

Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets

I'm sure that most of us have at some time in our lives tried to imagine what it must have been like to have seen and heard Jesus in the flesh. To have pondered how we would have reacted to the things he did and said, to have engaged him in conversation and to have spoken to him about the ordinary everyday things of our lives. Whilst the gospels do give us a flavour of his character, very rarely do they expose any real sense of his personality. However today's gospel does I think allow us a small window through which we can glimpse one aspect of his make up that cannot be denied – his concern to make us realise that our humanity, more than anything else, derives its dignity from a revealed truth that we are created out of love. So as to grasp the magnitude of this revelation, Jesus takes hold of what his Jewishness gives him, and then explores it in the light of how this quality is but a pathway to a deeper insight into God's love.

Like every Jew, he was taught by his parents about the Law, and about the essential part it played in his upbringing and in his life as a Jew. Time and time again when asked how to live out your life as a good person, Jesus would cite the Law: *Listen Israel the Lord our God is the one, only Lord and you must love him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and you must love your neighbour as yourself.* There is no commandment greater than this he tells the Pharisees. Now consider his words in today's gospel and apply that citation of the Law to them and you can see how, in whatever circumstances we may imagine, they open up that pathway to God's love.

What Jesus is saying to us is take any situation or relationship (in other words the Law or the Prophets) and think about them for a moment. Aren't these the realities of our lives? You can't abolish or do away with them, because they are the nuts and bolts of who we are and our lives and our relationships are built around them. So in order to understand them and to grasp what they mean, it is necessary for us to examine what they tell us about our own motives and feelings, about our own values and limitations, about the boundaries and standards that are appropriate. Thinking along these lines leads us to a deeper more profound realisation that as a person created by God from love, my life is a reflection of that love. This is an awesome realisation which has implications for every aspect of my life and in the examples which Jesus offers the magnitude of these implications is laid bare. Are we able to cope? Well not by ourselves. The only way we can is by turning to God's love, a love which in the person of Jesus has been poured out into each of us in a way that can never be abolished, but which will ultimately be completed when we meet him face to face in the fullness of time. Until this moment of completion, what we receive are glimpses of this love in and through the people we meet and in the relationships we treasure. Jesus asks us to look at them and see in them stepping stones towards this completion.

As St Paul tells us it may not be the philosophy of our age, but *they are the very things that God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit reaches the depths of everything, even the depths of God.*