

LEARNING JESUS: Part 3

*How I **approach** Jesus is crucial to my **learning** or experiencing him. I need to be open, trusting and receptive. I need to be patient, to take time for silent reflection, and to be prepared to suffer as I open myself to the challenges and changes that new truths bring. I recognise too that learning Jesus happens in the company of others, my contemporaries in the community of faith, across the ages.*

Seek first God's reign and God's justice and all these things will be given you besides.

Matthew 6:33

"What you fall in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything." (Pedro Arrupe) Jesus offers us a controlling or defining vision, a vision that will meet our deepest fears and nurture our grandest hopes. Jesus as God's dream holds out for us a way of reading reality, in such a way that we find a purpose for living - freely and hopefully - and not just for ourselves, but for others too.

Forgive and you will be forgiven.

Luke 6:37

God's forgiveness, according to Jesus, isn't conditional. Julian would go so far as to say God doesn't forgive, for there never has been a time when God hasn't forgiven! Forgiveness just is. And it is premature. It doesn't wait. It doesn't calculate. It's not strategic. And once we've been grasped by this forgiveness - not the idea of it, but the lived experience of its reality - we will practise it. Forgiveness is for giving.

Whatever you did for one of these least sisters or brothers of mine, you did for me.

Matthew 25:40

What matters is our life for others. And not because we are told to, or from self regard - but from a vision which has captured us. And this vision is based on our experience of being forgiven and being loved ourselves. Thomas Merton describes the experience as a "hell of mercy", where we experience our nothingness in a spirit of repentance and surrender to God. It is out of this experience that we can act in love for all the little ones.

Philip Carter is a retired Anglican Priest. He was the inaugural president of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD). He ran the Julian Centre in Adelaide, an independent and ecumenical centre for spirituality, from 1997-2009. Contact: juliancentre@gmail.com