

Donnybrook

4 January 2022

Welcome

Albert Einstein once said: the important thing is not to stop questioning. He probably never did read John's Gospel but I think he would have enjoyed it because of the great number of really good questions in that Gospel. Some of the very best are on the lips of Pontius Pilate, such as "where are you from?"

Topic

Today, we have the very first words on the lips of Jesus in that Gospel.

Steps

Because this is the very first thing Jesus says, it has a special place. What are you looking for? It is, of course, a great question. It can be translated in different ways. What are you looking for? What are you searching for? What do you desire? Anyone of us could spend time with that: what do I really want, desire, deep down? Such an open question can feel chaotic, destabilising and too much. It is also life-giving.

In English, the words question and quest are related. John's gospel is also a wonderful Gospel of quests – people on a personal journey of some kind. We can see this easily in today's Gospel with its question at the centre. As the Gospel unfolds, we are introduced to characters who are looking for something more: Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the centurion, the man born blind, Mary and Martha, and not least Mary Magdalene at the end.

At the end of the Gospel, Jesus ask another question. This time, it is part of the encounter between Mary Magdalen and the risen Lord. It is very like the first question but significantly different: Woman, whom are you looking for? It marks a shift from a meaning (what) to a person (whom).

Conclusion

It is all part of John's grand scheme of inviting us not to be satisfied with less, to seek even more. The important thing is to keep asking questions. What do you desire?