

**No.11**

**6th November 2020**

Dear Friends,

Here we are again - in Lockdown. How long will it last? No one can be sure but the RCIA Team has agreed that we should continue to “keep in touch” as we did during the first Lockdown.

The aim is to give you a flavour of the talk you would have heard had RCIA sessions continued normally. This first week I am grateful to John Kimberley for his summary on the Person of Jesus. Each week I shall also include a You tube talk by Bishop Robert Barron. Bishop Barron is Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles. He also runs a media apostolate called “Word on Fire” which offers talks and study programmes using modern technology. Part of this includes a free weekly “Sunday Sermon” by Bishop Barron - based on the readings for that Sunday. Our first sermon comes from 1st November, the Feast of All Saints. I hope you enjoy it and find it interesting and uplifting.

I will end each newsletter with the final prayer we have used recently at RCIA : the Nunc Dimittis.

If you have any suggestions, comments or questions please feel free to email me on : [madewaal@hotmail.com](mailto:madewaal@hotmail.com).

God bless

John de Waal

## **The Person of Jesus - Looking at His life.**

We are going to look at the world Jesus lived in and knew - and how this world moulded, informed and restricted him - as the world affects all human beings, ourselves included.

Some draw a division between the Jesus of History and the Jesus of faith but this is artificial - and bad theology. His life is constant from before the moment of Creation throughout until now and onto the Resurrection and beyond. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”*

In Jesus we see and meet someone who knows exactly what it means to be a human being - capabilities and weaknesses - who lived on earth at a particular time and in a particular place.

Firstly we must understand how different was the world of 2,000 years ago - it is difficult to compare it with the 21st century - although human behaviour does not change much.

Bishop Richard made a similar point in a recent Pastoral Letter when talking about life in this country in 16th and 17th centuries - *“Certainly, they were people of their own time - a period when lives tended to be shorter, perhaps more barbarous in some respects, a time when the vast majority of the population lived in great poverty, with the threat of war or plague never far away. Human nature changes little.”*

To begin looking at Jesus we need to go back around 4,000 years ago to a man named Abraham. He marked a change in the way in which people reacted with their gods - with Abraham realising that there is just one God and that we can have a living relationship with the one God. Abraham's obedience and acceptance led to a special relationship between God and his people - *“I shall be your God and you shall be my people”*. Abraham was promised a homeland and that his descendants would be as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea shore.

We can follow the history of this special relationship between God and his chosen people in the pages of the Old Testament - which was not always a perfect relationship, to say the least, human nature often asserted itself negatively. There came about, however, a belief that God would one day send a Messiah who would bring a reconciliation between God and his people.

Jesus was born into a country and among a people who had a rich and proud history, but was fractured in many respects - a nation under foreign occupation by a power often brutal and violent - the Romans. Alongside this everyday life was tough with a harsh subsistence economy, hunger was never far away. The gap between rich and poor was wide - and the nation seemed riddled with political intrigue. At the time of Jesus the expectation of the coming of the Messiah was great indeed - with the hope that the Messiah would put things right - including religious differences between the Sadducees and Pharisees.

This was the world into which Jesus was born (nb. Jesus Christ Superstar : *"Why did you choose such a backward place and such a strange land?"*) and was born to Mary and Joseph. The most likely dates of Jesus' life on earth were 4 BC to 30 AD. Jesus was born into a Jewish family and practised the Jewish religion in all its fullness.

He grew up and lived in the world as it was, and when an adult was seen as a teacher (a Rabbi, a revealer or interpreter of the ways of God) - showing the special relationship between God and his people. This ministry of Jesus came to the fore in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus made and formed friendships. He ate and drank with his friends - some of whom acclaimed him as Messiah (nb. the Greek word for Messiah is "Christ" - the Anointed One) and who followed him as his disciples.

**Note:**

St John's Gospel ch. 20 : *"My Lord and my God."*

St Matthew ch. 14 : *"Truly you are the Son of God."*

St Matthew ch.16 : *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."*

In a nutshell, Jesus refused to betray his vision of God revealed to Abraham and fell foul of his world, was rejected by his people and was killed by them - (although it must be emphasised that the Sadducees and Pharisees were not bad people - perhaps we can see ourselves in them all too frequently!).

We end this talk by going back to the beginning - which reminds us that in and through the Resurrection Jesus continues to be alive - he lived fully in his world 2,000 years ago but now lives as a complete human being who understands us and our world perfectly.

Next time we look at the Incarnation - *"God made man manifest."*

## **Bishop Barron's Sunday Sermon.**

Please click on the link below - it lasts about 15 minutes.

It is based on the Gospel for All Saints : St Matthew 5 : 1 - 12. You may wish to read this scripture passage first.

<https://youtu.be/IGkeOsCpN9g>

**Final Prayer** - taken from Compline (the Night Prayer of the Church).

**Antiphon.** Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

**Nunc Dimittis.**

At last, all-powerful Master,  
you give leave to your servant  
to go in peace, according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for  
all nations, the light to enlighten the Gentiles  
and give glory to Israel, your people.

**Antiphon.** Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

A short time for silent prayer.

**Concluding prayer.**

Lord our God,  
restore us again by the repose of sleep after the fatigue of our  
daily work;  
so that, continually renewed by your help, we may serve you in  
body and soul. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

**Blessing.** Lord, grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. Amen.

## **A final thought?**

No Nativity this year because the three Wise Men face a travel ban.

The Shepherds have been furloughed.

The Innkeeper has shut under Tier Three regulations and had a slump in bookings.

Santa won't be working as he would break the rule of six with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen.

As for Rudolph, with that red nose, he should be isolating and taking a test.