

BIBLE STUDY (Continued)

“The *New Testament*, we suggest, must be read so as to be understood. It isn't the kind of 'magic' book that simply bypasses the mind.” So begins N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird's massive and glorious *The New Testament in Its World*, a wondrous journey through the *New Testament*. I invite you to join Father Duncan and me on a 'magic carpet ride' through the *New Testament*, on a breathtaking sojourn from the base of a mountain to the highest heavens and on the way unfolds new glories in the course of the ascent, on a dizzying pilgrimage that will transform your mind and nourish your spirit.

Father Duncan has mentioned often how each of us (that includes Father Duncan and me) needs to be able to tell our own story, our journey into the freedom of the risen Christ, as if we were on an elevator and the opportunity to bear witness to Jesus arose suddenly. Actually, as Wright and Bird suggest, it's not a story. Rather, 'it is a play, a real-life drama. And the part of Jesus is to be played by you and me. This is Christian mission in a postmodern world.' For those of us who choose to live out this journey, it is to turn Saint John's mission statement into action as each of us becomes a 'polished mirror set at an angle so as to reflect the powerful and healing love of the creator back into the world' (p. 43). This is our vocation; the *New Testament* is as relevant today as it was in the first century and it announces that 'this is what is going on then and is still going on today.' Father Duncan and I invite you to join with us and be an active part of the drama, to learn the lines that were written especially with you in mind, to enlist for the journey.

While Satan may have thought that the current pandemic would serve to keep the faithful away from Christ and his church, hopefully never to return, daily Zoom Morning Prayer, a cascade of glorious concerts from Alex, Sunday zoomcasts of the Eucharist, individual and corporate involve in the wider community, the Tuesday Bible Study, (and the list goes on), all have kept Jesus at the forefront of our parish. Saint John's and its parishioners have functioned as living sponges who have absorbed the 'truth, power, and beauty of the gospel so that we reflect it outwardly, infect everyone we touch with it, and make gospel proclamation in all its dimensions the church's chief project' (p. 525). The Tuesday morning Bible Study group is an essential component of this end and, if there is sufficient interest, Father Duncan and I are willing to form an additional group, perhaps in the evening.

As we journey through Wright and Bird's book, our overarching aim is not to acquire information, not to become pseudo-scholars, rather to be transformed by the living presence of Jesus in our midst and renewed by his Spirit. Let me close with two brief stories:

1. E. V. Rieu, the great scholar of ancient Greek literature and translator of the classics, was asked to translate the gospels. Someone asked his son, “What do you think that your father will make of the gospels?” His son responded, “I am far more interested to see what the gospels will make of my father.”
2. There is a story, most likely legendary, about Saint Augustine who was converted after numerous affairs with women. One day he was walking and one of his old mistresses came up to greet him. He was courteous but somewhat distant. She was puzzled and as he began to walk on she said, “Augustine! You know it's me, don't you?” He turned with a smile and said, “I know, but it's not me.”

Join us on Tuesday mornings; help us to form an additional study group on another day or in the evening. And remember this: The story of the *New Testament* is that *the kingdom had arrived on earth as in heaven*, that *this was how it had happened*, and in particular that *that this was the reality in which Jesus' followers were now living*. Come and live within that repeatedly told story and find in it food and drink that sustains for ever.

Blessings, Fr. John+