

PLEASE JOIN US ON THURSDAY AT 7.30PM IN THE PARISH CENTRE
LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



Rathfarnham
Lectio Divina
Group

Please join us on
Thursday 7.30 pm
in the Parish Centre to
reflect on the Gospel
of the week.

24th Sunday of
Ordinary Time

September
14th 2025

John 3:13-17

Jesus said to Nicodemus: “No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

from **Jose A Pagola: FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS (Year B)**

This is not just one more saying, words that could be removed without any significant change. It is the statement that reflects the core of the Christian faith. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.” This love of God is the source and the foundation of our hope. “God loves the world” He loves it just as it is: incomplete and uncertain, full of conflicts and contradictions, capable of the best and the worst. This world does not go on its way alone, lost and forsaken. God envelops it with his love all around. This has extremely important implications.

First, Jesus is the gift that God has made to the world, not only to Christians. Researchers can argue endlessly about many aspects of the historical figure; theologians may go on developing ingenious theories; but only those who see Jesus Christ as the great gift of God will go on discovering in all his deeds, with love and joy, the closeness of God to every human being.

Second, the purpose that justifies the existence of the church and its presence in the world is to remember the love of God. Vatican II has often stressed this: “The Church is sent by Christ to reveal and communicate the love of God to all people.” There is nothing more important: the main task we have is to communicate the love of God to every human being.

Third, the evangelist says that God gave the world this great gift, which is Jesus “not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” It is very dangerous to build a pastoral programme around denouncing and condemning the modern world. We can only call one another to conversion with hearts full of love for all. If people feel condemned by God, we will not be communicating the message of Jesus but something else: perhaps our own resentment and anger.

Fourth, in these times in which everything seems confused, uncertain and discouraging, nothing should stop us from bringing a little love into the world. Do not wait for anything. Why? Aren't there good men and women among us who will bring love, friendship, compassion, justice, empathy and help to those who suffer? People like these will build the church of Jesus, a church of love.

In Matthew, Mark and Luke, there are three predictions of the Passion. In John the passion is prepared for in a completely different way. On three occasions Jesus speaks about himself as being ‘lifted up’. The Greek word can mean a physical lifting up and also an exaltation, a being raised up or glorified. By means of this deliberate play on words the evangelist explains to us that the passion, for all its injustice and brutality, is a glorious revelation of God’s love. In this text we have the first prediction of Jesus’ death and here the cross is explained as a saving, healing event. Jesus likens his being lifted up (on the cross) to the lifting cup of the bronze serpent by Moses in the desert. This is a reference to the occasion when the Israelites had cried out to God to save them from poisonous snakes. When they looked at the serpent Moses had fashioned from bronze they were healed. So too Jesus, raised up on the cross is the sign of God’s infinite love and the source of our healing.

SEAN GOAN—Let the Reader Understand, Year B

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

In John 3:16, we touch one of the best-known and best-loved passages in the Bible. Not everyone understands and/or likes what comes before and after – the imagery in vv. 14-15 is difficult for us and the exclusionary tone of vv. 17-21 disturbs us today. The context of the time of writing can be of some help.

KIND OF WRITING

The passage is a composite meditation, reflecting the teaching of the Johannine community. The story starts with Nicodemus and continues with Jesus' speaking, but these words are really the theology of the later community.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Light is often used in the Old Testament for God's guidance and word (see the Psalms especially). However, the "big" background to our passage is Moses in the desert and the sacrifice of Isaac.

Thought for the day

What does it mean to be saved? We have the secular sense of being rescued or spared somehow. The root meaning of the word in Greek and Latin is to be healed. So, the beginning is some recognition of need, of something fractured, unwell in my life. It includes faith in God who wants us to be both whole and holy, fully alive. The big "sickness" is death itself—from which we are saved/healed through God's love to us in the lifting up of Jesus in death into resurrection.

KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA—tarsus.ie

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus speaks of himself being lifted up, a term that can mean a physical lifting, or also exaltation. By this play on words the evangelist explains to us that Jesus' gift of himself in the passion was a glorious revelation of love, despite all its injustice and brutality. Bring to mind occasions when the love shown by Jesus in his passion was a sacrament of God's love for you.
2. It would be very cushy for us if we could be a source of life to others without cost to ourselves. True life-givers know that they need the generosity of being lifted up by giving their lives so that others may have life. Recall when you have had that generosity and give thanks for others who have been like that for you.
3. We receive life from God when our faith enables us to trust in God's love for us. We give life to one another when the love between us is trustworthy. Recall memories of that kind of trustworthy love. For whom have you been able to be a 'Jesus person' and give a love that another could trust? Who has shown that kind of love to you and been for you a sacrament of God's love?

JOHN BYRNE OSA—Intercom Deceased, remember him in your prayers.

PRAYER REFLECTIONS

Lord, we would like to be a source of life for others without cost to ourselves.
We thank you for true leaders we have met who knew the law of life as Jesus did,
that we must make ourselves vulnerable, be open to failure and humiliation,
allowing ourselves to be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
if our followers are to find life in us.

Lord, we thank you for all those who love
– parents, grandparents, spouses, community leaders –
they love so much that they give what is most precious to them,
their careers, their future security, their own friends,
so that those whom they love might experience that they can trust and so not be lost but live.

Lord, there is nothing more terrible in life than to feel condemned
– to live without purpose;
– to experience failure and rejection whatever happens;
– to know that you will never be admired by others;
and the root of this is not believing that you are loved.
Help us to be the presence of your only Son in the world, so that people might not go through life feeling condemned.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL—Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospel