

can be included in passing as part of normal day to day conversation on different topics. This is part of living your faith, letting it permeate every part of your life, whether at home, at work or at leisure, whether with friends, work colleagues, passing acquaintances or even strangers.

## Faith and Belief

Deep inner peace and true happiness can only come about from an active spirituality and this can only begin with an awareness of God and his love. It is not achieved by a love of materialism, the pursuit of pleasure and the rejection of traditional Christian moral standards. This truth is rejected because of the rejection of God by the majority of society. Faith in God is seen as blind faith,



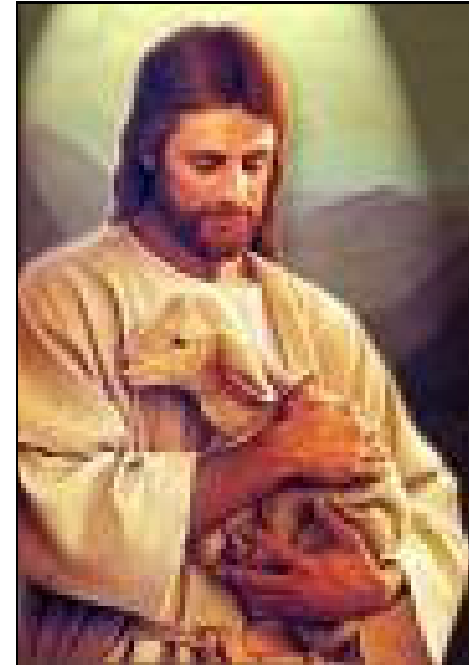
unsubstantiated by the new modern god of science and the so-called enlightened society. Yet Faith is far from being blind. **It is a seed planted in every person at conception.** It is not the end of a process but the beginning of one. It is an innate part of our very Being. Once it starts to grow we can not get God out of our mind, even if on occasions we try our very best to do so. We remain drawn to him. Faith not only guides us to want to know more about our Creator it also makes us realise our real calling, the real purpose of our life. It forms the basis for a person's subsequent enquiring and subsequent beliefs. It is the doorway to real freedom, a freedom that comes from letting God absorb our lives, not an apparent freedom based on exercising our free-will for selfish purposes.

There are many religions in the world because God has reached out to people throughout history, activating that core of faith innate in all humanity. So, the word religion is just the name for the specific beliefs a community of people have about the nature of their God and what it means for their way of life and death.

Christian beliefs centre on the person of Jesus Christ, who is also God Incarnate and who calls us to a practice of love, a love of God and a love of our fellow Man. These beliefs are based on the Gospel message of Jesus, a message that was preached by his disciples and, through the Holy Spirit, is preserved in the Christian community that is his Church. For Catholics, this represents the fullness of God's communication to Humankind and so are firmly founded through this direct historical line back to Jesus himself. Of course, other religions reject the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, but that is to reject the essence of the Gospel message that had such an impact on the Roman world and beyond all those years ago, and which still has the power to move hearts today if only its truths are recognised, absorbed and allowed to guide lives. We are all called to help in this process according to our abilities, but **all of us** have the ability to let others know that God really loves them.

# Jesus in the Gospels

## 21. The Gospels, Evangelisation, Faith and Belief



### Questions

1. What is evangelisation?
2. Are we all really called to evangelise?
3. What should we say to people who argue that faith in God is outmoded?

### For Reflection

## The Essence of the Gospels

Jesus came on Earth to tell us that God the Father, his Father and ours, **really does love us** and wishes that we be reconciled to him.

At a particular point in history, God, through his own gracious actions, offered us the opportunity to have our sins forgiven. All that we had to do was to accept this offer by having faith in his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, be baptised to signify our acceptance of his offer, and live lives in accordance with the gifts of Faith, Hope and Charity he would send us through the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us.

The above simple truths are what constitute both salvation and the greatest revelation of God, made through the person of Jesus Christ. That is the message of the Gospel, the 'Good News' revealed to us at that moment in time, nearly two thousand years ago.

That supreme truth is almost too big for the human mind to absorb; it is truly mind shattering. Can it really be that the Creator of the entire universe, with its billions of galaxies, each with billions of stars, is not only concerned about the welfare of some otherwise miniscule life form called Humankind, but actually loves it so much that he sent his Son, who adopted human form in the process, to tell us that fact? Yet that is precisely the truth of the Gospels.

## The Gospels and Evangelisation

For those of us who believe in the Gospel revelation, there is a responsibility to pass on that revelation. That is what is meant by evangelisation:

- **we are not only called but we are called to call others.**

We may think that doing this is beyond our ability. But through our own prayer, and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we can all do effective evangelisation.

The most obvious example of evangelisation is that of parents passing on their faith to their children. But what about the Christian's wider responsibility to a non-believing society in which he or she lives?

Too often, because Faith is assumed to be a matter of individual choice, we make little attempt to influence others in any direct way. In fact, we are sometimes reminded that conversations should not involve politics or religion. It is often argued that example and charity are the best teachers and evangelisers. And



indeed, they are most powerful. But if a direct approach is never made then we are clearly failing to use all the resources available for offering to others spiritual peace and the revelation of the Gospel.

The core of the Gospel message is that God really loves us—it is this first truth that is the most important. Is it not the case that in the turmoil of life, the rushing here and there, the worrying about money, family and friends, coping with illnesses, disappointments and tragedies, we have the assurance that whatever we face we can say with total confidence **God really loves me.** And doesn't this help us? And this would also help others if only they realised that there was a God, a divine Being, who really loved them as well.



Good example and charity to others, exemplified not only in the many marvellous organisations in the Church that help others less fortunate than us, but also in the countless individual acts of kindness we can do to friends, neighbours and strangers, are truly positive ways to influence people in the goodness of God. But surely the first and most direct act of kindness, and core of evangelisation, is to let people know that no matter what happens to them, no matter how inadequate or even how wicked they might sometimes feel that they are, that **there is a God who actually, really loves them.**

## What is Direct Evangelisation?

Direct evangelising is not force-feeding religious beliefs to people. It is not preaching religion. It is certainly not about trying to convert another religious believer. It is all about awakening the spirituality that exists naturally within people who deny its existence or are reluctant for whatever reason to acknowledge it. And it can only come by planting a seed within them in the form of the simple statement of truth that, whatever a person might think at present, **there is a divine Being who loves them.**

There are many good people in this world who do not believe in a God, yet they also do great works of charity to others and in so doing show to those in need that they are loved. Such humanists argue that this act of love is sufficient in itself. But good and positive that this is, wouldn't the people in need feel even better about themselves to know they are loved by God, that they have worth beyond this life. There is no reason for being afraid or embarrassed to do this. It need not be done in any formal way but

