

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, May 17th 2014

You have a problem. Here's the situation: You're God – not a remote, watchmaker creator God, but a God who cares deeply about creation, and especially about that most pesky and rambunctious of all your creatures – humanity. You want humans to see that, to know that you have made them in your own image. You want them, in the light of that knowledge, to care in return – to care for one another and for all of creation, as you do. How do you get them to see that?

Well, you might say, humans could look at the beauty and grandeur of creation. As your psalmist says “The heavens proclaim the glory of God!” Doesn't that tell them something about your own glory? Look at the spring that has just burst upon our northern hemisphere. What could be grander? Then there is always the wonder of the cosmos, revealed of late by the Hubble telescope – unimaginable order, power, beauty, majesty, . . . on and on. Yes, that too speaks of the glory and goodness of God. But does it convey your care? Maybe not – or not as clearly as you would like.

So you form a people, a people whom you will tell that they are special and that you care about them and will help them. Their task is not just to see you but to show the rest of humanity how deeply you care. So, you rescue them from captivity, not once but twice. Surely, when they experience all that, they will tell everyone of your goodness. You inspire them to write about your care for them and to tell the stories of that care to one another.

Still not quite enough. So, as one last, incomprehensible effort to convey how much you care, you take human form, not as a God-in-disguise, but as a fully human person, from birth to death, with everything in between. Now, other humans have only to know you, to see you directly, to hear you as one of them. Then they will know how much you care, and what they are called to do in response.

In today's gospel the apostle Philip asks Jesus to show them God (that is the Father). Jesus tells his disciples: “If you know me, then you will also know my Father” and “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”. What is it that we see when we see Jesus? We see love; we see compassion; we see concern for others; we see self-giving, we see forgiveness; we see humanity as God, in creating, had envisioned it. We see God!

What a plan! Surely that would work. And it does, once we come to know Jesus.

