**SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS**

**FIVE MARKS OF MISSION**

**Proposed for the Year of Come&C in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough, 2015-2016**

**THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION**

The Five Marks of Mission were developed by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984 and affirmed by Archbishops of the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conferences in 1988 and 1998.

**1. To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom (TELL)**

Proclamation may be in words – effective communication of the Gospel – but also in actions, by living the Good News we preach.

**2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers (TEACH)**

Christian discipleship is about lifelong learning, so we all need formal and informal resources for growing in faith, so that the Church is a learning environment for all ages.

**3. To respond to human need by loving service (TEND)**

Churches have a long tradition of care through pastoral ministry. Christians are called to respond to the needs of people locally and in the wider human community.

**4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation (TRANSFORM)**

Jesus and the Old Testament prophets before him challenged oppressive structures in God’s name. Christians should not only press for change, but also demonstrate justice within Church structures.

**5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth (TREASURE)**

The Bible’s vision of salvation is universal in its scope. We are called to promote the well being of the human community and its environment, so that Creation may live in harmony.

**PRAYER FOR COME&C INITIATIVE**

Almighty God,

your Son Jesus Christ

lived among us

and welcomed as his disciples

all those for whom the words of invitation:

 Follow me and Come and see

fashioned the pathway to

commitment and community.

Open our hearts today,

as the people and the clergy of these dioceses,

to fashion our lives according

to the richness of your creation

and to the responsibilities of loving service

which you have shared with us

in your earthly life.

Enable us to embrace the energy of our children and young people,

to enlarge our sense of parish and community

and to expand the discipleship and leadership of all your people.

We ask this in the power of the Holy Spirit

and to the honour and glory of your Name.

Amen.

**MARK OF MISSION #1**

**To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom**

**TELL**

Proclamation may be in words – effective communication of the Gospel – but also in actions, by living the Good News we preach.

**SOME NOTES ON DISCIPLESHIP**

1. Discipleship develops in the context of our search for a deeper and more meaningful life.
	1. Our search is seen in our attraction to things that give life.
	2. We are sometimes brought along by friends who have had a good experience and who want to share that with us
	3. Sometimes God intervenes directly and calls individuals.
2. The initiative comes from God – he asks what we are looking for, and he leads us to an answer. What God offers us is life. Moses involved the people to choose life over death (Dt 30:14-18). Jesus came that we might have life, to the full (John 10:10). Discipleship usually involves some appreciation that what one has received is a free gift from God. It leads to gratitude rather than a sense of entitlement. Our privilege leads to service.
3. Those who experience God’s love usually want to TELL others and share the good news so that others can experience the LIFE that God gives through discipleship.
	1. Some people knew about Jesus and came to hear him speak or to be healed. They went back to their own homes at night.
	2. Some people brought their friends and relatives for healing. They too went back home with their friends.
	3. Some people followed Jesus and supported him and his disciples as they moved around the countryside.
	4. Others “left everything” and followed Jesus.
4. Some people did not respond to Jesus’ invitation.
	1. The parables tell us that some people refused the invitation to the wedding feast.
	2. Others wanted to postpone their response in order to bury their dead, say farewell to their friends (Lk 9:59-62)
	3. We know of one disciple who was too attached to his wealth, although he had kept the commandments of the Law all his life. He could not make a deeper commitment. (Mt. 19:20-22)
	4. Others, like Nicodemus, came to Jesus at night.

The first Mark of Mission is the basis for all others. It helps us to reflect on our own experience of God’s love, his invitation to us to COME AND SEE. When we answer that call, we are drawn into an experience that draws us out of ourselves so that we become disciples who want to TELL others about God and his Son, Jesus.

**JESUS CALLS THE FIRST DISCIPLES**

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour

One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesuswas Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

**John 1:35-51**

1. The first two disciples received an invitation to “Come and see” from Jesus.

* They were curious about Jesus because of what John the Baptist said.
* They became disciples because of their experience with Jesus

2. The Call of Peter

* Peter came to Jesus because his brother Andrew brought him
* Jesus confirmed Peter as a disciple.

3. The call of Philip and Nathaniel

* Jesus called Philip directly and he responded immediately.
* Like Andrew, Philip tried to call his friend Nathaniel but he met with scepticism (“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”).
* Philip issued the same invitation as Jesus had given “Come and see”
* Jesus revealed himself to Nathaniel in a special way before he became a disciple.

**REFLECTION**

1. Reflect on this gospel passage in the context of your own life and your experience of discipleship. You may be asking the question “where do you live?” as a way of deepening your own experience of God, or you may have already responded to the call “Come and See” and you are seeking to deepen your appreciation and gratitude for the call.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | What I value and appreciate. | Who do I share this with, and how do I TELL my story? |
| My personal experience with Jesus |  |  |
| My experience in my own parish? |  |  |
| My experience of being part of the Church of Ireland and links with the Anglican Communion. |  |  |

1. Was there a John the Baptist figure in your life who made you curious about Jesus? Who are you grateful to for setting you in that direction?
2. Have you ever been an Andrew figure, and who was your Peter?
3. Have you ever had an experience like that of Andrew with Nathaniel? What was the resistance you met? What was this like for you?
4. Reflect on this passage in the context of your experience in the parish and in the Church.

In your parish:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| In inviting people to “Come and See” - attracting people to discipleship  | Who is attracted? | What is done? |
| In making people who Come and See welcome and comfortable. | Who does this? | What is done? |
| In allow people to tell their story so that those in the parish can learn from other’s experience | Who hears the stories? | How is it done? |

1. When you look at the list of activities in your Parish around the first Mark of Mission (TELLING others, and inviting them to discipleship), what makes you most proud?
2. When you look at the list, are there any people who are missing from the list, and who might really benefit from hearing the invitation? How might the parish deal with them?
3. What have you learned from other parishes about what they do? Is there a project worth trying from what you heard (or at least finding out more)?

How do you support this first Mark of Mission in your parish?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | As an individual | As a group within the parish |
| Personally, through prayer |  |  |
| Support, enabling others |  |  |
| Participation |  |  |

**MARK OF MISSION #2**

**To teach, baptise and nurture new believers**

**TEACH**

Christian discipleship is about lifelong learning, so we all need formal and informal resources for growing in faith, so that the Church is a learning environment for all ages.

**SOME NOTES ON CULTIVATING THE SPRITUAL LIFE.**

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **Mt. 28:19**

It would be a mistake to read this Mark of Mission as dealing only with the initiation of people into the Church. It arises from the first Mark, where the Kingdom of God is proclaimed. This second Mark focuses on how we grow towards the Kingdom, as individuals and church. We cannot be credible witnesses to others, and help them grow, unless we ourselves are committed to that growth.

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. (1 Cor. 3:1f)

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! (Hebrews 5:12)

I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.’ **Luke 6: 46-49**

In Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 13 represents the third of five discourses. As the central discourse, it has a pivotal place. It can be read in two sections. Verses 1-23 deals with the parable of the sower. Verses 24-52 include seven shorter parables which begin “The kingdom of heaven is like…”. These include the wheat and the darnel, the mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure hidden in the field, the merchant seeking fine pearls, the dragnet cast into the sea, and the householder who brings out of his treasury things old and new. As well as the parables themselves, there are two scenes where Jesus teaches his disciples the meaning of the parables, and discusses why he teaches in parables. The common theme in the parables is how people respond to the Kingdom of God, and how they allow it to grow and develop. The parables can be interpreted at different levels – the psychological level, looking at one own growth and development and at a sociological level – where different responses are characteristic of different groups in society.

In this exercise, the assumption is that we all need to grow and develop in our understanding of and response to the Kingdom. As in the parables, the initiative comes from elsewhere, and there is a power in the Kingdom (the seed to grow – wheat, mustard – the yeast and the attractiveness of the treasure and the pearls). Our lives are touched by the presence of God’s kingdom, and some parts of our lives may be more productive than others. We are on a journey of constant conversion. Similarly, the world around us at times supports us, and at times it challenges us on that journey. Two short passages from Chapter 13 are the focus of reflection although the context of the other parts of the chapter will enrich your reflection.

**THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.  Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed.  As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.  Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.  Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.  Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;
  though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

Matthew 13: 1-14

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Mt. 13:24-30

1. In both parables, the sower (farmer) takes the initiative.
2. There is a power built into the seeds that they grow of their accord.
3. The context in which the seeds grow determines how productive they are.
4. Reflect on this gospel passage in the context of your own life and your experience of growing in discipleship. This Mark of Mission focuses on how the Church sustains new believers. We cannot do this unless we keep the seed of faith alive in our own lives.

Draw a graph of your spiritual life. A peak on the graph shows a time when you felt close to God. A trough represents a time when you felt distant from it. Label the main events.

What was the context that made you “a path”, “rocky ground”, “thorny soil” or “good soil”.

What were “the birds”, “the withering heat”, “the thorns” in your life? Looking back on them, what have you learnt about God and his ways.

How do you focus on a good, productive life? What gives you strength in the face of distractions and “weeds”.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| In my own appreciation of God’s word through prayer and understanding the scriptures. |  |
| In making a link between my life of faith and my family and my work |  |
| In helping me deal with the “weeds and darnel” of life. |  |

1. Reflect on this passage in the context of your experience in the parish and in the Church.

Teaching and sustaining the faith

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Parish Activities | Your Involvement/support |
| Parents and Sponsors of children for Baptism |  |  |
| Candidates for Confirmation |  |  |
| Young Disciples (post confirmation) |  |  |
| Committed disciples |  |  |
| Adult Catechumenate |  |  |
| People who have been away from the faith for a while  |  |  |
| People of faith who are searching for something deeper |  |  |

1. When you look at the list of activities in your Parish around the second Mark of Mission (TEACHING others, and developing them in discipleship), what makes you most proud?
2. When you look at the list, are there any people who are missing from the list, and who might really benefit from deeper teaching? How might the parish deal with them?
3. What have you learned from other parishes about what they do? Is there a project worth trying from what you heard (or at least finding out more)?
4. Take a scene from the Gospels where Jesus teaches. For example, you might take the Beatitudes, or a scene where he explains a parable.

Think of how you can teach others what is in the Gospel

1. By an action in your own life
2. In explaining to others what you understand by the passage
3. By helping others explore this truth in their own lives, and discovering the richness of God’s message for them.

Do the same for how the parish, as a community, might

1. Witness to this truth in its own life
2. Might explore a deeper meaning for the message.

**MARK OF MISSION #3**

**To respond to human need by loving service**

**TEND**

Churches have a long tradition of care through pastoral ministry. Christians are called to respond to the needs of people locally and in the wider human community.

**SOME NOTES ON MISSION**

Jesus speaks of himself as being sent by God. He is the son who has been sent after other messengers have been rejected (Mk 12-2-8). He has come to announce the gospel (Mk 1:38), to fulfil the law and the prophets (Mt 5:17), to bring fire on earth (Lk 12:49). His mission is focused not on the just, but on sinners (Mk 2:17), the lost (Lk 19:10) and to give his life as a ransom (Mk 10:45). He describes his own mission in Lk 4:

The mission of Jesus in continued by his disciples. He sends them as the Father sent him (Jn 20:21). He commissioned them to preach and to heal (Lk 9:1), which was his own personal mission. They were the labourers sent to the harvest (Mt. 9:38) and the servants sent by the king (Mt 22:3). Jesus knew that this would not be easy, for they were like sheep among wolves (Mt 10:16), and would be treated the same way as he was treated. They were invited to take up their cross as followers.

The first two Marks of Mission focus on the command to preach and teach. This third Mark focuses on the aspect of discipleship that brings healing and reconciliation. It focuses on the second part of the great commandment – to love God with all our heart and all our mind, AND to love our neighbour as ourselves.

**THE MISSION OF THE DISCIPLES**

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.  And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

**Luke 4:16-20**

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

**Luke 9:1-6**

1. Jesus had a clear focus on the impact he wanted to have on individuals, resulting in a better society and community.
2. When Jesus gave the twelve a mission, he gave them power and authority to carry it out.
	1. Jesus has promised that he is always with us.
	2. He goes before us – the mission is the same as he exercised.
3. The disciples were to travel light. Their mission was inclusive – they went everywhere. They preached and healed.
4. The disciples were to manage relationships with those who accepted them and rejected them. They were to know when to move on.
5. REFLECT ON THE SCRIPTURE IN TERMS OF YOUR OWN SENSE OF MISSION.

Reflect on how you personally have experienced Christ’s healing mission in your own life.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | My experience of this in my own life. | My experience of Jesus’ mission bringing healing. |
| Poverty, needing to hear good news |  |  |
| Captivity, needing release |  |  |
| Blindness, needing sight |  |  |
| Oppression, needing freedom |  |  |
| Needing to hear of God’s favour |  |  |

Reflect on where you see the same “diseases” and the opportunities you have of exercising a similar ministry to others?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Where I see this in my own world. | How I try to, or might, bring Jesus’ mission to these situations. |
| Poverty, needing to hear good news |  |  |
| Captivity, needing release |  |  |
| Blindness, needing sight |  |  |
| Oppression, needing freedom |  |  |
| Needing to hear of God’s favour |  |  |

1. Reflect on this passage in the context of your experience in the parish and in the Church.

The scripture reading uses the term – power over demons and curing diseases.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What are the key “demons” and “diseases” that the Church is trying to deal with in Ireland to-day? | Are there some demons or diseases that are not being tackled? |

The disciples were to travel light - neither staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money and only one tunic.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Can you identify positive aspects of the parish or the diocese that makes it flexible and responsive to needs? | Can you identify any “baggage” that the parish or diocese might we be carrying that can hold it back from sharing faith and bringing loving service and healing to a broken world? |

The response to the success of the mission.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Where are the areas we rest because we have been accepted? What is the call of the gospel in these areas?  | Are there some places, people or issues that “we have shaken the dust from our feet”? How do we hear the call of the gospel in these areas? |

**MARK OF MISSION 4**

**To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation**

**TRANSFORM**

Jesus and the Old Testament prophets before him challenged oppressive structures in God’s name. Christians should not only press for change, but also demonstrate justice within Church structures.

**SOME NOTES ON TRANSFORMATION**

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. **Romans 12:1**

The process of conversion is a process of transformation – the transformation of the inner person to the attitudes of Christ which also transforms outer behaviour to align with the internal. Personal conversion leads to a transformed society. When we pray the Our Father, we pray that “thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven”, seeking the transformation of our world to be more in tune with the Kingdom of God.

The call to authentic living is to the fore in the teaching of Jesus. He regularly criticised those whose lack of awareness of the needs of others caused further grief and suffering.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Mt 23:13

Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them. Lk 11:46.

Jesus warned that riches and power can often blind us to the needs of others. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) we learn that wealth and material possessions are not criteria for moral value either now or after death. The key issue is how we deal with the wealth we have, and our willingness to use that wealth to treat others fairly. Ignorance and insensitivity to others is not an excuse for the rich acting unjustly. The rich man was unaware that he had done anything wrong, despite all the signs around him. Jesus warns us that, if our wealth makes us so insensitive to justice issues that we do not see them, no message (even someone coming back from the dead) will lead to conversion.

In Luke 18:1-8, the story of the judge who refused to give justice to the widow and only relented because of her persistence, is a critical reflection on the effect of power on the individual, and ultimately on society. The judgement scene in Mt 25, both the “sheep” and the “goats” ask Jesus when they had seen him hungry, thirsty, naked or in prison. Jesus affirms that when we act in an authentic human way, reaching out to others, then we follow him and bring the kingdom closer to others. The parable of the unjust steward (Mt 18:21-35) contrasts two types of behaviour; that of the master and that of the servant. The master shows justice mixed with compassion. In his justice, he would have been within his rights to exact retribution on the servant who could not pay his debt, yet he displayed an enormous degree of forgiveness. On the other hand, the servant did not mirror the justice of the master, and took no account of how he himself had been treated. The master took this lack of “character” or virtue as a more serious office than the particular actions of the steward that had led to his debt.

As well the focus on the authentic action of individuals, especially those in power, the early Church took an active part in trying to relieve suffering among the poor. We know that the disciples sold everything and the proceeds were distributed to those in need (Acts 2:45)

### The Parable of the Good Samaritan

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.  A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.  So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.  But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.  He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.  The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

**Luke 10:25-37**

1. The story began in response to a question “Who is my neighbour?” It seems that, in justifying himself, the man wanted to enter into an endless argument on who was the neighbour, and how to choose the neighbour one would serve from all the deserving causes there might be. Jesus turns this question around at the end, and focuses on the importance of neighbourliness as a personal trait.
2. One of the things that blocked the priest and the Levite from helping the man on the roadside was the requirement for ritual purity related to their office and position in society. In their own minds, they had valid reasons for not being involved.
3. The action of the Samaritan went beyond “pity” and feeling sorry for the individual. It showed an empathy with the man’s suffering and was willing to reach out to him. This is what Jesus wants us to imitate.
4. REFLECT ON THIS PASSAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF YOUR OWN LIFE.

In this exercise, we begin by reflecting on our personal experience of the truth of this parable. If we ask ourselves “who are you in this parable?” we can probably answer that we have experience of all the different characters in different events in our lives. Think of four particular instances where you had experiences of dealing with a situation of injustice.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Event when I experienced this role. | Who played the other roles in this event? |
| The person who was beaten up and left injured. |  |  |
| The priest or the Levite not being involved. |  |  |
| The Good Samaritan – trying to help out. |  |  |
| The Innkeeper – called in to help |  |  |
| The Robbers – (inadvertently) causing injury. |  |  |

Reflecting on the context of your own life at the moment, can you name one area of injustice

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Where I see this in my own world. |
| Who are the people affected by this injustice, lying injured by the side of the road? |  |
| Who or what has caused this injustice, however inadvertently? |  |
| Who are the people who pass by, even though they have the capacity to respond and help? |  |
| Who are the Good Samaritans? What do they do and how do they challenge others? |  |
| Who are the people who help out without any real concern (the innkeeper)? What effects do they have? |  |

Look back on your reflections and see where God has taught you about His justice and your mission in that.

1. Reflect on this passage in the context of your experience in the parish and in the Church.

The purpose of this reflection is to focus on issues of relieving suffering and also of dealing with structural issues that cause that suffering. In the parable, the Good Samaritan is the hero. Would there have been any mitigating circumstances for the priest and Levite if they had gone down to Jericho and organised a better policing policy for the road, or a better medical response system for accidents?

In your parish or diocese, who are recognised as victims of injustice in the outreach programmes:

In your local area?

In a larger region – deanery, county, diocese?

At a national level?

In an international context?

How does the parish community engage as a “Good Samaritan” in each of these situations or is it acting more as the innkeeper, helping others? Who takes responsibility for actions?

What is the impact of your action on the injustice of the situation?

In terms of relieving the situation for those who injured?

In terms of dealing with structures that allow such injury to happen?

How do you, as an individual, support these initiatives?

**MARK OF MISSION #5**

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

**TREASURE**

The Bible’s vision of salvation is universal in its scope. We are called to promote the well being of the human community and its environment, so that Creation may live in harmony.

**SOME NOTES ON BUILDING UP CREATION**

The Book of Genesis gives a symbolic account of human existence and its historical reality. We are told that God wanted all of creation to flourish, not just humankind. He told the fish and the birds to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:22) as well as humankind (1:28). He gave humans “every tree with seed in its fruit” and to the animals and birds “every green plan” for food. (1:29-30). We are not alone in creation, and we need to forge right relationships with all of creation.

The biblical message refers to three fundamental relationships – between the human and God, the human and her neighbour and the human and the earth. However, these relationships are fractured both internally and externally. The Fall is characterised by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our limitations. The relationship with our neighbour is broken in the blame passing between Adam and Eve and the Cain’s murder of Abel. This leads to the distortion of the mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (1:28) and to “till it and keep it” (2:15).

The spirituality we see in the Psalms shows that God delights in all creation. As humans, made in his image, we have a responsibility to care for that creation as he does. God continually reveals himself to us through creation. Its splendour leads us to recognise the majesty of God and to praise him, whose glory is reflected in what has been created:

 “Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created” (Ps 148:3-5).

Jesus also acknowledged the Father as creator of all. He proclaimed God as Father (Mt 11:25). He spoke of the love of the Father for all creatures: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God” (Lk 12:6). “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them” (Mt 6:26). He invited us to contemplate the world we are in as a means of being in touch with God: “Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” (Jn 4:35).

Romans tells us that Creation is an unfinished task. It groans in anticipation of the Kingdom and the revelation of the sons of God. “For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now”.  (Rom 8:22) The Book of Revelation gives us a vision of the whole of creation will be transformed in God’s kingdom. *“Then I heard the whole creation, everything in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea, say, ‘Blessing and honour and glory and might be to our God who sits upon the throne and to the lamb, forever and ever.’”* (Revelation 5:13)*.*…

The fifth Mark of Mission encourages us to treasure Creation and grow in our appreciation of how God has invited us to cooperate with him building it up.

**GOD’S CARE FOR CREATION**

Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, however much you worry, add one single cubit to your span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these.

Now if that is how God clothes the wild flowers growing in the field which are there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you who have so little faith? So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What are we to wear?" It is the gentiles who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.' **Mt 6:24-34**

1. God the creator, sustains the world through his care for it – he looks after the birds of the air, the flowers of the field.
2. Our contemplation of creation leads us to understand its splendour, which is far greater than anything we ourselves create. (Not even Solomon..)
3. When we are in right relationship with creation, we are led to a closer relationship with God and a concern for justice. (If he does this for birds and flowers, how much more does he do it for me?)
4. When we are not in right relationship – when we worry about what to eat, what to drink and what to wear – we are often drawn away from God and misuse our capacity to bring about justice.
5. **REFLECT ON THIS PASSAGE FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE**

God is the creator of all, calls it good, and values it in its own right.

How does the passage from Matthew affirm God’s care for all of creation?

What aspects of creation have inspired you to think of God’s care and love in the past?

God has given humanity a special place in his creation. From your reading of the passage from Matthew:

What is the appropriate attitude of the human person creation?

Where to you find this attitude in your own life?

Where are the challenges to this attitude for you?

Name your favourite Bible passages that:

Speak of the glory of creation as God revealing himself.

Encourage our care of the earth and our ability to learn from it.

Warn against disrespect for creation and its misuse.

1. Reflect on this passage in the context of your experience in the parish and in the Church.

When you look at the environment around you – in your parish, nationally, internationally, where do you see the greatest need in building up God’s creation or in restoring it from the damage that has been done to it?

What activities in your parish/diocese contribute to this Mark of Mission?

Within the parish?

Link with others on a regional or national basis?

Link with others on an international basis?

How does engagement in this Mark of Mission enhance your appreciation of the other Marks of Mission?

TELLING others about God, his love for his and his call to discipleship?

TEACHING about the sacredness of creation and the call to right relationship?

TENDING to God’s creation, and especially to those who are in need?

TRANSFORMING our attitudes, behaviours and systems to enhance creation?