

**TWENTY SIXTH SUNDAY - B - SEPTEMBER 27, 2015**

**"WHOEVER IS NOT AGAINST US IS FOR US...."**

**SINCE WE ARE CELEBRATING OUR 42ND BIRTHDAY TODAY AT QAC...  
LET ME BEGIN WITH A BIRTHDAY PARTY STORY....**

**UNPLANNED GIFT**

**A PRINCESS ONCE LIVED IN THE NOISIEST KINGDOM IN THE WHOLE  
WORLD. THE KING AND QUEEN LOVED THEIR DAUGHTER DEARLY, AND  
WHEN HER 16TH BIRTHDAY CAME AROUND THEY WANTED TO GIVE HER  
A SPECIAL SURPRISE.**

**THEY THOUGHT LONG AND HARD ABOUT THIS AND THEN THEY CAME UP  
WITH AN IDEA....**

**"LET'S ARRANGE TO GIVE HER THE VERY LOUDEST BIRTHDAY CHEER  
THAT THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN," THEY DECIDED...**

**AND SO THEY SENT MESSAGES ALL ACROSS THE LAND. AT NOON  
PRECISELY ON THE PRINCESS'S BIRTHDAY, THEY ASKED EVERYONE IN  
THE LAND TO GIVE THE LOUDEST CHEER THEY WERE CAPABLE OF...**

**ALL TOGETHER THEY WOULD RAISE SUCH A CHEER AS NEVER WAS  
HEARD BEFORE...**

**EVERONE WAS VERY EXCITED ABOUT THIS.**

**THEY ALL AGREED TO TAKE PART, BUT SECRETLY THEY ALL HAD A  
DIFFERENT THOUGHT.**

**"NO ONE WILL MISS MY VOICE AMONG SO MANY", THEY THOUGHT TO  
THEMSELVES.**

**"I WILL JUST KEEP QUIET AND LISTEN, BECAUSE IT WOULD BE SO  
AMAZING TO HEAR THE LOUDEST CHEER IN THE WHOLE WORLD."**

**THE DAY OF THE PRINCESS'S BIRTHDAY ARRIVED.**

**THE CLOCK ADVANCED TOWARDS NOON.**

**EVERYONE WAS HOLDING THEIR BREATH.**

***THE KING AND QUEEN HAD BROUGHT THEIR DAUGHTER TO THE CASTLE BALCONY TO RECEIVE HER SPECIAL GIFT, BUT SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT IT MIGHT BE.***

***SHE WAS REALLY EXCITED ABOUT THE GREAT SURPRISE THAT AWAITED HER....***

***FINALLY, THE CLOCK STRUCK TWELVE.***

***AND WHAT HAPPENED....***

***TOTAL AND COMPLETE SILENCE!!!!***

***EVERYONE HAD BEEN WANTING TO HEAR THE GREAT CHEER, AND EVERYONE WAS SILENTLY LISTENING FOR IT, THINKING THAT THEIR VOICE WOULD NOT BE MISSED AMONG SO MANY...***

***THE KING AND QUEEN WERE SHOCKED THAT THEIR GREAT SURPRISE COULD HAVE GONE SO WRONG...***

***FOR FIVE WHOLE MINUTES EVERYONE REMAINED SILENT, NOT KNOWING WHAT TO SAY....***

***AND THE PRINCESS....***

***SHE STOOD THERE ON THE BALCONY, HER EYES LIT UP WITH PURE***

***JOY....LISTENING INTENTLY...***

***EVENTUALLY SHE TURNED TO EMBRACE HER PARENTS....***

***THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THIS WONDERFUL BIRTHDAY GIFT,"***

***"I NEVER IMAGINED THERE COULD BE SOMETHING SO WONDERFUL IN***

***THE WORLD. WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SURPRISE."***

***HER PARENTS WERE AMAZED AT HER REACTION....***

***SHE WENT ON, "I HAVE LIVED IN THIS LAND FOR SIXTEEN WHOLE YEARS,***

***AND THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN NOISE EVERYWHERE.***

***I THOUGHT THAT WAS HOW THE WORLD IS...***

***BUT TODAY I HAVE DISCOVERED SOMETHING NEW AND WONDERFUL.***

***ABSOLUTE QUIET....***

***I NEVER KNEW THAT THE BIRDS COULD SING....***

***I NEVER HEARD THE WIND IN THE TREES...***

***I NEVER HEARD THE LITTLE CREATURES SCUTTling THROUGH THE***

***UNDERGROWTH...***

***I NEVER HEARD MY OWN HEART BEATING...***

***I NEVER KNEW THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO HEAR GOD SPEAK....***

***I WILL ALWAYS CHERISH THIS GIFT OF SILENCE YOU HAVE GIVEN ME  
TODAY...***

***I WILL CARRY IT CONSTANTLY IN MY HEART, AND I WILL KEEP ON***

***TAKING IT OUT TO WRAP AROUND ME, WHENEVER THE NOISE IS***

***OVERWHELMING....***

***THERE ARE MANY LEVELS OF MEANING TO THAT STORY....***

***OBVIOUSLY POINTING OUT THE VALUE OF SILENCE....***

***BUT I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON THE SURPRISE ASPECT OF THE STORY...***

***IT WAS VALUABLE BECAUSE IT WAS UNPLANNED, UNSCRIPTED, A***

***SURPRISE TO EVERYONE....***

***LIKE MANY OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED DURING THE VISIT***

***OF FRANCIS TO THE US THIS WEEK...HE IS FULL OF SURPRISES***

***OUR READINGS TODAY ARE SO VALUABLE BECAUSE THEY ARE FULL OF***

***SURPRISES ALSO...***

***I HOPE YOU CAUGHT THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE....***

***YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON THE SPIRIT TO BE FULL OF SURPRISES.....***

***THAT IS CERTAINLY ONE OF ITS CHARACTERISTICS...***

*IN OUR FIRST READING GOD IS OFFERING TO SEND HIS SPIRIT UPON  
CERTAIN HELPERS FOR MOSES BECAUSE HE IS SO STRESSED OUT...  
BUT TWO OF THE GROUP, ELDAD AND MCDAD DIDN'T MAKE IT TO THE  
MEETING TENT FOR THE LAYING ON OF HANDS...*

*DESPITE NOT FULFILLING THE REQUIREMENTS MUCH TO EVERYONE'S  
SURPRISE THEY ALSO RECEIVED AND EXERCISED GOD'S GRACE -  
MUCH TO THE CHAGRIN OF THOSE WHO PRIDED THEMSELVES ON  
HAVING MET THE QUALIFICATIONS AND OBEYED ALL THE RULES...  
AND IT'S A PERENNIAL RELIGIOUS PROBLEM - FRUSTRATION WHEN GOD  
DECLINES TO RESPECT OUR RULES AND RESTRICTIONS...*

*WE HAVE ANOTHER EXAMPLE IN THE GOSPEL....*

*THE DISCIPLES TRY TO SQUELCH SOMEONE TRYING TO DO GOOD IN  
JESUS' NAME BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT PART OF DISCIPLES' "IN GROUP"..  
JESUS SURPRISES THEM WITH "WHOEVER IS NOT AGAINST US IS FOR  
US"..*

*THE MESSAGE FOR ME - GRACE, THE SPIRIT IS UNRULY, SURPRISING...  
THE SPIRIT COMES TO CHANGE US...*

*TO CORRECT OUR ORIENTATION....EXPAND OUR HORIZONS*

*TO DIRECT US BEYOND OURSELVES AND OUR DESIRES FOR BEING  
IMPORTANT AND HAVING EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS ON THE TRUTH...*

*PERHAPS THIS WEEK WE COULD "JUST DO IT" BY RECOGNIZING AND  
PROMOTING THE GOOD ACCOMPLISHED BY SOMEONE DIFFERENT THAN  
OURSELVES...*

*E.G. DIFFERENT POLITICALLY OR THEOLOGICALLY....*

***PEOPLE WHO DON'T FOLLOW US...***

***THAT WILL BE A CHALLENGE...***

***BUT YOU MAY FIND IT AS A WAY OF INVITING THE SPIRIT TO SURPRISE***

***YOU IN A SPECIAL WAY....***