



WE ARE CHURCH International

Saturday, 9 May 2026

Theme –

When the Cross Becomes a Flag:

Thomas Merton and Joseph Cardijn.

See-Judge-Act. Let the method guide you.

Facilitator: Maeve W.

Welcome everyone to our Eucharist today. Living in Northern Ireland I am well used to the discomfort “Flags” can cause! I am also aware of how small ecumenical groups can assuage conflict and help create trust and long-lasting friendships.

Opening song: **ALL ARE WELCOME SONG**

https://youtu.be/N9bOiAxwi4U?si=u_PIUJRTFyek LENT 2026-4vl

Some quotes from Joseph Cardijn/Thomas Merton:

Reader 1 PAUL U. *"You [We] can now find the most ardent Christians lined up in the most ridiculous, regressive, irrational parades. If they were concerned only with flying saucers and conversations with the departed, it would not be so bad, but they are also deeply involved in racism, in quasi-Fascist nationalism, in every shade of fanatical hate cult, and in every semi-lunatic pressure group." Thomas Merton, *The Nonviolent Alternative**

Thomas Merton wrote those words decades ago. He was a Trappist monk, a mystic, philosopher, and one of the most penetrating Christian thinkers of the twentieth century. He was not writing about cable news or social media algorithms. And yet, if you read that passage today, you might assume he had a television on in the background of his hermitage, and a browser tab open on his “*typewriter.*”

Reader 2 KOCHURANI A. **What Merton saw — and what we keep refusing to see**

Merton’s warning was not a general criticism of religious fervour. It was a precise diagnosis of a specific pathology: sincere religious devotion being hijacked, twisted, and weaponized into something that Jesus of Nazareth would have found unrecognizable — or worse, horrifying. Christian Nationalism today carries all the markers Merton identified: the racial anxiety dressed in the language of heritage; the ‘quasi-Fascist’ admiration for strongman leadership draped in providential imagery; the pressure groups and political action committees that weaponize scripture to oppose the equality of women, LGBTQ people, immigrants, and religious minorities. The theological window dressing has grown more sophisticated, but at its core remains a fanatical inequality under a cross, threatening the integrity of faith and social cohesion.

Reader 3 KOCHURANI A.**The theological problem at the centre**

Merton's critique was ultimately theological. His entire life's work was a sustained argument that authentic Christianity demanded contemplation, poverty of spirit, radical love of neighbour, and — above all — a ruthless suspicion of one's own certainty. The mystic tradition he inhabited understood that the soul most convinced of its own righteousness was the soul most in danger.

Christian Nationalism, by contrast, is theologically allergic to doubt. It trades in absolute certainty — about who belongs, who threatens, who deserves power, and who does not. It has no room for the Sermon on the Mount's peculiar insistence that the blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the peacemakers, and those who hunger for justice rather than those who seize it by political force.

Reader 4 COLM H.**Prayer of Confession**

Many Christians — across Catholic, mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, and Evangelical traditions — recognize this. They have watched a political movement appropriate their faith, drape it in nationalist imagery, and use it as a cudgel. Their voices are real, they are growing, and they deserve far more attention than they receive. Forgive us God for our lack of courage to stand up and be counted when we witness inequality;

READER 5 PATRICIA M.**What faithful resistance looks like**

Merton himself pointed toward the answer in the very book from which this quote is drawn: nonviolent resistance. Not passive acceptance, but active, principled, costly refusal to cooperate with what one believes to be evil. He believed — drawing on Gandhi, King, and the deepest currents of Christian tradition — that the willingness to absorb suffering rather than inflict it was not weakness but the most radical form of power available to a person of faith. Merton saw clearly that the “irrational parades” he described were not a sign of Christian strength, but of Christian failure. The cross, in early Christian tradition, was not a banner of conquest. It was a symbol of what happens to those who refuse to conquer.

A QUESTION TO SIT WITH for 2 minutes:

If Thomas Merton were alive today and scrolling through your social media feed — the content you share, the voices you amplify, the outrage you engage — would he recognize what you practice as the faith you profess?

OPEN SHARING ON THE REFLECTIONS

Reader 6 - SOLINE H.: Be pleased O God we pray, to bless, acknowledge and approve this offering in every respect; make it spiritual and acceptable so that it may become for us the Body & Blood of your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

ALL: On the night Jesus was betrayed, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying *This is my body, given up for you*. He then took the cup and said, *this is the cup of my blood, the new and everlasting covenant, given up for you*. **DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME**

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Blessed are we who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

ALL: Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, only say the word and my soul will be healed.

Soline: Receive the body and blood of Christ, given up for you, Amen.

Song: Be Still for the Presence of the Lord is moving all around.

https://youtu.be/Vep_Ty4Zx1o?si=KdqBtSkMEccgbMy4

Prayer after Communion:

Reader 7 – SOLINE H.

Risen Saviour, this communion is your pledge of our eternal reward.

It is a foretaste of heaven, though our poor human senses cannot perceive it.

You have told us you will raise us up on the last day.

Make our faith strong and unshakeable.

Praise to you, Lord for the empty tomb.

Praise to you, Lord for your return from the dead.

Praise to you, Lord for women and men redeemed.

Praise to you, Lord for a new world.

We especially thank you for our Baptism in which you make us your people and heirs to heaven.

Christ is Risen, Alleluia, alleluia.

Closing Song: Thine be The Glory, Risen, Conquering Son

<https://youtu.be/Tjz4yXUJrgU?si=DZApgoPDOxDsMiwY>