

*The Jesus Code - Unraveling the Secret***In Exile**

We all love to unearth hidden things, to crack some puzzle or code. We need only to look at the hoopla that surrounded *The Da Vinci Code* to see how true this is. Like children, we all still believe there's a buried treasure somewhere, a secret wisdom, just waiting to be found.

Interestingly, Jesus speaks of just such a hidden secret. The gospels tell us he spoke in parables and that these were only understood by those who were inside a certain circle, but they remained riddles to everyone outside that circle.

That, of course, begs the question: what is the hidden secret, and who is inside and who is outside the circle of understanding? In the message of Jesus, what's the secret to be discovered, the code be cracked?

Mark's gospel takes this up explicitly. His Jesus makes it very clear that there is a hidden, secret wisdom that needs to be grasped if one is to understand the deep design of things. What is it?

In short, it's the cross of Christ and the wisdom that's contained within it. The hidden secret is that love is most truly revealed in the brokenness of Jesus on the cross. What's hidden in the cross of Christ is the code that we have to break open if we are to learn the deep secrets of life. The cross contains a wisdom, the wisdom of the crucified, which is a prism through which all else is to be viewed.

More specifically, what is this wisdom?

Unlike false, gnostic teachers who are forever playing games and giving the impression that learning the deep secrets is a question of luck, brilliant intelligence, or of becoming their disciples, Jesus tries everywhere to reveal the secret in public and in a language open to everyone. His whole life and mission are an attempt to lay open for everyone the deepest secret of all and to make that secret accessible to everyone, as accessible as the nearest water tap or the village well.

Since Jesus, the deepest secret is an open secret. What is it?

One entry into it is through the words Jesus speaks to his uncomprehending disciples on the road to Emmaus. In trying to explain this secret, he asks them: "Wasn't it necessary?" Wasn't what necessary?

That there is a necessary connection between certain things: isn't a certain prior suffering and humiliation always the condition for glory? Don't we all, like Cinderella, first have to sit in the ashes before the glass slipper will fit our feet? Isn't sublimation always the means to the sublime? Isn't it precisely when we are vulnerable and unable to impress or overpower others that we are finally open to intimacy, love, and family? Aren't self-sacrifice and self-denial, in the end, the way real love manifests itself? Isn't the crucifixion of the private ego the route to empathy and community? Isn't the forgiveness of those who hurt us the final manifestation of human maturity?

And, most graphic of all, isn't the way Jesus died—innocent, trusting, unwilling out of love to protect himself against suffering, absorbing hatred and sin, understanding and forgiving those who were murdering him, refusing to resort to any kind of superior physical power to overwhelm his adversaries, refusing to give back in kind, and refusing to give himself over to bitterness and cynicism—the paragon of mature human love?

Love is the deepest mystery within the universe. It lies at the base of everything, the cosmic, the biological, the emotional, the psychological, the spiritual. There is a level of reality inside of all things where one sees the relentless deep pull towards a unity, community, fusion, and oneness beyond self. Love stirs all things, speaking to every element in the language it can understand. Deep inside of us, we know too that this alone can bring us home.

And there is an inner code, a certain DNA, within love itself. It too has inner secrets, an inner structure, and a code that needs to be cracked if we are to properly understand its dynamics. And we don't crack that code all at once, at a week-end retreat or at religious rally. We crack it slowly, painfully, with many setbacks, over the course of a lifetime.

But Jesus gave us the keys to crack it. They can be named: vulnerability, the refusal out of love to protect ourselves, self-sacrifice, putting others before ourselves, refusing to give back in kind when someone hurts us, a willingness to die for others, the refusal to give ourselves over to cynicism and bitterness when things beset us, continued trust in God and goodness even when things look the opposite, and especially forgiveness, having our hearts remain warm and hospitable, even when we have just cause for hatred.

These are the keys to the wisdom that Jesus revealed and the gospels tell that we are "inside" or "outside" the true circle of love, depending upon whether or not we grasp this wisdom.

Ron Rolheiser

Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Currently, Father Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas.

St Thomas Aquinas Parish Bulletin

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Tuesday to Friday 8.30 am - 3.30 pm

Weekend Masses:

Saturday Vigil Mass 5.00 pm, Sunday 8.00 am and 9.30 am

Weekday Mass:

Tuesday - Saturday 9.30 am

Rosary & Devotions:

Tuesday - Saturday 9.00 am

Adoration, Rosary & Chaplet:

2nd and 4th Wednesdays of every month, 7.30 - 8.30 pm

Intercession & Adoration:

None until further notice

Baptisms:

2nd and 4th Sundays of every month - 10.30am and by appointment

Reconciliation:

By request

Weddings:

By appointment - restricted numbers

Funerals:

By appointment - restricted numbers

A Poem to Sit With

*He stood in their midst and said to them,
"Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified ...
(Gospel)*

Do not be afraid

I have shown you
how to live

I have shown you
how to pray

I have shown you
how to care
for your brothers
and sisters

why do you worry?

didn't I tell you
time and time again
you have a Father
who cares for you
who understands you
he knows all about
you

he even has the hairs
of your head *numbered* — counted!

J.Janda

THE GOSPEL

Luke 24:35-48

Touch me and see.

The disciples are surprised.
No, amazed, awed!
He is alive!
After death!

Christ,
you let them feel and see
your hands and feet
and you unlock their minds.

Oh Jesus, release our own minds. Let us see you
in the beauty of sun and moon and stars,
in the faces of the needy and forlorn,
in all those risking lives to help,
in the breaking of the bread,
in loving our friends.

Let us find you
a hundred ways,
every
day.

Anne Osdieck

Today's Readings: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; 1 Jn 2:1-5; Lk 24:35-48

Entrance Antiphon: Cry out with joy to God, all the earth; O sing to the glory of his name. O render him glorious praise, alleluia.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 4:2, 4, 7, 9

R. Lord, let your face shine on us or Alleluia!

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Lord Jesus, make your word plain to us: make our hearts burn with love when you speak. Alleluia!

Communion Antiphon: The Christ had to suffer and on the third day rise from the dead; in his name repentance and remission of sins must be preached to all the nations, alleluia.

Next Week: Anzac Day Acts 4:8-12; 1 Jn 3:1-2; Jn 10:11-18

We acknowledge the Darug and Gundugarra people, the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to elders both past and present.



Recently Deceased: Patricia Debnam

Sick: James Wallace, Mischa Damaguc and family, Margaret Day, Adam McCully, Christopher Coombs, Kate Moore, Luca Hurley **and all Private Intentions.**

Due to the strict privacy laws, names of the deceased and sick can only be included in the Bulletin with the express permission of the immediate family. Thank you.

Parish and Local Community News

JOIN THE BELLRINGERS OF ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL: The Peal of Bells of St Patrick's Cathedral have been officially installed. Bell ringing commences 10.30am Sundays ahead of the Solemn Mass. If you would like to enquire about learning to ring the bells, please contact Fr Christopher Del Rosario on Christopher.Del-Rosario@parracatholic.org. For further information, please visit <https://stpatscathedral.com.au/bellsofstpatricks/>

POSITIONS VACANT: Young Christian Students Worker (full-time) – Parramatta Young Christian Workers – Applications close Monday 30 April. More details at: parracatholic.org/employment.

CATHOLIC ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKEND: 1 – 2 MAY 2021: How prepared are you for marriage? Engaged Encounter provides you with deeper insights into each other and into married life. You are given a chance to spend time together to strengthen and enrich your relationship. The next Engaged Encounter Weekend will be held on 1 – 2 May. For further information and to register, visit www.engagedencounter.org.au/

PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETS 1ST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH: St. Thomas Aquinas Pastoral Parish Council meets on the 1st Wednesday of every month. Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th May at 7:30 pm, STA Church. Please Email - springwoodppc@gmail.com if you would like to contact the Parish Council.

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE: The next meeting for the Catholic Women's League will be on Friday, 16th April, after Mass in the Church.

IF YOU ARE OVER THE AGE OF 18, THIS MAY BE OF INTEREST TO YOU : The 2021 ACU Prize for Poetry will be awarded for outstanding poetry with the theme Resilience, reflecting on Jaeda DeWalt's supposition, "When we learn how to become resilient, we learn how to embrace the beautifully broad spectrum of the human experience," and Sharon Salzberg's thesis, "Resilience is based on compassion for ourselves as well as compassion for others." To enter, please go to: <https://catholicoutlook.org/18000-prize-purse-for-2021-acu-prize-for-poetry/> **GOOD LUCK!**

BELOVED 2021 WOMEN'S RETREAT: A retreat filled with peace, prayerfulness, adoration, Mass, reconciliation, inspiring guest speakers, praise and worship. St Finbar's Catholic Church, Glenbrook, 12th June 2021 from 8.30am to 8.30pm. Cost of \$60 per person. Places are limited. All enquiries to beloved2021info@gmail.com.

Halcyon Avenue Update : April 2021

The Diocese of Parramatta is working in conjunction with the Blue Mountains City Council to prevent any further (illegal) dumping of rubbish and cars driving over plants/through properties at Halcyon Estate so fences have been erected while the plants are given time to re-establish.

Council envisages this to be for around 4-6 months.

Holy Communion Meeting 2021 REMINDER

The First and only COMPULSORY MEETING for Holy Communion 2021 will be on Tuesday, 20th April at 7pm in the Church.

See you on Tuesday. Thank you.

Spirituality of the Readings - *The Rest of the Story*

"In fulfillment of these words, the apostles experienced a conversion".

We have all heard the story before. Two disciples walked to a small town, about seven miles from Jerusalem, Emmaus. They were sorrowful—I suppose in the same way all people tend to be when a relative has died.

The disciples' hero was dead, the man they had thought was the messiah.

Suddenly, they were joined by a stranger. He began explaining to them the story of Christ as foretold in the Hebrew scriptures. When the three of them arrived at Emmaus, they ate, and, as he broke the bread, the men knew in a flash, just who he was.

Then suddenly he disappeared. Mysterious.

These same men ran to Jerusalem as fast as they could, to tell the eleven apostles about this extraordinary revelation. Sunday's Gospel tells this part of the story. Surely they were babbling and prattling, being so excited. But in the midst of this excitement, suddenly, without warning, Jesus appeared.

"They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost."

Jesus replied that ghosts do not have flesh and bones, do they? Touch me and know I am real. He showed them his hands and feet, with the wounds of the cross now made beautiful by God's love.

Then comes Jesus' best move, a compassionate one. He says he is hungry. How much more un-ghostly could you get? He helps himself to the baked fish they bring him, just as he had done so often in their life together.

He begins to explain the events which had seemed like pure disaster: the passion, death, and burial in particular. He recalls everything written about him "in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms," just as he had done for the two men on the road to Emmaus. He tells why the Son of Man had had to suffer, die, and be then be raised.

How did he put it?

Surely he referenced the book of Job, a man who had been loving and moral, but had lost absolutely everything, which led to a direct encounter with God (maybe a prefiguring of the crucifixion).

And of course, the Book of Isaiah must have been part of it:

It was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed (Isaiah 53:4-5).

This passage is the heart and soul of Hebrew scriptures, and of the fulfillment that was Jesus, according to our Christian and Catholic belief.

What about the resurrection? Here is Isaiah again, words had been written centuries before Jesus:

Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear. *Therefore I will give him his portion among the great, and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty* (Isaiah 53:11-12 italics added).

In fulfillment of these words the apostles experienced a conversion.

Peter went off to preach what God "had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer," (First Reading), and would die and be glorified.

This is the "rest of the story" of Emmaus. And now, since Easter, the rest of our own story.

John Foley, SJ

Fr. John Foley, SJ, is a composer and scholar at Saint Louis University.

LORD JESUS YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Lord Jesus you are the light of the world

You have called us out of darkness

You have called us out of our weakness and our tiredness to fill us with your light

You are the risen Christ - Our Lord and Saviour

Bless us as we endeavour to share your mission with those whom we work with,
our families, and whom we meet.

Amen.