

**January 17, 2021 Jesus the Questioner Homily:** In 1968, the world's most popular and successful rock band, The Beatles, experienced an existential crisis. The four young men, John, Paul, George and Ringo, found themselves inexplicably restless and close to despair. Under the influence of a band member's girlfriend, they traveled as a group to Northern India to take part in a Transcendental Meditation course offered by a Hindu mystic, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Years later, Paul McCartney told an inquiring journalist, "Yeah, well it's great to be famous, great to be rich, but what is it all for?"

Everyone is looking for a Messiah... someone that will fulfill all our hopes and desires. But to whom must we turn? Who has the answers to life's most searching questions? In his commentary on John's gospel, the late Jesuit biblical scholar, Stanley Morrow, writes:

"What every one of us desires, seeks, wants and ultimately longs for is, of course, life. It is that without which nothing else matters, neither riches, nor honors, nor friends, nor anything nor anyone else in the world. Without life nothing can be enjoyed. The question put by Jesus to the would-be disciples at the start of the gospel receives a definitive answer in its conclusion, in the concluding statement of its purpose: 'These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.'" (Jn. 20:31)

In today's gospel (Jn. 1:35-42) John the Baptist implores his disciples to go to Jesus, whom he identifies as the Lamb of God. The two disciples heard what he said and followed him. (Jn. 1:37)

It is remarkable that the first words spoken by Jesus in the fourth gospel are a question: "What are you looking for?" It is a question that confronts every living person. Perhaps they are the first words spoken by Jesus to each one of us.

In John's gospel, Jesus has the habit of asking questions. He assumes the role of questioner. Consider the following:

"Will you also go away?"

"Do you believe this?"

"Do you know what I have done for you?"

"Do you love me?"

"Woman, why are you weeping?"

"What are you looking for?"

What is worth noting is that the questioner, Jesus, is the answer. Faith in God is a response to the questions asked by him.

In one of the most popular television game shows, "Jeopardy", what is novel in the format of the show is that all answers by the contestants are in the form of a question.

It is the tradition of the Benedictine religious order that whenever a prospective candidate for religious life arrives at the monastery gate, hoping to be admitted, a question is put to him, "What do you seek?" He should only be admitted if he answers correctly: "I seek only God".

To seek and find Christ, the source of truth and life, the Word of God invites us to take up, at the beginning of the New Year, the never ending journey of faith.

Jesus seeks us out. He is God in search of man.

He wants us to spend time with him;

He wants us to have a personal relationship with him;

It is only by coming to Jesus that we will have our questions answered and our life fulfilled.

Yet today, in the midst of a pandemic, only two percent of Catholics attend weekly mass. Sad! Too many have ceased practicing the faith.

In the Nineteenth Century, Gerard Manly Hopkins, a distinguished Jesuit poet, wrote his justly acclaimed work, "The Wreck of the Deutschland". The opening line of the poem is an expression of wonder:

"Thou questioning me, God".

"What are you looking for?"

Christ expects from us an answer.

Amen!