

## Week Six - Group Session

### Opening Prayer

*A crucifix is placed in a central place among the gathered people.*

Leader: With attentive hearts

**Response: We gather in your presence O Lord**

Leader: On the threshold of Holy Week

**Response: We gather in your presence O Lord**

Leader: leaving behind our comforts and distractions

**Response: We gather in your presence O Lord**

Leader: Committing everything to you at last

**Response: And always in your presence, O Lord, and under your cross**

Leader: Let us sign ourselves with the cross

In the name of the Father...

*All pray in silence for a short time. Small lights may be placed around the cross if this seems appropriate.*

A member of the group may say:

It was after this that Christ showed me something of his passion near the time of his dying. I saw his dear face, dry, bloodless and pallid with death. It became more pale, deathly and lifeless...And it seemed to me, that with all this drawn out pain, he had been a week in dying...There were times when I wanted to look away from the cross but I dared not. For I knew that while I gazed on the cross I was safe and sound.

*(Julian of Norwich – The Revelations of Divine Love 14<sup>th</sup> Century)*

Leader: We adore you Christ and we bless you

**Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world**

### Explore the Scripture from Passion Sunday (Year C) – Philippians 2: 6 – 11

His state was divine, yet Christ Jesus did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are, and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on the cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, and on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Following a short period of silence you may wish to share an image, a thought, a phrase, a question that has struck you.*

## For Reflection

In this Holy Week, as we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil, we enter deeply into the story of Christ's Passion and Resurrection. It is here that we can see, most clearly, what sort of Kingship, what sort of *power* is his; and from this we can learn more about what it means for us to share in this royal office (LG, 36). In the Passion we see that Christ's Kingship is one of self-sacrifice and love; his power is rooted in his total trust in and abandonment to the Father. This is the sovereign way of life to which all baptised people are called.

Being baptised into Christ's Kingship, means, first of all, to acknowledge him as sovereign over all things. (LG, 13; AA, 3) In our own lives, in our households, in our parish communities, and in our wider political and economic society – it is Jesus Christ who is Lord, and who is to bear the 'name above all other names.' But is this really how we see and understand the world? When we think of how our money and time and energy is spent, are we honouring Jesus as Lord of all? (Prayerfully reflecting on our diaries, or bank and credit card statements might help us be honest and practical about these questions!) Or do we have other priorities? Are there things we might begin to do that might make the Lord of Love the ruler of our lives in all things?

As our sense of Christ's Kingship grows, we can be drawn more and more deeply into his mission of proclaiming the Kingdom. Here, the Church teaches, there is a particular work – an *apostolate* (from the Greek word for 'sent', like 'apostle') – for the baptised lay person. As faithful and anointed Christians 'in the world', we are sent out to sanctify (that is, 'make holy') and evangelise all areas of human life and work (AA, 5-6). In the ordering of our lives to Christ's sovereignty, we are to work for the Kingdom of love in every circumstance, and to *announce* with confident and courageous words the truth of God's saving love (AA, 6). We do this with the same trust in the Father that Jesus shows us in his self-giving.

'The Church is called, in virtue of her very mission of evangelisation, to serve all humanity. Such service is rooted primarily in the extraordinary and profound fact that "through the Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion to every person." ' (CL, 36) In living this faith out, in every personal encounter, we fulfil our dignity as members of God's royal household.

*Share your thoughts on this reflection. How does this week's scripture reading and reflection on encourage you? Where are you affirmed? Where are you challenged? What impact might this have on your daily living?*

Leader: Aloud or in the silence of our hearts let us bring to the Father our thanks (pause)...

Leader: In sorrow let us ask the father for forgiveness (pause)...

Leader: With confidence let us entrust to the Father our cares and concerns (pause)...

O Virgin of the Magnificat,  
fill our hearts  
with a gratitude and enthusiasm  
for our vocation and mission.  
With humility and magnanimity  
you were 'the handmaid of the Lord';  
give us your unreserved willingness  
for service to God  
and the salvation of the world.  
Open our hearts  
to the great anticipation  
of the Kingdom of God  
and of the proclamation of the Gospel  
to the whole of creation.  
Amen.

Adapted from Christifideles Laici, 64

