

## Teacher

13 9 09

Almighty Father,  
whose will it is to restore all things  
in your beloved Son, our teacher and our guide,  
so govern our hearts and minds  
that we may come to see him as he truly is,  
Our Lord and Saviour.

My text may be found in today's reading from Isaiah:

'The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher  
that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.'

(50 v4)

Schools in England and France are now well into the new academic year. To be a teacher is a great way to earn a living. Even though it is not as well paid a job as that of a Banker, it is probably a more socially useful and personally satisfying. Teachers have the chance to make a difference. They can enthuse their pupils with a love for their subject and there is nothing better than to watch a student understand something which has previously been a mystery to them. One of the skills a teacher possesses is how to use their voice effectively; to project without shouting, to vary the tone and pace so that what they say is not only interesting but sounds interesting. At the time of Jesus, much teaching was done orally; paper had yet to be invented and the material on which the scrolls of the Law

were written was too costly to waste on exercises. In Ancient Greece, the dialogue between pupil and teacher was an essential strand in learning. So it is that in our text today, Isaiah predicts that the Messiah would be gifted with the voice of a teacher which would have the enviable virtue of giving heart even to the weary.

As you know, one of Jesus' titles was Rabbi, a Hebrew word for teacher. Certainly, Jesus was a teacher and he was so good at teaching that people of their own free will flocked to hear him speak simply because he was an inspirational teacher. It wasn't a question of duty; it wasn't a question of compulsion; it wasn't a question of having to pass examinations. The reasons they came out of the towns and villages of Galilee and Judea in such large numbers to hear him speak was because they recognised him to be someone special, someone who spoke with authority, someone who had the knack of capturing their interest, challenging them to think and exciting them with the reality of the presence of God in their lives.

But Jesus was much more than just a good teacher and in today's gospel from Mark, we see as much in response to the question he poses to the twelve disciples: 'Who do people say I am?' (8 v27). Their response was 'John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets.' Not bad but still wide of the mark. How people saw Jesus, according to the Twelve, was someone who was in touch with God, someone who spoke the words of God but not someone who was God.

Jesus then asks his disciples to answer the same question themselves. And it is Peter who answers: 'You are the Messiah'. Bingo; a bull's eye; a hole in one. Peter

has stated what must have become increasingly obvious to those nearest to him: that Jesus was, in fact, no less than the Messiah, the anointed one, God's Son, his beloved in whom the Father is well pleased. These last words, spoken aloud from heaven at the baptism of Jesus, would be uttered again just eight days later in the presence of Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration of Jesus.

The problem for some people is to accept that Jesus is more than a good man, more than a good teacher, more than a prophet, more than someone who could effect exorcisms, miracles of healing and sometimes demonstrate an astonishing power over the nature. What Jesus is, and which is implicit in his life and teaching but made obvious in his death and resurrection, is that he is the Son of God and our Saviour.

Of course, it is brilliant that Jesus was a gifted teacher and the Gospels contain plenty of examples of just how impressive he was as a teacher; for example, on taxes – 'render to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God what belongs to God alone'. But the claim that mainstream Christianity makes for Jesus is that his effectiveness as a teacher comes from the fact that he is Son of God, the Word of God, who has been born as a man to show mankind the way to have a real relationship with God not only in this life but in the life to come.

If he can teach us who he truly is then we will have learnt a truly useful lesson.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's Dinard*

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H: Sermon 20: Teacher

