

(PP1) The Jesus we never knew 2017 x28.

**(PP2) How Jesus behaves with people, who are different from him and difficult people. 09 July\_2017.**

**READ: Mark 14: 32 – 52. JESUS prays in Gethsemane before his arrest...**

**(PP3)** I don't know how many of you have watched the **BBC1 TV drama "BROKEN"** in the last 6 weeks. The reviews tell us that *Jimmy McGovern's "Broken"* is timely but tough to watch. *Sean Bean* plays Father Michael the all too human figure in the middle of this drama presiding over a Northern parish and Catholic community in various shades of poverty and certainly very human. I don't know how you feel about Roman Catholicism after this but generally some think it's a far more positive portrayal of human pain and religion certainly than what is portrayed of American religion in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

*The story of a troubled Catholic priest, played with heart and soul by Sean Bean, does something vanishingly rare in the schedules: it celebrates the best of religion while acknowledging the worst. David Butcher for the Radio Times.*

I despaired at times of much of the apparent cover-up and lying in various sections of the police and RC church but one thing I found powerful was the words used by the priest and congregation before they took the Mass. Here is a form of the Public Confession they said:

*I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore, I ask you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God*

In taking Communion together today we are each admitting that we need God's forgiveness but also it is a great leveller: we admit our common humanity and fallenness and need for one another's help.

I think one of the concluding and key points of the drama is that as Father Michael wrestles with his conscience and against the advice of his spiritual director/ brother priest is that as he finds the strength to speak the truth it liberates others – especially the young police officer Andrew to speak the truth. That is a very Jesus thing to do to speak the truth even if the consequences are difficult. The Jesus we read of in the Gospels does not say – “what they don't know won't hurt them”. Jesus speaks the truth – and he always speaks it in love. He is committed to truth and calls his follows to face up to truths about ourselves and also our families and the relationships we are in. Are those relationships positive – to they take us closer to Jesus and into greater strength and health?

**(PP4)** This is something that the early church took on board as we can see in the Gospels for instance when we read Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mountain about what to do with anger. (*READ Matthew 5: 21 – 26*)

We are spending some weeks thinking about **ways Jesus dealt with people – people who are often different from himself**. And this week we look at the incidents where the disciples again failed Jesus. In previous weeks, we have thought about Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar. Also last week we considered **the disciples who**

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**argued amongst themselves about who is the greatest.** EVEN at the Last Supper they amazingly and maybe even appallingly argued *Luke 22: 24 fol* : Who is mega? Who is of most importance. Inevitably they are also therefore saying others are less important, not as great.

(NB as we come to Confession and Communion – *So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and go and make peace with your brother or sister, and then come back and offer your gift to God. Matthew 5: 23, 24*)

**As we seek to follow and learn from Jesus a challenge is presented to us about how we relate to people who are often different to us but also share our weak and broken humanness.** During the weeks, quite a few people have spoken to me about the challenge you felt in thinking about your own behaviour with people at work, family, neighbourhood who may be very different to us or who behave badly or who we find difficult to respond to their behaviour.

Some of you found the: -

**Question we asked the last 2 weeks significant. Do we see people who are different to us and even difficult to us as a “gift” – God given and an opportunity for us to grow as people and to grow in holiness? Do we thank God for them.**

*“Regardless, by growing in holiness we can learn to accept the inconvenient, the incongruent and the bothersome (people and events) in our life not just as necessary nuisances but as gifts.” (1)*

**(PP5) Following the Last Supper as the Disciples followed Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives the disciples are not responsive to the needs of Jesus and he didn’t find them easy and supportive as our reading showed.**

**In the Garden of Gethsemane** – and the experience of Jesus being squeezed (as in an olive press) we see his humanity – his struggle to do what God the Father calls him to do. We see that in his humanity he wants the physical presence of Simon Peter, and the “Sons of Thunder” James and John but also the spiritual support of their prayers. But the strength of rock and the passion of thunder – fall asleep on the job. How difficult this must have been for Jesus. (We see Father Michael in “Broken” face a similar struggle – he wants the support and true advice of his brother priest and the understanding of the community of faith to enable him to do what is right). The Disciples in the Garden fail to keep their physical eyes open, and they are not alert to the spiritual reality of the dangerous times they live in. They’ve been so busy arguing about “who is the greatest” that they have lost sight of what Jesus is asking of them in the day to day and they’ve not understood his mission. There is a danger that we fall asleep – not so much physically (since we all need rest) but that we are asleep spiritually. As Jesus said to Simon Peter at the Last Supper – “I have prayed for you”...*Luke 22: 31 - 32.*

**It must have been deeply unhelpful to Jesus that his closest friends and brothers were emotionally unable to fulfil his request for their help in Gethsemane.** But he didn't give up on them!!! And nor must we quickly give up on those people who fail us. Yes, there are times that brothers in the church fail us but let's be honest there are numerous occasions when they fail us. After his death and resurrection, he went out of his way to see his failed disciples and restore them and encourage them to go on being changed. He challenged Peter at the breakfast about the depth and reality of his love for him and commissioned him to care for the other disciples as a shepherd cares for his flock.

But I guess the hardest thing Jesus faced that night was the kiss of betrayal from one of his disciples Judas – one of the 12. In the culture of first-century Israel, a kiss on the cheek was a common greeting, a sign of deep respect, honor, and brotherly love. What really stands out in the mode of Judas's betrayal is that Judas used such an intimate expression of love and respect to betray Jesus. Judas's actions were hypocritical in the extreme—his actions said, "I respect and honor you," at the exact time he was betraying Jesus to be murdered. Judas's actions illustrate [Proverbs 27:6](#), "*Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*" We do need to know who our real friends are – those who help us be closer to Jesus and not necessarily those who lavish us with kisses. On this occasion Judas behaved as an enemy of Jesus – greed and inner hurt got the better of him.

**What are the lessons we can learn from Jesus' relationship with those who were different from himself?** Jesus shows us the true human – *tempted in all ways as we are but without sin.* **Hebrews 4: 15.** To follow Jesus is to become more fully human. We recognize our weakness and sin and not just see the weakness and sin of others. We will increasingly say we will only be able to do what is right without God the Spirit's help and the help of our brothers and sisters in Christ. **The differences and behaviours that we find difficult in others can act as a challenge to change. (Sand in the shoes yesterday – It's the grit that makes the pearl)** Poem by *Kieran King* on bullying. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5P\\_NjReLP4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5P_NjReLP4)

#### **PRAYER used last week (PP6)**

*JESUS, help me see you in everyone, even the people who challenge me. Light me up with your radiant love so that I may see you even in the most difficult people. Every human being is made in your image. Help me to recognise you in them and love you in them. Amen. (2)*