



EPISODE 1 : CENTRE

How do we make Jesus the Lord of our Lives?



Guest Speaker: Fr Toby Lees OP

“¡Viva, Cristo Rey!” this was the resounding battle cry of the Cristeros, the name given by the government to those Mexican rebels, who refused to deny the name of Jesus Christ, during a vicious persecution of Catholics in Mexico from 1926-1929, a war described by Graham Greene as “the fiercest persecution of religion anywhere since the reign of Elizabeth.” And on the subject of Graham Greene, if you want an amazing book to read, try his book *The Power and the Glory*, it made me cry, one of only two books I’ve cried during.

“¡Viva Cristo Rey!” was the final confession on the lips of Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, a martyr of the Cristeros war. He wasn’t a resistance fighter as such, just a Catholic priest who despite the threat of persecution ran an underground ministry, teaching about God and bringing God to the people in the sacraments.

In 1927, Father Miguel was falsely charged and sentenced to death without due trial for the attempted assassination of Mexico’s former president, President Álvaro Obregón, but the reality was he was arrested and killed for nothing more than being a faithful Catholic priest.

Photographs of his execution were ordered by President Calles and were intended to show the cowardly death of a Catholic priest. Ironically, what has been seared into the memory of Mexican Catholics is the very opposite of what Calles intended. The photographs immortalize an otherworldly truth. If you look at them, you’ll see a man with all the self-possession, all the serenity that Jesus displays in His encounter with Pilate before His death.

Both literally and figuratively, Father Miguel’s life and death take the form of the cross. With arms outstretched in cruciform fashion, rosary in one hand and a crucifix in the other, facing the firing squad with fierce and fearless serenity, Miguel Pro defied every worldly power. It is said that he cried out in a clear and steady voice, “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” just as the bullets riddled his body.

After the publicity around the martyrdom of Bl. Miguel started to backfire, subsequent Mexican martyrs would have their tongue cut out before they were martyred for their faith so they could not cry out these words. But their sacrifice spoke the words all the same, and the words “Viva Cristo Rey” would not be silenced as brave Catholics broke the law to bury their martyrs... even that had now been made illegal, and many would line the streets for their funeral processions, and whilst you might silence one or two men and women, you cannot silence whole towns, and so they would shout out “Viva Cristo Rey!” as their dead passed by.

At the end of their lives, then, these martyrs had on their lips and hearts, words that we might be tempted to translate as:

“Long live Christ the King”, but which don’t mean that; rather, “Viva Cristo Rey” is not the expression of a wish, such as when people cried out at the coronation of King Charles, “Long Live the King”, rather it’s a statement of fact, a statement of faith, “Christ the King, He lives!”

Christ the King lives. He has always lived; He will always live. He is Lord. But will I accept His Lordship, and what does that mean to accept the Lordship of God?

Or is it something I can ignore? Well, no, just as the people who wear those shirts saying, "Not my president" are not stating a fact, but a wish, either Christ is or is not God, and if he is then my denial or ignoring of this does not change the fact.

If Christ is King the question becomes, how will I live? Will I live in accordance with this truth? And it's a real question because Jesus does not force it.

Just as atheism could not be forced on the devout Mexican masses despite their slaughter by their own government, so faith cannot be forced, without destroying the trust that lies at the heart of the relationship of faith. It's why it's wonderful that whatever place you are in with your faith right now, that you're watching this. I'll try and make it worth your while!

Faith, like love, must be free to be real.

And faith, like love, also has to have real content to be true. To cry out "Viva Cristo Rey" is to speak a truth, but we are called to not simply say this, but live the truth of this. Many have walked away from the Church in recent years, some because they found the gospel too hard, but others because they found the words of priests like me too hollow.

The heart of our faith is that the Word became Flesh, and that's supposed to be true not just of Jesus but of us too. Faith is not just belief, it's lived belief, belief made flesh.

But the gospel is hard, that's why Jesus got killed for preaching it, and it's why Christians still suffer for it today. Even simply refraining from gossip can be difficult.

There are lots of things that I notionally accept as true, but I don't really live the reality. One might be the need to combat climate change, and then you might think but do I try actually try and meaningfully use less electricity? Do I actually suggest walking when we might normally drive?

Don't settle for that gap always being there, but don't stress too much about it, or don't let it be the reason for quitting, let it be the reason for accepting Christ. St Paul knows our difficulty, when he writes, "I do that which I do not wish to do".

For most of us, there is a gap between who we want to be and who we are, what we want to do and what we do. Who has ever revised as much as they intended for exams?! Who gets to bed as early as they intended the night before a big day at work? Who had just one biscuit when they said to themselves, "just one!"

We find it hard to rule ourselves, let alone let Christ rule in our lives. But if we truly believe that Christ is King, we need to let Him begin to rule in us, or our words will be, to quote St Paul again, "nothing more than a clashing symbol."

To be ruled by Christ is essential to the life of a Christian. One of the reasons we celebrate the great Solemnity of Christ the King at the end of the liturgical year, just before the First Sunday in Advent when a new year in the Church begins, is to remind us that Jesus Christ is the end of our lives, i.e. Who and What it is we're aiming at, and the One who gives shape to our lives.

It's why we need to spend time with the Scriptures. Our lives can't be shaped by what we do not know: if we don't know Christ, if we don't meditate upon the things of Christ, then other things will give shape to our lives.

And so, I want to encourage you to keep choosing to know Jesus, and in knowing Him to love Him, because to know Him is to love Him, and then choose to follow Him again and again, even as you fail again and again.

Choose not to worship Jesus, even with the failures we have in following him, and you'll worship something else instead. A favourite writer of mine, David Foster Wallace, makes this point in a brilliant university commencement address which is often called "This is Water" – I'd really recommend listening to it on YouTube or reading it.

DFW says that "there is no such thing as not worshipping."

There are so many objects presented to us for worship each day that we often don't notice what we're doing, but there is no such thing as not worshipping.

The reality is that we live in a society where you'll get mocked for worshipping Jesus, where people will tell you that worshipping Jesus enslaves you, they'll tell you that they're free, and that you're not.

They couldn't be more wrong.

Freedom is choosing to worship what is worthy of your worship, and not slipping unthinkingly into prioritising what everybody else does.

GK Chesterton said that even a dead fish can go with the flow, you have to be living to swim against it.

And as DFW says, in the lived reality of adult life there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And worship things rather than God, and you'll find that unlike God, who gives you life, these things will sap the life out of you.

If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. You'll always be able to see someone who's got more and want more. It's the truth.

Worship your body and beauty and your sexual attractiveness and you will always feel ugly and insecure. No amount of gym time, or, worse, surgeries or treatments will make you truly content, because you'll always be getting older and you will just have to disfigure and distort yourself more and more, and there will always be people younger and more beautiful than you, who make you feel envious.

Worship power and status, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear.

Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.

But the worst thing about these other forms of worship is not so much that they're evil or sinful, it's that they're unconscious, they are unthinking. They are default settings. But thank God, by choosing to be here, you're already living more consciously than so many others, you're daring to be exposed to truths that will blow your mind, change your mind, change your life.

But, as I said, if you don't choose to worship Jesus, it's not that you won't worship, it's that you'll just slip into other forms of worship, and your world will get smaller and smaller; algorithms online will probably get more and more selective about what you see, which will affect what you think is truly important, and all this can happen without you ever being fully aware that that's what you're doing. And more than likely

your life will become more defined by what you consume, what you buy, what you wear, what you watch, than it is by how good a husband, a wife, a friend, a father, a mother you are. I know this is true because I've slipped down that road myself and I've seen it happen to friends to. And you can get a long way down that road before you wake up, or worse you might not wake up at all.

Not loving Jesus won't make you open-minded like many will try to persuade you, more likely it will most likely make you close-minded only loving people in your own image, who share your exact priorities. Look at how fiercely tribal the online world has become.

And the so-called real world will not discourage you from operating on your default settings, because the so-called real world of men and money and power doesn't want you to think, it wants you to watch, to click, to buy, and to go to work and to try and earn more so that you can watch more, click more, buy more.

You might not use it like this, but if we're honest much of what social media is about is the pursuit of likes and followers, the feeling that we're admired by others, desiring to be worshipped without any worry about being worshipped for being truly good. If we live our lives online, we'll spend more time on appearing to be good than we will on becoming good, and we won't actually do very much.

People will tell you that religion is like a trap, that if you want to be free you need to be able to do whatever you want whenever you want.

But I'd ask them what they mean by being free.

There are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talk about much in the great outside world of wanting and achieving and consuming The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in unglamorous ways every day.

You can become free to become a person who can be a good friend, a good parent, by learning not to do certain things just because you feel like it.

You can be free to eat whatever you like, whenever you like; watch whatever you whenever you want; drink whatever you want, whenever you want; but you can't be free to be the sort of person who just does whatever he feels like and at the same time the sort of person who is capable of having meaningful relationships which require sacrifice.

You can't be free to be the couch potato and the Olympic athlete. You have to pick which kind of freedom you want to go after.

The drug addict with plenty of money and easy access to drugs is free in a certain kind of way, but it's not the freedom I want.

There is a default mode of freedom, the freedom of our feelings and there is a more intentional form of freedom, a freedom for excellence. The Church, building upon Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle, has a long tradition of reflecting on what it takes to gain this sort of freedom and tends to talk about it in terms of virtues.

We might think of the virtues as being character qualities which dispose us towards behaving in a way which brings about excellence.

Christian excellence is about being Christ-like, and being Christ-like is about living like Christ and being prepared to sacrifice like Christ.

In fact, one of my brothers once said, “the only life worth living is one worth dying for.”

The Christian life is about finding something worth dying for and then being free enough to do it. That’s way more demanding than what most people will ask of you, but it’s also because the Church thinks you are capable of so much more than what most people think.

I don’t mean that most people watching this video are likely to literally be martyred for being Catholic, but that if you’re going to be a true Christian, you need to be the sort of person who can sacrifice, who can sacrifice even when it hurts.

Christ came to live and to love, and because He would not compromise in truth or love, He would die for it.

What would you die for, what do you live for?

Make sure it’s for people not things; for relationships, not for consumption.

Because if you live your life for the sake of things, for the sake of things less than love, then you’re already a little dead.

Some questions you might want to ask yourself... what do I worship, what do I love, what do I give my freedom, my attention to?

And then I want you to step outside of yourself, so to speak, and consider “if somebody was to look at my life, listen to my conversations, hear my thoughts (scary prospect I know, but the reality is God is doing that already, sorry to break it to you) but if somebody else could see this what would they think you worship?”

What does God know you worship? You need to ask these questions because the truest view of yourself you can get is the God-view and that requires stepping outside of myself from time to time, to look at the totality of my life, and not just my thoughts at any given time. Some of you might even find you’re better than you think... it’s also possible you might find the opposite. But at least you’ll know, at least you’ll be living in reality. To be Christian is to live more in reality, not less.

Pause for questions:

1. What do I worship, what do I love, what do I give my freedom to?

2. If someone looked at my life, my conversations, my thoughts, what would they think I worship?

3. What does God know I worship?

I want to talk now about your attention. It’s very precious. I’m grateful to have it right now. Perhaps even a notification is popping up as I speak; will you stay with me? Can it wait? Lots of people will compete for your attention because it’s so precious.

What you give your attention to will tell you an awful lot about who you are.

And I want to suggest that you’ll be able to tell a lot about what you worship, a lot about who you love by what you give your attention to.

Teachers and parents tell us to “Pay attention”!

There's something in that: attention costs us something. Being truly attentive to someone requires not checking my phone, it requires being able to take the cost of missing out on something else for the sake of someone present to me, making a genuine gift of myself to that person, which is a nice little word play on being truly present as being a present of yourself and your attention.

Being able to choose to give your attention to something is a particularly human quality; other animals don't have it, or at least don't have it to nearly the same degree: your cat is not deliberately ignoring you, there's just nothing it wants from you right now, and your dog couldn't ignore you no matter how hard he or she tried.

I remember a man when I was in a park in Italy, he was walking his dog, and was on the phone, he had a tennis ball in his hand and being Italian was gesticulating wildly even just on a phone call. He could have been talking about a feud with his life-long enemy, he could have been talking about picking up the dry-cleaning: both seem to require a lot of waving of hands in Rome. Whatever it was, he was not paying attention to his dog, but the dog was sure paying attention to the tennis ball in his hand, was going to and fro, and this was going on for some time and the poor dog was looking more and more demented, but this was a ball potentially about to be thrown and he was a dog, and it wasn't in his dog-like capacity to just ignore it.

But you can ignore me right now, you can be thinking, "Oh I wish was somewhere else, you can be thinking I wonder what's for dinner," you can decide to pay attention once more to this talk and think, "Oh, there might be something in this" or you can think "I'd be better off reflecting on that passage of Scripture I heard earlier."

All those options are on the table, and what we give our attention to is a value judgment, and it tells us something about us.

Confronted by the Bible on a table and a copy of Cosmo or Vogue or Readers' Digest or whatever else they might leave in waiting rooms these days, what you pick up to read says something about you and your priorities. Think Cosmo is better than the Bible? - Then I'd advise you to think again. Think the Bible is better but still pick up Cosmo? And it might show you that you prioritise entertainment and a quick fix over a slow-burning truth.

What I want to focus on, though, is the ability to be attentive as the pre-requisite of love. Simone Weil, the great French mystic, wrote: "Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity".

We cannot love something without paying it attention, we cannot love a person without making effort to be truly with them. There's a nice little interchange about attention in the excellent film *Ladybird*, a great film about relationships and the givenness of things and coming to terms with that.

Christine, the lead character, who goes by the name she's given herself of "Lady Bird", has written a college application essay. She's discussing it with one of the nuns who teaches at her school.

In contrast to what Lady Bird has maintained throughout the film, Sister Sarah-Joan tells her, "You clearly love Sacramento".

Surprised, Lady Bird responds, "I do?"

"Well", Sister Sarah-Joan elaborates, "you write about Sacramento so affectionately, and with such care".

"I was just describing it", Lady Bird says, brushing it off.

"It comes across as love", Sister Sarah-Joan insists.

"Sure", Lady Bird says, "I guess I pay attention".

To which sister Sarah-Joan replies, "Don't you think maybe they are the same thing? Love and attention?"

...

When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus speaks about love, but He doesn't just tell us to love, He says:

"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbour as you love yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets'" (Mt 22:37-40).

I want to say something about the second commandment first. Notice, He says "love your neighbour as you love yourself." If you don't love yourself, then loving your neighbour as you love yourself isn't going to much use to your neighbour.

Perhaps you don't think about it much, but the love you have for yourself is going to have a direct bearing on the sort of friend you are to others. Becoming holier, will make you a better friend.

And loving yourself is first and foremost about becoming holier: it's not about self-care, even though that has its place. Loving yourself is a response to God's love, it's seeing yourself as God sees you, which is worth dying for, and then recognising that you are not trivial, but full of meaning.

Because God is omnipotent, when He died on the Cross He knew in His mind all the people He would die for: He knew you personally. He did not die for an abstract idea of humanity: He knew you and He died for you. That's about the most remarkable thing anyone could ever realise. A person who would die for me that's the sort of person I want to serve, the sort of person I want to know.

It's the love of Christ that transforms, the recognition of who He is and what He has done for me. It's the actions of Christ's life that let me know that He is a King worthy of the name. He is the one true King. He is worthy of my love.

But, you can't force love, Phil Collins and Diana Ross also sang that "You can't hurry love," and that's true too, that'll date you... and me, if you're getting that reference.

The Kingdom of God has love as its supreme rule, but love is both an invitation and a response.

God invites us into His Kingdom, He doesn't make us subject to it as a tyrant. Perhaps we've been far from the Church, we've tried living in ways that are not God's ways, and we have seen that these do not give life. God wants us to love His law, He wants it to be a rule that is not lived out of fear, but out of love, a rule that does more than command our obedience, but which transforms our intellect, our will, and our passions, that is all of us: this is what it means for Christ to be truly King.

We only freely love what we think is good. And so to love God completely with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, is to love with all ourselves, to see clearly what is good and then to be free enough to give myself to it. We're only free when we see well and choose well.

Being Christian, loving as a Christian is not just about having a strong will, it's about seeing differently, desiring differently and doing differently.

If you see somebody for confession or spiritual direction and you have some recurring sin, and their recurring response is to tell you to try harder, well, at least in confession your sins still get forgiven, but it's not great advice, and I'd advise trying to see someone else.

Part of loving is knowing: you cannot love what you do not know, and so part of loving myself is also having some self-knowledge, understanding why I do what I do. And so again if I'm going to love myself well, so that I can respond to the Father's love, so that I can share this love with my neighbour, I need to know myself better and to understand why I do what I do, and to begin to understand that difficulty which St Paul points to, "The good that I wish to do, I do not do, and I do that which I do not wish to do".

And one thing we don't hear much about in homilies is the passions or the emotions. In fact, we might often hear them spoken about in a negative way, be reminded that love is not a feeling.

But, in fact, your feelings are really important because they're really powerful, and if you don't get them in order, you'll never possess yourself fully enough to be able to love anyone else well.

And so here I want to give you a little bit of the moral psychology of St Thomas Aquinas, who gets that our emotions are a crucial part of the moral life, who recognises that to give and be joyful in doing so is much better than to be a miserable giver.

Now he speaks of two general sets of emotions and passions. The Latin word is *passio*: *passio* gets at the fact that they're passive, in that they sort of happen to us rather than being something that we choose.

Now, the first set of emotions or passions, he calls the concupiscible passions.

We might think of the concupiscible emotions as gut reactions to things. We don't choose to react that way, the reaction just happens.

I see a steak and I want it.

I don't have to deliberate about wanting it, although I might have to deliberate about eating it if it's a Friday... or if it's on somebody else's plate.

The basic pattern of the concupiscible emotions/gut reactions goes like this: I sense something, which I perceive as good (it may in fact not actually be good, which is why we have to train our emotions), and because I perceive it as good, I love it. And because I love it, I desire it, and when I have it, I experience pleasure.

Love, desire, pleasure.

Love, desire, pleasure is crucial in the thought of Aquinas as being the basic dynamic of human action, it's this pattern that drives almost everything that we do.

But there is also a reverse equivalent.

And in reverse, if I see something bad, like a brussel sprout where I thought my steak should be, I try to avoid it, and if I can't avoid it and am forced to eat it because I am two years old and my mum is presently shoving a fork in my face, and forcing me to eat it, then I eat it but experience it as an evil and so I feel sad.

And so we see the opposite of love, desire, pleasure is...

Hate, aversion, sadness.

In all the emotions there is both a bodily reaction and my awareness of it. I may be salivating at the steak, but I'm not just salivating, I'm aware of wanting it too. So it's neither solely bodily reaction, nor solely mental event, it's both.

In the same way when I feel fear, I'm aware of my heart pounding, my palms getting clammy, and I'm aware of being afraid, aware of some danger.

The next set of emotions Aquinas talks about are the irascible emotions, these are like the gut reactions, but they're like second order reactions, they're at one remove, we might call them the daring emotions. They relate to the same ultimate objects, the good and the bad, as the gut reactions, but they relate to them insofar as there is some difficulty in obtaining the good thing or avoiding the evil thing.

So, if I sense a good thing, but it's hard to get, because for example there is an obstacle between me and the good thing, say for example that I see the steak on the table, and it's still looking good, but between me and it, leashed to the table, there is an aggressive dog. I can have two reactions. I can have *hope*, and think, yes that dog looks vicious, but I reckon I can get round it or see that's it's napping right now and think I'll do a quick snatch and run.

Or, on the other hand, I might *despair*, and think I'll never be able to get past it and give up.

So we've got the emotions of hope and despair in the face of a difficult good.

But what if I now notice that the person who tied the leash to the table hadn't been paying enough attention at Scouts, and now this big, snarling dog, is no longer just an obstacle to the steak, but is now coming at me? The dog is now a danger, i.e. a difficult bad thing.

Here, too, there are two ways I can react, I can be afraid, fearful, I might freeze or might start to run, or I can be daring and brave, and try and stare or shout down the dog or even take it on.

So fear and daring are the two emotions in the face of a difficult bad thing. There might be a bit of both, but our character will determine which dominates.

Another example of fear and daring, which gets closer to everyday life: there haven't been any dogs between me and dinner of late.

Say Steve is petrified of public speaking, because when he was a child he was on stage in a play and he slipped and fell over and everyone laughed and the memory haunts him. Whenever he thinks of public speaking, he thinks of that day and he thinks of the humiliation and the hurt of the laughter.

Public speaking for him has now become an object of danger, even the very thought of it seems dangerous and causes him fear.

But, say his boss has just walked in and he's been invited to give a presentation at work about an issue he's passionate about.

Immediately the heart pounds, but will his reaction be despair or fear and he declines instinctively? Or will it be hope and daring, and he accepts even though he thinks it will be really tough.

In this example, we also see how memory can enter into our emotions or emotions. We can see how sometimes we need to heal our bad memories.

For Aquinas, understanding the emotions is absolutely crucial to our learning to shape and form our emotions. Our emotions are not inevitable and hard-wired reactions that we have to live with for the rest of our lives. We can consider what a passion or emotion is relating to, in order to gain some control over the emotion. And most importantly we can bring our reason to bear upon our emotions.

We can recognise that we react this way, but we can also ask "is this a good reaction?"

So, for example, in any given situation where I experience fear, I can think, "what does the fear actually relate to, what actually is the loss that might occur in this situation, what is the real danger?"

And I can also think about what this fear is stopping me from doing. What is the good that I am choosing not to pursue in this situation because of my fear?

And then I can think am I giving up on something which is really good for the sake of preserving something which is of less value.

Now perhaps all of this sounds rather obvious, and in a sense it is, because courage which is the virtue I want to talk about in relation to things that cause fear is about reason in the face of difficulty.

Hopefully in the abstract all this very reasonable, but obviously in the heat of the moment we experience it differently, and that's why it's really important to step back from time to time and think about how we're behaving, with a calm head.

Look at the circumstances in which we're bold and courageous and the circumstances in which we shrink back from difficulty and this will tell us a little bit about what we really prioritise, not in our heads, but in the lived reality of our lives.

And what we might find is that we prioritise is not what I want to prioritise.

Looking at our emotions, realising the ways that I cope with sorrow, the good ways that I use to pick myself up, and the bad ways, helps me to know myself. It's very often the case that the cause of a sin is not what we think it is. People who struggle with weight, it's very rarely because they're greedy and a glutton, but because food is helping with some other sorrow. We need to use our reason to address what that is. In my experience people use pornography, just as often because of boredom and frustration than they do because of lust, again they have to find a better a more reasonable way of dealing with the negative emotions, that pornography is a really unhelpful emotional response too.

Because not many people are looking at pornography because they think it's a good thing, but a lot of people are still looking at it.

I want to close with one really practical suggestion as to how you might grow in the virtue of courage, which you might find appalling, but can actually be fun. It's a practical exercise, because whilst we can learn something about courage from listening to talk about it, the only way we really grow in it is by engaging in acts of courage.

What I'm going to suggest has the horrendous title of "rejection therapy." It involves recognising that fear holds me back from doing things which are good, and that often this fear relates to being rejected, a fear of social death so to speak rather than actual death, a fear of asking for a pay rise, a fear of speaking up about my faith in the workplace for fear of being shunned, a fear of speaking a certain truth because I'm scared about getting in an argument, a fear about standing out by speaking for someone who needs support.

And so what this therapy involves is deliberately getting rejected. You can decide to do it every day, or once a week, and I'd suggest doing it with a friend or colleague. But what you do is decide to ask for something that is not immoral, but which more than likely, the answer to which will be "no". You are aiming to get rejected.

The aim is not to be clever in the way that you ask for it, so that you do actually get it, but to be bold in asking even though you expect to be rejected. If you want ideas on some of the things you might do,

there is a fun video on YouTube with a man called Jia Jiang. The first day he asks a stranger to borrow \$100, the next day he eats in a Five Guys and he eats his burger and then asks if he can have a free burger refill. The third day he asks at Krispy Kreme donuts if they'll make him donuts in the shape of the Olympic rings. Watch the first three days and then think about whether you might do something similar.

Be bold and it might just change your life in things that are more important; it might just help you get over the fears that stop me saying "yes" to Christ, not just in my head, but also in my heart, and my soul.

Fr Miguel Pro loved the Lord His God, with all his heart, all his mind, all his soul. Fr Miguel, in celebrating the Mass, praying over the Scriptures, had had his fears of death transformed so that he no longer feared death, but only separation from true life in Christ.

I want to pray for you all today, that you let the Lord into your lives that you let Him become Lord of all of you, not just your Sunday, not just the moments of prayer, but that you let Him transform your emotions and all your thinking, that you let Him into the vulnerable places in your life, the places of pain, the places of fear so that He can bring His healing and His love to all of you, and you may find true joy, true solace, true comfort in calling Him, like St Thomas, my Lord and my God.

Section 2 Questions:

1. What in my life distracts me from worship? Do I need to offer these distractions to the Lord, or should I try to remove them from my life?

2. When and where might I try rejection therapy?



EPISODE 2: RENEWAL

How do we become missionary disciples?



Guest Speaker: Canon Kieron O'Brien

Next Sunday we have the Gospel story about Jesus clearing out the temple. There are people selling sheep and cattle and pigeons and the money changers are plying their trade. The reaction of Jesus probably disturbs us as it is angry and even violent, though not in a life-threatening way. It is not as though Jesus had stumbled across some random bizarre event in the temple. This was normal and that was the point. The sheep, the cattle and the pigeons were there to be purchased for sacrifices and the money changers were there to convert cash into the required temple currency, no doubt with a generous commission. So Jesus did not see this as an isolated incident of inappropriate use of the temple. He wanted to overthrow the whole system of cash for sacrifices which would never be pleasing to God and only served to perpetuate a corrupt system. He has come to bring about something radically new, so new and radical that He doesn't mind creating a scene. What He has in mind is far too important to worry about what people might think about Him at the time or that we might be disturbed when we read about it even now.

I would like for us to see this cleansing of the temple as something of a parable for our church today: a church which is in need of cleaning up and renewal; a church which is learning to move away from the confines of the temple and move towards becoming part of that Body which was to rise up after three days. This new way of Jesus is the way which honours the past but changes the future. It is the way which has no time for the kind of sacrifices which mean nothing to God, but all the time in the world for that one perfect sacrifice of Jesus. In clearing out the temple, Jesus is preparing for something new. We can all be part of that new idea.

I love the line from Ps 95 which calls us to *Sing a new song to the Lord*; moving from the temple which took forty-six years to build to the temple which is the Body of Christ is a very new song; it was beyond the experience of those old-style temple dwellers. Sometimes we might think that it is beyond our experience, but it does not have to be. In fact, we are all called to be part of that same Body through our Baptism.

At the risk of showing my age and freely admitting that I don't get out enough – one of my favourite films of the 1980s was *Educating Rita*. It's about a Scouse hairdresser, played by Julie Walters, who wants to improve herself and her prospects. She embarks on an English degree and is tutored by a rather eccentric and alcoholic professor played by Michael Caine. It is very entertaining, if not a bit dated by now. There is one scene early in the story where Rita is at the pub with her mates on a Friday night – as they always did. As the evening rolls on, they all get more and more tipsy, as usual and as the inhibitions are lowered they start to sing, the same songs as usual. The camera pans around the bar and everyone is singing, apart from Rita, who has had enough. She refuses to sing and boldly states *I want to sing a new song*. Meaning of course, that she actually wants a different kind of life. And so the adventure begins. You get the picture.

In clearing out the temple, Jesus is making a statement: there is a new way, there is a better way, there is a new song to sing. That way and that song is Him. Jesus wants to exchange the temple that will be destroyed for the temple that will be raised up. That is the temple of his Body and as baptised members of

the church, we are all called to be part of that Body. We are part of the Body that is going to be raised up. This is the radical call to renewal in our communities. Those old songs (those old ways of doing things) do not work for us any more. Pope Francis was acutely aware of that when, in his letter *Evangelii Gaudium* he invites us to dream with him, he writes:

I dream of a *missionary option*, that is a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.

That last line is a little bit stinging, but there are parallels with the temple in Jerusalem here – with its pigeon sellers and money changers – it was preoccupied with keeping its own show going and maintaining the status quo. We can fall into that trap if we don't see the bigger picture which Jesus is calling us to be part of.

I'm sure that it was not by accident that our present Pope chose the name Francis. St Francis was a champion of renewal and regeneration of the church in his time. Although he lived some eight hundred years ago, there are some remarkable similarities and resonances between his age and ours. This was a time of great social upheaval where the traditional dominance of the nobility was being threatened and undermined by the rising merchant and middle classes, which Francis was part of. It was also a volatile time within the church: widespread corruption, the worldliness of the crusades and abuse of power were all rife. Against this background, Francis had the vision of Jesus speaking to him from the Cross in the ruined chapel of the Portiuncula not far from Assisi. The voice spoke to him and said "*Go and rebuild my church, which as you can see, is falling into ruin.*" At first, Francis took these words quite literally and set about re-building the little chapel, brick by brick. He later realised that Jesus was speaking of the wider church, the People of God; that which is meant to be His Body. So Francis in his humility and simplicity embarked on that journey of renewal and purification. I think this is what prompted the Argentinian Pope to adopt his name. St Francis, who is a Patron of Europe, is certainly an inspiration for us to keep re-building the Church in the image of Christ and not of any other temple.

Pause for Questions:

1. Do I recognise that the Church must 'Sing a new song'?

2. What do I think needs to be cleared out of the 'temple,' in my own life and in the way we are Church?

Speaking personally, I came to the realisation that things had to change a few years ago, shortly after I had moved from Chichester to Brighton. I have to admit now, that was a bit of a culture shock – moving from the provincial delights of Chichester to the in-your-face, anything-goes, right-on Brighton!

It took some getting used to, but I have grown to embrace it all. I think a defining moment was one when of the young families suggested that we could have a Parish Picnic on the Level across the road from the church, after Sunday morning Mass. So I thought that this was a great idea, so we started making tentative plans. Just a few days before the event, someone usefully pointed out to me that the location we had identified for the picnic, was actually due to be the gathering point for the Brighton naked bike ride on the same day!!! Luckily we were able to hastily make alternative plans.

More seriously, during those early years in Brighton, I came to realise that I needed to let go of many of my previous assumptions. Perhaps this was partly to do with the place, but also to do with where I was in my ministry and where the Holy Spirit was calling. So, assumptions like:

- people will come to Mass (it seemed that for the size of the parish, the attendance was very low)
- People will approach the sacraments in the right order ... thinking that baptism, first Communion, confirmation, marriage all happen in a nice predictable sequence, does not recognise the complexity and fragility of people's lives
- Catholics will generally send their children to the local Catholic school ...not necessarily, especially if it's on the wrong side of town, and you have to walk past four other schools to get to it.

The list could go on, but you get the idea: we needed to be doing church in a new way. It's a bit of a cliché now, but we need to move from maintenance to mission. This is very much a journey we are still on in East Brighton, and it involves moving from a "consumer" model of church, to a discipleship one. Jesus overthrew the stalls in the temple because they were there simply to serve the consumers, those who had reduced religious observance to something purely transactional. Certain stalls and structures in our own church have to fall before we can move from the crumbling temple to being part of the Risen Body of Christ.

We have probably become quite attached to some of those stalls which might be overturned; like a particular Mass, in a particular time in a particular place. We may have to get used to going to Mass becoming a bit inconvenient. But wouldn't it be wonderful if having to make a bit more effort to celebrate the Eucharist at a different or in a different place made us realise that what is happening is so wonderful that it is worth being inconvenienced for! Moving to a discipleship model means that we come to appreciate the Eucharist prepares us for mission. We become less attached to a particular temple and more attached to the Body of Christ, which is rising with us as part of it. All of the baptised are caught up in this movement whereby Jesus is leaving the old models of temple worship behind and bringing people into the new reality of rising with Him. This is a new and exciting way of being Church and it is almost as radical as that switch from temple worship to following Jesus which is the movement described in the Gospel. For some, it might mean the difference between going to church (small "c") and being the Church. If the Church really is the Body of Christ as we claim it is, then we will rise with Him as well - this is the message of disciples on mission.

Everyone is welcome and everyone has a gift to bring to this way of being Church. I will finish with a story, which for me has become a parable of inclusion and the need to be open to the possibility of being surprised by people's gifts.

In one of my parishes, I used to accompany the year six residential trip to the Isle of Wight. It was like an annual rite of passage for that year group and generally great fun. One particular year we had a young lad with us - we'll call him Jack - who was hyperactive. We had to be very careful every morning to make sure that he had his medication for the day, otherwise we were in for a hard time. The trick to get him to do this was to crush the tablets into some marmalade, then spread the marmalade on toast and it worked a treat!

Each evening on the trip we would walk the children down to the beach for a game of rounders or football, hopefully to tire them out before bedtime. On this particular evening, as we walked past the pier there was a group of Morris dancers performing, so we thought it would be nice for the children to stop and watch for a while. Jack was still full of energy by this time, so merely watching was never going to be enough for him. So he launched himself right into the middle of the troop of dancers and began to strut his stuff - with some aplomb, it has to be said. But that wasn't the point: myself and the other teachers were totally embarrassed that he might be ruining their carefully choreographed moves, but we couldn't

stop him, and it was about to get worse. The lady who seemed to be in charge stopped the dance and everyone was still and the music fell silent and we thought she was going to complain to the staff to control our class. Instead, what she did was genius. She said okay then, we will show you a dance you can all join in with. So she invited all the children to join the circle and taught everyone a simple dance that could all be part of. Were it not for Jack's impulsive intrusion into the Morris Men, no one else would have had that experience. He had done us all a favour and rather than tell him off - we had to congratulate him.

Everyone is welcome to join the dance and sometimes we can be surprised by the invitations we get.

Jesus is doing something new and radical with his church and He wants us all to be part of it. He wants us not to be part of a temple which is decaying and will eventually collapse, but part of His Body which is rising and on its way to glory.

Section 2 Questions:

- 1. Are we guilty of making assumptions as a Church community?**
- 2. How can we become a community where all are welcome to 'join in the dance'?**
- 3. Fr Kieron's talk reflects many of the themes we find in the recently launched Pastoral Plan. How do you feel called to contribute to the new Diocesan vision?**

"I therefore take this opportunity to invite everyone in the Diocese – lay faithful and religious, deacons and priests – to join with me in forging our parishes into communities of saints, into strong, lively and welcoming schools of discipleship. May they be communities where the Lord is known and loved; where the liturgy is experienced as an encounter with the wonder of heaven; where daily prayer is a natural part of life; communities of healing, where all are welcomed, their dignity as children of God always recognised; where young people grow in deep love for the Gospel, for the sacramental life of the Church and for prayer; where all know the riches of the Faith and seek to share it with others."

Bishop Richard, *The Word Who is Life* 2024



EPISODE 3: COMMUNITY

What is the Church and how do we fit in?



Guest Speaker: Fr Thomas Mannion OP

We all know that people relate to the Church in different ways. Some people have a lot of anger for the Church, either because of her teaching or because of the behaviour of her members. A lot of the time because of misunderstandings of the Church, but sometimes actually with very good reason.

Some of us, even though we might be members of the Church of Christ, mystical body, may have been hurt by the Church in some way or may have been disappointed. Some of us, of course, though have a great debt of gratitude to the Church or her many charitable works, whether it be funding and running schools, hospitals and poverty relief.

But we should ask ourselves, what is the Church? What does the Church say about herself, or who is the Church? Fundamentally, each and every one of the baptised, all of us, we are the Church. We are the mystical Body of Christ. Christ is our Head, and we are the members of His mystical Body. The Church then is made up of many parts, but it is still nevertheless one Body.

What this means essentially, is that the Church is a very diverse place, and that this diversity is willed into being by God. We will have different vocations, all different people, different personalities. All of these things express something of the great creativity of God. But we have a fundamental unity. Faith in our belief in Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead, in our worship and our practice.

Our Masses might have slightly different music. We might even belong to a different rite. We might belong to the Syro-Malabar rite rather than the Latin rite. Our liturgies might look slightly different, but nevertheless we have a fundamental unity that binds us all together.

Let's read from St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.

"The body is, and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body. So it is with Christ. For in one spirit, we were all baptised into one body. Jews or Greek slaves or free and all, were made to drink of one spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many."

So you see here how Paul brings together this great diversity within the church, still emphasising the unity. Were all baptised into one Body, so then this means that even our brothers and sisters in Christ who are not Catholic, if they are baptised, they are still baptised into that one Body. They're not baptised into another body or into another church: they're baptised, we are all baptised, into the same Church.

However, the fruits of that might be inhibited in some way. We might relate to the Church, perhaps in an imperfect way. Notice St Paul does not compare the Church to simply a club or a group of like-minded people, who just happen to believe the same thing. He doesn't compare it to a business or even to a team. All of these are particular sorts of union. He doesn't compare us to a political party, which we might change or leave. We might leave the area that we're in or change our parish or our community.

There may be new people born in our communities, people who die in our communities, and there is that change that inevitably happens. But nevertheless, wherever we are, whatever happens, we are still always part of that same one Body: Christ's mystical Body, the Church.

And even if we may be sometimes frustrated or disappointed or even hurt. We can never really, truly ever leave that that one Body. We're still always defined by that relationship. We can to some extent choose to separate ourselves from the Body through our sins. But we're still nevertheless defined by that relationship with Christ in His Church. You can't undo your baptism. Thank God!

Paul, however, compares us to this living organic natural organism, which matures, which develops and grows. All bodies do that, don't they? All bodies mature and develop and grow. But compared to a body which we become a member of through our baptism, so then all of the baptised are members of the Church? Yes, even those not in communion with the Pope are related to his Body, though we would say imperfectly. Because there's only one Body that we're baptised into. And we grow and we change and we're shaped by those other members of the Body who are around us. They can help us to grow. To be nourished, we're nourished by our experiences with other people, sometimes challenged.

Who is the Head of this Body then? If we're all like different parts of the body, hand or foot or knee; who is the Head of the Body? Well, St Paul tells us in Colossians: Christ is the Head of the Body of the Church. So then we can see why Saint Joan of Arc says that. Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church,

We can, of course, by our behaviour, as I've said, choose to separate ourselves from Christ in some way, but we should always remember that He is always faithful to us, even if we are sometimes unfaithful. He gave us the sacraments to reconcile us not only to Himself, but also to our neighbour, in other words, to reconcile us to Himself, but also to the Church. The priest in the Sacrament of Confession, yes, represents Christ, and so ministers the mercy and the grace of God to us. But he also represents our neighbour. He represents the Church, and so he understands us as a sinner because he's a sinner also like us.

We are then reconciled both to Christ and to His Church through the ministry of the Church, in the priest. The Church is a great gift that we've been given by God. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are great supports to us, praying for us, giving us advice, and helping us to become more faithful in our discipleship, sometimes challenging us to be faithful disciples. And yet, this having been said about our own fidelity, we know that fundamentally it's that He has first loved us, rather than we loved Him.

Every gift that we have been given is not only for our own glory, but for the mutual upbuilding of the Church of Jesus Christ. Helping your neighbour to grow in faith, hope and love, helping others to grow closer to God and to grow closer to each other.

When we give our gifts and service, we grow closer to God and we grow closer to each other in love. We should always remember that God commanded us not only to love Him, but also to love our neighbour. He doesn't only say "love your neighbour as yourself". He goes beyond this, He says. "Love one another as I have loved you."

We are then to love each other with that self-same love that He has poured into our hearts. We are to love others as Jesus loved them. And how did Jesus love us? He loved us by making us members of his Church. He loved us into discipleship. And He loves us into heaven.

Let's read further in 1 Corinthians. St Paul writes:

"I cannot say to the hand. I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet. I have no need of you."

Notice here, then, that St Paul is telling us that every single member of the Church, no matter what role they take on, no matter what they do, simply because of who they are, all members of the Body, all members of the Church, are needed. And we need each other.

We're not simply to be then independent. Rather, we are called to be interdependent. We're called to rely on each other. St Paul goes on:

"The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honourable, we bestow the greater honour and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body given greater honour to the part that lacked it. That there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honoured, all rejoice together."

So then notice then that the different parts of the Body then rely on each other. If one member is sick or damaged or in need broken in some way, then the whole Body suffers.

Likewise, when one member of the Body fulfils their vocation, then all benefit. We see this in the lives of the saints who have fulfilled their vocation. Holiness, in many different ways, whether it be through being a doctor or being a parent or being a priest or religious. All of those who have become saints or great witnesses and encourage us by their example, sometimes by their writings, by the things that they have done by their kindnesses, and also, of course, by the prayers that they pray for us, that they now reign with Christ in glory. That we might be where they are and also reign with Him in glory in the time to come.

The Church, then in heaven, assists the Church on Earth and encourages us to grow in our holiness. We have this exchange then of holy gifts, of good things to each other in the Church. We're not just a community, we're a family. We're a household. And yes, of course you know, sometimes in families, things get a little bit or shall I say, tense. Sometimes, you know, we are all sinners, you know, all trying to become holier, of course. And in every family sometimes there are disagreements. But fundamentally, were characterised by love and unity that can't be taken away.

We're a household who are intimately connected and our togetherness helps us to grow and acquire virtues and to become more perfect. We learn from each other. Living cheek-to-cheek closely with each other gives us the opportunity to learn of what we're capable of: of forgiveness, of generosity, gentleness, compassion and love.

There was somebody in the early Church, Tertullian, who was writing in 197 so very early on in the Church's life! And he describes the Church in this way.

"We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This strong exertion God delights in. We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation.

"But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, how they love one another, for they themselves are animated by mutual hatred. See, they say about us, how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves would sooner kill."

The Church, though, even from the earliest days, has been defined by this love for one another, this great kindness. The Church, every member was known for this from the earliest days. And as St Paul said, "the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of you." Who doesn't need love? That's our role. That's our job as the Church. All people are called to this. Everyone has a role to play. Every parish, every parishioner has different gifts and strengths, and we can help each other not only financially, sharing goods and resources, but also praying for one another, loving one another.

We all have different gifts and strengths given by God, but they're given not to be hoarded simply for our own benefit, but to be shared with other people. This is how we become saints. We are all called to help each other to dwell in love and harmony and to build each other up. Notice St Paul talks about this in his

letter to the Ephesians. I think it's chapter four. He talks about the importance of living a life worthy of our vocation. How we're supposed to build each other up in humility and gentleness.

Let's read from St Paul.

"I therefore a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another, in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. There is one body. And one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all who is over all, and through all and in all."

But the grace was given to each of us, according to the measure of Christ's gift. The fidelity then, that we have to Jesus Christ goes beyond the particular geography or particular parish boundary or culture. We don't simply stop being a Christian when we go on holiday or when we move parishes or when we meet somebody else who's from another area. Of course, we show that Christian generosity and charity to all people.

There is something more important that binds us together than local interests, and that's the good of the whole body. What we want for each other is God Himself. We want God for all people, and we actively work to introduce them to, to introduce people to Him. To help people grow and deepen that relationship that they have with Him. Particularly, yes, through our prayers and good works and sacrifices, we can help each other get to heaven. That we make for one another, but always considering the needs of the whole Catholic, so that we must bear the whole in mind.

Our concern with the whole is also particularly about mission. What definite service has the Lord entrusted, particularly to me, to do to help others? Some people, of course, are called to serve the Lord as religious sisters or nuns or priests or bishops. But there are many other ways to serve the Lord. Each person has a calling from God as well as being a faithful disciple. Some are parents or readers at Mass. Others serve the poor, others sing and have great musical skill. All of these gifts, whether they be hierarchical or charismatic, all have the same source: the Holy Spirit, and so they can never truly be in conflict.

Some saints are artists like Frangelico. Some are doctors like St Albert the Great. Saints Louis and Zelig Martin were parents, parents of a saint no less: parents of St Teresa of Lisieux, the Doctor, the Great Doctor of the Church and Carmelite nun. The Church encompasses all of these vocations and enriches them as well as being enriched by them. They are gifts from Christ to his people for the good of the whole. All of us have an indispensable role to play.

I'm a Dominican friar. Sometimes brothers, they get to a certain age and they can't do the things that they were able to do before. And perhaps that might be some of you who are watching this video too. You can always pray. You can always give your life in that way through prayer and through kindness. You're always indispensable.

This diversity that we see in the Church is willed by God. He wants us to help each other. He wants us to enrich each other's lives. He wants us to help each other draw closer to him. This is the mission of the Church. This is your mission. The Church had many members who have been good and faithful disciples, and we call them saints. We're all called to be saints, but we know that we don't always live up to that call of holiness that God has called us to. At least I don't know about you, but I certainly don't. As much as I try. Even the Saints struggled with various difficulties. St Jerome, for example, struggled with anger. St Mark Ji Tianxiang, who was an opium addict who was granted the grace to be a martyr.

Some seem to struggle throughout their lives with physical illnesses like St Bernadette Soubirous, and St Teresa of Lisieux. Some saints struggle with depression and great discouragement. And some saints, yes, struggle in the moral life. St Augustine famously said, "Lord make me chaste, but not yet."

We should remember that no one individual member of the Church is the whole Church, so even if we meet people who are struggling in various ways, we shouldn't be discouraged by them. But we should try to help them, help build them up. We'll talk a bit more about this in the second video. But at the end of this first video clip, I've got three questions to ask you:

How does the church help you in your daily life to be a disciple of Jesus?

How do you help the church currently in her mission? To make disciples of all people, this could be through a charity work, perhaps simply through your prayers. Perhaps you're more actively involved in evangelization or apologetics by talking to people about the faith, helping to remove obstacles, intellectual obstacles they might have to the faith. Some, maybe some of you are catechists or teach people how to pray. How do you in your own life help people to draw closer to God and his Church?

And the third question. Is there more that you could do to reach out to grow your Church whilst maintaining fidelity to who we are as a Christian people? It always strikes me, especially now, more than ever, that for many people in our lives who God has entrusted to us to love; for many of them, you might be the only credible witness to the gospel. You might be their only tangible connection to Jesus Christ and his Church. All of us are indispensable and have a role to play. How we love others is by drawing them closer to God.

So I'll leave you with those three questions. How does the Church help you to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How do you currently help the Church in her mission to make disciples of all people? And is there more that you could do to reach out to those people in your own orbit? We all know lapsed Catholics, don't we? Is there more that you could do to reach out? To grow your Church whilst maintaining your local community, whilst maintaining fidelity to who we are, as a Christian, people.

Pause for Questions:

1. How does the Church help me to be a disciple of Jesus?

2. How do I help the Church in her mission to make disciples of all people?

3. Is there more that I could do to reach out to grow the Church?

I began the last video by emphasising that people relate to the Church in many different ways, but I didn't really talk about people of other faiths really.

We'll see in this video that Jesus makes the Church necessary for our salvation. Anyone who is saved is saved in Christ, meaning that they in some way become one of his members.

All those who are in heaven then are members of the Church, though perhaps on Earth they may not have been members of his visible Body. But nevertheless, are somehow saved by Christ's grace related to his Paschal Easter mystery. *Lumen Gentium*, a document from the 2nd Vatican Council, makes very clear that all those who are saved are saved by Christ's Paschal or Easter mystery and their relation to it in some way. However, some people may be related to that mystery in a way that's known only to God.

It also says that those who know that the Church is made necessary by Christ, and refuses either to remain in her or to become one of her members, and to join her in that sense. If somebody refuses to do so, knowing that the Church is made necessary by Christ, they have no hope of salvation.

The Church then is, according to the Second Vatican Council, and as we shall see, according to Scripture, indispensable. Christ gave us his Church for a reason, he told us. To baptise all nations for a reason. He told us to preach his gospel, to share in his mission for a reason. We should note, however, that this rather stark warning from the 2nd Vatican Council speaks about those who know and still freely choose to reject her. So then there's cause for hope. Very often when people reject the Church, they're not really rejecting what the Church is, but they're rejecting some misshapen vision of her that they've been given, very often is not Christ that they're rejecting, but a false image of Christ. And so sometimes when our atheist friends might come to us and say, you know, I reject this capricious evil God, we can say. Well, my God isn't capricious or evil, so it doesn't fall under that criticism. They might think that the God that we preach is capricious or evil, but we know that this isn't true.

People may be bound to Christ and His Body, the Church, in many imperfect ways, which still might be by God's grace saving. There is no name however, under the Sun other than Jesus Christ, by which we are saved. Everybody who is saved is saved by Jesus Christ. And becomes in virtue of their salvation a member of the Church.

I'll give you an example. There's something called baptism by blood whereby somebody might be martyred in *Odium Fidei* they might be martyred for the Catholic Faith, or they might be martyred because the person who's doing the violence hates the Faith in some way. This person may receive what we call a baptism by blood. So they might not be washed with water in the spirit and baptism like we all were. Most of us probably as children, but perhaps not all of us. But nevertheless, through their martyrdom. What we call a baptism by blood, if they're not already baptised. They may then become members of the Church.

This is just one way. But there might be other ways which are known to God, whereas we might we are bound by the sacraments and by the commandments and things. God is not bound in the way that we are bound. God's grace can work in ways that we do not necessarily see.

So this hidden or unseen element is an important part of the shape of the Church, an important part of her structure. And there are members of the Church, those who are saints in heaven, whose names perhaps in this life we may never know. So I want to really focus on then, in this second part of the video, the essential structure and shape of the Church, the Church is made necessary by Christ.

Part of this structure of the Church that we shall see is visibility. And one of those elements of that visibility is of course the papacy and the clergy. So I'll talk a little bit about that.

Bodies come, of course, in all shapes and sizes, and the mystical Body of Christ is no different. The Church has a Head - Jesus Christ. Jesus instituted a priesthood. This tells us that the Body is not shapeless. It's not formless. It has a shape. It has a structure that is essential to her, gifted to her by her creator, Jesus Christ.

The Pope we call the Vicar of Christ, meaning the one who acts in the place of Christ. The Pope has a very special and particular role in the mystical Body, as I'm sure we all know. He is the visible Head representing Jesus Christ to the Church on Earth and the wider world in a unique way.

Now of course, we should always remember we are all ambassadors of Christ. That was part of the point of the first video. We're all indispensable ambassadors for Christ. Everything we say, everything we do reflects on Christ and His Church, because when we speak, we speak not only in our name, but in His. We speak

with his authority, which he has given us, and so then we should be careful to remember that there are some things we have no authority to say.

We speak in His Name with his authority and ability to build up and to heal, to seek out the stray, and to bind up the wounded. For many people in your lives, as I said in the first video, you might be the only visible witness to Jesus Christ and his Church. The only visible witness to the love of God that they can recognise.

However, the Pope represents Jesus in a unique way to us, just as the Bishop does to his diocese, and the priest in his parish. You know, we represent Christ in different ways to each other through our service, but also through who we are by our ordination or by our baptism.

That's not to say that the Pope or bishops or priests or religious or any of the baptised will always be perfect witnesses. But we are entrusted with a particular care and authority to represent Christ and to minister to Him, and to His Body, the Church, and to the world in a particular way.

To be in communion with the Pope is vitally important. It's not an optional extra, but part of her fundamental structure. There are two documents, really, I want to recommend to you if you want to understand the church: *Lumen Gentium*, which I've already mentioned. Perhaps some of you might choose to go away from this video and start a reading group and maybe you could read through *Lumen Gentium*.

There's another document which I think is slightly shorter, by Pope Pius XII released in 1943 so that the height of the Second World War. He wrote a letter, an encyclical called *Mystici Corporis Christi*, which is a letter about the Church as the mystical Body of Christ. In it he wrote this:

"Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ also governs his mystical body in a visible and normal way, through his vicar on Earth" (meaning the Pope). In other words, Pope Pius XII. In 1943, is in a very clear way saying that Jesus governs His Church, through the Pope, His vicar on earth.

He goes on to say: "You know, venerable brethren, that after he had ruled the little flock himself during his mortal pilgrimage, Christ our Lord. when he was about to leave this world and return to the Father, entrusted to the chief of the Apostles, the visible government of the entire community, he had founded. Since he was all wise, he could not leave the body of the church he had founded as a human society without a visible head."

Visibility very important. How do people know the Church where the Church is if it doesn't have that visibility? The visible Head is important. The papacy is important.

"Nor against this may one argue, that the primacy of jurisdiction established in the church gives such a mystical body two heads [what he's saying there is there are not two heads, Jesus and Peter, there is one head]. For Peter, in view of his primacy, is only Christ's, vicar. There is only one chief head of this body, namely Christ, who never ceases himself to guide the church invisibly, though at the same time he rules it visibly through him, who is his representative on earth [meaning the pope]. After his glorious Ascension into heaven, this church rested not on him alone, but on Peter to, its visible foundation stone."

Here Pius XII is saying that this is willed by Christ. OK, it's not that Peter is assuming this authority to himself. This authority is given to Peter and his successors.

How do we know that Christ desires us to rule and reign with Him, and to have this legitimate authority? Well, go, I think, to the Gospel of Luke and Jesus says to the apostles. He says that He wills to give them

thrones in heaven, that they will share in His glory and that they will judge the twelve Tribes of Israel. He says this to all the twelve. However, it's to Peter alone that he gives the keys.

Now the keys, yes, are related to binding and loosing sins and in heaven and on Earth but the keys do not only represent that. The keys represent the office of Prime Minister and the Prime Minister governs when the King is away. Of course, the King is now away, whilst He does say "you know I'm with you always, even to the end of time," Jesus of course ascended to heaven. So yes, He's with us till the end of time in the Eucharist, also through governing His church, through the papacy, for example.

After His glorious Ascension into heaven, this Church rested not on Him alone, but on Peter too, its visible foundation stone. That Christ and His vicar constitute only one Head is the solemn teaching of our predecessor of immortal memory, Boniface VIII in the Apostolic letter *Unam Sanctam*, so this goes way back, and his successors have never ceased to repeat this. Saying they therefore walk in the path of dangerous error, who believe that they can accept Christ as the Head of the Church while not adhering loyally to His vicar on Earth. They have taken away the visible head broken the visible bonds of unity and left the mystical Body of the Redeemer so obscured and maimed that those who are seeking the haven of eternal salvation can neither see it, nor find it.

See it how important it is, then, for the Church to be visible. People need to be able to see the Church to know where it is, to be able to find it, to be united to the Church because the Church is the means a method of our salvation in that sense. Christ and the Church are one: by becoming members of the Church by God's grace, we are united to God. This is how we're saved by becoming in Christ.

So then we should be wary of those who claim to be acting in a faithful way to Jesus Christ or the faith and the tradition of the Church. But who are obedient to the Pope in speech only, or perhaps not even in speech, we should be very wary of that.

The successor of Peter is not an optional extra in the Church, but a fundamental part of a structure willed by Christ and endowed with the authority to teach and act in a full, universal and immediate way. This having been said, always remember of course, that the Pope and the bishops are disciples too. They too have spent much of their lives as non-ordained people. They are also in need of God's grace. Of course. Of course they are, and in need of his mercy, they also need the sacraments and they should also, must also remain faithful to their Lord, to their vocation, and to following the commandments. They need our prayers and our support. Just as they pray for us and support us.

Everyone belongs in the mission of Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. We don't all have the same role or mission to play, but we are all beloved sons and daughters of God. Heirs to the throne of grace and promised eternal life.

It is not the mission of the Holy Father alone to make disciples of all nations. It's our job too. We must pray for him and faithfully carry out Jesus's saving work which he has entrusted to all his disciples. Remember, Jesus said "he who hears you, hears me." He said this to His apostles. Remember also in another place, he says, "I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit apart from me you can do nothing." These words of Jesus from the Gospel of John should give us great courage, but they should also serve as a warning that we as a Church must do nothing apart from Christ.

Always remember that it is God who supports us. God is our root. When we say then, that the Church should be welcoming and kind, the Church should be a place that cares for the poor, the sick and the unloved. What's being said really is that all of us, you and I, should be doing these things. So then I ask

you, are you welcoming and kind? Do you care for the poor the sick and the unloved? I think if we're honest with ourselves well, hopefully the answer is, at least most of the time.

We all have moments where we let each other down, you know. The Holy Father Pope Francis describes the Church as like a hospital. This is again another part of her structure. Like every hospital, we are receiving treatment, the medicine of God's mercy of God's grace. But like in every hospital, not everybody responds well to treatment, even though they might be in the right place.

The Church is now and always has been a place of welcome for saints and sinners. It's where we all belong, no matter who we are and no matter what we've done, no matter how rich or poor we might be. All of us are to be at home in God and in His house, and we ought to love this house forever.

This is the mission of the Church to unite us to God and to unite us to our neighbour. We know, don't we, that we are not always best disciples, that we can be. But we can always be assured of a merciful welcome in God's hope.

We can always hopefully, or at least others can always hopefully, rely on us to provide them with a merciful welcome, no matter what it is that they're struggling with. There's no time like the present to become a better disciple.

To be a member of the Church is to be an heir to the throne of grace. It is to be one so loved by God that He asks us to share in his own mission, and work for the salvation of souls and loving others. And in this way, we participate with God's grace, and our hearts are widened. In this way, God prepares us for heaven, where we were sharing his active love for all people.

You see, the Church is not only made up of saints and sinners here and now on Earth, but the Church is also the holy souls in purgatory and in the great saints in heaven. The Church spans not only space and time but goes beyond space and time into eternity. Because love endures all things.

Now if I asked you what or who does Scripture call the pillar and ground of truth? What would your answer be? The pillar and ground of truth is something which sounds non-negotiable. Something good for all people, not only good for me, the pillar and ground of truth, of course. Something necessary.

1 Timothy 3:15 states "if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the Church of the Living God. The pillar and ground of truth". The church is called in Scripture the pillar and ground of truth, the household of God, and St Paul makes very clear that there is a certain way how we ought to behave in that, as members of the householders, as heirs to the throne of the Kingdom of heaven.

This household of God is all of us, the sheep of his flock.

So I'll leave you with another question. How ought we to behave as his people? How does God want us to behave? Second question: how will I help people come to understand and love the Church more? And the third question. How do I speak about the Church in my daily life? Do I speak about it like it's a good thing that people should come and join, that it's exciting and bold? Do I speak well of the Church? Do I speak well of my brothers and sisters in Christ? Or do I not? I'll leave you those three questions.

1. How does God want us to behave as his people?

2. How will I help people come to understand and love the Church more?

3. How do I speak about the Church in my daily life?