

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilot.....

As I contemplated that in preparation for tonight's prayers I was left without words. It is not often that I have nothing to say. Jesus, our Saviour, who was the only Son of our Lord, born of a Virgin by the Holy Spirit, only to be persecuted and tortured to death for us and for our sins. For us. In a very short space of time, he brought the Kingdom of God to earth in a way that has prevailed over 2000 years. Every aspect of that is almost incomprehensible to our limited human brains and hearts. But yet we embrace it with two simple words: I believe.

Let's try and unpack it just a little bit. Jesus was with God right from the get go, from the beginning of Creation. "In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God. Through Jesus, the Word that is God became flesh, in the form of God's only son. He came down to earth, giving us something, someone, we could relate to and understand. He shared the experience of what it means to be us. Jesus was fully human. But yet he is also completely God. He is the meeting point between our frailty as humans and the everlasting life and love of God. If Jesus had been only human, could he have been our Saviour or would he have just been our judge?

The Virgin Birth ranks as one of the Bible's most amazing miracles. It is one of the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith. It's funny, if you had asked me to name a few miracles; the Virgin Birth would not have been one of them. Jesus was born just like each one of us, but conceived in purity and without sin. It makes him very firmly one of us, but yet so very different. And he went through his life being without sin, something none of us can really comprehend. We all aspire to being sinless but only Jesus has achieved that.

Why does the Creed mention Pontius Pilot? Pontius Pilot ties Jesus to the first century of the Christian Era. He was a real person, a Roman Governor. Although he was a Gentile, a politician and a bureaucrat, he had the power and authority to put Jesus to death. While the Jewish religio-political leadership instigated Jesus' suffering, Pontius Pilot was the one in the day who could make it happen. And this he did, even though he was aware of the innocence of Jesus. The first example of being "politically correct" and acting for the advancement of one's own political career rather than doing what is right. Pontius Pilot was well aware that a friend of Jesus was no friend of Caesar, and that was political suicide. So Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilot. It fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament and fulfilled God's plan to provide humanity with a saviour for their sins.

What God gave to us in the form of his Son on earth, born of a virgin and suffering under a power hungry politician who lacked the courage of his own conviction, is a gift like no other. It is a gift that leaves me standing in awe of the love that our Father has for each one of us, love that is unconditional and everlasting. We just need to reach out and it is ours.