**Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf**

**GO IN PEACE**

**Exploring five marks of liturgy:**



**Eucharist and Mission**



 **INTRODUCTION**

It is indeed right and good, our duty and our salvation

always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise

holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our great high priest.

He offered himself to you as the Lamb without blemish,

the acceptable gift that gives you perfect praise.

At the Last Supper, seated with his apostles,

he left this memorial of his passion

to bring us its saving power until the end of time.

In this great sacrament you feed your people and strengthen them in holiness,

so that throughout the world the human family

may be enlightened by one faith and drawn together in one communion of love.

We come to this foretaste of your heavenly banquet

to be transformed by your grace

and restored in the image and likeness of the risen Christ. *(Corpus Christi Preface)*

The Eucharist has been called ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’

Often, we approach it in terms of personal devotion, and talk about ‘making my communion.’ The danger is that over-familiarity can desensitize us to the astonishing challenges the Eucharist offers us, so we aim here to take a fresh look at it and see it with fresh eyes. We ask: in what ways can elements within the Eucharist inspire and empower an outward-looking, forward-moving mission? In what ways can the Eucharist be a manifesto for mission: calling us to certain priorities? What are the links between worship and mission? In this course we explore dimensions of liturgical formation - the way that God shapes and redirects us through worship. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, we are formed as we worship.

This is true of all worship but can be seen most clearly in the celebration of the Eucharist. We discover how the Eucharist not only builds us up but also challenges, resources, energizes us for mission. We rediscover the Eucharist as journey, as encounter, spring-board, catalyst and launching-pad for our mission in the world. Recalling that the word liturgy (*leitourgia*) literally means ‘work of the people’ – we prepare ourselves for a little work!

We will be guided by the **Five Marks of Mission** accepted throughout the Anglican Communion as a balanced statement of our present calling in the world. But what are the Five Marks of worship? How does the Eucharist embody and communicate these values and priorities? The Five Marks provide a *lens* through which we can refocus our understanding of both Eucharist and mission.

**Tell:** proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (page 7)

*We explore how the Eucharist announces and welcomes the Kingdom*

**Teach:** baptise and nurture new believers (page 15)

*We explore how the Eucharist both teaches us and forms us for mission*

**Tend:** respond to human need by loving service(page 22)

*We see how hospitality and intercession lead to mission and self-offering*

**Transform**: unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, pursue peace and reconciliation (page 29)

*We identify elements in the Eucharist that support and inspire engagement*

**Treasure:** safeguard the integrity of creation, sustain and renew the life of the earth (page 37)

*We consider environmental challenges and the sacramentality of creation*

***Each session follows a 5-fold structure***

**1 Opening Prayer - from Eucharist**

**2 reflection**

**3 scripture**

**4 action point**

**5 Closing prayer – from Eucharist**

**Acknowledgement**

Liturgical extracts come from Archbishops’ Council, *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, 2000) and Common Worship: Times and Seasons (2013)

**The Role of the facilitator/ group leader**

* To guide the group and keep it focussed on the material, fostering a dialogue with the material, while allowing for questions and encouraging thoughtful reflection and “active learning”
* To encourage an environment of prayerfulness and enquiry: seeking a balance between the academic/ theoretical and the experiential/ personal appropriation of the issue in view

Sessions are to last one and a half hours. Decide what material and questions you wish to use and what to omit – there is no need to adhere slavishly to the material. Be selective. Prepare to *summarize* and give a precis for the group the content under each heading, so that in the group session you can “speak to” the material (as one “speaks to a report” in the sense of drawing out main themes). Participants should therefore read the material in advance where possible. Ask them each time: *what struck you about this passage/ what surprised you or stood out for you as you read it?*

* The course should be emailed to participants in advance
* In Session 1 explain the rationale of the course and its structure from the Introduction
* In using the questions, it is often best to consider these first in pairs, or 3s – and then invite responses in plenary
* Handouts are not needed but the closing liturgy should be copied. The final session can conclude with a Eucharist, maybe using unfamiliar texts mined from *Common Worship*
* Consider a visual focus for each session, maybe on a prominent table eg torn bread & wine, chalice & paten, globe, cross, candle



 **COMMENDATIONS**

**From the Bishop**

I'm pleased to commend this course for reflection, exploration, study, and prayer. The riches of scripture and Christian spirituality are inexhaustible and this course invites us to go deeper.  May all of us be blessed as we journey together in faith and worship. + Michael

**From the Barnabas Team**

When we gather at the Lord’s Table, in the Eucharist, and eat bread and drink wine, mysteriously, by the Holy Spirit, we meet with our Risen Lord Jesus, and are made one. We come, aware of our fragility and lack of focus on the One who makes us whole. Our scattered thoughts and hearts, bodies and minds are brought together in a way which is not easy to describe or talk about. We cannot manufacture that oneness, and the ‘making whole’ of our scattered elements, both personally and communally, changes us. We are compelled by that change to no longer serve ourselves, but serve Christ in others.

Each time we meet, it is the same, but different. The spiritual ‘habit’ of participating in the Eucharist can become so familiar as to escape our conscious notice. This is why it is timely for us as a Barnabas Team, and as a Diocese, to take time to reflect on the words and actions of the Eucharist, as the theme of discipleship and the ‘Five Marks of Mission’ are carried through our Synod meetings and presentations, and in our parish life. We are grateful for the work of the Revd. Canon Dr Andrew Mayes, priest of St Barnabas, Limassol, and our Diocesan Spirituality Adviser, for the creative work he has done in devising this course, which we offer to the people of the parishes of the Diocese, as a guide for parish groups to gather and share each week, within parishes and with people from other churches.

**From former course participants**

The course has been trialled at St Barnabas Limassol. Here are comments from those who took part:

“Very thought-provoking. It is taking the Eucharist outside of the church building into the world.”

“For me the trial course has been a valuable experience, It has opened my eyes to different ways of looking at things and given me a deeper understanding of what the celebration of the Eucharist means.”

“Seeing the Eucharist in a new light.” “A feeling of enlightenment”

“This course has really opened my eyes to the meaning and the significance of the Eucharist. Very in depth but kept us all focussed.”

“The course has helped me enormously to see the Eucharist in a way that makes me appreciate its meaning in a much more profound way.”

 “I now have a deeper understanding of what is happening throughout all stages of the Eucharist.” “Good discussion questions!”

“Rich collection of ideas and images drawn from the liturgy of the Eucharist which point to the world we live in. Prompting me to ask: Is there anything I feel called to do, to be, as a result of this course? “

“I came to realize that the invisible God in the visible – both in the elements of bread and wine and in other persons…”

 **TELL…**

*The first mark of liturgy is ‘proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom’.*

***In this session we explore how the Eucharist announces and communicates the Gospel in word and actions.***

**1 Opening Prayer - from Eucharist**

Father, we give you thanks and praise

through your beloved Son Jesus Christ, your living Word,

through whom you have created all things;

who was sent by you in your great goodness to be our Saviour.

By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh;

as your Son, born of the blessed Virgin,

he lived on earth and went about among us;

he opened wide his arms for us on the cross;

he put an end to death by dying for us;

and revealed the resurrection by rising to new life;

so he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people.

Therefore with angels and archangels,

and with all the company of heaven,

we proclaim your great and glorious name,

for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,**

**God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest! *(Eucharistic Prayer B)***

**2 reflection**

**Proclaiming the Good News**

Every celebration of the Eucharist can renew our reception of the Gospel, reinforce its message in us and re-equip us as evangelists – that is, bearers of the Good News.

**Questions**

1. What is the Good News for you? What times from the Gospel

fill you with joy the most?

1. How do you experience these in the Eucharist?

**Proclaiming the Good News in Actions**

Throughout the celebration, symbolic and sacramental actions declare and announce God’s saving grace.

**Questions**

1. In what ways can these aspects of the Eucharist communicate

Gospel truths?

* The gathering, by which separate individuals form community and one body in Christ?
* the confession and absolution?
* the Sign of the Peace?
* the Breaking of Bread?
* the distribution of elements?

What other moments in the Eucharist communicate to you the Good News?

**Proclaiming the Good News in Words – of Scripture**

The Old Testament reminds us that from the beginning God's creative Word or *dabar* powerfully shapes the landscape of the planet and redefines the cosmos. Genesis' opening hymn to creation tells us that when God speaks his word, things happen: 'And God said…And it was so… And God saw that it was good'. In the Eucharist God's Word is ever active and formative in our lives today. Isaiah expresses the power of God's Word:

For as the rain and snow come down from heaven,

And do not return there until they have watered the earth,

Making it bring forth and sprout,

Giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

So shall my Word be that goes out from my mouth;

It shall not return to me empty,

But it shall accomplish that which I purpose… (55:10,11).

In the New Testament, John gives us new glimpses into the Creator Word made flesh. In speaking of the Logos he echoes the Greek idea of Wisdom, Sophia and the Hebrew *hokmot*, by which God shaped creation (c.f. Proverbs 8: 22-31). The Word reveals the divine in signs and words. With Peter we say: 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life' (Jn 6: 68). The continual challenge for us is to read Scripture in such a way that brings into a conversation the text and context: a creative interaction, an interplay. The text points first to the original context – the historical setting and the geography of the Holy Land; in the case of the Gospels, to the first century world with its political and religious pressures. But it also speaks to today's context: to our present situation, often ugly, often messy…full of contradictions, paradoxes, injustices and questions. Of every passage, we must ask: 'how is this conversation going?'

Why do we stand to listen to the Gospel? In the Proclamation of the Gospel, the deacon or priest not here giving another reading: they are proclaiming the Word of Life. We stand to listen alertly to the voice of the living Christ. In the Armenian liturgy, the proclamation of the Gospel is announced by the Deacon crying out: ‘Wisdom! Let us be attentive! God is speaking!’ This encapsulates the very mission of Christians: to speak out boldly the message of salvation.

**Questions**

1. How do you announce the Good News in your life?

**Proclaiming the Good News in Words of praise**

The very word ‘Eucharist’, of course, means ‘Thanksgiving.’ We are coming to the Thanksgiving. But what are we giving thanks for? The Eucharistic Prayers proclaim the mighty works of God… Three great themes emerge:

*1 We celebrate and declare the goodness of God in creation, the gift of the universe. We proclaim ‘salvation history’: the story of God’s unfolding providence, his seeking of a covenant-relationship with us, his longing for humanity:*

You are worthy of our thanks and praise,

Lord God of truth,

for by the breath of your mouth

you have spoken your word,

and all things have come into being.

You fashioned us in your image

and placed us in the garden of your delight.

Though we chose the path of rebellion

you would not abandon your own.

Again and again you drew us into your covenant of grace.

You gave your people the law and taught us by your prophets

to look for your reign of justice, mercy and peace.

As we watch for the signs of your kingdom on earth,

we echo the song of the angels in heaven…*(Eucharistic Prayer F)*

*2 We proclaim the fact that God has come among us in the person of Jesus Christ – his Eternal Word incarnate and manifest in the human life of Jesus: read again the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer at the start of this session.*

*3 We proclaim in torn bread and poured out wine both the mystery of Christ’s self-giving on the Cross and the wonder of the Resurrection:*

**Let us proclaim [or, Great is,] the mystery of faith:**

**Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!**

**When we eat this bread and drink this cup**

**we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,**

**until you come in glory. *(Acclamations)***

Therefore, heavenly Father,
we remember now his offering of himself

made once for all upon the cross;
we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension *(Eucharistic Prayer B)*

Therefore we proclaim the death that he suffered on the cross,

we celebrate his resurrection, his bursting from the tomb,

we rejoice that he reigns at your right hand on high

and we long for his coming in glory. *(Eucharistic Prayer F)*

The entire celebration reminds us of our essential message: it reinforces in hearts and minds the Gospel we are called to share and its great themes of creation, incarnation and salvation.

**Welcoming the Kingdom of God into our midst**

The Eucharist is an announcement and an anticipation of the Kingdom of God, the reign of God breaking into our midst: ‘I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom’ (Lk 22:29-30).

Perhaps this is clearest in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy which begins: ‘Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever!’ (The Liturgy of St George’s Cathedral Jerusalem also opens with these words). The whole Eucharist is understood in terms of the inbreaking of the Kingdom. As Orthodox writer Alexander Schmemann puts it: ‘Each time that Christians assemble as the Church they witness before the whole world that Christ is King and Lord, that his Kingdom has already been revealed and given to all and that a new and immortal life has begun. This is why the liturgy begins with this solemn confession and doxology of the King who comes *now* but abides forever and shall reign unto ages of ages.’[[1]](#endnote-1)

At the Orthodox offertory procession, Christ comes as King in the Holy Gifts to be laid upon the Throne (the name for altar), passing through the Royal Gates, the entry to the sanctuary. The priest wears a crown! This is expressed in the well-loved hymn taken from the Liturgy of St James, dating from AD 275:

Let all mortal flesh keep silence, And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded, For with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descending Comes our homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary, As of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture, In the body and the blood;
He will give to all the faithful His own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven Spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the Light of light descendeth From the realms of endless day,
Comes the powers of hell to vanquish As the darkness clears away.

At His feet the six winged seraph, Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence, As with ceaseless voice they cry:
Alleluia, Alleluia Alleluia, Lord Most High! (tr. [Gerard Moultrie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerard_Moultrie))

In Orthodox understanding, the Eucharist is a foretaste on earth of the life of the age to come – a taste of heaven, and a welcoming of the Kingdom. It challenges us to see how our Anglican liturgies might better reflect the theme of the Kingdom…

John Wesley, founder of Methodism, called the Eucharist a ‘converting ordinance’ because he recognized how powerfully the celebration can transform our hearts and equip us for our witness in the world. One of his hymns puts it:

This is the richest Legacy,

Thou hast on Man bestow' d

Here chiefly, LORD, we feed on Thee,

And drink thy precious Blood.

Here all thy Blessings we receive,

Here all thy Gifts are given;

To those that would in Thee believe,

Pardon, and Grace, and Heaven.

**Questions**

1. What words would you use to express your experience of

grace in the Eucharist?

 **Let all mortal flesh keep silence – and listen!**

The other side of the coin is this – as worshippers we need to listen attentively – and watch alertly – so that we are receptive to what is proclaimed, and can make it our own. The practice of listening becomes a ‘transferable skill’ which prepares us and equips us to relate meaningfully to our contemporary culture, and is of course the essential prerequisite for any engagement with those around us. A double listening is required before any speaking, any evangelism: a listening to God and a discovery of the hopes and hurts in our community. As the report *mission-shaped church* puts it: ‘listening to the culture ...and to the inherited tradition of the gospel and the church’.[[2]](#endnote-2) We need to attune ourselves both to what God is saying to us in worship, and also to what God is saying in the people of our society today.

In the Eucharist we learn to listen to the Word of God and proclamations of the liturgy, and this equips us to listen to the cries of the poor, the screams of the oppressed, the sobs of the broken-hearted, the sighs of our culture. We echo Isaiah’s comment: ‘The Lord God has opened my ear’ (Is 50:5). The Scripture is emphatic: ‘O that today you would listen to his voice!’ (Ps 95:7). As the Book of Common Prayer’s intercessions put it, may the congregation both ‘hear and receive thy holy word.’ It is a receptive hearing, a listening that is utterly open, open to surprises, open to what God is asking of us, through the Eucharist.

**Questions**

1. What opportunities for silence are included in your worship?

How do you get the chance both to ‘hear – and receive –

God’s holy word?

**3 scripture**

Romans 10:6-17

After reading the Scripture, keep a reflective silence for a few minutes, asking:

**Questions**

1. What strikes you from the Scripture, in the light of what we

Have been thinking about? What is God asking of us?

This leads to the penultimate part of the session…

**4 action point**

The rubric for the sermon directs: ‘The sermon may on occasion include less formal exposition of Scripture, the use of drama, interviews, discussion and audio-visual aids.’ In what diverse ways will you proclaim the Good News this week?

As you reflect together on your current practice of worship and mission, and how it might evolve, what issues emerge for you as a church? Is there anything you are prompted to do differently? How can your local celebration of the Eucharist better express the themes we have looked at?

**5 Closing prayer – from Eucharist**

Eternal God, giver of love and power,

your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world

to preach the gospel of his kingdom: confirm us in this mission,

and help us to live the good news we proclaim; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Go in peace

To love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ, Amen!**

 **TEACH…**

*baptise and nurture new believers*

***In this session we explore how the Eucharist both teaches us and forms us for mission***

**1 Opening Prayer - from Eucharist**

As we eat and drink these holy things in your presence,

form us in the likeness of Christ,

and build us into a living temple to your glory. *(Eucharistic Prayer G)*

Form us into the likeness of Christ
and make us a perfect offering in your sight. *(Eucharistic Prayer F)*

**2 reflection**

This mark of liturgy invites us to consider the way in which the Eucharist teaches us. Recent thinking opens up the concept of formation – Christian formation of the baptized, *liturgical formation* by which we are shaped and re-shaped by the practice of worship, through the action of the Holy Spirit. As one contemporary liturgy puts it, we are ‘formed by divine teaching.’

The model of Christian *formation* has in recent years become a key way in which we can look at the influences that shape our spiritual lives. Jeremiah’s image of the Potter working on the clay (18:1-6) reminds us that God not only makes us of dust of the earth, he wants to shape and refashion us. God longs to do wonderful things with the ‘raw material’ of a human life yielded in worship into his hands. Formation is a process by which a person gets reshaped. The metaphor of formation is drawn from the natural world, speaking of a creative process at work in the landscape both physical and spiritual. It implies that at the heart of worship is the raw material of our life, on which God acts in a creative way. Most of all, the language of formation communicates the need for us to undergo a series of *changes* in our inner life, an evolution. It implies a *process* of change. Let’s unpack 3 dimensions.

 **Unpacking liturgical formation**

**Liturgical formation welcomes God’s creativity**

Formation attests to God’s ever-creative process of shaping our lives. We become caught up in God’s awesome creativity, first celebrated in the hymn to creation: ‘And God saw that it was good’ (Gen.1). The language of formation evokes the second account of creation: ‘the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being’ (Gen 2:7). It recalls the language of the Psalms. Psalm 139:13-15 wonders at God’s secret moulding of the person in the womb, while Psalm 119:73 links formation and learning: *‘*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me, give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments’. Psalm 33:15 talks about God forming the inner person: *‘*he fashions and moulds every heart.’ God has a plan and design for each of us. He wants to do something beautiful in each of us, and enable us to reach our full potential in Christ. In worship and prayer, we detect the movements of the Creator Spirit. We dare to ask the question ‘what is God doing in my life?’ We seek to discern and celebrate how we are growing, evolving, emerging into, as Paul put it, *‘*God’s Work of Art’ (Eph. 2:10). God is ever-creative. ‘Consider not the past …. Behold I am doing a new thing: Now it springs forth – do you not perceive it?’ (Is. 43:18-19). We seek to discern and celebrate God’s creativity in our life, so that we can tentatively name what God is doing in us.

**Questions**

1. In what ways does your experience of worship open you up

to God’s creativity?

**Liturgical formation shapes our identity – Eucharist affirms us**

The Eucharist clarifies and strengthens our vocation as Christians.[[3]](#endnote-3) It powerfully reminds us, on each occasion, of our mission and vocation. Augustine put it:

If you, therefore, are Christ's body and members, it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord's table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving! You are saying *Amen* to what you are: your response is a personal signature, affirming your faith. When you hear *The Body of Christ* you reply *Amen.* Be a member of Christ's body, that your *Amen* may ring true! (Sermon 272).

*Lex orandi lex credendi:* this maxim addresses the centrality of worship in the life, identity and mission of the Anglican Church: ‘as we worship, so we believe’ – our identity and beliefs are embodied and expressed in liturgy and hymnody. This is sometimes expanded to as: ‘lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi’ - how we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we will live. Worship shapes our fundamental identity and dignity as baptized Christians.

Worship shapes our identity as Anglicans

Today’s *Common Worship* Eucharist embodies distinctive and well-loved Anglican prayers drawn from our *Book of Common Prayer* heritage: ‘Almighty God to whom all hearts are open’ (Collect for Purity, a 10th century Latin prayer translated by Thomas Cranmer into English); ‘We do not presume’ (Prayer of Humble Access).

The Eucharist reinforces our identity as members of the Universal Church too, as we share key texts with Catholic, Orthodox and other Christians: the Gloria in Excelsis is a 3rd or 4th cent hymn, the Nicene Creed dates from 325 and Eucharistic Prayer B is based on the 3rd century prayer by Hippolytus of Rome. These are formative texts that shape and reshape and affirm our identity as members ‘the one holy catholic and apostolic church.’

**Questions**

1. How do you experience affirmation of your Christian identity

in the Eucharist?

**Liturgical Formation clarifies our vocation – Eucharist calls us**

In Isaiah’s Servant Songs the language of formation is often used in partnership with that of vocation: *‘*Thus says the Lord, he who formed you, I have called you by name, you are mine’ (Is.43:1). ‘The people I have formed for myself that they declare my praise’ (Is.43:21). A similar link is found in God’s words to Jeremiah: ‘Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I consecrated you and I appointed you a prophet to the nations’ (Jer.1:5).

Christian vocation, of course, springs from Baptism. As Christ received at the Jordan the affirmation ‘You are My Beloved Son,’ so in Baptism God establishes our true identity as his beloved sons and daughters. Formation is alert to the uniqueness of

each person and attentive to questions of personal identity: Who am I? What am I becoming? What is God calling me to be? Formation encourages us to see vocation in dynamic not static terms, as something evolving, deepening, growing, not as a given ‘once for all’. We recognise signs of a vocation unfolding in the journey from Baptism to Heaven. We recognise our hidden gifts. We move towards total surrender to God and to the discovery within ourselves of gifts or talents that perhaps lie latent or unfulfilled. We get in touch with our destiny.

Paul emphasises our call to be transformed into Christ: ‘Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind’ (Romans 12. 2) . In another place he puts it: ‘Reflecting the glory of the Lord we are being changed – transformed - into his likeness from one degree of glory to another. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit’ (2 Corinthians 3:18). The Greek word Paul uses, *metamorphosis*, denotes a process of profound change.

Benedict XVI puts it: ‘The goal of the Eucharist is our own transformation, so that we become “one body and spirit” with Christ (1 Cor 6:17).’[[4]](#endnote-4) What changes might we seek in worship? What transformations or movements are we longing for? This might include growing awareness of God and self. The key transformation is growth into Christlikeness, closer resemblance to Christ, increasing identification with Christ, fulfilling our Baptism. Formation is not a narcissistic, individualistic process of self-discovery. It is the process by which we become more fully conformed and united to Christ our Risen Lord.

**Questions**

1. To what extent is your Christian life and vocation evolving?

**Liturgical formation opens us up to transformation – Eucharist changes us**

This work of transformation is essentially paschal, a walking in the Way of the Cross and in the Way of Resurrection.[[5]](#endnote-5) It requires a dying and rising, and letting go and letting God.

It may well be a costly and painful process, involving a tearing down before a building up… until we can say with Paul: ‘I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me’ (Galatians 2:20). We are caught up in the divine - human synergy: we become partners with God the Holy Spirit as, through prayer, he shapes us all into the people he wants us to be.

Ford and Hardy, in their work *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God*, explore the interplay between worship and learning. Noticing how God reframes our very patterns of thinking (‘rationality’) through worship:

We see knowing and praising God to be intrinsic to each other… Our conclusion about the rationality of knowing and praising God is that in this movement not only is God known…but also God enhances our rational powers. By knowing the reality of God we are changed by it, not only morally but also rationally. We are freed from the fixations and obsessions of reason…and are gently opened to being knit into a reality that is delightful as well as true. Then we realise that our very capacity to know and enjoy God has only been kept alive by the respect of God.[[6]](#endnote-6)

**Questions**

1. What transformations or movements do you notice in yourself

Through the course of the Eucharist? Consider, for example

how you feel in making confession/receiving absolution,

in your experience of receiving communion. Can you name the

shifts that take place in you?

1. How do these 3 themes find expression in your own life? What

Evidence do you see in your own life of these three themes?

What clues or indicators that they are happening?

Which element flourishes? Which element is a struggle?

 **Encountering the Divine through Sacraments**

The Anglican teaching document *The Revised Catechism* asks: ‘What do you mean by a sacrament?’ The response is: ‘By a sacrament I mean the use of material things as signs and pledges of God’s grace, and as a means by which we receive his gifts.’

**Questions**

1. If sacraments are a ‘means of grace’, a potentially life-changing

Encounter with the Divine, a sure meeting-point with God, how

Should we prepare ourselves? Do we need to enlarge our

Expectations of what God might do in us through the Eucharist?

What do you think?

**3 scripture**

Matthew 28:18-20

After reading the Scripture, keep a reflective silence for a few minutes, asking:

**Questions**

1. What strikes you from the Scripture, in the light of what we

Have been thinking about? What is God asking of us?

This leads to the penultimate part of the session…

**4 action point**

As you reflect together on your current practice of worship and mission, and how it might evolve, what issues emerge for you as a church? Is there anything you are prompted to do differently? How can your local celebration of the Eucharist better express the themes we have looked at?

**5 Closing prayer – from Eucharist**

Almighty Father,

whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world:

may your people,

illumined by your word and sacraments,

shine with the radiance of his glory,

that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed

to the ends of the earth;

for he is alive and reigns, now and forever *(PC Epiphany 3)*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ, Amen!**

 **TEND…**

*respond to human need by loving service*

***In this session we see how hospitality and intercession lead to ministry and self-offering***

**1 Opening Prayers- from Eucharist**

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father

Hasten, Lord, the day when people will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit at table in your kingdom and we shall see your Son in his glory

*(CW Supplementary texts: intercessions)*

Wise and gracious God, You spread a table before us;

Nourish your people with the word of life and the bread of heaven. Amen

*(CW Supplementary texts: preparation of the table)*

**2 reflection**

In today’s session we look at two major themes: hospitality and intercession

**Utter openness to the other**

The attitude that we hold in relation to strangers and visitors to the Eucharist will shape our outlook and approach to ‘the Other’ that we encounter through the week.

Luke’s gospel reminds us that Jesus chose the inclusive meal as the primary symbol of the Kingdom. There are meals in almost every chapter: he rejoices to eat with tax collectors and sinners, he shares a banquet with Levi (ch.5), a dinner with Simon (ch.7) and a meal with Pharisees (ch. 11). He reveals himself at Emmaus in the breaking of bread (ch.24). On many occasions, and throughout Luke ch.14, these raise issues pertinent to our celebration of the Eucharist and to our mission in the world: who is invited? Who is welcomed, unconditionally? How inclusive can we be, or are there limits? James had to challenge his church:

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, ‘Have a seat here, please’, while to the one who is poor you say, ‘Stand there’, or, ‘Sit at my feet’, have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.**’** (James 1:27-2:8)

**Questions**

1. What does this say to our own situation? Are there people

we feel hesitant about? Can we name our own prejudices or

blind spots?

1. Who is marginalized or not represented in your Eucharist, from

among the local community? What does this suggest about

priorities for your church’s mission?

 **What are we doing in intercession?**

One of the thorniest but vital aspects that a Christian will need to ponder is their whole understanding of intercessory prayer. It can degenerate very quickly into an attempt to use God, advise God, and escape our responsibilities. Ward puts it plainly: ‘The Christian idea of intercession is that it is not a means we employ to persuade God to act in a situation he has presumably overlooked or into which he needs to be a summoned, but a means God employs to summon *our* help through our membership in the Body of Christ.’ [[7]](#endnote-7)

Sometimes we hear reference to ‘effective prayer’. This often implies how we can get good results from our intercessions, how our prayers could ‘storm heaven’. We want to learn the secret of ‘prayers that work’. But what if we looked at this differently – maybe with an understanding of ‘effective prayer’ as quite the opposite. Prayer might be seen as coming before God in a spirit of listening to him and utter availability to him, and giving God a chance to work on us!

A common approach to intercession is that it is about ‘handing over to God’ the worries and concerns on our hearts, an entrusting to him of situations, a making of specific requests. In this view, it is essentially about talking: pleading with God, advising God. But what if it started to be about listening – a double listening: hearing the cries of the earth and discerning the whispers of heaven? What if noisy incessant intercessory prayer gave way to reflection, and allowed a place for meditating on God’s kingdom and his purposes?

For John Macquarrie, prayer helps to heal the human experience of fragmentedness and individualistic isolation, enabling the prayer to see the world as a whole: ‘prayer enables us to see things in perspective…Prayer changes our vision of the world…Prayer interprets the world.’[[8]](#endnote-8) Rowan Williams describes prayer as involving ‘the project of reconditioning perception.’[[9]](#endnote-9) Prayer can become the place where real discernment is possible, where we see things with fresh eyes. A. and B. Ulanov in *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer* write of the transformations in perception that can take place in the course of prayer:

This means we are living now in rearranged form. We are the same persons and yet radically different…The theme that dominates our lives now is the effort to correspond with grace. We want to go with the little signs and fragments of new being given us in prayer.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Thus, prayer entails the risk of change, in which, little by little, perceptions are revised, self-acceptance grows, and contradictions, if not resolved, become better understood. Effective prayer is, then, not about seeking to influence God, but about allowing God to do extraordinary things in us. But it requires of us the ability to silence our own admonitions and advice-giving to God, which can be a feature of intercessory prayer (as if we were advising the Almighty what he should do next). It requires us to come to a place of vulnerability and receptivity before God.

The Intercessions in the Eucharist call us to listen both to God and to the needs of the world, that we may offer ourselves for involvement in God’s mission. It is the moment in the celebration where we are reminded of our vocation to be in touch with the passionate and compassionate heart-beat of God and with the pulse of a world in need of healing. Intercessions become the springboard for ministry.

**Questions**

1. What do you think happens when you pray for others? What

would you like to happen?

1. How do you think the practice of intercessory prayer might

change your outlook on a situation?

1. Have you experienced the shifting or revising of perceptions

when you pray?

 **Wisdom from the East**

Joseph the Visionary, (8th Century Abbot of Church of the East, Iraq) describes how intercessory prayer might change us and lead to action and ministry. He affirms that a

sign of the operation of the Spirit in you is the mercifulness that fashions within you the image of God, so that when your thought is extended to all people, tears are shed from your eyes like fountains of water. It is as if they are all dwelling in your heart, and you lovingly embrace them and kiss them, pouring your kindness over them in your thought. Whenever you remember them your heart is kindled by the power of the Spirit working in you like a fire. This engenders in your heart goodness and kindliness, so that you cannot bring yourself to speak any unkind thing to any person, nor does your imagination think evil of anyone, but you do good to all, in thought and deed.[[11]](#endnote-11)

This resonates with the late Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey’s definition of intercession as ‘coming before God with the people on your heart’ *(The Christian Priest Today).*

**Intercession and self-offering**

So, intercession must lead to self-offering. It does not let you off the hook or allow you to think that your duty is done by praying. Self-offering is at the heart of intercession as we place ourselves at God's disposal for the outworking of his purposes. One way in which God answers prayer is through his body on earth – the body of Christ. God is seeking people who will listen to him and allow themselves to be caught up into his unfolding purposes. In praying for healing, for example, we offer ourselves to be instruments of peace, for as Teresa of Avila reminds us 'Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours... ours are the hands with which he is to bless and heal people now.' As Evelyn Underhill put it: 'real intercession is not merely a petition but a piece of work, involving costly self-surrender to God for the work he wants done on other souls.'[[12]](#endnote-12)

In the Eucharist, we find ourselves caught up into the very movement and flow of Christ's self-offering: interceding for others, we find ourselves offering ourselves for others. The dynamic of the Eucharist takes us to the Cross at the altar and then catapults us out into the world. The Eucharist is a river of sacrificial love, drawing us into its current - celebrating Christ’s self-offering, we find ourselves saying: ‘Through him we offer ourselves to be a living sacrifice. Send us out…’

**Questions**

1. What links, if any, do you see between intercession and

vocation = what God is asking of you?

1. How do you think God answers prayer?
2. How alert are your intercessions to the hurts and wounds

of the world?

**Hands of prayer become hands of action**

Consider using your hands expressively in this exercise. Begin by clenching your fists tight and holding them before you. Feel the tension and let these fists represent an anger or frustration that bothers you today, or a situation in the world that you feel strongly about. Hold them before God in the solidarity of prayer and intercession.

Second, slowly open your downturned palms and let go of the tension. Let it fall away from you to God. In this gesture, give to God any negative feelings or stresses; feel them drip out of your fingertips, as it were. Surrender the situation to God’s providence and sovereignty.

Third, turn your hands upwards in a gesture of surrender to God and of receiving from God. Recall the blessing God has given you in the receiving on Holy Communion in these palms. Breathe in his empowering Spirit, who will give you the courage for action.

Finally, take a look at your hands. Feel the creases, their complexion; trace the lines. They witness to your unique human journey, with its mix of pleasure and pain. But now they are ready to reach out to others, to touch others. Is there an action that God is calling you to make in relation to your initial concern? What should you do as a result of your prayer – something bold, something risky or compassionate?

**3 scripture**

Luke 4:14-20; Luke 14: 7-23.

After reading the Scripture, keep a reflective silence for a few minutes, asking:

**Questions**

1. What strikes you from the Scripture, in the light of what we

Have been thinking about? What is God asking of us?

This leads to the penultimate part of the session…

**4 action point**

Write prayers suitable for use at a Sunday Eucharist or main service. What would you include/ exclude?

As you reflect together on your current practice of worship and mission, and how it might evolve, what issues emerge for you as a church? Is there anything you are prompted to do differently? How can your local celebration of the Eucharist better express the themes we have looked at?

**5 Closing prayers – from Eucharist**

Lord Jesus Christ,

you have taught us

that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters

we do also for you:

give us the will to be the servant of others

as you were the servant of all,

and gave up your life and died for us,

but are alive and reign, now and for ever. *(PC, Lent 5)*

God of all mercy, in the Eucharist you have set aside our sins and given us your healing: grant that we who are made whole in Christ may bring that healing to this broken world, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *(PC, Trinity 12)*

Go in peace

To love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ, Amen!**

 **TRANSFORM…**

*unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, pursue peace and reconciliation.*

***In this session we identify elements in the Eucharist that support and inspire engagement with struggles for peace.***

**1 Opening prayers from Eucharist**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,

that we should always sing of your glory,

holy Father, almighty and eternal God,

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

For you are the hope of the nations,

the builder of the city that is to come.

Your love made visible in Jesus Christ

brings home the lost,

restores the sinner

and gives dignity to the despised.

In his face your light shines out,

flooding lives with goodness and truth,

gathering into one in your kingdom

a divided and broken humanity. *(Preface for days after All Saints’ Day)*

Lord of all life,

help us to work together for that day

when your kingdom comes

and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth. *(Eucharistic Prayer E)*

To the darkness Jesus came as your light.

With signs of faith and words of hope

he touched untouchables with love and washed the guilty clean.

*(Eucharistic Prayer D)*

Look with favour on your people

And in your mercy hear the cry of our hearts.

Bless the earth,

Heal the sick,

Let the oppressed go free

And fill your Church with power from on high *(Eucharistic Prayer F)*

God of all mercy,

in the eucharist you set aside our sins

and give us your healing:

grant that we who are made whole in Christ

may bring that healing to this broken world,

in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *(PC Trinity 12)*

**2 reflection**

Let’s unpack the meaning of four actions of the eucharist….

*Sign of peace*: As we share a sign of mutual acceptance and reconciliation, around the table Christ forms a people in radical equality, community and dignity. Some of those present will have received no human touch in the last week, and this sign heals a sense of alienation and loneliness. Others may know a fractured relationship which can be restored through such gestures of reconciliation. The spiritual symbolism of the act is found in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus said, “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). Here we are offered a powerful image of our vocation to be reconcilers and agents of God's healing in a broken, fragmenting world.

**Questions**

1. What divisions are you aware of in your own context?
2. Who will you reach out your hands to this week? Which

outsider will you welcome and affirm this week?

*Calling down the Holy Spirit (Epiclesis)*

A key moment in the Eucharist is an invocation to God the Father to send down the Holy Spirit for the work of transformation.

This is a double invocation. The descent of the Spirit is sought for the transformation of the elements of bread and wine, so that they become *different*, charged in some way with the very presence of the Risen Lord:

Pour out your Holy Spirit as we bring before you

these gifts of your creation;

may they be for us the body and blood of your dear Son. *(Eucharistic Prayer G)*

Further, we plead that the transforming Spirit may descend on and touch our very lives:

Send the Holy Spirit on your people
and gather into one in your kingdom
all who share this one bread and one cup *(Eucharistic Prayer B)*

Send your Spirit on us now    that by these gifts we may feed on Christ

    with opened eyes and hearts on fire. *(Eucharistic Prayer D)*

In the Eucharist we pray that by the overshadowing of the Spirit, we too might become different, transformed, energized and ready to participate in God’s mission in the world.

**Questions**

1. What transformation by the Spirit do you seek?

*Breaking of Bread (Fraction)*: As we recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread, we see before our eyes the clearest possible expression of ministry and mission: to be consecrated for God and to be broken and given for the people. As the Ordination rite in the Catholic tradition puts it, at the giving of the Chalice: 'Realize what you are doing; imitate what you handle.'

**Questions**

1. How will the bread of our lives be broken and shared this week?

As we recognize the presence of Christ, in some way, in fragments of broken bread and in poured out wine, so we recommit ourselves to discover Christ in the broken and torn bread of people’s lives. We seek to fulfil Matthew 25's injunction: 'I was sick and you visited me', finding Christ in broken, fragile bread-like lives: the **sacrament of the poor.** The Eucharist, celebrating ‘God with us’ and ‘the Word made flesh' in the physicality and materiality of created elements, prompts us to go out into God's world and become ever more alert to God's presence in human lives: to rediscover the sacramentality of all of life. St. John Chrysostom (Hom. 50:3-4), asks:

Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: ‘This is my body’ is the same who said: ‘You saw me hungry and you gave me no food’, and ‘whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me...’ What good is it if the Eucharistic table is over loaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta challenges us: 'If you really love Jesus in the Eucharist, you will naturally want to put that love into action by serving him in his distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor. We cannot separate these two things: the Eucharist and the Poor'.[[13]](#endnote-13)

*Communion*: Further, as we hold out empty and expectant hands as we receive the gift of Holy Communion, can we see in this action a reminder of the call to go out into the world to respond to both physical and spiritual hungers: to feed the poor and the spiritually hungry of the parish?

**Questions**

1. What spiritual or physical thirsts and hungers are you aware

of in your own community? Who and how will you feed this

week?

 **A freedom meal**

On the night he was betrayed he came to table with his friends to celebrate the freedom of your people *(Eucharistic Prayer D)*

‘Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast’ (1 Cor. 5:7). From the Hebrew *pesach* and the Greek *pascha* we get in English the word ‘paschal’, understanding the events of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection in terms of a new Passover. The very origin of the word Passover concerns the *limen* of the Exodus: God’s instruction to his people on the brink of their liberation from the captivity and slavery of Pharaoh is this: ‘take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household...the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses....The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you (Ex. 12: 3, 6-7, 13). The very threshold of the house is marked by the blood of the lamb. This is the starting line of the race to freedom, the brink of escape: blood on the wood.

Jesus gathers his friends for a final Passover together.[[14]](#endnote-14) Jesus understood his passion in terms of a new and final Passover. The disciples are expecting the usual elements, which include bread and wine, to be accompanied by the traditional *haggadah*, the words of interpretation. At every Passover meal the son is prompted to ask the father: ‘Dad, why are we doing this?’ (see Exodus 13:8). This prompts the father to rehearse the story of salvation as has it been received by the tradition: the story of the Exodus. However Jesus gives a stunningly alternative *haggadah* and thereby reveals what he thinks about his impending death. ‘This cup, which you are expecting to recall the Exodus, is my blood to be shed for you. This unleavened bread, which you are expecting to recall the eve of liberation, the night before the great escape to freedom, is my body to be broken for you.’ In these words, Jesus is suggesting that the wood of the cross will become a new lintel, a new doorway to freedom, the threshold of a new exodus into freedom, not from the tyranny of a pharaoh but from humanity’s greatest enemies: death and sin. Blood on the wood: a new deliverance is at hand.

All the usual elements of the Passover are present at the Last Supper, according to the gospel accounts – the bread, the cup, the dish (dipping sauce for bitter herbs), the closing hymn – but one thing is not mentioned, one thing is missing. There is no reference to the lamb itself. It seems that Jesus understands himself as the paschal lamb. The Baptist had greeted him at the very beginning as the ‘lamb of God’.

Jesus had earlier identified with the suffering servant of Isaiah, who spoke of the ‘lamb that is led to the slaughter.’[[15]](#endnote-15) In his action at the table, which becomes the basis for the Christian Eucharist, he is inaugurating a new exodus, a new Passover, a new beginning for humanity. He is telling us that he sees the coming cross as making possible a new release from captivity and from the incarceration of death and sin.

The Eucharist is truly a new Passover, a freedom meal, celebrating the new exodus, the new liberation from slavery to sin and death that Christ has won for us. As Charles Wesley sings: ‘My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.’

**Questions**

1. What captivities of body or soul are you aware of in your own

context? Who is imprisoned in some way?

1. What are the liberations which Christ makes possible for us?
2. How will we lead people this week into the liberation Christ

opens for us?

**A vison of wholeness**

The Eucharist opens up for us a vision of a world renewed, where diverse peoples are united in one family around the table, and where physical, material elements from creation, bread and wine, are surrendered and transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit. As the liturgy puts it:

Gather your people from the ends of the earth

to feast with all your saints

at the table in your Kingdom,

where the new creation is brought to perfection

in Jesus Christ our Lord *(Eucharistic Prayer F)*

Bring us at the last with all the saints

to the vision of that eternal splendour

for which you have created us *(Eucharistic Prayer G)*

We thank you, Lord, that you have fed us in this sacrament,

united us with Christ,

and given us a forestate of the heavenly banquet

prepared for all peoples. *(Prayer after Communion).*

**3 scripture**

Matthew 25:31-46

After reading the Scripture, keep a reflective silence for a few minutes, asking:

**Questions**

1. What strikes you from the Scripture, in the light of what we

Have been thinking about? What is God asking of us?

This leads to the penultimate part of the session…

**4 action point**

As you reflect together on your current practice of worship and mission, and how it might evolve, what issues emerge for you as a church? Is there anything you are prompted to do differently? How can your local celebration of the Eucharist better express the themes we have looked at?

**5 Closing prayers – from Eucharist**

Eternal God,

comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken,

you have fed us at the table of life and hope:

teach us the ways of gentleness and peace,

that all the world may acknowledge

the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *(PC Trinity 4)*

As the grain once scattered in the fields

and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside

are now reunited on this table in bread and wine,

so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered together

from the corners of the earth

into your Kingdom. *(Prayer at the Preparation of the Table, second century)*

Go in peace

To love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ, Amen!**

 **TREASURE…**

*safeguard the integrity of creation, sustain and renew the life of the earth*

***In this closing session we consider environmental challenges from the Eucharist and the sacramentality of creation***

**1 Opening Prayers from Eucharist**

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have this bread to set before you, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have this wine to set before you, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become for us the cup of salvation. *(Prayers of preparation at the table)*

It is always right to give you thanks,

God our Creator,

loving and faithful,

holy and strong.

You made us

and the whole universe,

and filled your world with life. *(Additional Eucharistic Prayer One)*

Blessed are you, Lord God,

our light and our salvation;

to you be glory and praise for ever.

From the beginning you have created all things

and all your works echo the silent music of your praise.

In the fullness of time you made us in your image,

the crown of all creation.

You give us breath and speech, that with angels and archangels

and all the powers of heaven

we may find a voice to sing your praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,**

**God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest. *(****Eucharistic Prayer G)*

**2 reflection**

Let’s unpack the meaning of some more of the actions of the eucharist…

*Offertory*: Re-read the *Prayers of Preparation at the Table* (above)*.*  In this action we are doing at least two things.

As God’s people at the Offertory bring up to the holy table their bread, 'which earth has given and human hands have made', so in this action we surrender our daily work and labour to God. The bread has come from a long process of divine gifting and human work- planting, nurturing, harvesting, milling, baking- so it is fitting symbol of human labour brought to God in this action. The wine brought up to the altar is a double symbol, representing both human sorrows and joys offered up to God. The chalice holds 'wine to gladden the human heart' (Ps 104:15) but also evokes the cup of suffering (Mk14:36).

This action also speaks volumes about our approach to creation and material things- about our mindset and how we actually handle things – or rather gifts – from the created world. They can be revealers of the Divine. Handled with reverence, surrendered to God, material elements communicate divine truths and divine presence. The world can become sacrament, as we notice God’s presence not only in bread, wine, oil and water, but in all things…

**Questions**

1. What labours does the bread represent for us? What joys or

Sorrows do we wish to see poured as wine into the chalice?

What is your default approach to ‘things’ from creation?

*Thanksgiving*: As God's people are invited to 'lift up their hearts' so we are called to live a Eucharistic life, marked by daily praise and fulfilling the injunction to 'pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances' (1 Th 5:17).This powerfully reshapes our mindset and attitudes to see all created things as ‘gift’ to be shared and celebrated, not as ‘stuff’ to be grasped and used.

**Questions**

1. How can we ‘lift up our hearts’ on a Monday morning?

What difference might that make to our lifestyle?

*Consecration*: As the priest takes bread and wine into his or her hands and asks that by the power of the Holy Spirit these natural elements may become for us the Body and Blood of Christ, so we see a powerful image of God's call to us to surrender into his hands the raw material of our lives, that we may become Christ-bearers for our needy world. As we noted, a Eucharistic prayer in *Common Worship* puts it: 'form us into the likeness of Christ.' We find ourselves caught up into the dynamic and movement of Christ's self-offering to the Father, as we make remembrance (*anamnesis)* of the Cross.

**Questions**

1. What are we offering to God of ourselves in the Eucharist?

What are we holding back?

*Blessing*: As the priest blesses the people and sends them forth into mission with the words: ‘Go in peace to love and serve the Lord’, so we are reminded that God empowers us not for our own benefit but for the sake of the world.

**Questions**

1. Who will we bless this week? How can we be a blessing to others?

**The Eucharist and the New Creation: scripture and saints**

The Eucharist both brings us back to the God-given origins of the world, and points us forward to a vision of the new creation, in which a fallen fragmenting world is restored in Christ. What parts of Scripture can you recall that celebrate the givenness and gift of creation?

First we recall how the poem or hymn of creation found in the opening lines of Genesis celebrates the goodness to God’s world: ‘The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good’ (Gen1:12).

And at the very centre of the Bible the rich poem of the Song of Songs invites to enjoy a spontaneous delight in the beauty of creation and to rediscover a sacramental approach to the world.[[16]](#endnote-16) In this Wisdom literature, the garden becomes a meeting place for lovers, place of the tryst, the bride and groom celebrating their love. It resonates with a key life-affirming undercurrent in Jewish spirituality: the goodness and givenness of creation. Indeed, the most typical form of Jewish prayer is the *berakhah*, the blessing of God for his gifts: ‘Blessed are you, Lord God, King of the universe…’

The Hebrew prophets, seeing the land as sacred, employ metaphors facing them each day in their very environment:

I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon (Hos 14:5-7).

**Jesus takes a contemplative look at the world**

Summoning us into the new creation, Jesus invites us: ‘Consider the lilies, how they grow’ (Luke 12:27). ‘Consider’: the Greek word means ‘turn your attention to this, notice what is happening, take a long, slow look.’ Jesus summons us to a contemplative way of living, a deeply reflective way of seeing the world. Learn to perceive things differently. This sacramental way of viewing reality becomes a dominant theme in the fourth gospel. Jesus sees wine, vines, water, bread, sunlight and candlelight, even shepherding as speaking of himself. The other gospels combine to give us the clear impression that this was an outlook on the world that was truly characteristic of Jesus himself. The secrets of the Kingdom reveal themselves through the elements of earth, sky and sea: all creation becomes a parable of God’s reign.

**Francis of Assisi,** patron saint of ecology, gives us clues for an approach to the world that celebrates a kinship and sense of unity with creation. In his *Canticle of Creation* he hailed the sun as brother and the moon as sister; he greeted Sister Water and Brother Wind, and in his ministry he approached the fearsome wolf of Gubbio as ‘brother.’ Franciscan prayer nurtures such an appreciative and respective approach to the world of nature, and overcomes what Martin Buber last century characterised as an ‘I/It’ relationship, nudging us towards an ‘I-Thou ‘relationship. The former regards the other as an object to be studied or utilised for our benefit: the latter sees the Other as subject in his or her own right who might just change us in the course of genuine encounter.[[17]](#endnote-17) Francis invites us, indeed, to move from a ‘I-Thou’ relationship which still distinguishes and separates, towards a communion with the Other, symbolised in his embrace of the despised leper.[[18]](#endnote-18) He invites us to recognise and celebrate the radical and essential interconnectedness of all things and of all people, as in his great prayer:

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all blessing,

To You alone, Most High, do they belong,and no human is worthy to mention Your name.Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun,Who is the day and through whom You give us light.And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather..

These words invite us to share with Francis a deep connectedness to all things that is honouring and non-exploitative.

**Contemporary approaches**

Pope Francis opens his 2015 encyclical *Care of our common home* with the words *Laudato Si’* – ‘Praise be to you, my Lord’ – quoting St Francis’ Canticle of Creation. It is a passionate appeal to all people of good will to address the devastating effects of climate change on people and the planet. Pope Francis' encyclical emphasizes the connection between environmental degradation and poverty, between the love for creation and poverty reduction and the interconnection between human dignity, human development and human ecology. Peoples across the world are being pushed deeper into poverty due to the changing climate and our faith moves us to speak out in solidarity.

In his chapter ‘Ecological Education and Spirituality’ Francis calls us to an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith. Calling us towards a new lifestyle, he says that what we need is

an ‘ecological conversion’, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.

He goes on

Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. We need to take up an ancient lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that ‘less is more’. A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures.[[19]](#endnote-19)

We are being summoned from a pragmatic and self-centred consumer mentality, so deeply entrenched in our culture and mind-set, to seeing creation as not an entity to be manipulated or exploited but a divine presence to be honoured.[[20]](#endnote-20)

**Questions**

1. If the Eucharist communicates to us a reverence for created

things, delight in creation and a sense of simplicity, how does

our lifestyle and daily choices about the use of our money reveal

that we are not trapped by consumerism but might even reveal

a prophetic, counter-cultural way of living? What do you think

of the phrase ‘less is more’? What does it mean for you,

practically speaking?

We join with Pope Francis in his prayer:

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good,
advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

**3 scripture**

Matthew 6:25-33

After reading the Scripture, keep a reflective silence for a few minutes, asking:

**Questions**

1. What strikes you from the Scripture, in the light of what we

have been thinking about? What is God asking of us?

This leads to the penultimate part of the session…

**4 action point**

Is there anything you might do differently as a result of this course, in terms of your preparation for, participation in and moving out from, the celebration of the Eucharist?

Are there any changes or developments you would like to see in the local celebration of the Eucharist that would emphasize and illuminate its vital connections with today’s mission in the world?

**Concluding thoughts**

We have considered together elements within the Eucharist which can inspire and empower mission. Indeed, the Eucharist becomes a manifesto for mission, calling us to clear priorities. At the very heart of the Eucharist is the celebration of the Cross, Passion and Resurrection of the Lord. It is the paschal mystery, the mystery of Easter, the mystery of God's sharing and redeeming our human pain, that will help make sense of the daily practice of ministry – rather, it is the key, the heart of ministry and mission. What is proclaimed in the Eucharist – in both Word and Sacrament – is nothing less than the very message we will live out in our daily mission.

We welcome the presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament and then go to search out his real presence in the lives of the sacrament of the poor. The Bishop of Zanzibar put it memorably in his 1923 address *Your Present Duty*. He spoke of the joy of encountering the Risen Christ in the Eucharist, but this was to be a beginning not an ending of the quest for the Risen Lord:

Now go out into the highways and hedges … Go out and look for Jesus in the ragged, in the naked, in the oppressed and sweated, in those who have lost hope, in those who are struggling to make good. Look for Jesus. And when you see him, gird yourselves with his towel and try to wash their feet. [[21]](#endnote-21)

We recall again the affirmation of Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body now but yours.

No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

YOU are Corpus Christi! You are the Body of Christ! Live out the Eucharist! As a prayer deriving from the Syriac tradition of St Ephrem (fourth century) puts it:

Strengthen for service, Lord,

the hands that have taken holy things;

may the ears which have heard your word

be deaf to clamour and dispute;

may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit;

may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope;

and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life;

glory to you for ever. *(Post Communion Prayer Trinity 8)*

As we recalled, a key moment in the Eucharist is the *epiclesis* calling down the Holy Spirit on the gifts of bread and wine for their transformation: so let us pray that the same Spirit may transform us and make us Christ-bearers to a hurting world:

Send your Spirit on us now

that by these gifts we may feed on Christ

with opened eyes and hearts on fire.

May we and all who share this food

offer ourselves to live for you

And be welcomed at your feast in heaven

where all creation worships you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

Blessing and honour and glory and power

be yours for ever and ever, Amen! *(Eucharist Prayer D)*

**5 Closing prayers**

Friends, God has touched you with his love and given you a place among his people. God promises to be with you in joy and in sorrow, to be your guide in life, and to bring you safely to heaven.

In baptism, God invites you on a lifelong journey. Together with all God’s people you must explore the way of Jesus and grow in friendship with God, in love for his people, and in serving others. With us you will listen to the word of God and receive the gifts of God.

Those who are baptised are called to worship and serve God. Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? *With the help of God, I will.*

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord? *With the help of God, I will.*

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

*With the help of God, I will.*

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself?

*With the help of God, I will.*

Will you acknowledge Christ’s authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?

*With the help of God, I will.*

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, that you may be rooted and grounded in love and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.[[22]](#endnote-22)

Father of light,

in whom is no change or shadow of turning,

you give us every good and perfect gift

and have brought us to birth by your word of truth:

may we be a living sign of that kingdom

where your whole creation will be made perfect in Jesus Christ our Lord. *(PC, Trinity 21)*

Lord Jesus Christ,

we thank you that in this wonderful sacrament

you have given us the memorial of your passion:

grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries of your body and blood

that we may know within ourselves

and show forth in our lives

the fruits of your redemption;

for you are alive and reign with the Father

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. *(Corpus Christi Collect)*

Send us out in the power of your Spirit

To live and work for your praise and glory

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen!

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!

***In the Name of Christ, AMEN!***

1. Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1987), p. 48 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Archbishops’ Council, *mission-shaped church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), p. 104. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See also, F. C. Senn, *The Witness of the Worshiping Community: Liturgy and the Practice of Evangelism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993); P. McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church* (Eastern Christian Publications, 2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 86. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. There can be a creative place for struggle. See Andrew D. Mayes, *Spirituality of Struggle: Pathways to Growth* (SPCK, 2002) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. D.F. Ford and D.W. Hardy, *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God* (DLT, London, 2005), 142 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. J. N. Ward, *The Use of Praying* (London: Epworth Press, 1967), p. 87**.** [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. J. Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (London: SCM, 1972)*,*p. 34. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. R. Williams, *Teresa of Avila* (London: Continuum, 1991), p. 156. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. A. & B. Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p.122. See also experiences of God as understood as perception in W.P. Alson, *Perceiving God: the Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Joseph the Visionary in Brain E. Coles (tr.), *The Wisdom of the Pearlers: an anthology of Syriac Christian Mysticism* (Cistercian Publications, 2008), p 146 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. E. Underhill, *Life as Prayer* (London: Mowbray, 1946), p. 59. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. From www.motherteresacause.info [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. The synoptic gospels give clues that the Last Supper is a Passover celebration. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Scholar Jeremias puts it: ‘With the words *deb bishri,* ‘this is my (sacrificial) flesh’, and *den idmi,* ‘this is my (sacrificial) blood’, Jesus is therefore most probably speaking of himself as the paschal lamb. He is *the eschatological paschal lamb*, representing the fulfilment of all that of which the Egyptian paschal lamb and all the subsequent sacrificial paschal lambs were the prototype.’ J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (SCM, London, 1966), p. 223. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. For a recent exploration of garden imagery see Jennifer Rees Larcombe , ***A Year’s Journey with God*** (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. M. Buber, *I and Thou* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004) [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. See, for example, J. M. Stoutzenberger & J. D. Bohrer, *Praying with Francis of Assisi* (Winona, Mass: Saint Mary’s Press, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’, Care of our Common Home,* paragraphs 217, 222 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. We might begin by using the environmental toolkit via www.ecocongregation.org [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Address of Bishop Francis Weston to the Anglo-Catholic Congress 1923, from anglicanhistory.org [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Archbishops’ Council, *Services of Initiation* (Church House Publishing, 1998), pp. 164–65. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)