

“I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in me and you will bear much fruit.” John 15:5

Vine & Branches

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Weekly Edition
August 25, 2021

Offensive Jesus



It never ceases to amaze me how different the Jesus of the gospels is from the Jesus of popular imagination.

The sugary sweet, all white, blonde hair, blue eyed Jesus of popular imagination is overrun by the actual Jesus — who couldn't care less if people are offended by what he says.

Who never seems worried about upsetting our preconceived notions. So it's no surprise today, at the end of this long conversation about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, that nearly everyone who followed him up to this point says: “Enough!”

Eat your flesh? Drink your blood? Can you get any more offensive?! More off-putting?!

Which is, with Jesus, nothing new. After all, Jesus is constantly calling the big shots of his day “hypocrites” and “whitewashed tombs.” Nor does he limit his insults to the high and mighty. When Jesus begins his public ministry, he goes to the neighborhood church in Nazareth.

Reading from the prophet Isaiah, he announces that the blind will see, the deaf shall hear, and the lame walk. And then he has the temerity to say: “Today is the day!” So offended are his fellow citizens — that Jesus dares to step into the shoes of a great prophet — that he's nearly tossed off a cliff. Weeks later, his family tracks him down, sure that he's lost his mind; only to have Jesus respond: “Who is my family but those who hear the word of God, and do it?”

He calls Peter a Satan, because Peter cannot imagine a suffering messiah. Everyone knows that suffering is evil. Suffering is God's punishment. So how can the Messiah suffer? Perhaps the same way we think about Haiti with all of its terrible natural and political disasters. The frequent response is: “they must have done something to deserve it!”

One televangelist calls Haiti's sufferings: “God's punishment for voodoo.” But for followers of offensive Jesus, the question God is actually asking has nothing to do with those who are suffering — and everything to do with those who are not.

The question being asked is: “How are we responding to their suffering?” With compassion? Or with judgment? Why is Jesus so offensive?

And why do we prefer the picture of gentle Jesus meek and mild over the Jesus of the gospels? Perhaps because gospel Jesus constantly challenges, cajoles, insults, teaches, argues, demands and scolds.

Indeed, the only people Jesus doesn't confront are those who already know they're in trouble. The thieving tax collectors who steal from their own people. The prostitutes. The outcast and the demon possessed. Folks like drug addicts. And alcoholics. Folks who, if they pass by a mirror, rarely look up. I'm a long time fan of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The beauty of AA is that its founders took the spiritual wisdom of the ages, and with the help of Fr. Sam Shoemaker, discovered that recovery from addiction to spirits means learning to live an authentically spiritual life.

The Right Reverend
Robert L. Fitzpatrick
V Bishop of Hawaii

The Reverend
David J. Gierlach
Rector

The Reverend
Imelda S. Padasdao,
Priest Associate

The Reverend Peter S. M. Fan,
Cantonese Language Priest

Fr. Mafi Vakameilalo,
Priest Associate

The Reverend Deacon
Viliani Langi, Deacon

Hsiao Ying “Ajaon” Chen
Choir Director

Marie Wang
Organist

Bill Slocumb
Parish Administrator

—

Cathy Lowenberg
Senior Warden

Charles Steffey
Junior Warden

Doug Ing
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It isn't the head game of religion, with its nods to dogma and doctrine and creed.

These things matter, to a point. But to rescue the hopelessly lost, (which Jesus tells us every day includes us), something more is needed.

It's been said that religion is for people who are afraid of hell, while spirituality is for people who have been through hell. And so, in AA, the first step toward recovery is to admit that one is powerless over alcohol.

It's not a "head" admission. It's a "brutal fact" admission. Because only from a place of genuine surrender can a person move forward into a lasting recovery.

"Well, that's all fine for an addict," you may be thinking, "but that's not me." True. Most of us aren't addicted to alcohol or drugs.

But we are all addicted to the human condition. Which says: "I do what I like." "People get what they deserve." "What goes around comes around." All of which boils down to: "I'm in control."

This need to be in control is the air we breathe, the water we drink. It's so pervasive that we rarely notice it.

Much less question it. Much less seek to change it. Yet it's this very human condition that Jesus not only notices, he's come to smash it!

No wonder he ends up on the cross. No wonder we prefer that sweetly sentimental Jesus to the real savior who alone can save us.

Our obsession with being in control leads to unjust and unbalanced class structures. To bigotry and racism. To wars and strife. As the Taliban take control of Afghanistan, it's almost comical to hear political leaders of every stripe express amazement that such a thing can happen!

Although wars never bring real peace, but only interludes of time spent preparing for more violence, we are, nevertheless, still shocked when all of our efforts at control turn to dust!

That unwillingness to let go of control creates the nails that pin Jesus to the cross.

"I'm in control" is a deadly virus, far worse than COVID, that infects who we are.

It distorts who we are called to become. The need to control gives birth to very strange, but very common myths.

How many people believe (even if we never say it out loud) that if a seemingly good person becomes afflicted with a disease or public embarrassment or financial calamity -- then that person is not right with God? But God is not the judgment police. God meets us in the face of Jesus.

If you want to know what God is like, look at what Jesus says and does. He speaks words of compassion. He heals. Through him, the physically and spiritually blind, see. The physically and spiritually deaf, hear.

The physically and spiritually lame, walk. And the poor in pocketbook and the poor in spirit hear the good news that life's struggles are not a sign of God's anger.

They're simply part of the human experience. The accidents of life: illness, misfortune and the like, are just that, accidents!

Which is threatening to the healthy and wealthy who are at the top of their game! Because it undermines our sense of deserving what we have. Being entitled to it all.

Rather than the truth of the matter. That our fortunate condition is also merely an accident. Of birth. Good luck. Chance.

But also of unjust economic structures and systems which Paul takes aim at today. These powers and principalities that hold all of us in bondage. One quick glance at our body politic or the front page of the paper bears this out!

Jesus embraces a new world being swept in by the kingdom of God. It sweeps away distinctions between people. Upends prejudice.

And examines the log in my own eye before I try to remove the speck from your eye. Jesus is all about rescuing us from our addiction to the human condition.

And the narrow door that allows this rescue is opened by the grace of humility.

It's said that Jesus sends no one away empty — except those who are full of themselves.

As Bernard of Clairvaux observes: "It's only through humility that great grace can be obtained. And so when you're feeling humbled, rest assured that grace is on the way. Just as a heart, puffed up with pride, is ultimately destroyed, the heart must be humbled before it can be honored."

Perhaps this is why Jesus spends so much time speaking of himself as bread.

There's an old saying: "You are what you eat." If we are what we eat, then eating this bread of service, gentleness and compassion slowly transforms each and every one of us.

From people who were once afraid, anxious and proud — into people of faith who know in our bones that all shall be well. As we dedicate our hearts, minds and wallets to building up the Kingdom of God!

All because we have come to believe and to know that Jesus is the Holy One of God.

Quoteable Quotes from Notable Folks

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A MATTER OF NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL, SECURITY



THE "WAR ON TERROR" HAS COST **\$6.4 TRILLION** SINCE 2001...

MEANWHILE, AT THE CURRENT STATE OF TECHNOLOGY, FULLY DECARBONISING U.S. POWER WOULD COST **\$4.5 TRILLION**



YET ONLY ONE IS DEEMED "UNAFFORDABLE"

WWW.BROWN.EDU/NEWS/2019-11-13/COSTSOFWAR

ES&O.YALE.EDU/BICEST/SHIFTING-U-S-TO-100-PERCENT-RENEWABLES-WOULD-COST-4-5-TRILLION-ANALYSIS-FINDS



"TO REPENT IS NOT TO LOOK DOWNWARDS AT MY OWN SHORTCOMINGS, BUT UPWARDS AT GOD'S LOVE, IT IS NOT TO LOOK BACKWARDS WITH SELF-REPROACH BUT FORWARD WITH TRUSTFULNESS, IT IS TO SEE NOT WHAT I HAVE FAILED TO BE, BUT WHAT BY THE GRACE OF CHRIST I MIGHT YET BECOME."

St John Climacus

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

He said, "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

48.

There is Nothing more Sacred in All the World than the ability to respond to your Circumstances with Joy, Acceptance, Laughter and Love.



Facebook/Zen to Zany

Welcome and Eulogy barbara bennett, tssf

David Lloyd Catron

June 18, 1939 -

August 24, 2020

Aloha! Welcome and thank you for taking a long awaited moment to be here to bid Aloha-farewell to David.

The first time I met David, I was terrified of him. I had gone to his home in Salt Lake City for a Franciscan event planning meeting. He struck me as brilliant, holy and (before that awful disease, Parkinson's got ahold of him) vibrant. After that first meeting, he wanted to get to know me and introduced himself through his love of music. He relished wildly diverse music - from classical to Meatloaf to Erasure to Industrial. It was all too much for me; but he, and God, had a different idea. David continued his pursuit, which I suspect was, right from the start, cooperation with God, who saw in us a team that could accomplish a few things, such as establish the Franciscans in Brazil, and, while we were at it, write a book and care for the poor and needy. But most important, God saw in David a man who could bring me back to life.

And so he did. David was my pearl of great price. For years I longed and prayed to be saved from myself, from choices made, and to enter missionary service. David was God's answer to those prayers, and so much more. He did not think there was such a thing as a false self—all of you is real, he said—but he was a master surgeon who sliced through my B.S. to reveal my true self.

David had no time for platitudes and feel-good religion, or what he called God-talk. Talk of eternal life drove him nuts. It wasn't that he was against eternal life, he was all for it, but he railed against the focus the church puts on it, in talk and prayers. He said it distracted people from the nitty-gritty of being human, the here and now in God's world. I had written a prayer for our daily morning prayer which read, in part, may we be embody You in all ways. Who is You, David wanted to know. God, I said, we are praying to God. What does that mean "to embody God?" If it read: may we embody Jesus, that I could pray because I know something about Jesus. David consistently cut through the God-talk, he got our attention with a single disarming question and rattled us to consider how we think and live.

To know David was to be told to read Spanish author Miguel de Unamuno's novella, *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* (1930), the story of a noble priest who goes the extra mile to support the lives of his parishioners' faith, in spite of having lost his own faith. I am that priest, David liked to confess. Indeed, David did go the extra mile to support the life of faith, mine and countless others, perhaps some of you here, regardless his claimed faith status, because for him how we express our lives—in word and deed—matters. He gave up everything, family, home, security to follow Love and the life of service. He understood and lived today's gospel.

David was a gifted linguist. His two daughters used to call him Dr. Lexicon on account of his language skills. It was his knowledge of Portuguese that first took him to Brazil where he served as translator for First Order Franciscan Br. Derek, who went in response to the initial inquiry from Brazil about the Franciscans. At the first event in São Paulo, David struggled to translate the line from today's psalm, "It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard." He was reduced to sign language he enjoyed recounting.

The drawing on the back of the program was a grief response to a dog we buried on this same date, August 24, but in 2007. David adored jokes and had a limerick for every occasion. Not a day passed that he didn't make me laugh. His death was his parting joke which presents as a headline: Franciscan dies in pet store. David was a Franciscan beyond the garden variety: he was a man who loved with an open heart and light spirit, who allowed God to play him, as if an instrument, who loved me whole. Thank you, David.

