Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Sep 14th 2017

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

I always forget that, before Jesus, no one got to heaven. And I shouldn't forget that since that's really what he did. He came and became like us to save us. He opened the gates to heaven. I'm reminded of it when I teach Dante's Inferno and all the literary figures from antiquity are outside the gates of heaven because they were born and died before Jesus so they never knew him. I've always felt a little sorry for the folks in the Inferno whose only sin was being born BC. So how wonderful it is that we are in the right place and the right time. He reminds us in the Gospel, "No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man." Before Jesus came to save us, no one was saved. No one got to heaven. But after Jesus, now everyone has the opportunity for salvation. God sent his own son to save us, to be like us, to show us the way.

Jesus didn't come like a god, he came as a baby. Vulnerable, human. He chose to be like us. To be human, to grow up as a human, to be subject to all the trials and tribulations humanity is subject to. And he can show us the way where we are. He didn't send us directions from the heavens; he came here, lived with us, and worked with us. He showed us, and let us know that salvation was possible by being human with us.

God loved us so much he sent his own son to save us. Jesus came out of love to save us all. He did not come to condemn but to redeem. He came to lead us to heaven by opening the gates of heaven himself, ascending into heaven, to show us that if we follow him, we can follow him to heaven.

Tamora Whitney-Creighton University's English Department