



# Allocutio



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Allocutio: Christ has the Answer

The latest discoveries from the world of science are raising many puzzling questions before we even wonder about God. What is the meaning of our planet in a gigantic Universe aged 13.7 billion light years? How did life begin here? Does life exist here alone or is it diffuse in the Universe? And what is the meaning of just everything that is including life? How well it is put in a psalm written 3,000 years ago: When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you arranged, what is mortal man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him? And with our present awareness of how small we are against the huge backdrop of time and space it is a very real question: who actually am I? Does it all have any meaning? We immediately think of St. John's prologue: "Nothing that came to be had life except through him". Or St. Paul: "In him all things were created ... all things were created through him and for him" (Col 1:16).

On this one planet on which life does for certain exist the human being is the most intelligent, skilled and refined creature. Okay we are humbled by the fact that we cannot build a bird's nest or spin a spider's web. Yet just think of the variety of music we produce, the works of art, the technical feats including sending machines into the air and into space. We have capacities beyond the other creatures with whom we share the planet. It is true that with this comes a responsibility for the rest of creation which we can be good at sometimes.

But this creature who can manipulate the laws of nature has a horrible downside. We need only reflect on the Second World War with the holocaust and the atom bombs, Rwanda and the twin towers, the gap between rich and poor and even the troubles in our own country. We do not always mind creation well. Stay closer to home and think of the many broken relationships, the addiction to drugs and passing pleasures which drag people down. Broken relationships and a deficiency of love results in the weakening of the human spirit, the discouragement, the turning in on self. Instead of the creative spirit flourishing and giving life, human potential is almost annihilated and the energies that could have contributed to the common good are dissolved or worse passed on like a cancer undermining the potential good in others. And so as St. Paul said, "Who can save us from this wretched state?"

We are here because of one man. The one man Jesus Christ, to put it St. Paul's way, has shown us the best way forward, indeed the only way. So much of Jesus' ministry was about picking up people who were down. If you look close at his healings you will find that in some way or other, sometimes in fact at many levels, he is restoring the life and energy of people: the cripples can walk, the blind can see, the deaf hear, those burdened by sick children are freed to give their energies in other ways. Or look at the many people burdened by sin and guilt whom he freed from the oppression caused by their sins. And after the Resurrection he renews and restores the utterly deflated disciples. He did not come to condemn but to lift up.

Jesus asks us to join him in that ministry of lifting people's spirits and giving them hope and encouragement. "As the Father sent me so am I sending you" (Jn. 20:21). That is what the Gospel is about. And let's not forget that at the top of that Gospel is the hope held out to us all that death is not the end but that there is life after death for those who have followed the way of Jesus.



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In the Old Testament we have this challenge: “I put before you today life or death. Choose!” And that challenge is brought to its climax by Jesus. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He is saying to humanity that he is the way forward for all. He is even addressing those who have been ensnared by the culture of death to leave it behind and follow his way of eternal life. Instead of killing we are to give life and hope to people, instead of letting people die of starvation and thirst we are to share with those less fortunate, to those trapped in their prisons of depression and hopelessness we are to give encouragement and help them believe in their capacity to be life-givers.

How often have people who were turned in on themselves been given a new life by coming to know Jesus? From being crippled by neurotic guilt John of God changed to reach out to so many wounded people, wounded especially by their inner troubles. It is not what we have done in the past that counts as much as what we can become with the uplifting help of Jesus who wants us to bring out our best, something put in us all by God.

We seem to be part of some great unfolding plan that is gigantic compared to any individual. We may wonder about our role in the midst of something we cannot get our heads around. But here is something worth thinking about: the greatest agent God found in our world was a humble backwoods girl who didn't try to understand it all. She simply accepted her smallness and trusted in God. And with God she was a life giver. She permitted Jesus to be conceived in her. She brought joy to Elizabeth. She contributed to the wedding at Cana. She stood in solidarity with Jesus in his passion and death. She nurtured the infant Church. All this because she was humble. She handed everything over to God and kept her proper place. That is how we can all contribute to whatever the unfolding plan of God is. God does not expect or demand that we understand it. Just to trust in him.

The people who will most determine the future are those who have the love of God in their hearts because they are the people who will give hope and encouragement and confidence to others to bring out their best. God preserve us from knocking anyone's confidence or causing gifts that could be brought out to be buried even more. When God calls us to love everyone we must listen. It is not just a command for the sake of a command. God knows that the fragile life of grace in each person can only flourish with love supporting it. And anything we do to help another human being actually helps us all. On the other hand negativity towards another, any sniping, criticism, rejection, dismissal, rubbishing in any form can only knock and discourage and cause life to be diminished.

We have made great strides in our knowledge of science and medicine in recent times. The people who have contributed to this and to other fields of human research will be found to be people who did receive love and are often people of faith. Indeed some of the great contributions have been made by Catholics, even our clergy. I think for instance of Lamaitre, the Belgian Jesuit who spotted that everything had to go back to one primordial event called the big bang. And by the way you will often find that they are people who had a strong devotion to Mary, the humble handmaid of God.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill