

How many play “Connections”, that online game? Basically Connections has a grid of 16 words and the challenge is to group 4 words into categories. The categories range from easy to difficult and sometimes they are just obscure. Early this week, the categories were Broadcast, as online media, Sound like a Dog (words were Bark, bay Howl and snarl), cocktail making verbs and organizational structure metaphors (chain, ladder, pyramid and tree). So it makes one think of relationships and how words can be categorized.

Our brains/minds make categories. It is part of how we deal with information; trying to make sense of it and come to know our world. It is how science certainly works, think of “King Philip came over for good soup”, Kingdom, phylum, class order family, genus species. It is how biologists categorize and organize animals, plants and all forms of life.

We will do this with people: we will categorize people into groups based on what we think are the commonalities. We will categorize them as liberal or conservative, democrat or republican, cool or geeks; white or dark chocolate. And we tend to think of those persons and treat them as part of that category.

What happens though when something or someone cannot be easily categorized? Or transcends the category we have placed them into?

Our Lord Jesus, King of the Universe, or Christ the King, a category we have, in a way, to explain and grasp the meaning of Jesus Christ, to describe how we believe in Jesus. However, we hopefully understand this is poetry and symbolism.

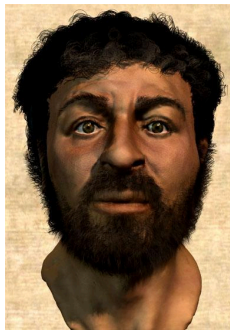
Jesus transcends any kind of idea, any category of “Kingship”.

This is the tension in our Gospel, and it is a tension in our lives.

Jesus, the person and what he stands for, cannot fit easily into what Pilate and the Jewish Leaders think of. They want to impose “kingship” upon him because it fits their way of making sense of the world. They consider “King” as political, authoritative, as one who rules over others. Jesus as king then becomes a threat to Rome, one which must be eliminated. Jesus as king

becomes the political leader that the Jewish leaders longed for, but Jesus himself did not act like the Messiah they envisioned. Therefore he must be eliminated.

Think about the images we have of Jesus, especially the more popular ones. Jesus for us from European culture decent looks European. We have given him white skin, aquiline nose, angular chin and brown, long, maybe wavy hair. None of this is bad, it is simply how we try to make sense of him. Other cultures will present Jesus as Asian, as African, as their own. Some twenty five years ago a group wanted to determine how Jesus could have actually looked, as an eastern Mediterranean, Palestinian Jew. So they produced an image; dark skinned, black curly hair, wide broad nose, round head. Some people took exception to this because it did not match their image of Jesus.



We have always tried to categorize Jesus. People try to make him fit their own political leanings, their own specific spirituality or practice. Ironically when we encounter an aspect of Jesus in Scripture or tradition that does not fit our category, we conveniently ignore it, or deny it, or corrupt it to make Jesus fit.

The challenge for us always is to appreciate and realize that Jesus transcends any category, any definition, and any concept that we have of him. Jesus cannot be limited by us.

The challenge for us is to grow and constantly move forward in our understanding of Jesus, and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. We have to see beyond any human category to the true Person of Jesus Christ.

Fr. Ronald Rohlheiser wrote a book called "Against an Infinite Horizon" in which he uses symbology, that poetic language, to describe trying to grasp God. We all see the horizon and we can walk to the horizon. We never reach it. Once we get to where we thought it was, there is another.

So it is with God, with Jesus. We cannot rest simply in our limited categories of trying to understand God. To do so does not bring us to life; it actually stagnates us.

We say and believe God is love; but if we categorize love as simply feelings and emotions, or love as something to be earned with conditions then we cannot grasp God.

We believe God is merciful, yet, if we categorize mercy as having to be earned, begged for, deals need to be made, then we have not grasped God's mercy.

Jesus reveals to us God whose love is beyond limitations, a mercy that is always given, never to be earned.

Jesus, by his Death and Resurrection, shows us the infinite horizon of God's capacity to love, to forgive, to reconcile.

Our response is always to follow Jesus, to allow ourselves to transcend as well, to be taken to new horizons.

And what we can then experience is life in a more fuller way, more richer way, a way in which God intends.

We can find that our capacity to forgive grows, and we can actually begin to forgive someone who has hurt us, or have the courage to ask for forgiveness.

We will find our capacity to love will grow. We can find that we can actually love others, truly see good in other persons, even those we have previously categorized as "enemy".

We can find a deeper beauty and harmony to this world in which we live with others, and all of creation

I just get the sense that we are losing sight of the transcendent, losing sight of hope; we have limited ourselves. We are losing out on beauty and life these days. We are losing a sense of the poetic.

It can be easier for us; just to stay where we are in our mind and ideas, or worse retreat back to an imagined past that has little to do with reality. We can think it is just easier to remain angry and hurt, hateful and vengeful.

We may only want easy answers. We don't want to think. We don't want to explore. Pilate wanted an easy answer. The Jewish Leaders wanted it all black and white.

We cannot settle like them.

The King of the Universe wants more for us, and that is the Truth.