



2023

Diocesan Day for Catechists

Using *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina* in your catechesis

Dr Mark Nash, Director
Mrs Ingrid La Trobe, Catechetical Advisor



Agency for Evangelisation
and Catechesis
ARCHDIOCESE of SOUTHWARK

Lectio Divina

*Have this mind
among
yourselves,
which is yours in
Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 2:5

LECTIO DIVINA

Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis
KAROLITZKE, JOHANNES

WHAT IS LECTIO DIVINA?

Pope Benedict XVI gave an address, in 2005, on the 40th anniversary of Dei Verbum, the Second Vatican Council document on Scripture where he spoke of lectio divina in this way:

"I would like to recommend the ancient tradition of lectio divina: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer which brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church a new spiritual springtime. It should never be forgotten that the Word of God is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (see Psalm 119:105)."

HOW SHOULD I APPROACH IT?

Scripture itself provides us with a guide to the thoughtful and prayerful reading of the Word of God:

"Be still and know that I am God" – Psalm 46:10
"For God alone my soul waits in silence" – Psalm 62:1
"Speak Lord; your servant is listening" – 1 Samuel 3:10

Wherever you are when you practice lectio divina try to ensure that you are comfortable, try to banish any distractions you may have and, above all, relax.

HOW MIGHT I PRACTICE IT?

Lectio divina is a four-stage process; repeat this cycle as you feel necessary. Occasionally a fifth stage, action, is added. We believe that our lives can be fed by our prayerful reading of Scripture and seeking God's will. We might then consider lectio divina with this image:

Reading Scripture (lectio) is like biting into it, meditation (meditatio) is chewing it over, prayer (oratio) is savouring its goodness, contemplation (contemplatio) is a digestion of the Word and action (actio) is where we make use of the nourishment and we have received from the Lord.

1 READ
What does the biblical text say in itself? Here we desire to understand its true content, moving beyond our own ideas.

2 MEDITATE
What does the biblical text say to us? Here, individually and as a member of a community, we let ourselves be challenged by Scripture.

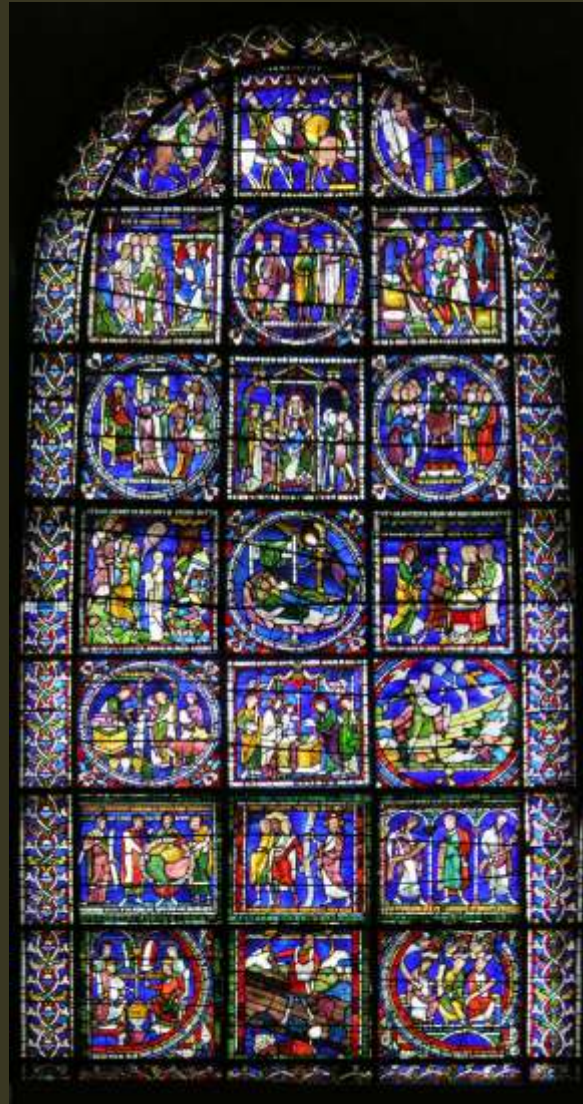
3 PRAY
What do we say to the Lord in response to his Word? Prayer, as petition, thanksgiving, intercession and praise, is the primary way that the Word transforms us.

4 CONTEMPLATE
Accepting, as a gift from God, His way of seeing reality, we ask what conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us?

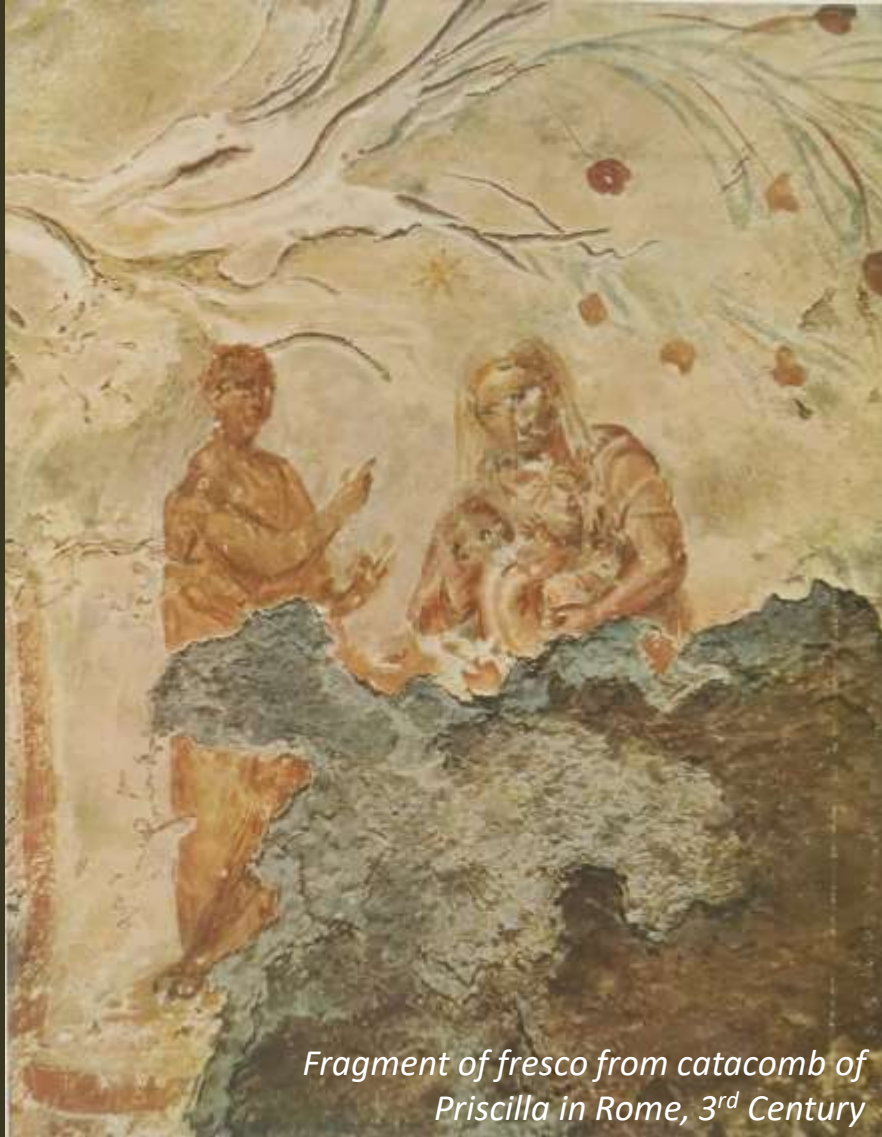
5 ACT
The process of lectio divina is not concluded until it arrives at actio, which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity.

Copyright © Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis, Archdiocese of Southwark, 2023

Communicating the Gospel



Visio Divina



Fragment of fresco from catacomb of Priscilla in Rome, 3rd Century



Fresco from the catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, Rome, 4th Century

Visio Divina

Lord, enlighten
the eyes of my
heart
Ephesians 1:18

VISIO DIVINA

Agency for Evangelisation
and Catechesis
ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWEST

WHAT IS VISIO DIVINA?

Pope Francis wrote, in *The Joy of the Gospel* (2013), that every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the way of beauty (*via pulchritudinis*):

'Every expression of true beauty can be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus.'

Representations of religious subjects, as well as the beauty of God's creation, have a way of drawing us in and helping us to appreciate the creative act:

'Genuine sacred art draws us to adoration, to prayer and to the love of God, Creator and Saviour, the Holy One and Sanctifier' (from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2502). *Visio divina* offers a pattern to experience this 'drawing in'.

HOW SHOULD I APPROACH IT?

Scripture and sacred art are intertwined, start your meditation with calling on the Lord's will and wisdom:

"Lord, enlighten the eyes of my heart" – Ephesians 1:18
"For God alone my soul waits in silence" – Psalm 62:1
"Speak Lord; your servant is listening" – 1 Samuel 3:10

Wherever you are when you practice either *visio* or *lectio divina* try to ensure that you are comfortable, try to banish distractions and, above all, relax.

HOW MIGHT I PRACTICE IT?

Visio divina is a process; repeat this cycle as you feel necessary. Some people recommend the reading of Scripture alongside contemplation of the image, others not. Our lives can be fed by our prayerful reading of Scripture and seeking God in beauty.

For centuries people have created and admired religious or sacred art; the creative process is an echo of God's own creating. Drawing on this tradition, the relationship with *visio* (looking), *lectio* (reading) and prayer is vital, and offers the possibility of fresh insight into the Lord's own truth, goodness and beauty.

CHOOSE

Identify the art that you will use - perhaps reflect why that particular piece has drawn you to it. Relax and ask that God will enlighten your time in prayer.

1

LOOK

Gaze at the entire picture. Notice the colours, the details, the composition. Note what details have drawn your attention in particular.

2

MEDITATE

How is the Lord speaking to you? Do you sense an invitation? Are emotions or memories evoked? Perhaps a verse of scripture comes to mind.

3

CONTEMPLATE

Gaze at the image again, remain receptive to the Lord's voice. Ask the Lord to help you see the image and your life through his divine lens.

4

RESPOND

What you receive during the *visio divina*, resolve to take into prayer and to act on in the coming week; seeing your life as a gift for others.

5

Copyright © Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis, Archdiocese of Southwest, 2023

The Incarnation and Sacred Art



The Incarnation and Sacred Art

Iconoclasm : smashing of images

Previously God, who has neither a body of a face, absolutely could not be represented by an image. But now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God... *and contemplate the glory of the Lord, his face unveiled.*

CCC 1159 St John Damascene



*Christ and Saint Mena or friend,
Louvre, 8th Century, Coptic Icon*

The Incarnation and Sacred Art

'The complete absence of images is incompatible with faith in the Incarnation of God.'

Pope Benedict XVI



*Christ and Saint Mena or friend,
Louvre, 8th Century, Coptic Icon*

The Incarnation and Sacred Art

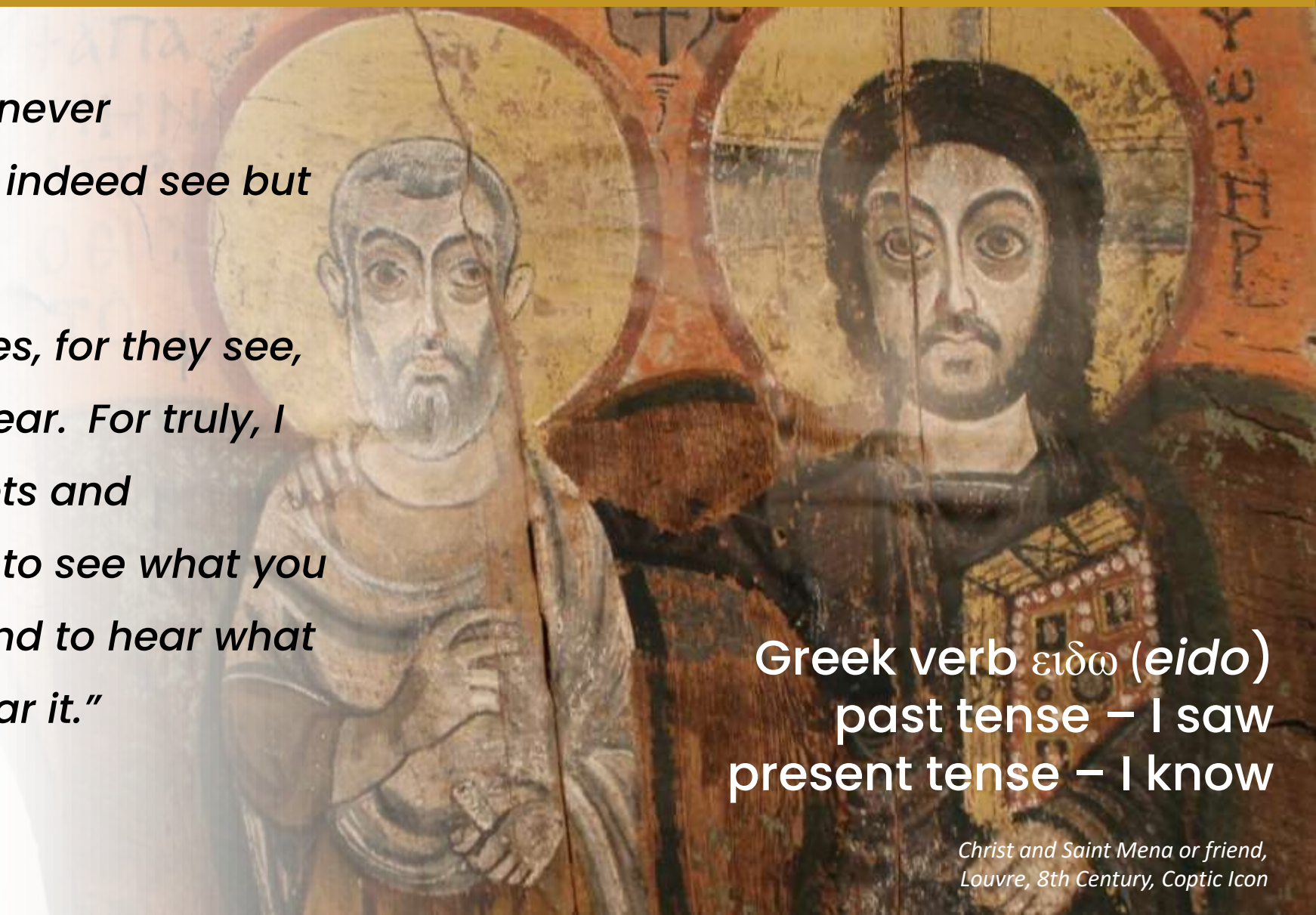
You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive...

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

Matthew 13:14,16,17

**Greek verb εἶδω (*eido*)
past tense – I saw
present tense – I know**

*Christ and Saint Mena or friend,
Louvre, 8th Century, Coptic Icon*



The Incarnation and Sacred Art

Christian iconography expresses in images the same Gospel message that Scripture communicates by words. Image and word illuminate each other: ... For it confirms that the incarnation of the Word of God was real and not imaginary, and to our benefit as well. CCC 1160



*Christ and Saint Mena or friend,
Louvre, 8th Century, Coptic Icon*

From Seeing to Contemplation to Adoration

The believer is also compelled by what is 'seen' or 'heard' through works of art – to stand in awe and wonder, to be permeated in mind and body and spirit by the divine beauty of Trinitarian love revealed in the human face of Jesus Christ. In this way, Christian art becomes a visual Gospel within contemporary culture.

Jem Sullivan: 'The Beauty of Faith: Using Christian Art to spread the Good News



From Seeing to Contemplation to Adoration



From Seeing to Contemplation to Adoration

Previously God, who has neither a body nor a face, absolutely could not be represented by an image. But now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God . . . and contemplate the glory of the Lord, his face unveiled. (St John Damascene)

CCC 1159

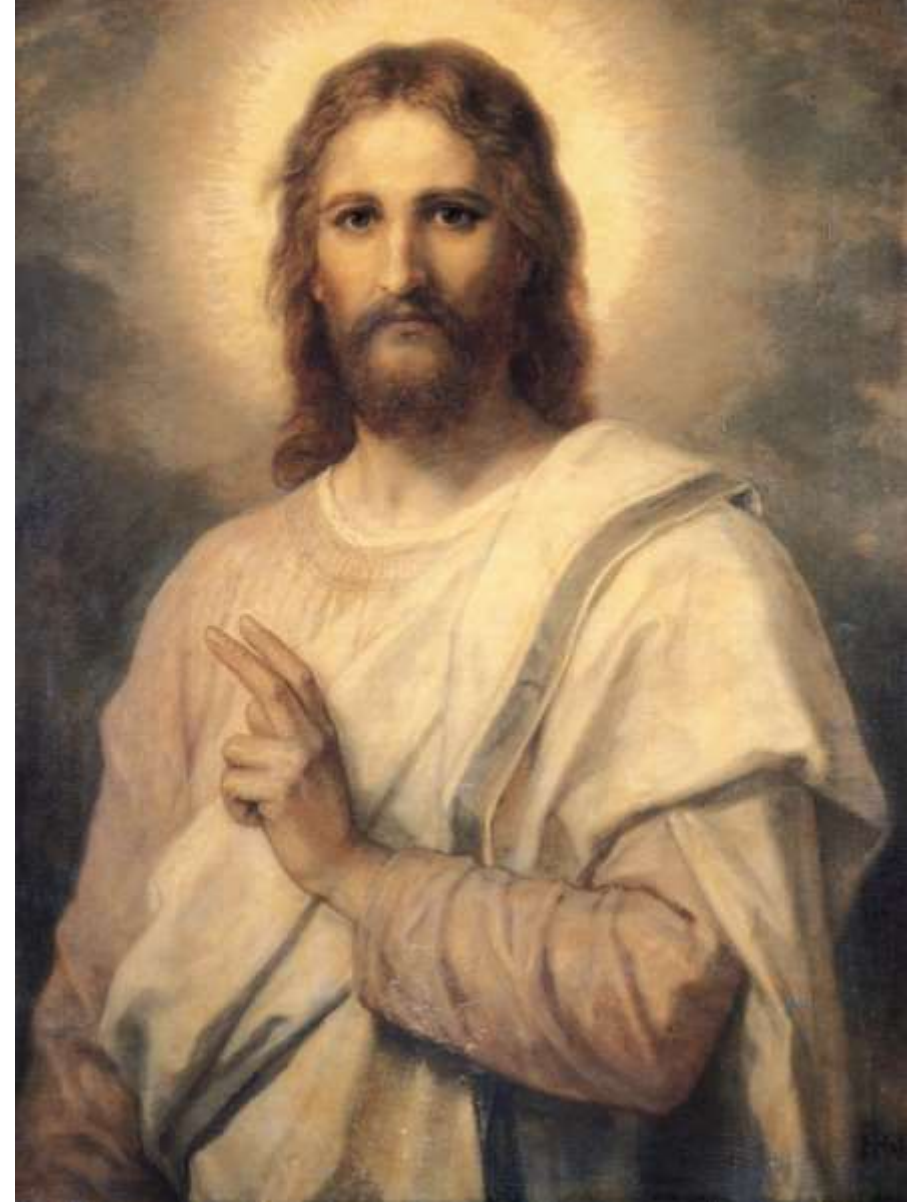
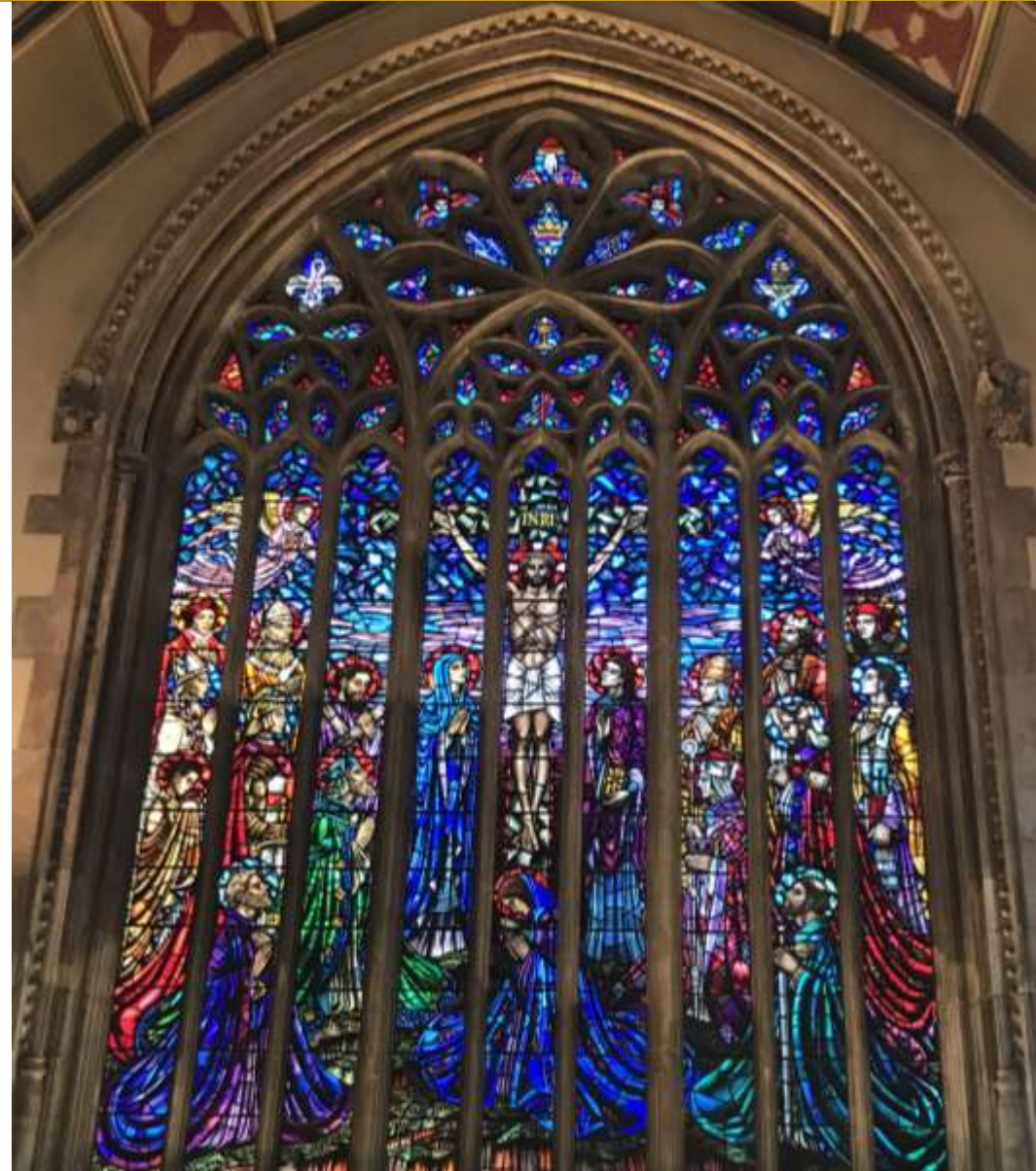


Figure of Christ, Heinrich Hoffman, 1884

Seeing from within

It is only from the inside, from the experience of faith and ecclesial life, that we see the Church as she truly is: flooded with grace, resplendent in beauty, adorned by the manifold gifts of the Spirit. It follows that we, who live the life of grace within the Church's communion, are called to draw all people into this mystery of light. Pope Benedict, 2008



Resources

LiturgyTools.net

CARFLEO.com

Pathways to God

Christian.art

University of Portland

