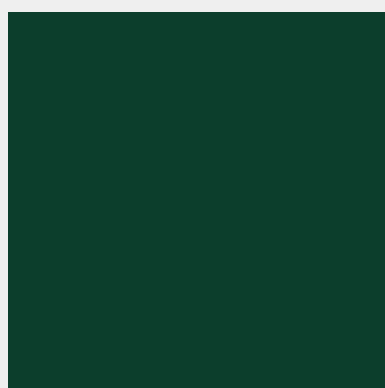
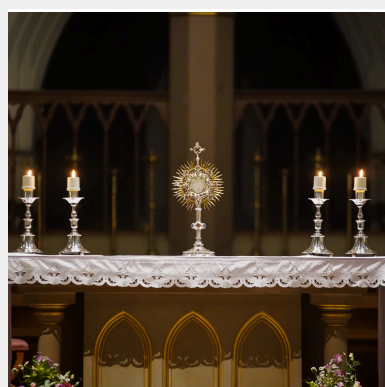


The
Catholic
Diocese of
Nottingham

“Go, make disciples”

“Go, make time.”

Print and Pray Reflections on the Diocesan Mission Plan



Before You Begin

Go, Make Time: Three prayerful reflections from Bishop Patrick

Everything in the life of faith begins with prayer. Not with doing more, or getting it right, but with making a little time and turning towards the Lord who has already turned towards us.

That is all these three reflections ask of you. Each meditation can be as long or as short as your time allows. Together they follow the heart of our Diocesan Mission Plan: Go, Make Disciples. Reminding us that each of us is invited first to encounter God's love, then to grow as His disciple, and then to share that love with others in the ordinary circumstances of our lives. *Encounter, discipleship, mission*. None of it happens by our effort alone. It begins, and keeps on beginning, in prayer, before the Lord, who feeds and sustains us above all in the Eucharist.

You do not need to be an expert. You do not need to have prayed like this before. You only need to make the time. The Lord does the rest.

WHEREVER WORKS FOR YOU

Print these reflections off or read them on your phone. Take them to your parish, pray before the Blessed Sacrament or for a few minutes after Mass. Pray them at home, alone, in a quiet corner of the day. Gather as a family, or as a small group, and pray one together. Pray them on your commute or make a little time in your day, that you didn't know you had. There is no right or wrong way to pray them. The Lord meets us wherever we are.

IN ORDER, OR HOWEVER YOU PREFER

The three are written to be prayed in sequence – Encounter, then Discipleship, then Mission –because that is the shape of the journey Bishop Patrick has put before us as a Diocese this next five years. But each one stands on its own. Start wherever you find yourself today and in whichever way suits you.

Go, and make time. He is already waiting for you.

The Three Reflections

Read them in this booklet, or scan to pray
along with Bishop Patrick.

Encounter

Experiencing God's Love

John 15:9 Abide in my love



Scan to Pray

Discipleship

Supporting ongoing conversion

John 8:31 Make my word you home



Scan to Pray

Mission

Nurturing witness of life

John 15:26 You will be my witnesses



Scan to Pray

All inspired by the Holy Spirit
and nourished by the Eucharist.

Encounter

Experiencing God's Love

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love" (Jn 15:9)

You have made a little time today to pray. Wherever you are – before the Blessed Sacrament, at home, or in a quiet corner of the day – what matters is that you have made the time, and the Lord has noticed. He is pleased that you are here. There is nothing you need to do. You do not need to feel anything in particular, or pray in any particular way. Just be here; Jesus is the one who does the work.

SETTLING

Begin by becoming aware that you are in His presence. Take a breath. Let your shoulders drop. Notice where your feet are on the floor. Many of us come to prayer with a head full of concerns: about family, about work, about our health, to name but a few. You do not have to leave them behind. You can bring them. The Lord wants you to bring them. But for these few minutes, you do not have to carry them on your own.

Look at the Lord. The Curé d'Ars used to notice an old man who sat in his church day after day, doing nothing in particular. When he asked the man what he was doing, the man said: *"I look at Him, and He looks at me."* That's all that is needed. You do not have to find words. You do not have to perform. Just allow the Lord look at you, and gaze upon you.

A READING

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love."

THE REFLECTION

God is love. Love is His very being. Love is not just an aspect of God, it is the very essence of His nature. So when we try to grasp in our minds something of God's love, we must all surely hesitate, because it is a love that surpasses all knowledge.

And yet, the love of the Father for the Son is the mirror that Jesus uses to express just how much He loves us. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. As the Father loved the Son and could not live without Him, so Jesus loves us. You and me. His love is bound up with us. We are to Jesus more precious than we can ever know.

What a love. It is a perfect love, because it gives all and holds nothing back as it reaches out to us in invitation. *Abide in my love.*

In His life on earth, Jesus knew what it was to be the object of His Father's love, and to abide in that love. From His life He gives us an example to follow, because His life was one of seeking the Father's will in all things. It was a life lived in loving obedience to the Father. Jesus was not afraid of losing anything by giving up His life to the Father, because He knew that the Father loved Him and had no interest apart from that of his beloved son.

And so, as we reflect on the life of Christ Jesus as the pattern and promise of what our own lives may be, we come to learn the truth of His words. *"Without me, you can do nothing."* That is the forerunner of the proud boast of Saint Paul: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

A TIME OF SILENCE

Now sit in silence for a while. This is your time with the Lord. Perhaps let one phrase rest with you: *As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Let Him say it to you.* Let him say it to you, you are the one He is saying it to. And if your mind wanders, as it will, don't be cross with yourself. Just come back. Look at the Lord, He has not moved. *As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.*

A STEP FURTHER

It remains my experience, as a priest and now as a bishop, that many of us as Catholics still need to be helped to believe that God loves us personally. That He loves you. Not in a general way, not because He loves everybody, but personally, the way the Father loves the Son. That is the love that is for you.

So, simply: bring to Him whatever in your life that makes that hard to believe. The thing about yourself you don't think He could love. The thing in your past you keep carrying. The thing in your present that feels heavy. Bring it, set it down in front of Him. You do not have to explain it. He already knows. Just let Him look at it with you.

BEFORE YOU GO

Pope Francis began his letter on the joy of the Gospel with these words: *"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ or at least an openness to letting Him encounter them. Whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms."* You took a step towards Jesus today by making this time. He was already here, waiting for you. He always is.

A CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank you for this time. Thank you for loving us: not in a general way, but personally, each one of us. Thank you for the way you wait for us in the Blessed Sacrament: patient, faithful, never hurrying us. Help us to believe that we are loved. Help us to abide in your love through this day; through the people we meet, the work we do, the difficulties we carry. And bring us back to you, again and again, until the day we see you face to face. Through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

Discipleship

Supporting Ongoing Conversion

“If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:31)

In the first of these reflections we sat with the Lord’s love for us. This one asks what it means to follow Him, to be His disciple. If this is where you are beginning, you are just as welcome; there is nothing you need to have prayed first.

SETTLING

Take a breath. Let your shoulders drop. Notice that you are in His presence. If you bring anything heavy to this prayer today, and we usually do, bring it. The Lord is interested in your real life, not the life you wish you had. Whatever joys and successes, whatever challenges, worries and concerns, bring them all to Him. He wants to help you with them. Look at Him. He is looking at you. That is enough for now.

A READING

“If you make my word your home, you will indeed be my disciples.”

THE REFLECTION

Once a person has encountered Christ and has made a decision to follow Him, the process of ongoing conversion can begin to develop. This encompasses growth in spiritual, intellectual, emotional and human maturity. It is reflected in a growing life of prayer, and of encounters with Christ in our personal prayer, in the sacraments and the scriptures. It is reflected in developing habits which help us to grow in virtue, in commitment to learning more about the person and teachings of Christ, and in dedicated service to others.

A disciple is primarily the pupil of a teacher. As Christ’s disciples we are people who wish to learn from Jesus, our Master, and to grow in our relationship with Him. A disciple is also someone who wishes to work with Jesus – to be a co-worker – in ensuring that God’s love, care, compassion, healing and forgiveness can be ministered through them to others.

A disciple is someone who is trying each day to move from a “me-centred” relationship with Christ – one that is exclusively about them – to one that seeks to hear and respond to what Christ may be inviting them to do in their daily lives. *“Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will.”*

Saint Teresa of Ávila is said to have expressed it like this: *Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands but yours. No feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world.*

A disciple is also someone who, through prayer, knows that they often fall short of what Christ desires for them. So disciples acknowledge that there are things in their lives that, with the help of God's grace, they need to let go of. Things that prevent them from becoming the disciple Christ is calling and inviting them to become. And so disciples of Christ are grateful recipients of God's merciful and healing forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This, in turn, helps them to become instruments of that mercy to others.

Disciples are deeply aware that Christ is calling them to holiness of life in and through the ordinary daily circumstances of their lives. *"Be holy, for I am holy."*

A TIME OF SILENCE

Now stay in the silence for a while. Perhaps bring to the Lord one area of your life where you would like to grow as His disciple. Not a big resolution. Something small and real. Something you would like His help and guidance with. Tell Him, or just sit with it in front of Him. He is aware of it. *Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands but yours. No feet but yours.*

A STEP FURTHER

A disciple is also someone who, in prayer, acknowledges they often fall short. Who, with the help of God's grace, knows there are things they need to let go of. So here is something a little harder. Bring to the Lord one thing in your life that you know is in the way. One thing you would like His mercy to meet. You do not have to call it by name. You do not have to fix it now. Just bring it. Set it in front of the Lord.

And know this: seeking God's merciful and healing forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a great grace. If something has come up for you in this silence, perhaps that's the Lord's invitation. Try to go to Confession this week. Do not be afraid of it. The Lord is waiting for you there, just as He is waiting for you here.

BEFORE YOU GO

Discipleship is not first of all about what we do. It is about who Christ is making us. He is forming us. Slowly. Patiently. Over our lifetime.

There is a short prayer I say each morning, the one I have encouraged the young people I confirm to make use of. *"Holy Spirit, walk with me this day, and help me to walk more closely with you."* Take this prayer with you, if it helps. Say it as you walk to the car. Say it when you wake tomorrow. It is not magical. But it is a way of calling upon the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you. You know we fall short. You know we hesitate. You know how me-centred we can be. Make us your disciples. Teach us. Form us. Let your love, care, compassion, healing and forgiveness be ministered through us to others.

Holy Spirit, walk with us this day, and help us to walk more closely with you.

Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Mission

Nurturing Witness of Life

“When the Advocate comes whom I shall send to you from the Father... he will be my witness, and you too will be my witnesses.” (Jn 15: 26-27)

In the first two of these reflections we sat with the Lord's love, and asked what it means to follow Him as His disciples. This one turns to mission, what it means to be sent. If this is where you are beginning, you are still welcome; the Lord will meet you wherever you are.

SETTLING

Take a breath. Let your shoulders drop. You have made this time, to be with Jesus. He notices. He always notices. And He has something to ask of you; not because He needs you to perform, but because He loves you and knows that you are happiest when you are working with Him. Look at Him.

A READING

“When the Advocate comes whom I shall send to you from the Father, he will be my witness. And you too will be my witnesses.”

THE REFLECTION

The importance of Christian witness is a thread running through all the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and the Church's teaching ever since. Pope Paul VI put it like this: *People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission.* Christ, whose mission we follow, is the supreme witness and the model of all Christian witness.

Jesus is the supreme witness to the Father, because He knew Him uniquely. *“No-one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made Him known.”* Jesus insisted that His word was not His own; when He spoke, He was testifying to the Father. *“I do nothing of my own accord. What I say is what the Father has taught me.”*

Above all, He made the Father known not only by word and action, but with His very life. By His attitudes and values, His willingness to serve rather than to be served, His patience, courage and self-giving: He bore witness to the love which bound Him to the Father. *“The Father and I are one.”*

There is only one perfect witness to the Father, Jesus Himself. But at baptism every Christian comes to share in Christ's prophetic office, and so is called, invited, to let Him testify in and through those joined to Him as children of God, as members of His body, the Church. This is the basic mystery of the Christian's union with Christ. It is foundational to the whole matter of Christian witness. And it is significant that the mandate of the apostles to bear witness to Christ and the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are aspects of the one package. And the power given by the Holy Spirit is essential to it. *"No-one is able to say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit."* The Holy Spirit is the one who makes Christian witness possible.

A TIME OF SILENCE

Now stay in the silence for a while. In this silence, do something specific. Bring one person to the Lord. Not the world. Not those in need in the abstract. One person. By name. Someone in your life to whom the Lord might be sending you this week. You may already know who that is. You may need to ask Him. Either way, bring them to the Lord in prayer. Let the Lord look at them with you. *People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers. In experience than in teaching. In life and action than in theories.*

A STEP FURTHER

There are two young people I confirmed not long ago. Both are fifteen, friends from the same parish. Since their Confirmation they begin each day with a moment of quiet prayer. They ask the Holy Spirit to guide them and help them throughout the day to see opportunities when they can be kind and helpful. And they each end their prayer by saying this: *"So Lord, what today are you and I going to do together?"* This is what witness looks like. Not heroic. Not loud. Just ordinary people, asking the Holy Spirit each day what He and they can do together, and then doing it.

So think about the person you just brought to the Lord. What might working with Jesus, for them, look like this week? A text message? A visit? A prayer for them said by name? A conversation you have been putting off? A kindness? Ask the Holy Spirit. He is the one who guides and makes this possible.

BEFORE YOU GO

Pope Saint John Paul II once described the Holy Spirit like this: *"The Holy Spirit is like a wind filling the sails of the great ship of the Church. If, however, we look at her closely, she uses numerous other sails: the hearts of the baptised. Everyone is invited to hoist their sails, to unfurl them with courage, and to permit the Spirit to act with all his sanctifying power. Do not be afraid to unfurl your sails to the breath of the Spirit."*

Today is the day you unfurl your sails. Don't be afraid.

A CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you are the supreme witness to the Father. You bore witness with your life; your patience, your courage, your willingness to serve. Make us your witnesses too. Not in heroic ways. Just in the ordinary kindnesses of an ordinary day.

Holy Spirit, walk with us this day, and help us to walk more closely with you. Show us the one person we are being sent to. Give us the courage to go. And bring us back, again and again, to you, to Jesus, present for us in the Blessed Sacrament, the place where mission begins. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Read the full version of the Diocesan Mission plan
and download the tools:

www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/missionplan

Have you got a story to share or were you moved by these reflections?
Email: communications@dioceseofnottingham.uk

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk>

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