



AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies

67/1 Jan-Feb 2022, ISSN P-2249-1503 E-2582-791X | **6-10**

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5829323

Stable URL: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5829323>

Like God, Become a Human Being

Bernhard Heindl SJ

Rektor, Jesuitenkirche, Innsbruck, Austria

Abstract: Based on his New Year homily, the homily urges us to discover the beauty of becoming a human being, just like God himself became. Christmas is the feast of the Incarnation, of God becoming a human being. So, it is good it is to ask ourselves at the end of the year: Have I become more human in the past year? This is the very challenge that Christianity itself poses to all of us. The author asks three fundamental questions in this article: 1. Have I become more loving? 2. Have I become more grateful? Have I become more faithful? The answers will help us to become more human.

Keywords: Becoming Human, Incarnation, God Becoming Human. Gratitude, Faithfulness.

It's been a few years now, since I have received Christmas mail at the end of the year! Some years ago I draw the cards out of the envelopes, some of them remind me of Adoration of the Magi, Albrecht Dürer, The Nativity, ... Images of carved or clay

Cite as: Heindl, Bernhard. (2022). Like God, Become a Human Being (Version 1.0). *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*, Mar-Apr 2022 (67/2), **6-10**. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5829323>

figures, the Holy Family, shepherds, angels, singly or in choirs, in frescoes or oil paintings, ... the Star of Bethlehem in straw, as a watercolour ... and suddenly a photo, I can't even associate it with Christmas at first: A youth in a white T-shirt, smiling, cheerful, ... with his fists on his hips so that the T-shirt inscription is easy to read, and it says: Do as God does, become a man!

Becoming Human

I pause, that's what it's all about, every year: Do like God, become human! So simple, so freshly formulated and yet so demanding! How often am I, are we only shadows of ourselves? The card won't let me go, it has been with me for years. In the meantime, I know that the saying is from the Bishop Emeritus of Limburg, Franz Kamphaus (Kamphaus and Groot, 2019).. I like this bishop, who is like Bishop Reinhold Stecher (2013) of Innsbruck, Austria.

Christmas is the feast of the Incarnation, of God becoming a human being. So, it is good to ask ourselves at the end of the year: Have I become more human in the past year? We celebrate an incarnation, but what about my incarnation? Has my soul gained a year's ring of humanity? Have I grown as a human being? These are three questions that have become important to me, for retrospection and also as resolutions for the new year, because I associate maturing of faith more with deepening of it than with constant new acquisitions.

Christmas is the feast of the Incarnation, of God becoming a human being. So, it is good to ask ourselves at the end of the year: Have I become more human in the past year?

Three Fundamental Questions

The three questions are: 1. Have I become more loving? 2. Have I become more grateful? Have I become more faithful?

1. have I become more loving? - How do I notice this? Love has to do with devotion, giving oneself, stepping out of self-love, self-

interest. Life becomes stale, empty, if it only revolves around itself. There comes a moment in every life when it becomes clear that self-sufficiency is no longer enough. We want to give ourselves, to become a gift for others, and those who refuse to do so become spiritually impoverished.

I believe this is the fingerprint of our Creator on our soul, because: Why does the Creator of all things create anything at all? For me, the only answer: out of love, there is no necessity for him, he does it out of love, the Creator of all things, and henceforth it is rooted in the heart of all creatures, the desire for devotion, the wanting to refrain from oneself. Not being afraid to waste oneself, that is love, an increase in love.

Have I become more grateful? - Gratitude has become a key spiritual word for me. Gratitude is a beautiful feeling, a gift! But gratitude is not only a feeling, it is also an attitude that one can practise, adopt! An emotional impulse, if it is genuine, is beyond my control, simply there. But how I want to live is determined by myself!

I would like to be a grateful person! I expect a lot from practising the attitude of gratitude. There great insight in this simple twist of words:

Because I am happy, I am grateful.

Because I am grateful, I am happy.

Because I am happy, I am grateful, that is normal. Because I am grateful, I am happy, that's the direction of our faith!

I love the Christmas speeches of Queen Elizabeth II. She has delivered 69 of them and you can just tell she knows how to do it! This year her thought spoke to me: Some may say Christmas is a children's affair. Yes, it may be that Christmas reaches children's souls better because they find joy in the simple things of life more easily. Go through life with grateful eyes, do not overlook the traces of happiness, rejoice! Or: Have a better view

of what is really important in life, e.g. good friendships! Ultimately, this is what we want to do with our Christmas gifts, to appreciate relationships, to give thanks and in this respect it is a beautiful custom.

Have I become more faithful? - Do I see more traces of God in my life over the years or less? Is my basic trust growing or am I becoming a seismologist who suspects danger everywhere and foresees tremors and earthquakes everywhere? A great yes to life is also a great yes to God. When we say yes to life, life works towards us. And trust is not a passive state, it is: recognising what is necessary now and acting confidently, because my life is underpinned by a loving, benevolent power, by God!

Growing in Faith Experiences

Perhaps we could help ourselves even more and make ourselves more aware of God. Of course it needs the right tone, but my impression is that we are too often silent about experiences of God, and it is often like that in life: Once you have become aware of something, you discover it here, there and there, ... much more often than you might think.

A new year announces itself. The rings of life, the growth rings of becoming and maturing into human being closes up and new ones are hopefully opening up. Being human with growth rings, the image of the tree appeals to me as a whole: we need roots, the foundation of roots, and at the same time we want to develop, strive upwards. Being human, becoming human: rooted in God, unfolding, maturing, forming a crown, that embraces our fellow human beings..

Perhaps the hopeful messianic image from Isaiah can also be transferred to us in following Christ: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1) - Amen.

References

- Heindel, B. S. (2022). *Jahresschluss—Mach's wie Gott, werde Mensch!* Retrieved 14 January 2022, from <https://jesuitenkirche-innsbruck.at/at/1900-jahresschluss-machs-wie-gott-erde-mensch>
- Kamphaus, F., Groot, B. R.,. (2019). *Mach's wie Gott, werde Mensch: Ein Lesebuch zum Glauben.*
- Stecher, R. (2013). *Liebe ohne Widerruf: Betrachtungen..* Innsbruck Wien Tyrolia-Verlag.



Rev Bernhard Heindl, a Jesuit belonging to Central European Province of the Society of Jesus, is currently, Rektor, Jesuitenkirche, Innsbruck. Email: bernhard.heindl@jesuiten.org | ORCID: 0000-0002-7628-8640

Article received: Jan 8, 2022: Accepted: Jan 14, 2022. Word count: 1180



© by the authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).