

ST JOHN'S GOSPEL IN LENT

The four Gospels, that have been handed down to us, emerged from the early Christian communities in the latter decades of the first century.

We know that each evangelist, as we call the authors of the Gospels, was presenting an account of the life and teachings of Jesus for his own community. That context gave each Gospel its particular focus.

While Mark, Matthew and Luke shared a common approach, John's Gospel is very different. That difference has led many scholars to seek to understand what was happening in the *Johannine Community* as it is called.

To understand the issues facing that community at the end of the first century we need "to read between the lines" of John's Gospel. To do that we need the help of those who study the Gospel.

As a Christian community living in the early twenty-first century, an understanding of those issues can help us to understand the message of John's Gospel for us today.

That task is made more difficult, however, because we do not hear John's Gospel read in full on Sundays throughout the year. Instead, we hear it in sections. We listen to John's account of the Passion on Good Friday. We read other sections during the Easter Season.

This year in Lent we will hear three of the great dramatic narratives of John's Gospel on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays: the woman at the well, the man born blind and the raising of Lazarus.

These stories are about coming to believe in Jesus and have been read in Lent from the earliest centuries as an "instruction" for those who were preparing to be baptized at the Easter Vigil.

This Lent I am inviting you to join me in reading *Come to the Light – Reflections on John's Gospel* by Brendan Byrne, an Australian Jesuit priest and renowned biblical scholar. Drawing on his knowledge of John's Gospel, he offers spiritual reflections on some of the key chapters.

Those who are interested are invited to join a group that will meet over five sessions in the Parish Hall either on five Tuesday evenings or on five Sunday afternoons.

The groups will be based on a "Book Club" model. Each week a section of *Come to the Light* (about 15 pages) will be the subject of our shared reflections. More information is available on a separate registration form.

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