

# GENERATIONS OF FAITH



## Who do you say that I am?

### Understanding the world behind the words of the Gospels

*“Once when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” They said in reply, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, “One of the ancient prophets has arisen.” Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter said in reply, “The Messiah of God.” He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone. —Luke, 9:18-21*

When it comes to understanding Jesus, context matters. Jesus was a 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestinian Jew, and he preached his message within that context. We cannot understand Jesus and his message outside the context of his world.

Consider for example, the passage above, which you’ll find in all three of the synoptic Gospels – Matthew 16:13-20, Mark 8:27-30, and Luke 9:18-21. (By the way: these three Gospels are called the synoptic Gospels because they include many similar stories, in contrast to the Gospel of John, whose content is comparatively distinct. For example, in the Gospel of John, instead of Jesus’ question – “Who do you say that I am?” – you’ll find Jesus’ many “I am” statements...)

As James Martin notes in his excellent book, *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, the disciples’ varied answers to Jesus’ question probably represent “a fair summary of popular opinion at the time.” To fully

understand these popular opinions, we have to dig deeper. Who was John the Baptist? What did he preach, how widely was his message accepted, how did he die, and at whose hands? Who were the ancient prophets of Israel and what role did they play in the drama of salvation history? Why is the prophet Elijah singled out? (And why is the prophet Jeremiah also singled out in Matthew’s version of this exchange?) Is Peter’s provocative answer a surprisingly insightful summary of Jesus’ mission or is it more reflective of conventional wisdom that God would eventually send a military deliverer from the royal Davidic line to restore Israel as a unified, independent nation? What’s more, *why* were these popular opinions floating around in the first place? What about Israel’s religious and political history *and* the present circumstances of 1<sup>st</sup> century life in the Palestinian sector of Rome’s vast empire might have led Jesus’ fellow Jews to wonder, hope, and maybe even dare to expect that God would directly intervene in their world in some way, shape or form? These questions are critically important, for Jesus is a product of his world – his message is rooted in and blossoms out of his Jewish faith; his ministry is directed to his fellow first century Palestinian Jews, and it is from within this community that Jesus’ critics and followers first come forth...

## Pray it forward: The Psalms

*The word psalms comes from the Greek psalmoi, meaning: religious songs performed to music. The Psalms are a collection of songs composed and collected by many people over many centuries ... centuries before Jesus was even born! There are 150 Psalms in the Bible: you’ll find the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament. These ancient prayer songs cover all aspects of the human heart, from the highest peaks of joy to the deepest pits of despair. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Psalm 22 bursts forth from Jesus as he cries out to God on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” For thousands of years, people of faith have used the Psalms to lift up their hearts to God.*

**Adults:** Join us at St. Matt’s for an Advent Bible Study featuring the Book of Psalms. We offer 2 sessions, to accommodate daytime or nighttime availability: Wednesdays, 3-4:30pm or 6:30-8pm. November 29, December 6, 13, 20. Study sessions facilitated by Joy Galameau. RSVP by November 27: Email [stmatthewsfathdevelopment@verizon.net](mailto:stmatthewsfathdevelopment@verizon.net) or call 518-765-2805

**Teens:** Fr. Chris and Joy are leading a teen bible study featuring the Book of Psalms: Sundays, 2-3pm: October 22, 29, November 5, 12. Feel free to drop in!

**Introducing children to the Psalms:** For young children, try a collection of paraphrased psalms, such as Marie-Helene Delval’s Psalms for Young Children, which uses simple yet powerful words and imagery to introduce children to the psalms. For children in upper elementary and middle school, invest in a Bible such as The Catholic Children’s Bible from Saint Mary’s Press, a complete children’s bible that is written in accessible language. Practice looking up psalms with children, focusing on verses that are age-appropriate.

“The Son of God who became Son of the Virgin learned to pray in his human heart. He learns to pray from his mother, who kept all the great things the Almighty had done and treasured them in her heart. He learns to pray in the words and rhythms of the prayer of his people, in the synagogue at Nazareth and the Temple at Jerusalem...”

—Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2599

## Seasons of Faith: Which American Saint Are You?

*We need saints without cassocks, saints who listen to iPods and drink Coca-Cola.*  
—Pope Francis

*Do not be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium!*  
—Pope John Paul II

On All Saints Day (November 1) we prayerfully recall the saints. It is no accident that the Gospel reading for All Saints Day is Matthew 5:1-12: the beatitudes. For in the beatitudes, Jesus both recalls and calls forth the communion of saints – the great cloud of holy witness past, present and future – without uttering a single

saint’s name. Rather, Jesus names the attributes and actions of the saints: of those men and women who would follow Jesus; thereby answering his call to discipleship by continuing his work in the world. In so doing, Jesus shows us the path to sainthood.

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### Which American saint are you?

Take Loyola Press’ free online quiz and find out!

<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/saints/saints-activities/lesson-plans/which-american-saint-are-you>

## Catholicism 101: Jewish Roots of the Mass

"A better understanding of the Jewish people's faith and religious life as professed and lived even now can help better our understanding of certain aspects of Christian liturgy." *Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1096*

**"Berakah**, also spelled **Berakha**, or **Berachah** (Hebrew: "blessing"), plural **Berakoth**, **Berakot**, **Berachoth**, or **Berachot**: in Judaism, a benediction (expression of praise or thanks directed to God) that is recited at specific points of the synagogue liturgy, during private prayer, or on other occasions (e.g., before performing a commandment or for being spared from harm in the face of danger). Most berakoth begin with the words Barukh Attah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam ("Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe"). Berakoth for food and wine are customarily recited in many Jewish homes as a grace before meals—e.g., "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine." Many of the berakoth also thank God for choosing the Jewish people to observe the holidays and remember him in this way." *Britannica.com*

**"Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life."** Do you recognize this berakah? Hopefully you do, since this prayer is recited at Mass, during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

### Use this 3-part formula to create your own berakah:

-Adapted from "Leading a Spontaneous Prayer," by Joe Paprocki, D.Min

**First:** Name and bless/praise/thank God: What are some ways you can think of "naming" God? What are some ways you can think of to bless, praise, thank God?

**Second:** Gratefully remember the wonderful things God has done – both long ago and up to the present: What are some things God has done that you can gratefully remember?

**Third:** Ask God for something: Now that you have named and blessed God and recalled God's wonderful deeds, what is one thing you would ask God to do?

## We recommend...

### Getting Acquainted with Jesus' World

#### ...for adults:

*Jesus: A Pilgrimage*

by James Martin

Take a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, travel back in time to the world of Jesus ... all without leaving the comfort of your cozy couch! Accessible, informative, well researched.

#### ...for kids:

*The World Jesus Knew: A Curious Kid's Guide to Life in the First Century*

by Marc Olson and Jemima Maybank

This book is pure awesomeness. The publisher's description reads: "Jesus often told stories using everyday objects to help his listeners understand life with God. But for most of us, the deep imagery and meaning behind those objects has been lost to history. This book helps kids discover the world Jesus lived in through maps, charts, graphs, and other infographic elements. They'll learn about the culture Jesus lived in—his Jewish religion, the power of the ruling Roman Empire, the role of fishermen and carpenters and shepherds. It's an invitation to explore the stories of Jesus in their cultural context, bringing new life to familiar biblical events. This beautifully illustrated book will be a family favorite that kids and adults will come back to over and over again."

#### ...for adults with kids:

"How to Talk to Children about Jesus"

by Janet Schaeffler

Pick up your copy of this pamphlet at the Faith Development Resource Table. Short, sweet and packed with practical insights.

#### ...for adults and kids:

"Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus" Board Game

by Us!

When our search for a totally awesome board game that could help players dive into Jesus' world and gain familiarity with the Bible came up short, we went ahead and created our own. Team trivia fans, this one's for you. Family game night will never be the same! We have a few copies of this game for lending ... to borrow one, contact Joy Galameau at [stmatthewsfathdevelopment@verizon.net](mailto:stmatthewsfathdevelopment@verizon.net)

## Living the Lectionary

November 5, 2017

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12

**Adults:** During the next week, what could you do to welcome someone who usually feels excluded?

**Kids:** Is there a child in your class or neighborhood who is left out of games and activities? What can you do?

November 12, 2017

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

**Adults:** When have you regretted that you did not look ahead and foresee the consequences of an action?

**Kids:** Is there something coming up this week that you could be better prepared for? What might happen if you do not prepare?

November 19, 2017

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

**Adults:** What gift haven't you developed as you had hoped? What could you still do?

**Kids:** What gift has God given you? What do you want to do with it?

November 26th, 2017

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ,  
King of the Universe

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

**Adults:** If you were to be judged today by God, what would be your greatest regret? What is one thing you could do to change that?

**Kids:** To which person did you especially try to show Jesus' love and care this past week?

From RCL Benzinger  
<http://rcllectionary.com>