

## Teens - Jesus is the Answer!

Bishop Victor Galeone

*"Bishop, what if what we've been told about Jesus isn't true? I mean, all our life we're trying to be good and all that - and then suppose when we die, we learn that it wasn't true. Why waste our time, if we can't be sure?"*

This quote is from a letter that I received from a candidate I confirmed this past year. I can understand this teenager's frustration. Underlying his dilemma is the thought: "Why should I believe in Jesus? I've never seen him."

That's true. I've never seen Abraham Lincoln either. But I believe that he was president during the Civil War; that he signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863; and that John Wilkes Booth assassinated him on Good Friday 1865 in Ford's Theater.

Why do I believe all that and much more about Mr. Lincoln, even though I wasn't there? Because those who were there - witnesses, namely - told others about what they had seen. Their accounts were recorded in the newspapers, and ultimately wound up in our history. Once I'm convinced that a history book is reliable, I accept its contents as true. The same thing applies to Jesus.

We have four reliable history books that tell us about Jesus - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Perhaps you may ask, "But how can we be sure that what they narrate really happened?" When a historian shows a person's warts and not just his virtues, you can be almost 100 percent sure that he's telling you the truth.

In addition to the apostles' good points, the gospel writers report some very embarrassing faults:

- The apostles come across as slow learners, petty and jealous.
- When Jesus is arrested, they desert him.
- Simon Peter curses and swears he doesn't know who Jesus is.
- On Easter morning, it's the women who discover the empty tomb. The apostles are hiding like cowards behind locked doors! (Talk about warts!)

Coupled with this internal evidence for the reliability of the gospels, all the apostles, except for John, suffered excruciating deaths rather than deny what they were preaching. To paraphrase St. John Chrysostom, an early Church Father: "How do you account for the fact that these men, who deserted and denied Christ during his lifetime, set out to win the whole world for him after his death? Did they perhaps say to themselves, 'He could not save himself while he was alive, but now that he is dead, he will extend a helping hand to us?'...It is evident, then, that if they had not seen him risen from the dead and had proof of his power, they would never have risked so much, including their own lives."

Yes, Jesus is alive. During his time on earth, he claimed to be God's eternal Son in the flesh. In addition to the many miracles he performed, the fact that he rose from the dead proves that he is who he claimed to be. Would God have brought an imposter back to life?

Think a moment. Born in a remote corner of the Roman Empire, Jesus never did any of the things we associate with greatness, like conquering an empire or writing great books. Yet today those who did those things - along with everyone else who ever lived - are all stamped with the date of his birth. He split history right down the center: BC/AD. You cannot even write a valid check without acknowledging the year of his reign: 2006! And when was the last time you heard someone on a TV sitcom swear, "For Buddha's sake!" Why, then, is Christ's name used that way? Obviously, he's the most hated as well as the most loved person who ever walked our earth.

When I was asked to prepare my message for this special teen edition of our magazine, I asked myself, "What could I possibly say that would prove a challenge to them?"

Teens, Jesus wants to reign -not on the date of a calendar - but in the fibers of your heart. Fall in love with him! Yes, surrender your hearts to him.

But remember that Jesus can't stay in a divided heart. Recall what he himself once said, "You cannot serve two masters." So if your heart is filled with anger or hatred or prejudice, there's no room for the Lord. And if you're dabbling with drugs or alcohol or illicit sex, you're really telling Jesus, "Go away - there's no room for you here!"

If you're feeling down and miserable after trying to find happiness in all the wrong places, isn't it time that you surrendered your heart to the Lord? He will never let you down. And besides, there is no high like the high that comes from falling in love with the Lord Jesus!