

I seem to spend half my life looking for things: keys, books, glasses, etc. Almost always I eventually find it in the first place I had looked!

Lent starts this month; a time for looking again for those things we need to get on with our life: love of God, love of neighbour. Every year I start looking for this where I should: the Bible; but, not having looked properly, I then start searching for it elsewhere.

Remarkably, I find what I'm looking for all over the place, only to realise they are just reflections of where I had first looked: the Bible - more specifically, the story of Jesus' call, crucifixion and resurrection.

Doubtless, some of you will now be turned off from reading further. But how about if the message comes from something more familiar, might you accept the life and message of Jesus at least as a worthy way of living a full life?

Finding this truth has been the inspiration for so many to be part of the solution to the problems of the world. The themes of love and sacrifice permeate every great story of life - fiction as well as historic - that I can think of.

So for this year's Lent study my colleague David Crombie and I hope to illustrate these things using the film, "Casablanca," with its themes of exile, love, loss, virtue, fortitude, being part of the bigger picture. Themes which inevitably echo the road to the Cross, which should be every Christian's preparation for Holy Week and the great celebration of Resurrection on Easter Day.

Don't think this is just for overt Christians, though. All you who perhaps once felt part of the church, or simply had - have - a relationship with God one way or the other, too, have a part in the plot of whatever and wherever our personal "Rick's Café Américain" happens to be.

Casablanca is a film from which many found inspiration in times of uncertainty. I know it's only a black and white movie, but it has darkness and light nonetheless. Looking there again may even reveal a depth of colour, too. In the same way I'm hoping that the Cross will show new depths of darkness, light and colour, regardless that it might have been the first place so many have already looked without seeing.

So I say to you as Rick Blaine said (well, almost) in 1941:

*Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, I hope you walk into mine. This may be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.*

All are welcome. Meet at 18.00, (initially) at Burnham Market village hall - not a gin joint! - on Thursdays 26 February, 5, 12, 19, 26 March.

*Here's looking at you, kid...*