

Christ Our Light
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Christ is the light of all nations. This bold and beautiful statement from the Second Vatican Council is simply the echo of the Church through the centuries which finds its origins in the revealed Word of God. Not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old, and ultimately to the beginning of time. "In the beginning was the Word."

Throughout the Bible there is this constant, implicit reference to the One who is to come. "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them the things about himself in all the scriptures." (Luke 24.27)

This is the mission of the Church, to bring Christ to all nations, to all generations until the end of time. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. (Mt. 28.19-20)

But how are we to bring this "Jesus Christ who was crucified" to others if we do not bring Him first into our hearts and lives?

In the spirituality of Carmel we find this call to follow Our Lord ever more closely so as to reach union with Him "whom we know loves us". In the Blessed Virgin, the Mother and Queen of Carmel, the Carmelites have the example par excellence of true discipleship of Jesus Christ, and following her the Carmelite founders teach us to follow Christ as they themselves strove to do with perfection.

St. John of the Cross advises us to "Have a habitual desire to imitate Christ in all your deeds by bringing your life in conformity with His. You must then study His life to know how to imitate Him and behave in all events as he would." (A 1, 13, 3)

The "desire" to imitate Him is given to us through grace, "Inspired by the Holy Spirit", we state in our promise, and "In response to God's call". In order to fulfil our promise we have to "study" His life to know how to imitate Him.

A brief guide to the life of Jesus helps us to examine and compare ourselves so as to be able to discern where we are lacking in imitating Him. So that we may remain in Him and He in us.

Jesus prayed: In private, in public, silently and aloud, during the day and during the night. He prayed first of all for Himself, that He may have courage, and perseverance, for wisdom and for the other gifts of the Holy Spirit and for the success of His mission. He prayed for His mother and foster father, his relatives and neighbours. Later, He prayed for His disciples and the rich and the confused. He prayed for the dead, for His opponents, for His people, for unity among His chosen ones, for those of His time and for those who were to come. He prayed in celebration, in joy and in sorrow, in work and in persecution and suffering. Most of all He prayed in thanksgiving and praise.

How does our prayer life compare with His?

Jesus made use of Scriptures: to learn, to form His character, His identity, to develop His mind and attitude on His journey on earth. He made use of Scriptures to pray, to meditate, to combat

error and weakness, to fight temptation, to teach and instruct.

How does our use of the Scriptures compare with His?

Jesus Loved: God the Father, His mother, His foster father, His relatives and those around Him, His disciples, His followers, the rich and the poor, the sick and the downtrodden, His enemies His people and all peoples. He loved His contemporaries, His ancestors and those who were to come. He loved children, He loved creation "and God saw that it was good."

How does our love for God and neighbour compare with His?

Jesus obeyed: God's Law, His parents, the law of His land, the law of the established authorities in as much as they were just laws. Jesus obeyed God's will for Him.

How does our obedience compare with that of Jesus? Do we obey God, the Church, our superiors, and God's will for us?

Jesus was always willing to forgive, in words as well as in deed. He also had a radical and open approach to others. He made Himself available to all regardless of cost of time or price, especially to those most in need. A dedication and commitment that finally led Him to the cross.

It seems a difficult act to follow, He Himself told us "Without me you can do nothing.", but He also promises to be with us "till the end of time". Our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus assures us that God helps those with determination to serve Him.

As Carmelites, our mission should be clear like St. Paul's:

"All I want is to know Christ, to experience the power of His resurrection, to share in His suffering and be one with Him in His death, in the hope that I myself may be raised from death to life." (Phil 3.10-11)