

Terry & Fred Quinn Homily Sun 3-15-09 John 2: 13-22

Terry---Bishop Spong, in his recent online letter, says that religion as it has been understood in the past, is dying---- and that in contemporary life, religion now means "spirituality."----- Well, we looked it up in that great resource Wikipedia and found that the word "religion" has been in use since the 13th century, and that it comes from the Latin word "religio" whose origins are obscure but derive from "ligare" to connect or bind.—to reconnect. Perhaps this root meaning makes more sense in today's world when we want to understand what is termed religion in our daily lives. We hope that true religion has meaning. We don't just want to be onlookers, obedient listeners who don't question rules or rituals, who belong to a certain religion and look askance at others, but people who delve into the meaning of scripture and spiritual thought.

Fred---- Religion is a connector ---- to Jesus, our brother, but also to each other and our universe. There is a song that we discovered when we sent for the CDs by the Strathdees (the wife and husband who appear on the tape that Mary & Dick are showing to us) the song is titled "Sunday Morning" It's a song that we thought might be better listened to rather than sung— What it represented to us was the feelings we had at the end of the 60's and in the 70's—when we left "religious life" -----when we use that term now, it seems like such a misnomer because the hopes of VaticanII were mostly dashed by a church which closed it doors and windows rather than opened them as John the XXIII wanted—and about many other churches who have done the same thing as they cling to their literalism and self-righteousness. It's a song about a search for and an even visceral need for the true religion. (play song Sunday Morning)

(words to the song included here)

Sunday Morning

***55 barely alive—tired of struggling to survive---preachers.
Sunday morning and I've got nothin' to say.
Been working for the mainline, old line, closed line, side line—churches,
Somehow I lost my vision along the way.***

***We used to stand for God---Shalom,
Make the earth our peaceful home—civil rights, human rights,
Cry for justice in the night---open door—stop the war---
Always standin' with the poor,
It used to be much easier
It used to be much easier
It used to be much easier***

To speak for God.

**Don't know when to start---broken heart—stolen body—torn apart seeker,
Sunday morning—got no place to go.
Been lookin' at the hardline—meanline—draw the line—
toe the line—churches—
not a place for my heart and spirit to grow.**

**Well, I need to find my home again—loving people to include me in---
But it's anti-gay, just one way
Send the immigrants away, close the door, bless the war,
bigger prisons for the poor,
How can Jesus' followers
How can Jesus' followers,
How can Jesus' followers
be so confused?**

**55 still alive---catch the spirit and survive singer,
Sunday morning and I still have songs to sing,
Been lookin' for the mainline, new line, open line, front line---churches
Where songs of hope, love and justice ring,
Where the bread is broken and the wine is poured,
All are welcome at the table of the Lord.
Shed your tears, share your fears, all your doubts are welcome here,
Day by day, learn to pray, together we will find a way,
How can the spirit lead us now, how can the spirit lead us now,
How can the spirit use us now?
I'll just have to wait and see.**

**(personal note made during homily---the song and the theme reminded us
of The Inclusive Community which has worshiped together in churches,
halls, homes, in the open air—wherever---and tended to each other's needs
and to the needs of others throughout the years)---true religion!**

With this in mind-----

(Terry)---I've had this vision of Jesus in my head of this calm,
compassionate, perhaps even jocular human being, with a soothing yet
energizing voice. I picture him as unruffled and not usually bugged by
daily events. He travels with women as well as men---they probably
chatter and tell him what to do---but he still remains unruffled. Maybe his
mother bugs him sometimes (you know like when she said---they have no
wine—do something)—but he manages to deal with that and she seems

to be with him most of the time. So the fact that he “lost it” in the Temple watching the money changers and the sacrifice of the animals lets us know how important this was to Jesus and to his message. It was important for him to show his rage at what had become de rigeur for what went on in the temple, what passed for “religiosity.” When we think of this passage, we sometimes call it the “cleansing of the temple.” But Jesus’ rage was not just directed at the activity but the reason for it.

(Fred) The reason for it was certainly connected to the improper use of the temple, but it was also connected to the thinking of those in charge of the temple, -----thinking aligned with those in charge of the government of the time, mostly aligned with greed and power, rather than compassion for the people. (this may sound familiar and echo the saying “some things never change”). ---Today we read a passage from Jeremiah because Jesus echoes what was said in Jeremiah 7—standing at the gate of the temple, Jeremiah said, “has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? The phrase in Hebrew suggests not just thievery, but robbing with violence. In Jeremiah, the den of robbers referred to an oppressive system that did not practice justice, but exploited the most vulnerable in society. It was an indictment of the powerful and wealthy of the day, centered in the monarchy and in the temple. Their everyday injustice made them robbers. The temple in collusion with them, was their “safe house.” Therefore, when Jesus called the temple a den of robbers, he was not just raging at the moneychangers and the sellers of sacrificial animals, but the temple authorities and the those at the top of the domination system. It was an act that got Jesus in trouble, but Jesus saw it as an act of justice. Jesus wanted the “kin”dom to replace the “king”dom—with the kindom representing the root of religion which is connection, and the kingdom representing control and power and even greed. The religion of the kingdom resides in the buildings and the religion of the kindom resides among the people who are everywhere—in churches, homes, schools, parks, homeless shelters, fields, deserts---everywhere---

(tell current stories of the priest who ministers to the homeless beneath a bridge---and my visit to the detainees in Elizabeth with the group “First Friends”)