

# The Inclusive Community

## Second Sunday of Lent

February 28, 2010

### Warning

Luke 13: 31-35 Philippians 3:17-4:1

Homily of Terry and Fred Quinn

In his book *The Prophets*, [Abraham Joshua Heschel](#) describes the unique aspect of the Jewish prophets as compared to other similar figures. According to Heschel, the Hebrew prophets are characterized by their experience of what he calls theotropism — God turning towards humanity.

He writes:

Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profane riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and man. God is raging in the prophet's words.

It occurred to me that when Jesus called himself a prophet he saw himself in this way, as the voice of the poor, as the experience of God enveloped in humanity. And when he said that it was impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem, he indicated that in his own consciousness he was like the prophets of the Jewish Bible whose calling came out of this experience of God. Those same prophets of old, challenged the monarchies of ancient Israel with public works and public acts. When Jesus warns Jerusalem, and agonizes over what it has become, his warning reminds me of the old proverb of “none so blind as those who won't see”, or of not “seeing the forest through the trees.” Jesus' way of seeing was not conventional. Ordinary ways of seeing actually indicate paradoxically, a kind of blindness; whereas, Jesus' “Way” went beyond convention, looking inward--- to the spirit within.

When Jesus looks out at Jerusalem, perhaps symbolizing more than Jerusalem, but the world as he knew it, he likens himself to what I think of as a “mother hen” looking at her chicks, bemoaning what they cannot see, how misplaced their values are, how blind they are to what is truly important as we live our lives. Like the ancient prophets, he spoke not so much of a future (as the word prophecy may sometimes be perceived today) but of the admonition that if you keep on

doing what you're doing, if you don't change your ways, the kingdom of justice and peace will not be in your future. Like his prophetic predecessors, from whom he learned so much, he challenges the domination system of the day and indicts the powerful and the wealthy, who cannot or will not see the poor before them. (Could he have been referring to Herod the Fox or others like him?)

Paul seems to be saying the same thing in today's excerpt from his letter to the Philippians. As he speaks to them with great sadness of their inability to see that the things of God are not earthly things---that to be "with God" is to model oneself on Jesus and his Way of living, his passion for the poor and the marginalized, his passion for tolerance and love.

This warning, the same warning Jesus gave to Jerusalem as he harkened back to the teaching of the Jewish prophets, speaks to the modern world that is so concerned with the instant answer, the instant product, the instant comfort while forgetting the comforts of others, forgetting what tolerance really means, forgetting that we are all responsible for our planet and for each other.

In this season of Lent, we may try with more emphasis to reach the true core of our being, connecting to the spirit in each other urging that spirit to envelop all that we do, helping us to make what we do more meaningful for ourselves, for others and the world we live in as we express "God embracing humanity."

Fred ----I'd just like to take a little time to talk about a part of a very famous French tale, *The Little Prince*. The author, Antoine de St. Exupery wrote *The Little Prince* as a glorification of childlike innocence and as an indictment of the spiritual decay he perceived in the milieu of World War II. St. Exupery saw himself in both the character of the narrator and the Little Prince and his story became a sort of mystical revelation. Briefly, the narrator is an airplane pilot who crashes in the Sahara Desert leaving him without much food and water. He meets The Little Prince, who comes from another small planet, Asteroid B-612.(By the way, he gave the planet a name with numbers because grown-ups are so concerned with numbers)--- The little prince tells the pilot about his planet, and in the telling, reveals many important lessons about human nature and how to live essentially. One of the key themes in the story is the famous quote--"What is essential is invisible to the eye." (Reminds you of the kingdom within doesn't it?)

With that in mind, I'd like to tell you what—in the fifth chapter of the story, the Little Prince taught the narrator about the baobab trees. The little prince took great care of his planet, preventing any bad seeds from growing and making sure it was never overrun by baobab trees because baobab trees are gigantic trees whose roots could split the little prince's tiny planet into pieces. The little prince notes that one has to take very good care of one's planet, uprooting the bad plants as soon as they start to grow. The narrator then illustrates that an

overgrown planet is a warning to children. He cautions that the baobabs pose an everyday threat that most people deal with without ever being aware of it. In fact, the narrator says that the lesson of the baobabs is so important that he has drawn them more carefully than any other drawing in the book. Throughout the book, he is taught to be patient and to keep his planet in order. Of course, we can see the warning message contained in St. Exupery's marvelous work—and we are reminded to heed the warning, much like Jesus' warning to Jerusalem and its leaders—otherwise we and our planet will be overtaken by the baobab trees in our lives and in the life of our planet. We are the ones who need to examine if those baobabs are growing and how to root them out.

We've chosen our songs to connect to the theme of warning—not in a dire sense, but in the sense of loving and caring. So, we are using Pete Seeger's rendition of "If I Had a Hammer", Pete, being such an example of one who deeply cares for the planet and its people---and then--for our ending song, we've chosen "If We Only Have Love" from Jacques Brel—it was one of Terry's sister's favorite songs---we include it in her memory and also as a representation of what Jesus was trying to prophetically impress on Jerusalem. Let us hope that our Jerusalem will stand and embrace all--- becoming relational, not hierarchical---enveloping all of creation.