

Be Transformed

BY Deacon Jim McFadden

**Your life will never
be the same,
when you
fall in love
with Jesus.**

Have You Been Formed in Christ?

By virtue of our baptism we are called to be missionary disciples. The risen Christ commissioned His followers to carry out His mission: "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" (Matthew 28:19). To do that, we need to be empowered, formed in Christ. What does that mean?

A good place to start is John 15: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does He prunes so that it bears more fruit" (John 15:1-2). To be transformed, we need to be pruned by prayer and suffering. While prayer is necessary to participate in the divine life, it is suffering that can break down boundaries separating us from God. At certain points in life—such as during profound loss, rejection or failure—we lose control. Sooner or later, we all find ourselves in a place of pain.

At these moments, the Lord is with you in your pain. He has suffered it all and He loves and sustains you in being, every moment

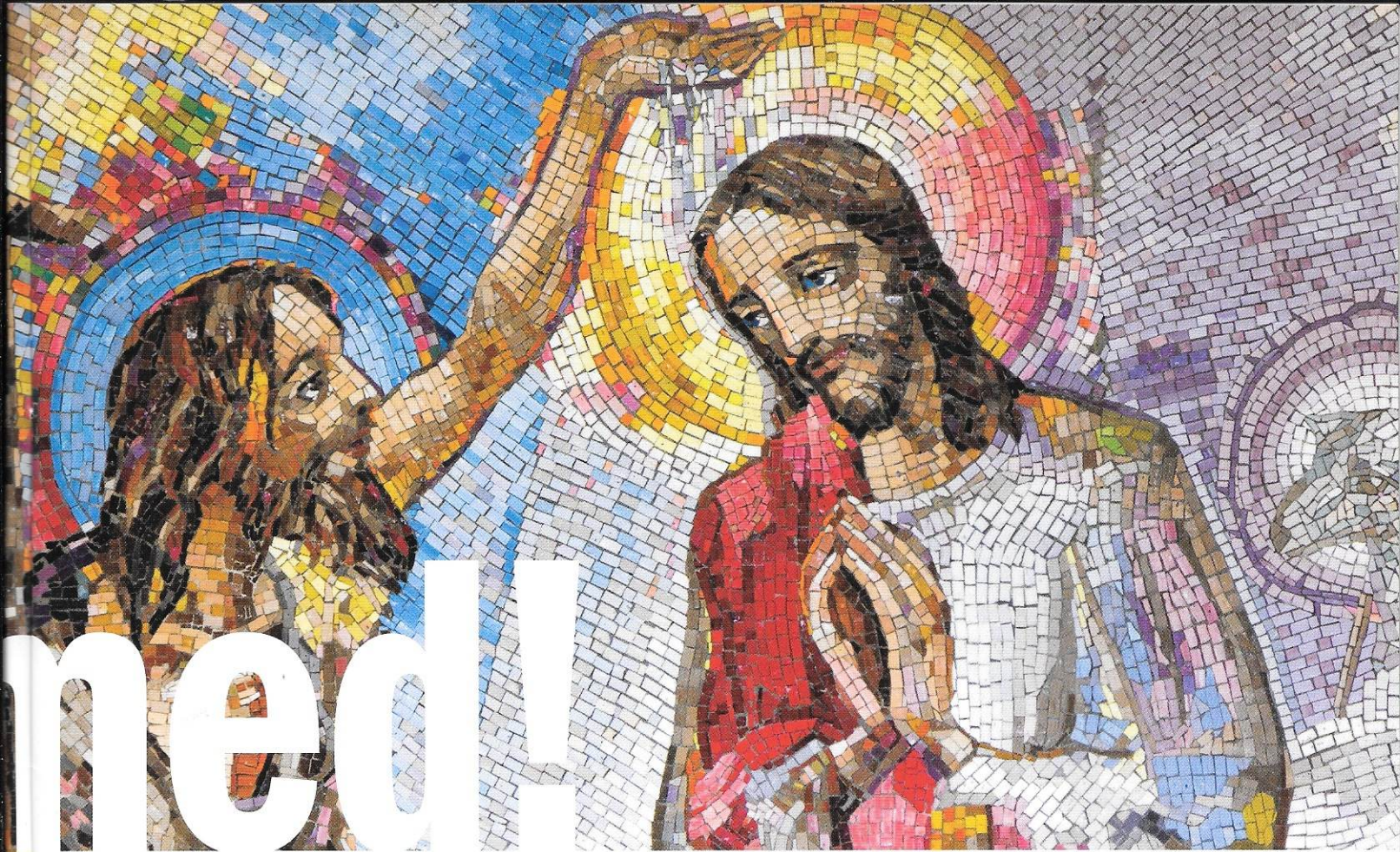
of your existence. Collapsing into His arms, uniting yourself with Him, you can do the impossible. If you have been betrayed, rejected or harmed, you will be able to forgive through His grace.

Forgiveness is such a key component for transformation. When we do not forgive, we stay stuck in the painful experience. Our relationships with God, others and ourselves are stifled. When you allow Christ to take over, forgiveness happens and the pain is released. It almost happens in spite of you. It happens when you say "Yes" to God's will, just as our Blessed Mother did at the Annunciation: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done according to Your Word" (Luke 1:38).

Have You Fallen in Love With Jesus?

Ironically, for some Catholics, this invitation seems strange. Many Catholics have a hard time even saying the name Jesus, let alone saying "I love Jesus" because it seems so Protestant or evangelical. You are made in the image and likeness of God. He is love, so you are made to love and be loved by





God. As a beloved child of God, how can you be afraid of God, whom Jesus invites us to call Abba or Daddy? That is why Jesus says further along in John 15, "I no longer call you slaves, I call you friends." This is the friendship model of genuine religion.

As Saint Catherine of Genoa said, "My deepest me is God." A thousand years prior to Saint Catherine, Saint Athanasius, who did so much to fight against Arianism and contribute to the Nicene Creed, said "The Son of God became Man so that man could become God." To participate in this reality is transformation. That is why Christian ministry re-grafts the true self into the experience of the Triune God. That is why suffering is not the worst thing that can happen to you, because it seems it is the most effective way to die to the false self.

The cross leads to resurrection. That is the Paschal Mystery, which we are called to live every day. What happens to Christ Jesus is meant to happen to us, because we are members of His mystical body, the Church. Saint Ignatius of Antioch put the necessity of suffering in this way:

It was necessary for Christ to suffer: it was impossible for His Passion not to have happened ... (His companions) failed to recognize that He had to suffer and so enter into His glory. Leaving behind the glory that had been His with the Father, He had gone forth to save His people before the world was made. This salvation could only be achieved by the suffering of the author of our life, as Paul taught when he said that "the author of life Himself was made perfect through suffering" (from a discourse).

As the Body of Christ, the Church, we are meant to go through the same process of transformation that is brought about by suffering. The important thing is to find God in the midst of your afflictions. Once you can find God in all things, you become indestructible because God is working in and through you.

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