



## **‘Heart speaks to Heart’ - being a missionary and synodal diocese.**

### *A Six-Week Course for the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia*

#### **WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION AND OUR FOUNDATION IN PRAYER**

‘Heart speaks to Heart’. I was reminded of this motto of St John Henry Newman as I attended the proclamation of him being declared a Doctor of the Church in Rome. This took place at the same time as we marked the first anniversary of the proclamation of the erection of our united Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia. God’s heart speaks to our heart. He does so uniquely through the Heart of His own Son, Jesus. That encounter leads us to speak to the hearts of our brothers and sisters, many of whom do not know Jesus, and who, apart from us, may never have any chance of coming to know Him.

I invite all of our parishes, schools and communities to be places where Heart speaks to Heart. Firstly, to recognise that Jesus’ Heart touches our hearts. To encounter Him is to “set out on a completely new horizon.”<sup>1</sup> Through the ongoing encounter with Jesus, we want to touch other’s hearts so that they know the life-giving experience of encounter with Him. Our motivation is that we love Jesus and we want others to know the beauty of His friendship and His love.

We believe that it is within the Church that we experience and encounter Jesus. We are given a path in which to follow Him and deepen our love of Him. We walk together as we love being His disciples, and encountering others who are His disciples, and we want others to be His disciples, too. This is why I share this message on being a missionary and synodal diocese, where we are all seeking to be more deeply Jesus’ missionary disciples.

#### **Our Vision: Foundation and Four Pillars**

I talk about a **foundation in prayer** and **four pillars of our life** which help us build a missionary and synodal diocese together. Those pillars are:

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, par 1

1. **Youth and the raising up of young leaders** in the diocese, including vocations to the priesthood.
2. An **evangelising zeal** which brings Jesus to others.
3. A **formation in faith** which recognises that every baptised person is called to be missionary as we accompany one another in a synodal way.
4. A **loving service** of those most especially in need.

## OUR FOUNDATION IN PRAYER

Prayer is the foundation of who we are and what we do. We are invited to have both a deep relationship with Jesus and a life in service of others so that they encounter Him through us. Each of us is called to be a 'disciple-making disciple'. We are not communicating a message but a person. We cannot give what we have not got. We must remember that prayer is not something to be done at the beginning and left behind, as we sometimes do when we gather for meetings. We must have sustained prayer, for each initiative in the parish, school or community.

All of us are called to deepen our encounter with Jesus, and to draw close to Him in prayer. Let us increase prayer opportunities in our parishes and our schools; invite one another into the rich devotional life of our Church through the rosary, pilgrimages, intercessory prayer, times of Eucharistic Adoration, guided meditation and prayer, *lectio divina*, and the sacrificial prayer offered from the sick and housebound whose prayer is particularly efficacious. There is the need to encourage and model prayer in the home, in families and from children and young people who un-self-consciously articulate their love for God, for Jesus and Mary, when encouraged to do so.

Of course, the fundamental thing about our prayer is that we recognise that it is God, and not ourselves, who is at the centre of our life. It is ultimately not our work, but God's.

In this respect, cynicism can be a particular fault that priests, and I, as bishop, can suffer from. It is a manifestation of a practical form of atheism.<sup>2</sup> We must ask the Holy Spirit to rid us of it daily.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Practical atheism' is a term which was first used in Catholic circles in the twentieth century by the

French philosopher Étienne Borne. It was taken up both by Pope Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

**For reflection (Week 1):**

1. The introduction spells out a 'vision' for the Diocese – why do we need 'visions' of who we are and what we are called to be and do as communities, families, and individual persons? Does this one speak to you? How?
2. How is prayer the foundation for this vision? How does the Heart of Jesus speak to your heart in prayer, both personally and communally?
3. How can we avoid living as 'practical atheists'? What would that look like in practice?
4. What can we do as a parish community to make sure prayer is indeed the 'foundation' of all we *are*, rather than being just '*one of the things we do*'?