



The Church-The People of God Meditation

Time: 2nd meditation on Rise Day

Length: 25-30 minutes

Speaker: adult

Purpose:

1. To proclaim that the Church flows from, and is, an image of the love of the Trinity. In the Creed after we profess our faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Church is proclaimed as the work of the three persons in God.
2. To share with the candidates one's own story/experience of Church, a sharing that is warm, honest, hopeful, realistic, human, inspiring and faith-filled.
3. To focus on the Church as COMMUNITY of faith, as PILGRIM PEOPLE OF GOD and also convey to the candidates a sense of the mystery of the Church as SACRAMENT through which Jesus lives among us.
4. To be aware and perhaps subtly point out what they (team and candidates) are experiencing during the TEC weekend is, in fact, Church.
5. To bring out the importance of the Church as the context in which we encounter the risen Christ.
6. To sketch the rich history of the Communion of Saints, those outstanding members of the family of God.
7. To let the candidates know they, too, are the Church, to affirm their gifts, to invite them to full participation in the life of the Church.
8. To prepare them to say YES to the gifts of God through the Church.

Setting: The candidates have just experienced the total self-gift of the Three Persons in God in the first meditation of the day. They should be filled with wonder at standing in God's presence as the recipient of this unconditional love. As God is revealed by Jesus as a community of persons, so in building up the community around Him, Jesus communicated the three-fold love of his Father and the Holy Spirit to all that He encountered. "The Father and I are one. If you know me, you know the Father." (John 10:30; 14:7) "When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who issues from the father, he will be my witness." (John 15:26) So close was the bond He created that he could refer to the union between the vine and its branches as a symbol of that bond.

Jesus did not select those who would become part of His family on earth because of talents or abilities, power or prestige, but purely because he loved us and wished to share his living-love with us. Jesus first drew persons into his circle of friends by being a true friend to them. As they progressively grew in their love for Him, He taught them by the way He lived. As Jesus moved through the human community, at every turn in the road He encountered people whom He reached out and touched, healing them either physically or in their internal needs. The Gospel accounts are filled with stories of how the love of Jesus drew him to embrace everyone who had any need and to affirm those who were able to walk with Him in building a model kingdom of the mutual love of his Father and the Holy Spirit with which He was filled.

Then, through his passion, death and resurrection, He consecrated this love community and brought it to the level of a Sacrament. All His life and love are incarnated in the family of God which He established. How He dwells within us

is a mystery...something too large for our minds or hearts to ever completely comprehend. But it is a very real mystery, like our life itself. We can live within it and enjoy it even if we cannot completely define it. Love is like that, it is a lived reality.

Within this Family of God, we have a wonderful family tree which has its roots in Jesus, it has countless holy men and women who have been so committed to it and all to whom it offers life that they were willing to die for it. When we become part of this family through Baptism, we enter into a very special family, one that has brought all sorts of good to the rest of the human family. Jesus truly lives on in the world in and through the persons bonded to him in this Church. We call this family the Communion of Saints.

Like all love (human and divine) that exists in the human family, those who followed Jesus not only developed a special way of living together, they also created a home, a structure, through which we could live together within the mystery of Jesus. We call this home the Church, a home built not of stones but of human persons. As within every family, in the family too, there are levels of responsibility and maturity to which we are challenged. We are called to grow in our Christ relationship, our Christhood.

Jesus, in drawing together and sustaining his family on earth, the Church, filled three very important roles. He constantly led a life of self-sacrificing love which both inspired and affirmed the love of those who followed Him. (We call this his priestly role...through his loving relationship with others, He inspired them to become His eyes, His ears, His heart, His hands, continuing His presence on earth.) He also invited them to stand with Him on the Gospel values He proclaimed. (We call this His prophetic role.) He gave them the high dignity of becoming shepherds of His flock with Him. He asked them to be responsible for leading all other persons into His presence. (We call this His kingly role.) These roles are what give us great dignity as Christians. We were anointed into these three roles in our Baptism. Jesus invites us freely and through our own personal decision to choose to walk in His company and to share responsibility for His Church, God's family on earth. I hope you will respond: YES, COUNT ME IN!

This meditation is designed to take the youth into the internal life of the Church as a community meshed with Christ and as a Sacrament of His presence. Since the Church is a mystery, as many of the images of Vatican II in the document on the Church, should be used to sketch it in broad strokes. However, the core portion of the meditation centers mainly on the communal and sacramental reality in the Church. This meditation prepares the candidates for the COVENANT RITE which follows it immediately.

Outline:

Scripture: (1 Cor. 12:27; Col 1:24; Eph 1:22-23; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

1. Option: Solicit images of the Church from the candidates and team in the conference room. Publish and post the images as a starting point. (If you choose not to do this, go to the next point in the outline.)
2. Meaning of "Church".
 - a. Jesus gathered about Him a community of friends. Within their friendship circle He came to know them and they came to know Him in a very intimate and profound way. He revealed in his personal love for them how deeply God loved them. As He lived with them, He taught them what gift-love was all about by how He lived. To be His follower was to be someone special in the world. When with Him, they felt near to the heart of God.
 - b. Finally, after three years of living with Jesus (many times under the stars), Jesus in His life-giving death and Resurrection shared with them His special divine gifts and invited them to continue His

work and to share His love with the world. They became the family in which He continued to live and through which his love continues to touch all the people of the world.

- c. Share with the candidates your experience of Church. How has your experience of Church changed through the years?
3. Present the image of the Church as a multi-faceted reality. The mystery of how God continues to dwell in the midst of this unique Family of God cannot be defined by any one image.

Note: since the Church is a mystery, it cannot be exhaustively defined, but its nature is best communicated by studying the various biblical metaphors. Beside the term "Family of God," Vatican II calls attention to four groups of images: The Church is the Flock of Christ, the Vineyard of God, the Temple of the Holy Spirit and the Spouse of the Immaculate Lamb.

(Two ways of presenting this portion of the meditation are proposed.)

Option 1: The Church

1. Looked at from the outside: Buildings, Pope, bishops, priests, as an organization.
2. Looked at from the inside, Christ's view: WE are the Church.
 - a. "All of you, then, are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it." (1 Cor. 12:27, Col 1:24 and Eph 1:22-23)
 - b. Vatican II stresses the human communal aspect of the Church. The Church is a mystery, but one like life, we can live within.
 - c. Share experiences or stories drawn from the six models of the Church without specifying the name of the model exemplified: institution, communion, sacrament, herald, servant, community of disciples.

Option 2: Share one of the following images of Church.

1. The Church is like a diamond.
2. The story of the blind men of Indostan
3. The Church is like a laser light show.
4. Other images or stories you have discovered to describe Church.

Church as Community:

1. A gathering of people from all over the world.
 - a. It is not based on geography, national origin or heritage.
 - b. It is not a club
 - c. It is a community of people who have come to know God through Jesus, and who have given their CREDO, their heart to the three persons revealed in God.
 - d. They are a people who believe God lives in them in a very special way because of their Baptism. (Use the scripture reference from John 15:5 and 1 Cor. 12:12-31 to develop this understanding of community.)
 - e. They reflect the gift-love of god's self in the manner in which they live together.
2. Reflect on the TEC experience as living an experience of community to this point. Name several experiences the candidates have had:

- a. Building trust through the icebreakers of Die day
- b. Receiving bibles
- c. Reconciliation
- d. Prayer
- e. Example of team

5. The Church as a community of believers who accept the call to live in the way of Christ.

1. **Weekly Eucharist:** this is our family gathering around the table of the Lord. It is the oldest and principal obligation of those who choose to live in Christ's family. We have the privilege and dignity of offering with Christ, His life-giving death on the Cross. It is a time for us to recollect our thoughts, feelings, dreams and to receive renewed strength in our journey with Christ.

2. We gather as a family in the **context of prayer** at important times in our lives (e.g. marriages, illnesses, reconciliations, Baptisms, vows, ordinations and for the funerals of our loved ones.)

3. **Even when we are not gathered for prayer**, we (each in his own place in the world) are sharing our gifts in imitation of Christ's gift-love with all who have needs, whether in charity or justice.

6. **Walking in companionship with Christ** in this His family, His pilgrim people, we are called by God to share the gifts with which God has richly endowed us in Baptism with all who touch our lives.

1. We are asked to share in his **Priestly role** by lending Him our eyes, our ears, our heart, our hands to be the source of his loving presence among all on earth. May our sacrificial love attract others to love Christ as we do. (Acts 2:33)

2. We are asked to share in His **Prophetic role** by standing firm on His Gospel values, by being persons of value who witness before our peers our sincere faith and commitment to Christ. (Ep 5:29)

3. We are called to share the **Kingly role** of Christ by recognizing the value of all other members of the human family, affirming their worth, fighting for them in charity and justice. (1 Cor. 10:17; 12:27; Rom 12:5) We share Christ's responsibility for his flock.

Conclusion: we are now going to ask those at each table to reconnect with their spiritual family tree. When you were Baptized, you were given a name. Christian tradition usually tries to find some form of a Saint's name for each child. It shows our connectedness. We ask that you do a bit of research now. Find either your Saint's name and his/her story, or your chosen Confirmation name, or, if you do not have a patron Saint, we ask that you choose one. We have a supply of materials to help you.

When you have finished this task, we would like each table to discuss the meditation on the Church, and to write what you would like from the Church in living out your commitment to Christ.