

Week 1 - September 16, 2020

“...For us men and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,

and became man.”

These words might be familiar to you as part of the Creed that Catholics say during Mass. Specifically, it is the part of the prayer in which everyone bows their heads in Church as they say it. In a prayer filled with the core beliefs of the Catholic Church we bow at the mention of Jesus, who is the God over all of the Universe, became human just like us. He had a mother like us. He grew up like us. He experienced friendship like us. Just like you and me and everyone else who lived he experienced happiness and sadness, boredom, having a job, feeling the sun on his skin, being hungry and thirsty, the sand under his feet, and meeting new people. He experienced pressure, stress, what it felt like to pet an animal, what it felt like to be rejected, and what it felt like to be idly drawing on the ground. He experienced temptation. He experienced what it was like to suffer and feel pain and be humiliated. He experienced what it was like to die.

Unlike us, he didn't have to experience any of that, certainly not rejection and pain and death. Nothing forced him to take on the human condition. But he chose to come to earth and be one of us anyway. God chose to share life with human beings. Every week we are going to share a story from Jesus' life and discuss his example and his lessons for us in those stories. How does Jesus reveal to us who God is and what God thinks of us? How does Jesus want us to live as people? Christians have been dwelling on these stories and these questions for 2,000 years largely because the Creator of the Universe became one of us and offered us love and friendship. We invite you each week to read the passage provided with your family, meditate on it, discuss the questions and commentary with the passage with each other as well as your own thoughts and observations, then read the passage again with your new insights.

As you read these stories, remember that no matter what you are experiencing in life now or have experienced before, God doesn't abandon you. Jesus may not be walking around talking to people in the town marketplace anywhere, but he still comes to us when we read and meditate on scripture, when we gather to pray, and especially when we receive the sacraments through the Church. We can all decide to share friendship with him.

The Gospel of Mark Chapter 2, Verses 1 - 12

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, **“Child, your sins are forgiven.”**

Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, *“Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?”*

Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, **“Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, pick up your mat and walk’?**

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth”— he said to the paralytic, **“I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home.”**

He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, *“We have never seen anything like this.”*

Reflection

This story takes place after Jesus has become a famous preacher and religious teacher working in and around the town of Capernum. He is so popular that crowds of people gather to see him preach, so much so that there is no way anyone on the outside of the house can get through the door.

Despite that obstacle four determined (and arguably reckless) men think it's a good idea to haul a paralyzed man onto the roof of a crowded building, tear off the roof with people inside, and lower the paralyzed man down in front of Jesus and everyone else. **What would you have thought if you were standing there and saw that happen?**

What jumped out at you when you read this story? Why?

Do you think Jesus is just a preacher and religious leader or do you think he is God?
What in your life has convinced you for your position either way?

Have you ever helped bring someone else closer to God, whether by teaching someone about your faith, sharing prayer with them in a time of need, literally bringing them to Church with you, or something else? Why did you do it? How did it feel?

We've all probably experienced what it is like to be on the "outside" at some point in our lives. Maybe it's how you feel now. Outside the group. We're right behind everyone else and still everyone else, or almost everyone else is too focused on something to notice us let alone help us or invite us in. Imagine how the paralyzed man felt. He was helpless to go anywhere or do anything unless four people carried him. What if those men hadn't been there that day, would he have even been forgiven and healed? **If you are comfortable sharing, when have you felt like an outsider? Has anyone ever helped you in the situation?**

Why do you think Jesus was so quick to forgive the man of his sins? Why does Jesus want everyone in the crowd to see him forgive sins and know he has the authority to forgive? What does that mean for you?

Discuss these questions together, and any other questions or insights you have about it, then read it again together, reflecting on what you've discussed. Finally say a Glory Be together. If you like, you can ask God to heal someone who needs it, it can be you, a loved one, someone you know or have heard about.

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*