

# *Attunement to Jesus*

*by Brother Joseph Klikevice, O.P.*



Once when working with Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz, I heard him say, “Jesus is perhaps the most projected upon male in human history.” I agree with this insight. Jesus (Yeshua, the Aramaic name he was called by his followers) is either thought of as a harsh and shaming judge who strikes fear in our hearts, or as an androgynous wimp, as depicted in popular religious art. He was neither. This desert dwelling fiery mystic and prophet, who knew love, friendship, happiness, betrayal, anger, hunger, and grief was as comfortable at a wedding feast of friends as he was being critical of the religious leaders of his own tradition. Most of the stories about him contained in the Christian scriptures show a man who welcomed the ‘outsiders’ of his day. They were the poor, the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers, tax collectors, prostitutes, children and people of another religion.

How can a leader of the Dances of Universal Peace be attuned to this extraordinary man in the midst of a circle of people that undoubtedly contains some who have been wounded by shame-based and sin-preoccupied religiosity? How can dance participants be invited to experience the spiritual energy of Yeshua when their images of him have been filtered through an all too human church that struggles with embracing his teachings and example of compassion and justice making? I have found making a distinction between religion and spirituality particularly helpful.

The word, ‘religion’ means ‘to bind together’, yet it is sometimes what most separates people from one another. Religious differences have been the cause of hostilities and bloodshed through human history, each side of conflicting camps claiming God is on their side. For some, religion is the place of deep personal shaming and profound sadness and anger over the loss of self-esteem. It is also the place where people gather for prayer, ritual, learning, inspiration, comfort, healing and celebration of life passages. But people’s experiences are all different, and while some can feel at home in Christianity, others are too deeply wounded and are unable to enter the energy of Yeshua as encountered in the Christian inspired Dances.

‘Spirituality,’ on the other hand, is a word that refers to the experience of the divine that one may have, no matter what name one may use for God. Here is where all traditions can meet and find a place of convergence and harmony. Here, the richness and diversity of the world's religions can engage each other in mutual respect and appreciation. The tradition of Yeshua takes its place within this sacred space. Here, all are invited to hear his teaching, receive his healing and come to know him as one of us who walked this earth and experienced the same joys and sorrows of life that we experience. The Dances of Universal Peace that celebrate the Christian tradition provide an opportunity to discover who Yeshua is before Christianity, before the layers of theology, politics, western culture and institutionalizing have covered over, and sometimes trivialized and dishonored this man.

The dance leader him/herself needs to be attuned to Yeshua in this way before inviting others to do so. Holding the circle as a container that is safe and respectful for all, is the sacred task of the dance leader. “Where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there among them,” said Yeshua. Gather in his name and he will be there to welcome, heal, teach and embrace all with love, just as he did in his own time and place. May you come to know him in this way.