



# A Contemporary Understanding of Jesus



## *Prayer One*



■ HYMN

GOD IS HERE

*David Haas*

Why do you stare at the skies up above,  
while your hearts are broken and looking for love?  
Don't get lost in the things of the past,  
but believe in the promise of a truth that will last.  
God is here, God is here, one thing I know, God is here.

Why do you dwell on what's happened before?  
Release all that burdens you, open the door.  
The future we reach toward is not found in the sky,  
for the reign of God's glory will never die.

Here in this place, with the gifts that we bring,  
the body of Christ is found – our reason to sing.  
In our coming and going, in every day,  
God's presence is stirring here, proclaiming the way.

With our strength and our talents, in our weakness and fear,  
in joy and in sorrow God's healing is near.  
In growth and in faith, in the darkness of sin,  
a new hope is present here where love can begin.

The church that we ache for can be found in this place,  
in our working for justice, in the presence of grace.  
For we are God's people, all holy and strong,  
to serve is our mission, with Christ as our song.

Why do you seek the living among the dead,  
Jesus is risen, friends, just as he said.  
All things are made new, true to God's word,  
it's beginning right here, right now, haven't you heard?

■ *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of  
God's presence among us and in creation*

## ■ READING

JESUS KNEW FROM HIS JEWISH RELIGION what the “kingdom of God” was about. He knew what it would take to make God’s kingdom visible on earth. He knew the mess humanity found itself in. He saw the violence, the fear, the domination, the suppression, the poverty, the discrimination, and the indifference of religious leaders to the authentic expression of Judaism.

Jesus’ preaching about the kingdom of God and the need to establish it resonates with what we believe today about the Divine Presence permeating everything that exists.

In our 21st century perspective of the Divine Presence at work in the universe we can better appreciate Jesus’ insight that the Divine was within him and all around him. However, he also realised that people did not ‘see’ what he saw, and because they could not see it, there was little hope of changing the way society operated.

How to bring about change? That was the concern for Jesus. How to bring about a society that would reflect the Divine Presence evident in people’s lives and their interactions?

Jesus tried to persuade people to take responsibility to establish ‘God’s reign’ on earth. He gave his heart and soul to helping people see how they could make visible God’s reign on earth.

Jesus set out to ‘convert’ the way people thought about themselves and about their relationship with God. His call to ‘conversion’ challenged people to think about and change their imagination about God. Jesus invited people into a relationship of utter trust with their God.

*It’s Time: Challenges to the Doctrine of the Faith, Michael Morwood*

■ *Pause for a moment to reflect and share  
on the Reading*

■ CANTICLE

*Philippians 2: 6-11*

Though he was in the form of God,  
Jesus did not count equality with God  
something to be grasped at.

But emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

Being found in human estate,  
he humbled himself and became obedient,  
obediently accepting death,  
even death on a cross!

Therefore God has highly exalted him  
and bestowed on him the name  
above every other name.  
So that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bow,  
in heaven, on the earth,  
and under the earth,  
and every tongue proclaim  
to the glory of God:  
Jesus Christ is Lord!

■ SCRIPTURE

*Lk 4: 18-19*

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom  
for the prisoners and  
recovery of sight for the blind,

## PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

■ *Pause for a moment to reflect and share  
on the Reading*

## PRAYER

In the busyness of this day, grant me the stillness  
of seeing, O God. In the conflicting voices of my  
heart grant me a calmness of hearing. Let my  
seeing and hearing, my words and actions be  
rooted in a silent certainty of your presence.

Let my passions for life and the longings for  
justice that stir within me be grounded in the  
experience of your stillness.


Let my life be rooted in the ground of your  
peace, O God. Let me be rooted in the depths of  
your peace.

AMEN

*Celtic Benediction, John Philip Newell*







When media  
and the digital  
world become  
omnipresent,  
their influence  
can stop people  
from learning  
how to live  
wisely, to  
think deeply  
and to love  
generously.

*Laudato Si, par. 47*



# A Contemporary Understanding of Jesus



## *Prayer Two*



■ HYMN

DO YOU HEAR THE MUSIC

*Kirtana*

Your Beloved calls you here today  
to ask you for this dance; what will you say?  
Are you going to throw the chance away?  
And do you hear the music?

I know you've got a lot of things to do,  
but I think the world could turn a time or two  
without all your precious plans  
and you could stop to hear the music  
in your heart, in your heart.

Maybe you should give your mind a rest  
and put its main assumption to the test;  
just let go and see who leads the best,  
surrender to the music.

Maybe you don't need to understand.  
Maybe these are steps that can't be planned.  
Funny how your feet know where to land  
when you listen to the music  
in your heart, in your heart.

Your Beloved calls you here today  
to ask you for this dance; what will you say?  
Are you going to throw the chance away  
or listen to the music, listen to the music  
in your heart?

- *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of  
God's presence among us and in creation*



## ■ READING

The son of Mary, Jesus, hurries up a slope as though a wild animal were chasing him.

Someone following him asks, 'Where are you going? No one is after you.' Jesus keeps on, saying nothing, across two more fields. 'Are you the one who says words over a dead person, so that he wakes up?' I am. 'Did you not make the clay birds fly?' Yes. 'Who then could possibly cause you to run like this?' Jesus slows his pace.

I say the Great Name over the deaf and the blind, they are healed. Over a stony mountainside, and it tears its mantle down to the navel. Over non-existence, it comes into existence.

But when I speak lovingly for hours, for days, with those who take human warmth and mock it, when I say the Name to them, nothing happens. They remain rock, or turn to sand, where no plants can grow.

Other diseases are ways for mercy to enter, but this non-responding breeds violence and coldness toward God. I am fleeing from that.

As little by little air steals water, so praise is dried up and evaporates with foolish people who refuse to change.

Like cold stone you sit on, a cynic steals body heat. He doesn't feel the sun. Jesus wasn't running from actual people. He was teaching in a new way.

*What Jesus Runs Away From, Jallalludin Rumi*

*And/Or*

A CHURCH MADE UP OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES that relate to a badly known Jesus, who is vaguely grasped, abstractly confessed, a silent Jesus who says nothing special to today's world, a dull Jesus with no appeal, who neither calls nor touches hearts, this is a Church that runs the risk of burning out and extinguishing

in the years ahead.

We need Christian communities marked by a new experience of Jesus. If we ignore Jesus, our communities will live ignoring themselves: we won't be able to know our most essential and critical work and mission.

Unless we look at life, the people and the world with the same compassion with which Jesus looked, the Church will be a blind Church, we will deceive ourselves believing to see everything through the privileged light of Revelation, but we will be living as if closed to the only one who is the "true light that enlightens every man and woman coming into the world".

If we do not listen to the voice of God and do not attend to the suffering of the people, our communities will be deaf communities, not aware of the Gospel and unable to communicate the Good News of God embodied and revealed in Jesus.

*Excerpt from a Talk by Jose Antonio Pagola*

■ *Pause for a moment to reflect and share  
on the Reading*

## ■ CANTICLE

*Jud 16: 2,13-15*

Strike up the instruments,  
a song to my God with timbrels,  
chant to the Most High with cymbals.

Sing a new song,  
exalt and acclaim God's name.  
A new hymn I will sing to you.  
O God, great are you and glorious,  
wonderful in power and unsurpassable.

Let your every creature serve you;  
for you spoke, and they were made,

## PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

you sent forth your spirit, and  
they were created;  
no one can resist your word.

The mountains to their bases,  
and the seas, are shaken;  
the rocks, like wax, melt before your glance.  
But to those who fear you,  
you are very merciful.

### ■ SCRIPTURE

*Mt 11: 16 - 19*

TO WHAT CAN I COMPARE THIS GENERATION? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

“We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.”

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.

### PRAYER

Clear our heart, O God,  
that we may see you.

Clear our heart, O God,  
that we may truly see ourselves.

Clear our heart, O God,  
that we may know  
the sacredness of this moment

and in every moment seek you, serve you,  
strengthen you as the living Presence  
in every presence.

Clear our heart, O God,  
that we may see

AMEN.

*Praying with the Earth, John Philip Newell*



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# A Contemporary Understanding of Jesus



*Prayer Three*

❧

## ■ HYMN

### CHRIST BE OUR LIGHT

*Bernadette Farrell*

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!  
Shine out through the dark, shine!  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.

- *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of God's presence among us and in creation*

## ■ READING

OVER THE CENTURIES the impression has been given that Jesus is of God in a way that does not apply to the rest of creation. Jesus came out of the very substance of the Holy, but the rest of creation was fashioned from afar by a distant Creator. But Jesus reveals the deepest truth, that each one of us is the beloved, that each species is cherished, that each nation and each race is holy.

Jesus is an example of intercultural and interfaith dialogue who transcends separations by disclosing the oneness of love. The



## PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

Gospels were written with an aim of presenting Jesus as the Christ who is the incarnation of an external deity. We now read the Gospels through a new lens, not as a Jesus separated from what is truly human, but as the one who is the embodiment of utter freedom, commitment and love for all, the one who can show us and lead us into a deepening sense of who we can also become.

*OWITF Publication, Godfrey et al.*

*and/or*

CHRISTIANS FORMALLY BELIEVED that, “somehow,” Jesus was both human and divine at the same time. However, with our largely dualistic thinking we humans were only human, and Jesus, for all practical purposes, was only divine. We missed the major point, which was to put the two together in him and then dare to discover the same in ourselves! We made our inclusive Saviour, whom we could imitate and participate with, into a Redeemer whom we were told to worship as an exclusionary “Saviour.” It is so strange that Jesus, who was always inclusive and compassionate in his lifetime, seemed to create a religion that had an entirely different philosophy. How could that happen?

*Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi, Richard Rohr*

■ *Pause for a moment to reflect and share  
on the Reading*

## ■ CANTICLE

*Ephes 1:3-10*

Praised be the God  
of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has blessed us in Christ  
with every spiritual blessing in the heavens.  
God chose us in him  
before the foundation of the world,

that we should be holy  
and blameless in God's sight.  
We have been predestined  
to be God's children through Jesus Christ,  
such was the purpose of God's will,  
that all might praise the glorious favour  
bestowed on us in Christ.  
In Christ and through his blood,  
we have redemption,  
the forgiveness of our sins,  
according to the riches of God's  
grace lavished upon us.

For God has made known to us  
in all wisdom and insight,  
the mystery of the plan  
set forth in Christ.  
A plan to be carried out in Christ,  
in the fullness of time,  
to unite all things in Christ,  
things in heaven and things on  
earth.

## SCRIPTURE

*Jn 1: 1-5*

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being. What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

## PRAYER

May the blessing of God the Supreme Mystery  
and Creator,

Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word who is our  
brother and friend,

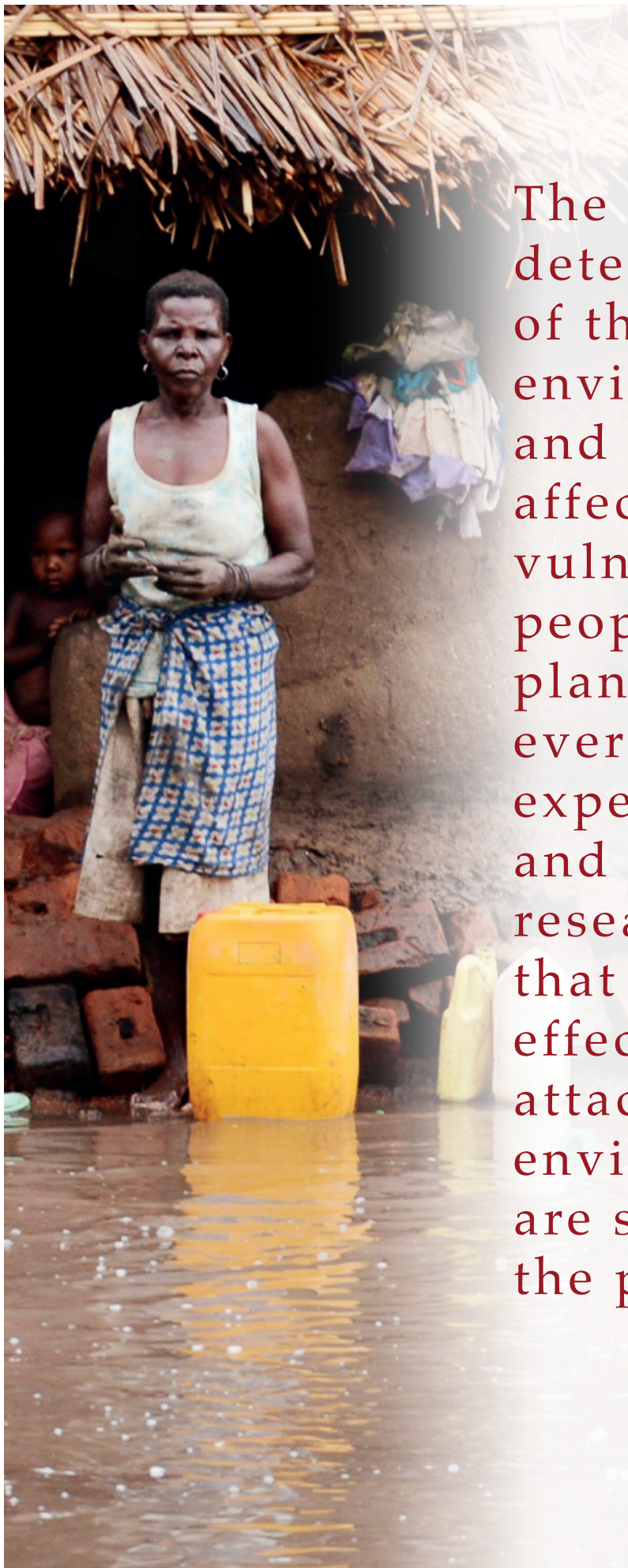
and the Holy Spirit, Life-giving breath and  
Wisdom,

be with us and remain with us, this day and  
always.

AMEN.

Adapted from Sr Ruth Fox OSB





The deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: “Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest”.

*Laudato Si, par. 48*



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# A Contemporary Understanding of Jesus



*Prayer Four*

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## ■ HYMN

### OPEN

*Mike Scott*

Open to the world, open to spirit,  
open to the changing wind,  
open to touch, open to nature,  
open to the world within.

Open to change, open to adventure,  
open to the new,  
open to love, open to miracles,  
open beloved to you.

Open to learn, open to laughter,  
open to being blessed,  
open to joy, open to service,  
open to saying 'yes'.

Open to risk, open to passion,  
to peace and silence too.  
Open to love, open to beauty,  
open beloved to you.

- *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of  
God's presence among us and in creation*

## ■ READING

THE HISTORICAL LIFE OF JESUS is a unique moment in the evolutionary story whereby divine consciousness within the human attains new heights. Thus Jesus of Nazareth evolves into a "Cosmic Christ" present for all time moving, inspiring and transforming humanity. Only in union with this Christ will brothers be enabled to join in the transformation of the Earth and its marginalised people.

This Jesus, in his humanity and as he constantly searches out



## PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

God's ways, goes beyond and challenges his own Jewish tradition. His was a road of gradual enlightenment and transformation. He was led to question the unjust structures of religion and state. He becomes a radically disturbing presence.

The urgency of the crises in our world requires and prompts a new understanding of Jesus. The growing awareness of, and emphasis on, the human Jesus emerging in scripture scholarship today is not by chance. It is the understanding most relevant to a world becoming dehumanised by technology and anonymity. In these times brothers, as others, need to root their faith in Jesus as the man of compassion so that they can learn compassion for those marginalised by the modern world.

*Validation, OWITF*

- *Pause for a moment to reflect and share on the Reading*

## ■ CANTICLE

*Col 1:12-20*

Let us give thanks to God  
for having made us worthy  
to share the inheritance of the saints in light.

God has delivered us from the power of darkness  
and transferred us into the kingdom of God's beloved Son,  
in whom we have redemption,  
the forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God,  
the first-born of all creation;  
in him all things were created,  
in heaven and on earth,  
things visible and invisible.

All things were created through him;  
all were created for him.  
He is before all else that is.  
In him all things hold together.  
He is the head of the body, the church!  
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,  
that in everything, he might be above all others.

In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,  
and through him, to reconcile all  
things to himself, whether on earth or in heaven,  
making peace by the blood of his cross.

## ■ SCRIPTURE READING

*Mt 4: 12-17*

Now when Jesus heard that John was arrested, he went to Galilee. He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, which lies alongside the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. This fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said:

“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who lived in the dark have seen a great light, and a light has come upon those who lived in the region and in shadow of death.”

From that time Jesus began to announce, “Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!”

## PRAYER

We believe in God present and active in Jesus of Nazareth,  
revealing to us the good news of our  
connectedness with God  
and with all other people

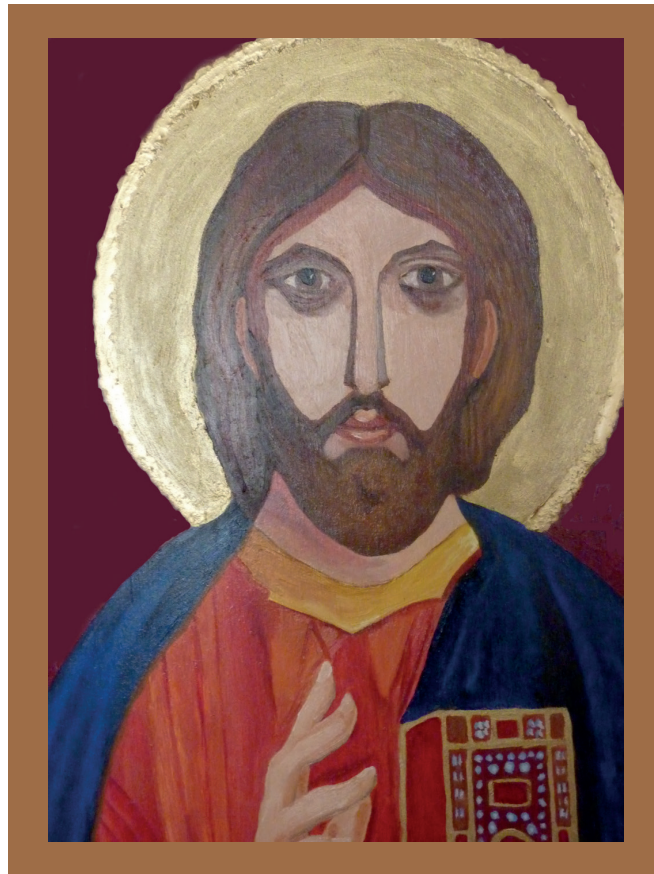
## PRAYING IN A NEW TIME


and urging us to love graciously and generously  
so that God's reign might be established.

May people see in us the spirit of appreciation,  
gratitude, and generous self giving  
we have seen in Jesus.

AMEN.

*Praying the New Story, Michael Morwood*





We urgently  
need a  
humanism  
capable of  
bringing  
together the  
different fields  
of knowledge,  
including  
economics, in  
the service of a  
more integral  
and integrating  
vision.

*Laudato Si, par. 141.*

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# A Contemporary Understanding of Jesus



*Prayer Five*

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## ■ HYMN

### ST TERESA'S PRAYER

*John Michael Talbot*

Christ has no body now but yours,  
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes through which He looks  
with compassion on this world.  
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good.  
Yours are the hands  
with which He blesses all the world.

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

Christ has no body now but yours,  
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes through which He looks  
with compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

- *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of  
God's presence among us and in creation*

## ■ SCRIPTURE

*Mt 25: 14-25*

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like a man who was leaving on a trip. He called his servants and handed his possessions over to them. To one he gave five valuable coins, and to another he gave two, and to another he gave one. He gave to each servant according to that servant's ability. Then he left on his journey.

After the man left, the servant who had five valuable coins took them and went to work doing business with them. He gained five more. In the same way, the one who had two valuable coins gained two more. But the servant who had received the one valuable coin dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.



## PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

Now after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five valuable coins came forward with five additional coins. He said, 'Master, you gave me five valuable coins. Look, I've gained five more.' His master replied, 'Excellent! You are a good and faithful servant! You've been faithful over a little. I'll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.'

The second servant also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two valuable coins. Look, I've gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little. I'll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.'

Now the one who had received one valuable coin came and said, 'Master, I knew that you are a hard man. You harvest grain where you haven't sown. You gather crops where you haven't spread seed. So I was afraid. And I hid my valuable coin in the ground. Here, you have what's yours.'

## ■ CANTICLE

*Ephes 3:14-21*

This is why I kneel before the Father.  
Every ethnic group in heaven or on earth  
is recognized by him.

I ask that he will strengthen you  
in your inner selves  
from the riches of his glory  
through the Spirit.

I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through faith.  
As a result of having strong roots in love,  
I ask that you'll have the power  
to grasp love's width and length, height and depth,  
together with all believers.

I ask that you'll know the love of Christ  
that is beyond knowledge,  
so that you will be filled entirely  
with the fullness of God.

Glory to God,  
who is able to do  
far beyond all that we could ask or imagine  
by his power at work within us;  
Glory to God in the church and in Christ Jesus  
for all generations, forever and always.  
AMEN.

## ■ READING

DESPITE ITS SEEMING INNOCENCE, the parable of the talents carries an explosive charge. Surprisingly, the “third servant” is condemned without having done anything wrong. His only error was “doing nothing,” not risking his talent, not making it bear fruit, keeping it intact in a safe place.

Jesus' message is clear. No to conservatism, yes to creativity. No to a sterile life, yes to the active response to God. No to obsession about security, yes to risky efforts to change the world. No to faith buried under conformity, yes to committed work to make way for the Kingdom of God.

The great sin of Jesus' followers could always be not daring to follow him creatively. It's important to observe the language that's been used among Christians over the centuries to see where we've often focused our attention: preserving the deposit of faith, preserving the tradition, preserving good customs, preserving grace, preserving vocations.

This temptation to conservatism is stronger during times of religious crisis. It's easy then to invoke the need to control ortho-

## PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

doxy, reinforce discipline and rules, ensure membership in the Church. All might be explicable, but isn't it often a way of distorting the gospel and freezing the creativity of the Holy Spirit?

The attitudes we should nurture today in the Church are not 'prudence', 'fidelity to the past', 'resignation'. Instead, they have other names: 'creative searching', 'boldness', 'ability to risk', 'listening to the Spirit' that makes all things new.

Talk by Jose Antonio Pagola

■ *Pause for a moment to reflect and share  
on the Reading*


## BLESSING

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
will give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation  
that makes God known to us.

We pray that the eyes of our heart will have  
enough light to see what is the hope of God's  
call, what is the richness of God's glorious  
inheritance among us.

Adapted from Ephesians 1: 17-19





Today, however,  
we have to  
realise that a  
true ecological  
approach  
always becomes  
a social  
approach; it  
must integrate  
questions  
of justice in  
debates on the  
environment, so  
as to hear both  
the cry of the  
earth and the  
cry of the poor.

*Laudato Si, par. 49*