

# Showing the Way to God

You may well have heard talk in the parish of something called the **UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES**. Their name is important because they are not a 'to do' list, a list of rules or even a plan of action. They are signposts, adopted by the Jesuits, which will guide them for the next 10 or so years. Over the next few weeks, we will be looking at them more closely because, as a Jesuit parish, we too need signposts, to show us the way forward – especially after the last year and a half.

The preferences are not numbered, because they are all important, but the preference known as '**Showing the Way to God**' is of paramount importance, as some would say it presupposes, as a basic condition, the Jesuit's (and therefore our) relationship with the Lord, in a personal and communal life of prayer and discernment ... Without this prayerful attitude, the other preferences will not bear fruit'.

## Some questions:

**Do I have a personal relationship with Jesus and with God?**

**How do I, how do you, show the way to God?**

In answer to the first question, we might say that my relationship with God and Jesus is a personal (and therefore private) matter.

Our answer to the second might go something like, "That's not my job surely. What do I know? That's what the priests, sisters and other 'holy' people are there for.

The opposite is true, however! Our mission, as Christians, is to show other people the way to God, to show them how God is working in our ordinary everyday lives, to show them how God speaks to us, in the ordinary (good and bad) events of our lives.

How do our children learn what family is? How do they learn the difference between good and bad choices? How do they learn to be compassionate, caring, loving, and forgiving adults? They rarely learn any of this because they have been **told** about it. They are more likely to learn it because we have **shown** them what these things look like and how to respond to different situations.

In the same way, our relationship with God and with Jesus, is crucial to how we live as Christians. This relationship must be at the heart of our lives, personally as well as communally.

Each of the **UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES** begins with a verb, and most people will tell you that a verb is a 'doing word' – it describes an action, so rather than **telling** people about Jesus and God, we **show** them how important they are to us by what we do and how we behave towards others.



Universal Apostolic Preferences: Our United Mission

We are fortunate in this Parish because we can draw on the rich tradition and experience of the Society of Jesus. St Ignatius, their Founder, put together what are known as 'Spiritual Exercises' which can help us all, to live a more discerning and reflective life. They were the fruit of his desire to deepen his relationship with God and his desire to be God's instrument and do His will.

Do I take time each day, to spend time with God?

Where was He?

What can I be grateful for?

What is God asking of me?

What is He saying to me – even if my life is a mess?

Do I trust that He is with me, in **all** of it?

Am I willing to believe that what He wants for me is good - despite the challenges and difficulties that I face?

How do I share my faith with others?

These are important questions, if I want to have a real relationship with God and with Jesus.

The **UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES** need to be seen as openings to grace. Yes, we co-operate. But the real agent is God. If I am to be the missionary disciple that Jesus speaks of at the end of Matthew's Gospel, am I open to the graces that God wants to give me, or am I too busy planning my next step to hear what God is saying to me? In order to really hear what He is saying to me, I need to develop that reflective attitude in my life so that I can discern and understand what it is that He wants of me.

When the **UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES** were introduced by Father Sosa, he recorded a video which began with an invitation....

**Imagine God speaking to you.**

What is He saying to you?

What has He said to you over the last year and a half?

What fills you with gratitude?

What does He want you to do?

If you would like to share the answer to these questions, without leaving your name, please use the post-it notes in the porch and leave them on the wall in the space provided. It would be good to see what God is saying to us as a parish and what He is asking of us now as we move forward together.