

Metanoia

Our constant temptation

JESUS! He continues to be a threat because he radically impinges on our easy assumptions.

by John Valk

I finally saw Martin Scorsese's "Last Temptation of Christ". I had wanted to see it earlier. After all, a movie that created so much public fuss and fervour must have something of interest to say. Thanks to VCR technology, I was able to bring the movie, and some friends, into my living room to view yet another life story of Jesus.

I would not easily be tempted to see this movie again. Oh, it wasn't the infamous "love scene" that bothered me. It was, rather, the distorted character portrayal of Scorsese's Jesus that disappointed me most.

Jesus was human, and no doubt humanly tempted. He would not have been isolated nor insulated from doubt, anxiety, even lusts of the flesh. But one would miss the point if one failed to understand the unique way Jesus dealt with these. And here my doubts about Scorsese come to the fore.

It is hard to believe that the legacy of Jesus would have spread so far and wide in the last 2000 years based on the character portrayed in this movie. Who would be attracted to someone that is indecisive, weak, disoriented, confused and unconvincing? And, to suggest that there was a conspiracy by his followers, who concocted a resurrection story in order to begin their new religious movement, is equally weak and unconvincing.

Does Scorsese help us get a better understanding of Jesus? I have my doubts. Denys Arcand's "Jesus of Nazareth" alludes much more to the strength of character, charisma, intelligence, perception and compassion of Jesus. But like Arcand, Scorsese has great difficulty with Jesus' divine nature, an essence that makes him more than a moral man, an insightful prophet and a wise teacher.

It would be rather unfortunate if our perception of Jesus was shaped only by Scorsese's portrayal. But that indeed might be a concern today. Bibby tells us that some 83% of young adults do not attend church. And, the Bible, the most complete and extensive source about Jesus, has all but been removed from the schools. Where then does the next generation get their information about this unique figure, if not from film or video?

Through debacles like the one at the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital? Some decision makers felt that although Jesus might be the "reason for the season", public display of such was inappropriate. But the public, who didn't quite see it that way, with great "hue and cry" brought the sentimental Nativity Scene back into prominent display. A local Anglican priest perceptively noted that many (seasonal) Christians suddenly came to realize the extent of the secularization of our society.

Yet, if we allow this seasonal display — the gifts, the music, the decorations, the lights — to be another prime teaching source what have we really gained to sustain us for the remainder of the year? Once the bills come in, we are again tempted to become hard-nosed, and neither our forgotten sentimentality nor Scorsese's Jesus give us much hope.

The Gospels, on the other hand, portray a radically different Jesus. There are indeed those expressions of care and concern, of warmth and hospitality, of closeness and compassion: our Christmas identity. But there is also the radical call. That call is not to drunkenness, bingeing or spending. Or is it to focus solely on our jobs, our careers, our advancement, our status. Rather, it is to focus on the other, to sacrifice for the weaker brother or sister, to put a human face on our business dealings, to be guided by *agape* (love) rather than *eros*. And foremost, it is to be God-centered, not self-centred.

The figure who dared present that radical challenge was initially greatly misunderstood, and still is to a large extent today, as we can see. He was crucified not because he was a weak, disoriented, confused and unconvincing pest. Those types are a nuisance more so than a threat.

Jesus was and continues to be a threat because he radically impinges on our easy assumptions. We focus too readily on "illusions" — money, status, power, possessions, ourselves — to which we devote so much time and energy. But, in the middle of the night, when we are left with stark questions of who we are, and the meaning of our lives, what do we answer?

The Jesus portrayed in the Gospels supplies a much more comprehensive and satisfying response than does Scorsese, or Nikos Kazantzakis on whose book the movie is based. Of course, we can only know that after we have done a little reading, a perhaps a little soul searching. Relying solely on the big or little screen, or sentimental Nativity Scenes, for our information of history's most significant figure is hardly adequate. Unfortunately, our constant temptation is to believe much of what we see and hear from those sources.

First Nations' view

Why now are changes taking place?

POSITIVE! As a result of changes there is more confidence within our First Nation of Listuguj.

by Cline Gideon

Welcome 1993 and the United Nations declaration: **International Year of Indigenous Peoples**. Indigenous Peoples are what the United Nations call those who are the first peoples of the land. In Canada, we are called Native Aboriginal. We come in many packages, all most distinguished primarily by the varied dialect spoken by each, but none the less, we do have a very common element. Despite the possible obvious meaning to this declaration, I will make a strong attempt to gain most information from the above mentioned world institution (as soon as I dig up the address) so as to provide a more detailed and correct brief as to this said declaration. So, in the meantime, be good to the Native person you know. For instance, simple "hello" would do just fine. But feel free to show support or even affection (honest, I'm not throwing any hints) to the Native person you know in recognition of the said declaration. Hopefully, this information should not take more than three to five weeks to obtain. How much affection can a person take!? Geeze, it's a great time to be native!

Perhaps now is a good time to introduce myself. Yours truly is a Micmac Native Aboriginal from the **Listuguj First Nation**. Formerly known as the Restigouche Indian Reservation, it is located across a river from your northern city of Campbellton, N.B. in the province of Quebec. Separating your fine northerly provincial city and our First Nation is the Restigouche River, where you will find perhaps one of the greatest salmon fishing rivers in the world (top six for sure!). If you are hesitant to accept my humble word, just ask a perhaps more commanding individual who happens to be a four star general of the U. S. Armed Forces who found himself in the middle of a desert approximately one year ago; somewhere near Baghdad, I think! He is known to visit the area every once in a while!!

The first thing that I hope you all would notice in the previous paragraph is the name of where I am from. I am from a First Nation. This is a term which has just very recently been adopted, and is the name that is hoped will become more used by all those in addressing our people. It is our way of shedding the outer shell that we call a "reservation", a term (name) which holds negative connotations, especially to the non-Native communities. Don't get me wrong. Many, many native communities do call their land "reservations", which is what has been the case for a very long time. This is no way incorrect to do so. In our attempt at developing a more self-sustaining native community (a.k.a. self-government), the term First Nation does provide a greater feel at achieving this task, while at the same time losing the negative connotations with the term "reserve". I believe this is a god

move. It is my hope that all "reservations" will consider the term "First Nation" (St. Mary's, Woodstock, Big Cove, etc.).

Also something I would like you to notice is the name of our First Nation is not Restigouche, but Listuguj, a name significant to a traditional past. Listuguj in Micmac means to "disobey your father". There is a legend to this name. There once was a great chief who had a son. This son was always warned of the boundaries of the nation and especially of the boundaries of other nations, especially the Mohawks, who at the time were enemies of the Micmac Nation. Being the son of a Saqamaw (Chief), he wanted desperately to prove as being a worthy son. Although there were many ways of achieving this, invading the Mohawk Nation to obtain "trophies" would be the ultimate act of worthiness. Convincing a few braves to commit this act, they set off. The invasion of the land of the Mohawks was tedious, but was successful. With the coming of the rising sun, the Mohawks saw a few of their females missing. The cry went up. Close to the Micmac Nation, the search was concluded as the young Saqamaw son was hunted down. The fight was worthy, but the ferocity of the Mohawks dramatically prevailed. Upon learning of this high but misguided act by his son, and showing pride, his departing words to the spirit of his son was, "Listiguj". ("Worthy, yes, but...").

In changing our home name we are using something that is reflective of our cultural history. Using a name with consideration of such history does bring forth a link to that past, something that must be done in order to bring an understanding of who we are, especially us young folks.

Until recently, to go back home to Listuguj you would see it being just another community, well kept and clean for the most part. You could not tell that it was a native Aboriginal community. Why? There was no indication of even a name in the Micmac language that could be found within the community. No signs, even pictures, anything. In other words, culture was lacking a very great deal. Now that is slowly changing. In going home for the holidays, I saw such subtle changes, with traditional holiday greetings expressed in the Micmac language. The spirit of the holidays was very evident, with an aura of confidence in the air which I haven't felt in quite a long time.

Why the current subtle changes in our Native community? Why now are these changes taking place? This fall we had an election, which in the Native community occurs every two years, as opposed to every four in non-Native communities. For the very first time in our known history, a female, Brenda Gideon-Miller, was elected Saqamaw (Chief). As a result, very noticeable changes have taken place within our First Nation. Most noticeable is our name change to

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Listuguj First Nation. All changes occurring being positive changes in consideration of traditional ways. As a result of these changes, there indeed is considerably more confidence within our First Nation of Listuguj. With the United Nations declaration, it surely does seem like a good time to be **Native**.

One further point that I would like to point out to good and many readers of the *Brunswickan*, is this: **Native**. You will never read me using the term anything other than Native or Aboriginal with respect to our reference as a people. In other words, I will not use the term "Indian". In doing so I will use it only to refer to it as a comparison to what is currently considered proper terminology, Native or Aboriginal. Here in university, I have met a great number of people, from many places. In particular other people who are just as, if not darker, that I am! I come up and introduce myself and say "Who are you?" The response is "I am Indian". When I ask from what nation they come from, the response is from India, the country. From that day forward, with respect to those individuals, I became aware that perhaps Native or Aboriginal is more appropriate because every time "Indian" does turn up, I always need to clarify between the country or Aboriginal. Though it is not totally wrong to call Native Aboriginals "Indian", there are those who truly are Indian. So, from now on, here in Canada, because it is the home of Native Aboriginals, we should all become accustomed with using the term **Native Summer** in those dog days of early August, in respect to both peoples. Therefore, if you see me and call me "Indian", I will squirm a bit and perhaps put on a funny face and ask to be referred Native or Aboriginal, because there are other individuals more deserving of the name (to be named after their country or nation).

One final point I would like to add. Yours truly will not do this column every week. Another fine individual will have a different view which she would express. So every once in a while Kathy will take helm and also perhaps a guest contributor will come forward.

If you the reader has any questions or comments, please bring them down here to the *Brun* direct them to the editor in Saqamaw (Allan), which will be redirected to Kathy or moi.

Until next time, please keep in mind **1993, United Nations declaration International Year of Indigenous Peoples**. I will!!

Wela'liq.