



June 20, 2010 Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

“But you—who do you say that I am?” Luke 9:20

Dear Friends;

Do you believe Jesus to be alive or dead?

Luke Timothy Johnson considers this to be a key question when we speak of Jesus. When we answer this question, we come close to answering the question that Jesus poses for us in today’s Gospel from Luke. And we make a profession about our faith in Jesus.

When we say that someone is dead we speak of them in the past tense. We do not hear directly from them; though we may hear more about them from people who knew them. For those who are dead their deeds are ended and their voice is silent. Their history is over.

When someone is alive we speak of them in the present tense. They are evolving and changing. We can share a relationship with them. We can converse, question, disagree and share ideas with them. We are happy when they are near and miss them when they are away. We are part of them and they are part of us.

If Jesus is merely a historical figure he is dead. He was a good person who walked the earth and is part of the distant past. We might try to get some more historical information about him however the ancient Roman and Jewish sources say very little.

Everything else that we know about Jesus comes from people who experienced him as being very much alive—risen from the dead. He was intimately present to them. The New Testament is a record of the experience of a living Jesus. The resurrection was not the conclusion to a compelling life but the beginning of a living story that continues in us.

So is Jesus a dead hero or the living Lord? How you answer will be reflected in how you live. Is your faith a mere observance of someone else’s religious ideas, rituals and conventions? Or is Christ someone who is alive and growing within you? Is your relationship with him fixed (you know all that there is to know) or is it growing and developing?

Monk and writer, Thomas Merton, in a book (published after his death), *He Is Risen*, wrote that Jesus,
“...is not an inert object, not a lifeless thing not a piece of property, not a super-religious heirloom: HE IS NOT THERE, HE IS RISEN. The Christian life, Christian worship, Christian community, the Eucharist, all of these have been obscured by a limited ritualistic piety that insists on treating the Risen Lord as if he were a dead body, a holy object; not Spirit and Life, and Son of the Living God...let us come with faith to the banquet of the Lamb, the Risen Savior to the Bread of Life that is not the food of the dead but the true and Risen Body of Christ. He who encounters the Risen Christ in the banquet of his Body and Blood will live forever!

In the Gospel of John Jesus tells us that we would do the things he does and even greater. The only way he can do that is if he lives in us. Who do you say Jesus is? Is he dead hero or Living Lord?

Peace,

Fr. Ron