

## o6. Building a truly 'Catholic' Church



‘No one should think that the invitation is not meant for him or her.’

(EG n.3).



Vatican II Gaudium et Spes §1

‘The joys and the hopes,

the griefs and the anxieties

of the men and women of this age,

especially those who are in any way afflicted,

these are the joys and hopes,

the griefs and anxieties

of the followers of Christ.

Indeed nothing genuinely human

fails to raise an echo in their hearts,

for theirs is a community composed of men and women.

United in Christ,

they are led by the Holy Spirit

in their journey to the kingdom of their Father

and they have welcomed the news of salvation

which is meant for **everyone.**’



## The Church's mission

‘Peoples everywhere, open the doors to Christ! His Gospel in no way detracts from human freedom, from the respect that is owed to every culture and to whatever is good in each religion’(J-P II, Mission of Redeemer, n.3).

‘Everyone is searching for the Good News, albeit at times in a confused way, and all have a right to know the value of this gift and to approach it freely’(Mission of the Redeemer, n.II).

‘Missionary activity is the greatest and holiest duty of the Church’(Vatican II Ad Gentes, 29).

‘Missionary activity to those who do not know Christ has only one purpose: to serve men and women by revealing to them the love of God shown forth in Jesus Christ’(Mission of the Redeemer, n.2).



‘Working for the Kingdom of God means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. The Kingdom of God is the manifestation and realisation of God’s plan of salvation in all its fullness’(Mission of the Redeemer, n.15).

‘Through the action of the Holy Spirit the Good News takes shape in human minds and hearts and extends through history. In all of this it is the Holy Spirit who gives life’(J-P II, Lord and Giver of Life [1986] n. 42).

‘The ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share in the communion which exists between the Father and the Son.’

(Mission of the Redeemer, n.23)

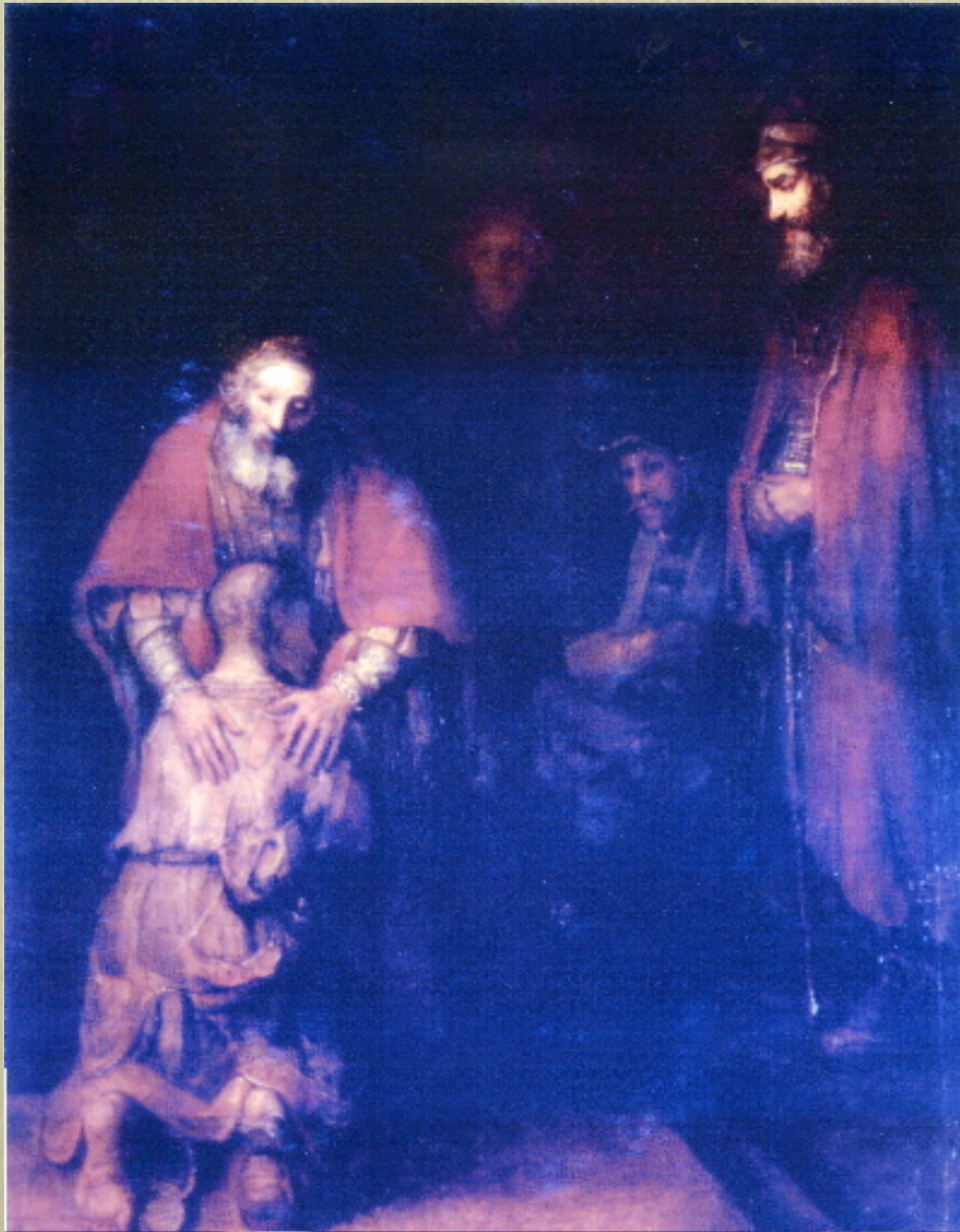
‘Missionary dynamism is not born of the will of those who decide to become propagators of their faith. It is born of the Spirit and it progresses through faith in God’s love’(J-P II, Mission of the Redeemer n.44).



Cardinal Franz König 2002 (died 2004 aged 98)

‘The Church of Christ must be an inviting Church, a Church with open doors, a warming, motherly Church of all generations, a Church of the dead, the living and the unborn, a Church of those before us, those with us, and those after us, a Church of understanding and sympathy, thinking with us, sharing our joy and sorrow, a Church that laughs with the people and cries with the people, a Church that is not foreign and does not act that way, a human Church, a Church for us, a Church that, like a mother, can wait for her children, a Church who looks for her children and follows them, a Church that visits the people where they are, at work or at play, at the factory gate and at the football stadium, and within the four walls of the home, a Church of those in the shadow, of those who weep, of those who grieve, a Church of the worthy, but also of the unworthy, of the saints and the sinners, a Church not of pious pronouncements, but of silent helping action.’





Rembrandt

‘How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy’(EG, n.3).

‘If we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?’(EG, n.8).



Paul VI Pentecost 1966 announcing the establishment  
of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians:

‘To take away from the Church its qualification of "catholic" would mean to change its face, the face Christ wants and loves; it would mean to go against the intention of God who wanted to make the Church the expression of his unbounded love for mankind. We should understand the psychological and moral newness which this qualification implies ...



‘The human heart is small; it is self-centred; it has place only for oneself and for a few others of one's own family. And when, after long and arduous efforts, it opens up a little, we succeed in loving our own country and our own social class; but the human heart always seeks boundaries within which it limits itself and seeks refuge. Even today, the heart of modern man finds it hard to transcend this interior confinement. To the invitation of civil progress to widen its capacity for love of the world, it responds hesitantly and on the still self-centred condition that it be for its own advantage. Usefulness and prestige govern people's hearts, not to speak



‘But when the name "catholic" becomes an interior reality, all egoism is overcome, all class struggle develops into full social solidarity, all nationalism is reconciled with the good of the world community, all racism is condemned, and all totalitarianism is unmasked in its inhumanity. The small heart has been broken open. It acquires a completely new capacity to expand. As Saint Augustine says: ‘Let the space for love be widened’.

A catholic heart means a heart with universal dimensions: a heart that has overcome the basic narrowness that prevents us listening to our calling towards supreme love. It means a magnanimous heart, an ecumenical heart, a heart capable of embracing the whole world.



‘This does not make it a heart that is indifferent to the truth of things or to sincerity of words. It does not mistake goodness for weakness, nor does it confuse peace with cowardice or apathy. It lives the marvellous synthesis of St. Paul: ‘Doing the truth in love’(Ephesians 4:15)”



‘Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that “delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow ... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ”(Paul VI). (quoted EG n.10)





Caravaggio 'The Call of Matthew'



## Eyes to see



‘True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances’(n. 199).

- Michelangelo



## Treasured Possession : segullâ

‘If you obey my voice and keep my covenant,  
you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples’(Exodus 19:5).

‘YHWH has chosen Jacob for himself,  
Israel as his treasured possession’(Psalm 135:4).

‘They shall be mine, says YHWH of hosts,  
my treasured possession’(Malachi 3:17).

‘You are a people holy to YHWH your God;  
YHWH your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth  
to be his people, his treasured possession’(Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2).

‘Today YHWH has obtained your agreement: to be his treasured people,  
as he promised you, and to keep his commandments’(Deuteronomy 26:18).



‘The immense importance of a culture marked by faith cannot be overlooked; before the onslaught of contemporary secularism an evangelized culture, for all its limits, has many more resources than the mere sum total of believers. An evangelized popular culture contains values of faith and solidarity capable of encouraging the development of a more just and believing society, and possesses a particular wisdom which ought to be gratefully acknowledged. It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel.’

(EG, nn. 68-69).



## Joy of the Gospel n. 178

‘To believe in a Father who loves all men and women with an infinite love means realizing that “he thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity” (JP II Message to the Handicapped 16.11.1980). To believe that the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been taken up into the very heart of God. To believe that Jesus shed his blood for us removes any doubt about the boundless love which ennobles each human being.

Our redemption has a social dimension because “God in Christ, redeems not only the human person, but also the social relations existing between people” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Compendium n. 52). To believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone means realizing that he seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds.



## Joy of the Gospel n. 178 continued

‘Evangelization is meant to cooperate with this liberating work of the Spirit. The very mystery of the Trinity reminds us that we have been created in the image of that divine communion, and so we cannot achieve fulfilment or salvation purely by our own efforts.

From the heart of the Gospel we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization. Accepting the first proclamation, which invites us to receive God’s love and to love him in return with the very love which is his gift, brings forth in our lives and actions a primary and fundamental response: to desire, seek and protect the good of others.’



The Church's mission is to share (with everyone who wants to listen) the Good News of what Jesus revealed about God

about the meaning of life

about how we can best live to the full.

‘I have come that you may live and live to the full’(John 10:10).



## A truly 'Catholic' community

- open to embrace every person in his or her uniqueness
- open to welcome each person's gifts and insights
- open to respect each person's freedom



## Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue (EG, nn. 244-258)

‘Ecumenism is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us. To give but one example, in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and the experience of synodality. Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness’(n. 246).



- November 21st 1964, promulgation of decree Unitatis Redintegratio  
The word "redintegratio" (instead of "return") was invented by Paul VI in 1962 for "convergence towards Christ".

‘The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council ...

The division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalises the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature’ (Vatican II, UR§1).



Dialogue : Paul VI Ecclesiam Suam 1964, n.138-141

‘Dialogue is not proud; it is not offensive ... Its authority is intrinsic to the truth it explains, to the charity it communicates, to the example it proposes. It is not a command; it is not an imposition; it is peaceful; it avoids violent methods; it is patient; it is generous ... In the dialogue, one discovers how different are the ways which lead to the light of faith, and how it is possible to make them converge on the same goal ... Dialogue will make us wise.’



- Paul VI Homily on occasion of canonisation of 40 English and Welsh martyrs (Oct 25th 1970). A paragraph added by his own hand.

‘May the blood of these martyrs be able to heal the great wound inflicted on God's Church by reason of the separation of the Anglican Church from the Catholic Church ... Their devotion to their country gives us the assurance that on that day, when – God willing – the unity of faith and life is restored, no offence will be inflicted on the honour and integrity of a great country such as England. There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church – this humble "servant of the servants of God" – is able to embrace firmly her ever-beloved sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ: a communion of origin and faith, a communion of priesthood and rule, a communion of saints in the freedom and love of the spirit of Jesus.’



Pope John XXIII on his deathbed

‘Today more than ever, certainly more than in previous centuries, we are called to serve mankind as such, and not merely Catholics; to defend above all and everywhere the rights of the human person, and not those merely of the Catholic Church.

Today's world, the needs made plain in the last fifty years, and a deeper understanding of doctrine, have brought us to a new situation, as I said in my opening speech to the Council.

It is not that the Gospel has changed: it is that we have begun to understand it better.

Those who have lived as long as I have were faced with new tasks in the social order at the start of the century; those who, like me, were twenty years in the East and eight in France, were enabled to compare different cultures and traditions, and know that the moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look far ahead.’



“In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or a ‘hierarchy’ of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith”(UR II)<sup>38</sup> This holds true as much for the dogmas of faith as for the whole corpus of the Church’s teaching, including her moral teaching’(EG, n. 36).

‘What counts above all else is “faith working through love” (*Gal 5:6*) (n. 37).

‘It is the task of exegetes and theologians to help “the judgment of the Church to mature”(DV, 12) (EG, n.40).



We are to create communities that live the love that filled Jesus' heart and to invite people to share this experience.

The Church is not given a mission to control or force.

The Church is only to present and attract,

leaving people free to accept or reject,

for that is the nature of love.

That is the nature of God as revealed by Jesus.



## Respect for people's experience and freedom

- Central to the mission of the Church is respect and reverence for each and every person

for the ways in which God is acting in their lives

and the ways in which, whether they realise it or not, they are responding to grace.

This means respecting people's freedom as to how they choose to respond to the Good News that we never cease to offer them.



‘Christ gave himself to set us free’(Galatians 1:4)

‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me’(Galatians 2:19-20).

‘For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery’(Galatians 5:1).

‘You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”(Galatians 5:13-14).



In relation to religion, John Henry Newman had to make huge sacrifices to be at home with the truth.

Newman: An essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine

‘Some claim  
that truth and falsehood in religion are but matter of opinion;  
that one doctrine is as good as another;  
that the Governor of the world does not intend  
that we should gain the truth;  
that there is no truth;  
that we are not more acceptable to God by believing this  
than by believing that;  
that no one is answerable for his opinions;  
that it is enough if we sincerely hold what we profess;  
that we may take up and lay down opinions at pleasure;  
that we may safely trust to ourselves in matters of faith  
and need no other guide.’



‘There is a truth;

there is one truth;

religious error is of itself of an immoral nature;

those who maintain it, unless they do so involuntarily,  
are guilty in maintaining it;

religious error is to be dreaded;

the search for truth is not the gratification of curiosity;

the mind is below truth, not above it,  
and is bound, not to descant upon it, but to venerate it;

truth and falsehood are set before us for the trial of our hearts.’



‘Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion,

but that one creed is as good as another,

and this is the teaching which is gaining substance and force daily.

It is inconsistent with the recognition of any religion, as true.

It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for all are matters of opinion.

Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste;

not an objective fact, not miraculous;

and it is the right of each individual to make it say  
just what strikes his fancy.’



God offers his grace unconditionally. To receive/welcome grace and so to come to know THE TRUTH, it is for us to commit ourselves to the following imperatives.

- be **attentive** to reality and to our response to it
- be **intelligent** - look for meaning in our experiences
- be **reasonable** - check our insights so as to know what is real  
(how things are, and not just how things seem to me to be).
- be **responsible** - respond to what we know to be true  
in a creative, personal way.
- **be-lieve**. As disciples of Jesus we are graced to love with Jesus' love.



‘Saint Thomas Aquinas pointed out that the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God “are very few”.<sup>47</sup> Citing Saint Augustine, he noted that the precepts subsequently enjoined by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation “so as not to burden the lives of the faithful” and make our religion a form of servitude, whereas “God’s mercy has willed that we should be free.”(S. Th. I-II, q. 107, a. 4) (n.43).



‘The contribution of the Church in today’s world is enormous. The pain and the shame we feel at the sins of some members of the Church, and at our own, must never make us forget how many Christians are giving their lives in love. They help so many people to be healed or to die in peace in makeshift hospitals. They are present to those enslaved by different addictions in the poorest places on earth. They devote themselves to the education of children and young people. They take care of the elderly who have been forgotten by everyone else. They look for ways to communicate values in hostile environments. They are dedicated in many other ways to showing an immense love for humanity inspired by the God who became man. I am grateful for the beautiful example given to me by so many Christians who joyfully sacrifice their lives and their time. This witness comforts and sustains me in my own effort to overcome selfishness and to give more fully of myself’(EG, n. 76).



‘The mission is first and foremost the Lord’s work, surpassing anything which we can see and understand. Jesus is “the first and greatest evangelizer”. In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit. The real newness is the newness which God himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides and accompanies in a thousand ways. The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that “he has loved us first” (1 John 4:19) and that he alone “gives the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:7). This conviction enables us to maintain a spirit of joy in the midst of a task so demanding and challenging that it engages our entire life. God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us’(EG, n.12).



## Gerard Hughes

‘The teachings of our churches, our forms of worship and our laws are important, but they are a means to an end, not ends in themselves. They are means to enable us to experience God as the God of love and compassion. Once we know God in this way, we are then enabled to be loving and compassionate to others. This is being a disciple. This is following Christ.’



John Henry Newman, Letter 1841

‘Faith is but the expression of love. If they and we were animated by one spirit, we *should* unite in one Church. The belief of the heart would lead to the confession of the lips. Reverse the process, and you but sew a new piece into an old garment.’

In 1845 Newman joined the Catholic Church





## Yogananda

In this your temple  
With your own hand,  
Light the lamp of your love.  
Turn my darkness into light.  
Turn my darkness into light.



‘Christ Jesus has made me his own’ (*Philippians 3:12-13*) (n. 121).



Come as you are





## Come as you are

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Come as you are  
that's how I want you.

Come as you are,  
feel quite at home,

close to my heart  
loved and forgiven  
come as you are.

Why stand alone?





No need to fear,  
love sets no limits.

No need to fear,  
love never ends

Don't run away  
shamed and disheartened.

Rest in my love,  
trust me again.





I came to call sinners  
not just the virtuous.  
I came to bring peace  
not to condemn.

Each time you fail  
to live by my promise,  
why do you think  
I'd love you the less?





Don't run away  
shamed or disheartened.  
Come as you are,  
why stand alone.





Come as you are,  
that's how I love you.

Come as you are,  
trust me again.

Nothing can change  
the love that I bear you.

All will be well,  
just come as you are.