselves safe from men, while being paid significantly less than men. This is the world women live in today.

When it comes to our church, some facts are obvious also. Women not only make up a significant majority of regular church-goers, but they also play the primary role in handing on the faith and in carrying out much of the church's unglamorous work. Think of parish administration and upkeep of churches.

The synod priority

"Women: recognising and including women's gifts, leadership, and co-responsibility at every level of church life, as a matter of justice and credibility."

And while they serve in a variety of church ministries, such as catechists, liturgists, musicians, singers, servers, readers, eucharistic ministers, and theologians, many women still feel invisible and unheard.

Progress is being made. Women are being appointed to top positions in the Vatican administration, and are taking on bigger roles in dioceses and parishes. But, still, the church remains a clerical, top-down institution, and it's difficult for women - and laymen - to exercise any real leadership. While power is bound up with ordination, that will remain the case. Much remains to be done before women's gifts and leadership are recognised and utilised at every level of church life.

Whether in church or in society, it's still, in the words of singer James Brown, very much a man's world.

The challenge

Jesus lived in a culture where women had no rights. A woman was almost always under the authority of a man: her father, her husband, or a male relative of her husband if she was a widow. This left women in a very vulnerable position. Men could legally divorce a woman for almost any reason. But a woman couldn't divorce her husband. In the Temple, and in the synagogues, women were separated from the men and

not permitted to read aloud. It was, in every sense, a deeply patriarchal society.

Jesus' attitude to women was different. Look at how he treated them. How he forgave the woman caught in adultery; how he accepted the Samaritan woman at the well, how he welcomed the woman with a bad reputation who washed his feet with her tears. Jesus recognised women's dignity, desires, and gifts, and always treated them with respect, often facing criticism for doing so. Jesus didn't send women off to the kitchen or expect them to stay apart from the men. He called them first and foremost to be disciples.

Pope Francis repeatedly insisted that women and men share equal dignity and complementarity, rooted in baptism and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that it is unjust and harmful to waste the potential of half of humanity. He said that women's gifts, leadership, and co-responsibility in the church must be recognised and acknowledged—not only as a matter of justice but also as essential for the life and mission of the church and the world. He urged all of society to respect, defend, and esteem every woman, calling any harm against women a profanity against God.

Jesus opposed the misogynistic culture of his day. He refused to see women as inferior or second-class. The way Jesus treated women offers a model for how church and society must treat women today.

The connection

Baptism is more than a symbolic ritual: it changes our identity. It gives all of us a fundamental equality and common dignity as Christ's brothers and sisters. Every baptised woman and man shares in the priesthood, prophetic mission, and kingship of Christ.

Youth matters: A church where the young feel at home



The word

[Jesus said to his disciples], “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
Jn 13:34-35

The context

In many ways, life is harder on young people today than when their parents were growing up. There was no internet 35 years ago. Young people didn’t have to worry about online bullying or how they looked on Instagram or TikTok. Young women weren’t inundated daily with hundreds of images of stick-thin Barbie lookalikes, all conforming to unrealistic beauty standards that today’s girls are told they must aspire to. Andrew Tate wasn’t around to preach his message of toxic masculinity, encouraging boys to treat girls as objects.

The pressure young people feel today to be successful, with a rewarding career, a big income, a perfect family, and a nice house, is huge. Social media, with its obsession with looks, money, and celebrity, makes self-love even more challenging.

It’s hard on young women. In *Good Girls*, her book about her battle with anorexia, Hadley Freeman writes: “We see the impossible

standards set for women: be smart but not ambitious; look perfect but don’t be vain; don’t age but don’t get plastic surgery; be slim but don’t be obsessed with diets; be smart but not smarter than the men around you; be pleasing and have no needs of your own. This is the nonsense women have to put up with.” The result is that many women end up with a destructive relationship with their bodies that lasts a lifetime.

It’s hard on young men, too. They’re told that to succeed, they must be brash, buff, tough, never soft or sentimental, that women exist for their pleasure. The blogs and websites that make up what’s called the manosphere tell them that masculinity is all about being active: doing, achieving, overpowering, being dominant. It gives them a distorted view of women and of themselves.

There are other pressures, too. Young people worry about getting on the property ladder and whether Artificial Intelligence will destroy the job market. They worry about growing political instability and climate change. They worry about the future.

And this pressure costs. It affects people’s self-esteem. They compare themselves with others and think they don’t measure up, that they’re lacking, even that they’re failures. Unhappy with who they are, what

"It doesn't matter how young or old we are, through baptism, we are all part of the People of God, responsible to and for each other and for the church."

they have, their future prospects, or how others see them, they become discouraged, disappointed, and despairing. They can lose hope.

Many also have a fragile connection with the church. They don't look to it for comfort or support, but see it as failing to recognise or respond to their worries and concerns.

The challenge

In 2019, Pope Francis wrote an apostolic letter, *Christus vivit*, addressed especially to young people. It's an appeal to listen to young people because, as he puts it, young people are not just the future of the church; they are also the present of the church. Without young people, Pope Francis writes, the church risks losing its vitality and becoming 'museum-like.' Without young people, the church is not complete.

Young people are idealistic, the Holy Father writes. They care about injustice and are sensitive to suffering. Their commitment can shake the church out of its complacency and make it more responsive to people's needs. Young people's creativity, enthusiasm, and voices can help the church take new paths while remaining rooted in the faith.

But if they are to feel at home and valued in the church, then the church must admit its

failures and listen humbly to young people, Pope Francis admits. The church must never preach at them; instead, it must be brave enough to trust them. This means involving young people in dialogue, planning, and decision-making so they feel genuinely part of the church's life and mission.

Young people need assurance that Jesus is present with them in their struggles, doubts, joys, and hopes, and that the church has their back.

Supporting young people means doing all we can, as a church and a society, to help them develop to their full potential. It means building a society where they feel they can have a future, with good education opportunities, good career prospects, and a home of their own. It means being alert to the destructive influence of social media and helping the young to navigate the online world safely and wisely. It means encouraging them to delight in their individuality and uniqueness, to take good care of themselves and their bodies, and to respect other people and their bodies, too.

As Pope Francis put it, all of us must try to listen and draw close to our young people, for they are the joy and hope of the church and the world.

The connection

It doesn't matter how young or old we are, through baptism, we are all part of the People of God, responsible to and for each other and for the church.

The synod priority

Youth: engaging young people with authenticity, offering them meaningful roles in leadership and mission, and listening to their hopes and challenges.

Profile in courage: Following the example of Mary, our Mother in faith



The word

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, and now onwards all generations will call be blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me.

Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him. He has used the power of his arm, he has routed the arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things, send the rich away empty. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love – according to the promise he made to our ancestors – of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever." Luke 1:45-56

The context

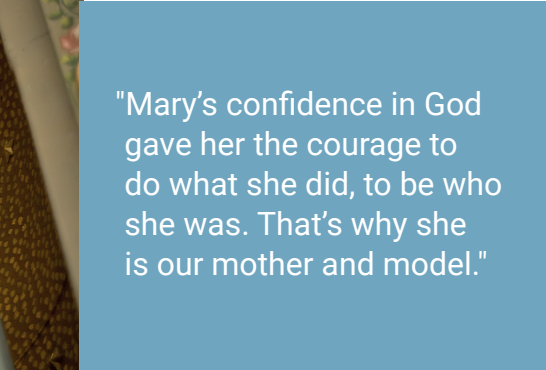
By mid-1966, Robert McNamara was becoming increasingly anxious about the war in Vietnam. As U.S. Secretary of Defence, McNamara was intimately involved in shaping the war. He knew what was happening on the ground in Vietnam; he knew that America's strategy was failing and

that it was being sucked into a guerrilla-type war it couldn't win. He knew that sending more troops would result in more casualties. In a private briefing with reporters that summer, McNamara confided that "no amount of bombing can end the war."

But in public, he said nothing. He kept quiet even after he became convinced that the strategy embraced by President Johnson and his generals was flawed. McNamara's family and friends were puzzled. Knowing his true feelings, they couldn't understand why he wouldn't resign. Still, he remained in office for another 18 months.

For the rest of his life, McNamara was racked with guilt over his failure to challenge the White House consensus on the war. He felt that his unwillingness to confront Johnson and the generals had contributed to the tragedy of Vietnam. He was angry with himself for his lack of courage.

There is nothing unique about Robert McNamara's story. As foreign policy expert Janne Nolan explains, the failure to speak out has been "a source of strategic failure over and over again." Too often, decision-makers have been afraid to challenge colleagues with whom they disagree. They stay silent rather than cause upset. They



"Mary's confidence in God gave her the courage to do what she did, to be who she was. That's why she is our mother and model."

choose to say nothing, even if it troubles their conscience.

Lack of courage doesn't just happen to politicians. It can happen to all of us.

It can happen to our practice of the faith. We know it's not easy to practise our faith in 2026. Society is more secular now. Fewer people go to church; fewer people believe in God.

This challenging environment can make it difficult for us to witness to our faith. Like Robert McNamara, we can be tempted to keep our heads down, to stay quiet. We can lack the courage of our convictions.

The challenge

To live out our baptismal calling today requires courage and strength of character.

Unlike Robert McNamara, Mary, the mother of Jesus, had courage in abundance. She didn't keep her head down. She responded wholeheartedly to what God asked of her. She said 'yes' even though she wasn't sure of its implications. She followed Jesus faithfully all the way to the foot of the cross.

Her Magnificat also shows her courage. Mary voiced her opposition to the way the

world is organised. She stood squarely on the side of the lowly and oppressed. She spoke of knocking the mighty from their thrones. Imagine what she'd say about some of the world leaders of today. She wasn't afraid to speak up for what she believed.

Mary was no meek young woman who stayed silently, submissively, in the background. Rather, in the words of Pope Francis, she is a model of strength, courage and joyful hope. Her unconditional 'yes' to God, Pope Francis said, gives us the courage to say 'yes' to God's call today. Mary had a 'courageous confidence' in God's plan, a confidence we also must share.

That courageous confidence was tested many times throughout her life. To be told of God's plan for her, to hear Simeon's prediction that a sword would pierce her soul, to see the way her Son was putting his life at risk, and then to see him arrested and executed as a common criminal, must have been very difficult for her to deal with.

Still, despite everything, Mary trusted in God. She knew that God was with her at all times, and that God would always be with her.

Mary's confidence in God gave her the courage to do what she did, to be who she was. That's why she is our mother and model. That's why she is a wonderful profile in courage. She shows us what it means to fulfil our baptismal promises. She shows us what discipleship means, what it costs. Her example gives us the courage to witness to our faith, to stand up for it every day without fear.

The connection

Through baptism, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who gives us the courage to witness to the Gospel every day.

1 Abide with me

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;
 the darkness deepens,
 Lord, with me abide!
 When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
 help of the helpless,
 O abide with me.
 I need thy presence every passing hour;
 what but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
 Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?
 Through cloud and sunshine,
 O abide with me.
 Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
 Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
 Heav'n's morning breaks,
 and earth's vain shadows flee;
 In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

2 Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
 That saved a wretch like me.
 I once was lost but now am found,
 Was blind, but now, I see.

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.
 And Grace, my fears relieved.
 How precious did that Grace appear
 the hour I first believed.

The Lord has promised good to me;
 His word my hope secures.
 He will my shield and portion be
 as long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
 Bright shining as the sun,
 We've no less days to sing
 God's praise than when we first begun.

3 All that I am

All that I am, all that I do,
 All that I'll ever have,
 I offer now to you.
 Take and sanctify these gifts
 for your honour, Lord.
 Knowing that I love and serve you
 is enough reward.
 All that I am, all that I do,
 all that I'll ever have I offer now to you.

All that I dream,
 all that I pray,
 all that I'll ever make,
 I give to you today.
 Take and sanctify these gifts
 for your honour, Lord.
 Knowing that I love and serve you
 is enough reward.
 All that I am, all that I do,
 all that I'll ever have I offer now to you.

4 As I kneel before you

As I kneel before you,
 As I bow my head in prayer,
 Take this day, make it yours,
 And fill me with your love.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu.

All I have I give you,
 Ev'ry dream and wish are yours
 Mother of Christ, Mother of mine,
 Present them to my Lord.

As I kneel before you,
 And I see your smiling face,
 Ev'ry thought, ev'ry word
 is lost in your embrace.

5 Be still for the presence of the Lord

Be still for the Presence of the Lord,
 the Holy One is here.
 Come, bow before him now
 with reverence and fear.
 In Him no sin is found,
 we stand on holy ground.
 Be still for the presence of the Lord,
 the Holy One is here.

Be still for the glory of the Lord
 is shining all around.
 He burns with holy fire,
 with splendour He is crowned.
 How awesome is the sight,
 our radiant King of light!
 Be still for the glory of the Lord
 is shining all around.

Be still for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

He comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his Grace.

No work too hard for Him –
in faith, receive from Him.

Be still for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

6 Be thou my vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of
my heart;

Naught be all else to me save
that thou art.

Thou my best thought by day
and by night;

Waking or sleeping, thy
presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou
my true Word;

I ever with thee and thou with
me, Lord.

Thou my great Father, I thy dear
child;

Thou in me dwelling, with thee
reconciled.

Be thou my breastplate, my
sword for the fight;

Be thou my dignity, thou my
delight.

Thou my soul's shelter, thou my
high tow'r;

Raise thou me Heav'nward,
O Pow'r of my pow'r.

Riches I heed not, nor vain,
empty praise;

Thou mine inheritance, now and
always.

Thou and thou only, first in my
heart,

High King of Heaven, my
treasure thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory
won,

May I reach Heaven's joys, O
bright Heav'ns Sun!

Heart of my heart, whatever
befall,

Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

7 The Servant Song

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;

pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are
weeping;

when you laugh I'll laugh with
you;

I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey
through.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;

pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

8 Christ be beside me

Christ be beside me,
Christ be before me,

Christ be behind me,
King of my heart.

Christ be within me,
Christ be below me,

Christ be above me,
never to part.

Christ on my right hand,
Christ on my left hand.

Christ all around me,
shield in the strife.

Christ in my sleeping,
Christ in my sitting,

Christ in my rising,
light of my life.

Christ be in all hearts
thinking about me,

Christ be in all tongues
telling of me,

Christ be the vision
in eyes that see me,

in ears that hear me,
Christ ever be.

9 Come as you are

Come as you are, that's how I want you.

Come as you are, feel quite at home.

Close to my heart, loved and forgiven,
Come as you are,
why stand alone.

No need to fear, love sets no limits,
No need to fear, love never ends.
Don't run away, shamed and disheartened
Rest in my love, trust me again.

I came to call sinners, not just the virtuous.
I came to bring peace, not to condemn.
Each time you fail, to live by my promise,
Why do you think I'd love you the less.

Come as you are, that's how I love you,
Come as you are, trust me again.
Nothing can change the love that I bear you,
All will be well, come as you are.

10 Close to you

I watch the sunrise lighting the sky,
Casting its shadows near.
And on this morning,
bright though it be,
I feel those shadows near me.

But you are always close to me, following all my ways.

May I be always close to you, following all your ways, Lord.

I watch the sunlight shine through the clouds,
Warming the earth below.
And at the mid-day, life seems to say:
"I feel your brightness near me."

I watch the sunset fading away,
Light the clouds with sleep.
And as the evening closes its eyes,
I feel your presence near me.

I watch the moonlight guarding the night,
Waiting till morning comes.
The air is silent, earth is at rest
only your peace is near me.

11 Drawn to you

Drawn to you, Lord,
we are drawn to you,
to the beauty of your presence in this place.
Here for you, God,
we are here for you,
as the gifts we bring become a feast of grace.
We are drawn to you.

Drawn by the love that you have poured on us,
we bring these gifts,
works of our hands.
You gather all we offer to yourself,
receive our prayer.

Drawn by the faith that you accept our gifts,
and sanctify what we have shared.

To make us holy by this bread and wine,
receive our prayer.

12 Gifts of bread and wine

Gifts of bread and wine,
gifts we offer, fruits of labour,
fruits of love.

Taken, offered, sanctified,
blessed and broken;
words of one who died:
"Take my body; take my saving blood."

Gifts of bread and wine, Christ our Lord.

Christ our Saviour, living presence here,
as he promised while on earth:
I am with you for all time,
I am with you in this bread and wine.

"Take my body, take my saving blood."
Gifts of bread and wine:
Christ our Lord.

13 Give me joy in my heart

Give me joy in my heart,
keep me singing,
Give me joy in my heart, I pray,
Give me joy in my heart,
keep me singing,
Keep me singing till the break of day.

**Sing Hosanna, Sing Hosanna,
Sing Hosanna to the King
of Kings.**

**Sing Hosanna, Sing Hosanna,
Sing Hosanna to the King.**

Give me faith in my heart,
keep me searching, etc.

Give me hope in my heart,
keep me striving, etc.

Give me love in my heart,
keep me serving, etc.

14 Hail Queen of Heaven

Hail, Queen of heav'n,
the ocean star,
guide of the wanderer here
below

thrown on life's surge,
we claim thy care;
save us from peril and
from woe.

Mother of Christ, star of the sea,
pray for the wanderer,
pray for me.

O gentle, chaste and spotless
maid,
we sinners make our prayers
through thee;
remind thy Son that he has paid
the price of our iniquity.
Virgin most pure, star of the sea,
pray for the sinner, pray for me.

15 Hail Redeemer, King divine!

Hail Redeemer, King divine!
Priest and Lamb,
the throne is thine;

King, whose reign shall
never cease,
Prince of everlasting peace.

**Angels, saints and nations
sing;**

**"Praise be Jesus Christ
our King;
Lord of life, earth, sky and sea,
King of love on Calvary!"**

King whose name creation
thrills,
rule our minds, our hearts,
our wills,
till in peace each nation rings
with thy praises, King of kings.

16 Here I am, Lord

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

**Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in
the night.
I will go, Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my
heart.**

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my words to them,
Whom shall I send?

17 How great thou art

O Lord my God, when I in
awesome wonder,
Consider all the works thy hands
have made;
I see the stars,
I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the
universe displayed.

**Then sings my soul,
my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art,
how great thou art.
Then sings my soul,
my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art,
how great thou art!**

And when I think, that God his
Son not sparing;
sent Him to die, I scarce can
take it in;
That on the cross, my burden
gladly bearing,
He bled and died, to take away
my sin.

When Christ shall come, with
shouts of acclamation,
And take me home, what joy
shall fill my heart.
Then I shall bow in humble
adoration,
And there proclaim: "My God,
how great thou art!"

18 Immaculate Mary

Immaculate Mary, your praises we sing.

You reign now in splendor with Jesus our King.

**Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!
Ave, Ave, Maria!**

In heaven the blessed your glory proclaim;
On earth we your children invoke your fair name.

We pray for our Mother, the Church upon earth,
And bless, Holy Mary, the land of our birth.

19 How Lovely on the Mountains

How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him,
who brings good news,
good news,
announcing peace, proclaiming news of happiness.
Our God reigns, our God reigns

**Our God reigns, our God reigns.
Our God reigns, our God reigns.**

You watchmen lift your voices joyfully as one;
shout for your King, your King
See eye to eye the Lord restoring Zion,
our God reigns, our God reigns!

Waste places of Jerusalem break forth with joy,
We are redeemed, redeemed.

The Lord has saved and comforted his people,
our God reigns, our God reigns!

20 Nearer my God to Thee

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me.
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Deep in Thy Sacred Heart,
Let me abide;
Thou that hast bled for me,
Sorrowed and died,
Sweet shall my weeping be,
Grief surely leading me
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

21 Prayer of St Francis

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred,
let me bring your love.
Where there is injury your pardon, Lord.
And where there's doubt true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life,
let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness only light

and where there's sadness ever joy.

Oh, Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving to all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

22 O Mary of Graces

O Mary of graces and mother of Christ,
O may you direct me and guide me aright.
O may you protect me from Satan's control,
and may you protect me in body and soul.
O may you protect me by land and by sea.
And may you protect me from sorrows to be;
a strong guard of angels above me provide;
may God be before me and God at my side.
May a smile of your mercy from heaven come down,
when my heart would leave you and cleave to the ground.
And when this poor body returns

to its sod,
may your loving arms bear
my soul to its God.

23 Peace is flowing like a River

Peace is flowing like a river,
Flowing out through you and
me;
Flowing out into the desert,
Setting all the captives free.

Joy is flowing like a river,
Flowing out through you and
me;
Flowing out into the desert,
Setting all the captives free.

Faith is flowing like a river,
Flowing out through you and
me;
Flowing out into the desert,
Setting all the captives free.

Hope is flowing like a river,
Flowing out through you and
me;
Flowing out into the desert,
Setting all the captives free.

Love is flowing like a river,
Flowing out through you and
me;
Flowing out into the desert,
Setting all the captives free.

24 Sacred Silence

**Sacred silence, Holy ocean
Gentle waters, washing over me
Help me listen, Holy Spirit
Come and speak to me.**

God my father, Christ my brother,
Holy Spirit, sanctifying me.
Lord, I'm sorry,
please forgive me,
Come and set me free.
Holy Mary, Gentle mother,
God's pure vessel, praying for
me.
Saints and Angels, all in heaven,
Come and be with me.

25 Seek ye first

Seek ye first the kingdom
of God,
and His righteousness;
and all these things shall be
added unto you.
Allelu, Alleluia.

Ask and it shall be given unto
you.
Seek and you shall find.
Knock and the door shall be
opened unto you.
Allelu, Alleluia.

We do not live by bread alone,
but by every word;
that proceeds from the mouth
of the Lord.
Allelu, Alleluia.

26 Soul of my Saviour

Soul of my Saviour,
sanctify my breast;
Body of Christ,
be thou my saving guest;
Blood of my Saviour,
bathe me in thy tide
wash me ye waters flowing
from his side.

Strength and protection may thy
Passion be;
O blessed Jesus hear and
answer me;
deep in thy wounds, Lord, hide
and shelter me;
so shall I never,
never part from thee.

Guard and defend me from the
foe malign;
in death's dread moments make
me only thine;
call me, and bid me come to
thee on high,
where I may praise thee with thy
saints for aye.

27 Sweet Sacrament Divine

Sweet sacrament divine,
hid in thy earthly home,
lo, round thy lowly shrine,
with suppliant hearts we come;
Jesus, to thee our voice we
raise,
with songs of love and heartfelt
praise,
sweet sacrament divine,
sweet sacrament divine.

Sweet sacrament of peace,
dear home of ev'ry heart,
where restless yearnings cease,
and sorrows all depart,
there in thine ear all trustfully
we tell our tale of misery,
sweet sacrament of peace,
sweet sacrament of peace.

28 Only the Shadow (The love I have for you)

The love I have for you, my Lord,
is only a shadow of your love
for me:

only a shadow of your love
for me;
your deep abiding love.

My own belief in you, my Lord,
is only a shadow of your faith
in me;
only a shadow of your faith
in me;
your deep and lasting faith.

My life is in your hands;
my life is in your hands.
My love for you will grow,
my God.
Your light in me will shine.

The dream I have today,
my Lord,
is only a shadow of your dreams
for me;
only a shadow of all that will be;
if I but follow you.

29 Take our bread

**Take our bread, we ask you,
take our hearts, we love you,
take our lives, oh Father,
we are yours, we are yours.**

Yours as we stand at the table
you set,
yours as we eat the bread our
hearts can't forget.
We are the signs of your life
with us yet;
we are yours, we are yours.

Your holy people stand washed
in your blood,
Spirit filled, yet hungry,
we await your food.
Poor though we are,
we have brought ourselves
to you:
we are yours, we are yours.

30 The Bell of the Angelus

The bells of the Angelus calleth
to pray.
In sweet tones announcing the
sacred Ave.

**Ave, Ave, Ave Maria.
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria.**

Immaculate Mary, our hearts
are all thine.
Protect us, thy children, who
kneel at thy shrine.

O bless us, dear Lady, with
blessings from heaven,
And to our petitions let answer
be given.

31 This is my body

This is my body,
broken for you,
bringing you wholeness, making
you free.
Take it and eat it,
and when you do,
do it in love for me.

This is my blood,
poured out for you,
bringing forgiveness, making
you free.
Take it and drink it,

and when you do,
do it in love for me.

Back to my Father
soon I shall go.
Do not forget me;
then you will see
I am still with you,
and you will know
you're very close to me.

Filled with my Spirit,
how you will grow!
You are my branches;
I am the tree.
If you are faithful,
others will know
you are alive in me.

Love one another -
I have loved you,
and I have shown you
how to be free;
serve one another,
and when you do,
do it in love for me.

32 These are the days of Elijah

These are the days of Elijah
Declaring the Word of the Lord.
And these are the days
Of Your servant Moses
Righteousness being restored.
And though these are days
Of great trials
Of famine and darkness
and sword.
Still we are the voice
In the desert crying
Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

**Behold He comes
Riding on the clouds
Shining like the sun
At the trumpet call
So lift your voice
It's the year of Jubilee
And out of Zion's hill
Salvation comes.**

And these are the days of Ezekiel
the dry bones becoming as flesh
And these are the days
Of Your servant David
Rebuilding a temple of praise.
And these are the days of the
harvest
The fields are as white in
the world
And we are the labourers
In Your vineyard
Declaring the Word of the Lord.

There is no god like Jehovah
There is no god like Jehovah
There is no god like Jehovah
There is no god like Jehovah

33 Walk in the light

Let's all join together in
communion sweet,
Walk, walk in the light.
And love one another till the
Saviour we meet,
Walk, walk, in the light.

Walk in the light
Walk in the light
Walk in the light
Walk in the light of God.

Jesus died on Calvary,
Walk, walk, in the light,

To save the lost like you and me;
Walk, walk, in the light.

Jesus did just what He said,
Walk, walk, in the light,
He healed the sick and He raised
the dead;
Walk, walk, in the light.

34 When creation was begun

When creation was begun,
God had chosen you to be
Mother of his blessed Son,
Holy Mary, full of grace.
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria.

When creation was restored,
You were there beside the Lord
Whom you cherished and
adored,
Holy Mary, full of grace.
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria.

All of us are children too,
often doubtful what to do,
Needing to confide in you,
Holy Mary, full of grace.
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria.

35 Christ be our light!

Shine in our hearts,
shine through the darkness.
Christ be our light!
Shine in your church,
gathered today.

36 The cloud's veil

Even though the rain hides
the stars,
even though the mist swirls
the hills,
even when the dark clouds
veil the sky,
God is by my side.

Even when the sun shall fall
in sleep,
even when at dawn the sky
shall weep,
even in the night when storms
shall rise,
God is by my side.
God is by my side.

Bright the stars at night that
mirror heaven's way to you.
Bright the stars in light where
dwell the saints in love and
truth. R/.

Deep the feast of life where
saints shall gather in deep
peace.
Deep in heaven's light where
sorrows pass beyond death's
sleep. R/.

Blest are they who sing the
fellowship of saints in light.
Blest is heaven's King. All saints
adore the Lord, Most High. R/.

CHANTS & RESPONSES

37 Ubi caritas et amor,
Ubi caritas Dues ibi est.

38 Be still and know that
I am God
(sing 3 times)
I am the Lord that health thee.
(sing 3 times)
In thee, O Lord I put my trust.
(sing 3 times)

39 Bless the Lord my soul
And bless God's holy name.
Bless the Lord my soul,
He leads me into life.

40 Eat this bread,
drink this cup,
come to me and never be
hungry.
Eat this bread, drink this cup,
trust in me and you will not
thirst.

41 Wait for the Lord, whose
day is near.
Wait for the Lord be strong,
take heart!

42 O Christe Domine Jesu.
O Christe Domine Jesu!

43 Father, we adore you.
Lay our lives before you.
How we love you.
(Jesus, Spirit)

44 In the Lord
I'll be ever thankful,
In the Lord I will rejoice!
Look to God,
Do not be afraid.
Lift up your voices,
The Lord is near;
Lift up your voices
the Lord is near.

45 Jesus, remember me
when you
come into your Kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you
come into your Kingdom.

46 Jesus, Name above all
names,
Beautiful Saviour,
glorious Lord.
Emmanuel, God is with us,
Blessed Redeemer,
Living Word.

47 Lay your hands gently
upon us.
Let their touch render your
peace.
Let them bring your forgiveness
and healing.
Lay your hands gently,
lay your hands.

You were sent to free the
broken hearted.
You were sent to give sight to
the blind.
You desire to heal all our
illness.

Lay your hands gently,
lay your hands.
Lord, we come to you through
one another,
Lord, we come to you in all
our need.
Lord, we come to you seeking
wholeness.
Lay your hands gently,
lay your hands.

48 Misericordias Domini
In aeternum cantabo.

49 O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer,
When I call answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord hear my prayer,
come listen to me.

50 Open our eyes, Lord,
we want to see Jesus,
to reach out and touch him and
say that we love him;
open our ears, Lord,
and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord,
we want to see Jesus.

51 Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me. *(sing twice)*
Melt me, mould me, fill me,
use me.
Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.
(...on us, on all)

52 Sweep over my soul,
Sweep over my soul,
sweet Spirit,
sweep over my soul,
my rest is complete
when I sit at your feet,
sweet Spirit
sweep over my soul.

53 Faithful is the Lord,
our King.
Let us all in glory sing,
ever praise in song and word,
Holy, holy, holy Lord!

54 Father, I believe,
Father I believe,
Father, I believe,
I believe in you.
Jesus, I believe...
Spirit, I believe...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The hymns are covered and reproduced under Licence of One License, LLC 7343 S. Mason Ave. Chicago, IL 60638.

The following songs covered by Christian Copyright Licensing Europe Ltd have been reproduced under licence: As I Kneel Before you, Maria Parkinson, 1978; Be Still for The Presence of the Lord, David Evans; Brother, Sister (The Servant Song), Richard Gillard; Father, we adore you, Terrye Coelho; How great thou art, Stuart K. Hine; How lovely on the mountains, Leonard E. Smith; Seek Ye First, Karen Lafferty, 1972; Spirit of the Living God, Daniel Iverson; This is my Body, Jimmy Owens and Damien Lundy. Close to you ©11976, Kevin Mayhew.

Only a Shadow © 1971,197, Carey Landry and OCP. Drawn to you, @Sarah Hart OCP

The following songs covered by Calamus have been reproduced under Calamus licence. 1. All that I am 2. Christ be our light 3. Here I am Lord 4 Prayer of St Francis 5. The love I have for you 6. The cloud's veil. 7. In the Lord I'll be ever thankful 8. Jesus remembers me 9. Lord hear my prayer 10. Ubi caritas 11. O Christe domine Jesu
Acknowledgements: (c) 1994, Hope Publishing Company. /© 1978 Kevin Mayhew

/ © 1987 WGRG, Iona Community. / ©2015 Hope Publishing Company. / © 1969, James Quinn. / Deirdre Browne ©Spectrum Publications. / © 2019,2020, Sarah Hart.

/ Text© 2003, Tom Booth, Jenny Pixler, and Anthony Kuner.

/ ©1972 Cccm Music (ASCAP) Universal Music- Brentwood Benson Publ.

/ Robin Mark Text© Song Solutionns Daybreak. / Text © 1972, Michael Hodgetts.

/ © 2014 GIA Publications, Inc. 1/ © 1981, OCP. ©1975,1997, OCP.

/ © 1993, Bernadette Farrell. / © 1997, GIA Publications, Inc. /

Ateliers et Presses de Taize & reprinted with permission of Calamus, Oak House, 70 High Street, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 OAU. Spectrum Publications PL, composer Deirdre Browne and sung by Paul Gurr O. Carm for Come as you are. Drawn to you,© 2019, 2020, Sarah Hart .OCP

Every effort has been made to trace the owners of copyright material and we hope that no copyright has been infringed.

Pardon is sought and apology made if contrary is the case and the matter will be corrected in any future reprint of this book. It is unlawful to reproduce in any way of the copyright material contained in this book.

Written by Gerard Moloney C.Ss. R

Edited by Anne Dillon & Gerard Moloney C.Ss. R

Designed by Tanika Design

Printed by W & G. Baird Ltd.

© 2026 Published by Redemptorist Communications,

St. Joesph's Monastery, St Alphonus Road,

Dundalk, Co. Louth A91 F3FC

Tel: 00353 1 4922488

Email: sales@redcoms.org

Website: www.redcoms.org



