

# That shrinking feeling

Margaret Marshall *reflects on* John 1:1-14

Shrinking human beings down in size has provided a rich seam of creativity for writers and film makers. In the 1987 film *Inner Space*, people are miniaturised to the size of microbes and injected into a full-sized human. Their dynamic rescue mission offers a whole new perspective and a deeper understanding of human biology. The human immune system's response and the heart's pumping action are infinitely more dramatic from within.

Perhaps when Jesus – part of God's own self – found himself right inside humankind he also made surprising discoveries about people. But the mystery of God becoming flesh and dwelling among mortals, of which St John movingly writes in the introduction to his Gospel, is a rescue mission of far greater significance. For its unexpected feature is not how Jesus gains a new perspective on humanity, but how humanity gains a unique opportunity to encounter the very mind of God: the word, the rationale, the wisdom of its creator.

Sadly, few of Jesus' contemporaries grasped this, and we read that: "He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him." Yet for those who could see through this person to the supremely loving source of all being, "he gave power to become children of God". The close encounter, by dynamic and innovative shrinking of God's own nature into the humble form we all share, opened up the possibility of a new way forward. Paradoxically, it enlarged humanity. 🙏

## Retirement

### *What is retirement?*

by Julia McGuinness

Many cards reflect a popular portrayal of retirement – freed from having to work for an income, we can finally take a well-earned rest, from cruising to snoozing, lunch with friends, afternoons with a jigsaw.

The concept of retirement is relatively recent. The 1908 Old Age Pensions Act entitled those over seventy and "of good character" to draw a pension. Before that, provision was piecemeal. Those

unable to keep working relied on family, charity or parish support. Retirement today defies a single definition. Some see it as a forever holiday, while others are busier than in their working days. Some pursue personal dreams, others volunteer their time and talents to the community. Some embrace it, others delay it.

The psalmist, speaking from a pre-retirement era, compares God's people to flourishing trees that "still produce fruit" in old age, as they "are always green and full of sap" (Psalm 92:14). Perhaps the more appropriate retirement cards are those that declare "Let the adventure begin!" 🙏



Lord Jesus, thank you for taking humble human form and living among us on earth. Through your divinity we become full-sized. Amen.

## Characters of the New Testament

### *James, Jesus' Brother*

by Caroline Fletcher

Initially Jesus' family struggled to understand who Jesus was or comprehend his message. However, after Jesus' brother, James, saw the risen Christ, things changed. He became a significant Christian leader, heading the church in Jerusalem. Many believe he wrote the New Testament's Letter of James.

The first Christians were Jews who continued to practise circumcision and other regulations of Mosaic Law. When

the Gospel spread to non-Jews, tensions arose over whether these Gentiles believers should be expected to keep the Law too. James chaired The Council of Jerusalem to discuss this (Acts 15). It agreed Gentile Christians should be free from onerous adherence to the Law, paving the way for Christianity to be viewed as a religion in its own right.

James is believed to have been martyred. One tradition claims he was pushed from Jerusalem's Temple pinnacle after refusing to denounce Christ. He was an important and brave man. 🙏

“Tension, anxiety, worry, frustration, all melt away before him, as snow before the sun.”

Jim Borst (1932-2018), Dutch Roman Catholic missionary