**ADVENT RETREAT: Cry from the heart**

**1st December 2024 – St. Patricks, Donabate**

I would like to share some experience on Contemplation and Action, on Meditation and the work of justice.

This presentation offers a brief introduction to the practice of contemplative prayer in our parish and the wider community.

Firstly, let me share some recent parish history. Fr Jim Caffrey PP came to Balally parish in Autumn 2021. He had just returned to the diocese after spending five years in Mepkin Abbey as a monk. He taught us that contemplative style of prayer is not just for those inside a monastery but is for all of us outside the monastery walls too. Contemplative prayer can work just as well outside the monastery as inside the monastery.

Under Fr Jim’s leadership and using the diocesan Building Hope program, a new parish vision and mission was established by the PPC in 2022.

Our Vision is **to become a monastery without walls working together in serving the mission of Jesus**

Our Mission is **to become disciples of Jesus through Meditation and Service**

**How do we implement our mission in Balally?**

1. The mission of the parish is in the words of Jesus “Go make disciples of all nations” (Mt.28:19).
2. To do this the parish will bring together into a dynamic unity
* Meditation **and** Service
* Contemplation **and** Action

Note that little word **and**, it is not one or the other but both.

1. Contemplation will lead to action and the service of others will inform the rhythm of contemplation.
2. The creative relationship between contemplation and action will lead into our weekly celebration of the Eucharist around the table of the Lord as “the source and summit of the Christian life” (Vatican II).
3. An essential part of the mission of the parish is to care for the gift of God’s creation so that together we can hand on a more habitable and healthier planet to the next generation.
4. Another part of our mission is to change the culture from being a parish of “customers” to being a community of disciples. As a community of disciples, we call others and form them into discipleship through Meditation **and** Service.

The parish was introduced to Christian Meditation through experience, sharing, teaching, practice, local school participation, World Community Christian Meditation, retreats and pilgrimages.

* Contemplative Mass is every Tuesday evening at 7pm.
* Morning and evening prayer is held in the Icon Chapel.

Details of these are on the parish website and all are welcome.

Meditation is part of all our prayer services including all masses. We use the mantra **Maranatha** which is Aramaic for **“Come Lord Jesus”**.

The introduction to Christian Meditation has been a gradual development over time. It is both a personal and a communal journey. As Fr Jim often says, in many ways we are still at the beginning and we continue to learn and develop.

**What does that mean for us; for you; for me?**

Life is busy, time is precious and it is perhaps our most limited commodity with many demands on it; family, work, social, community, well-being…. it is a juggling act ………………we live in a noisy world …………….

**Is there something missing?**

Balally recently hosted a seminar entitled ***A noisy world in need of Meditation & Service*.** Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury was the keynote speaker. In his one of his presentations entitled **Contemplation: The Journey Inwards**, Rowan spoke about each person’s journey inwards to Jesus. This is how he put it; *“it means surrendering our attachments to plans and solutions. In becoming detached we reach a stage of* ***unstuckness.*** *That is Contemplation. It is not an action but rather a place to be to surrender ourselves to God.”*

In our search for the meaning of life and equally in our search for a deeper understanding of our relationship with God we could consider the following possibilities.

Every now and again, we glimpse God out of the corner of our eyes. This God seems to come and go, here today and gone tomorrow

Another possibility is **to discover** the God who is present all the time to us. It is us who are absent to that God. God is there but it is we who are absent to the presence of God all around us: God in nature, in the gift of creation, in the person of Jesus, in the history of Christianity and in the grace of each other.

It is through **Contemplation and Action** that we can discover this God, that we can get in touch with the God who surrounds us in love all the time.

It is therefore the **journey inwards** that enables us to move from one possibility, that is the God who comes and goes, to a 2nd possibility of getting in touch with the God who is already there ahead of us.

To conclude, let me share some words with you, which we sing in Balally before meditation from Blessed Columba Marmion, who was a Benedictine Irish monk

 ***In the still, in the quiet you will find Him.***

***He is there in the silence of your heart.***

***No words are needed in the stillness, in the silence.***

***He is there and He loves the person that you are.***

Finally, I wish to thank Fr Pat for the opportunity to speak to you this morning.