

**THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT, FEBRUARY 28, 2016**

**I'M SURE THAT MANY OF YOU CAME TO CHURCH THIS MORNING  
WONDERING HOW IN THE WORLD THE EXPRESSION "FACE THE MUSIC"  
ORIGINATED.....**

**IF YOU'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THAT EXPRESSION AND ITS ORIGIN  
- YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE...**

**I LEARNED ABOUT ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION WHILE PREPARING FOR  
THIS HOMILY...**

**SO YOU GOING TO HEAR IT - WHETHER YOU WANT TO OR NOT....**

**IT IS BELIEVED TO HAVE ORIGINATED IN JAPAN....**

**ACCORDING TO THE STORY, A VERY WEALTHY AND INFLUENTIAL MAN  
DEMANDED TO BE PART OF THE IMPERIAL ORCHESTRA IN ORDER TO  
PERFORM BEFORE THE EMPEROR - EVEN THOUGH HE COULD NOT PLAY  
A NOTE...AND WE KNOW THAT MONEY TALKS...**

**THE CONDUCTOR AGREED TO LET HIM SIT IN THE SECOND ROW AND  
HOLD A FLUTE, EVEN THOUGH HE COULDN'T READ A BIT OF MUSIC...  
SO, HE WOULD SIMPLY RAISE HIS INSTRUMENT, PUCKER HIS LIPS AND  
MOVE HIS FINGERS -**

**GOING THRU THE MOTIONS BUT NEVER MAKING A SOUND.....**

**THIS DECEPTION CONTINUED FOR TWO YEARS....**

**HOWEVER, A NEW CONDUCTOR TOOK OVER, WHO INSISTED ON  
INDIVIDUAL AUDITIONS WITH EACH MEMBER OF THE ORCHESTRA..**

**THE PHONY FLUTIST EVEN PRETENDED TO BE SICK BUT EVENTUALLY**

***THE NEW CONDUCTOR INSISTED THAT THE MAN APPEAR AND  
DEMONSTRATE HIS SKILL....***

***EVENTUALLY, THE PHONY FLUTIST HAD TO CONFESS THAT HE WAS A  
FAKE.... I.E. A FAKE PHONY FLUTIST***

***HE WANTED THE PRESTIGE OF BEING A MEMBER OF THE ORCHESTRA,  
BUT SINCE HE NEVER TOOK THE TIME AND MADE THE COMMITMENT TO  
PLAY THE INSTRUMENT HE WAS UNABLE TO "FACE THE MUSIC" ...***

***HE LOOKED GOOD BUT HE COULDN'T PLAY AT ALL....***

***AND, NO DOUBT, YOU ARE WONDERING WHAT THIS STORY ABOUT THE  
ORIGIN OF "FACING THE MUSIC" HAS TO DO WITH OUR GOSPEL STORY  
ABOUT THE FIG TREE....***

***MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT FIG TREES ARE UNIQUE IN THAT BOTH THE  
MATURE LEAVES AND THE RIPE FRUIT APPEAR AT THE SAME TIME....***

***THE TREE THE OWNER CONDEMNED HAD ALL THE OUTWARD SIGNS OF  
BEARING FRUIT - BUT IT WAS NOT FRUITFUL***

***LIKE THE PHONY MUSICIAN IT LOOKED GOOD ON THE OUTSIDE BUT IT  
COULD NOT PLAY, IT COULD NOT BEAR FRUIT.....***

***TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY CHALLENGES US TO EXAMINE OUR LIVES  
DURING THIS LENTEN SEASON....***

***ARE WE AUTHENTIC? ARE WE BEARING FRUIT?***

***OR ARE WE JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS AND LOOKING GOOD?***

***WE MAY BE MORE LIKE THE PHONY MUSICIAN AND THE BARREN FIG  
TREE THAN WE WOULD LIKE TO ADMIT TO OURSELVES...***

***LOOKING GOOD BUT JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS....***

***I ALSO CAME ACROSS A STORY ABOUT THE FAMOUS ACTOR ROBERT REDFORD WHO WAS WALKING THRU A HOTEL LOBBY ONE DAY AND A FAN FOLLOWED HIM TO THE ELEVATOR.....***

***"ARE YOU THE REAL ROBERT REDFORD?" SHE ASKED WITH GREAT EXCITEMENT...***

***AS THE DOORS OF THE ELEVATOR CLOSED, HE REPLIED, "ONLY WHEN I'M ALONE"***

***IF WE ARE TRULY HONEST, WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT WE ALSO MANUFACTURE FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES THAT ARE LESS THAN HONEST.....***

***WE ARE OFTEN NOT AUTHENTIC.....***

***WE LOOK GOOD ON THE OUTSIDE BUT ARE OFTEN NOT PERSONS OF INTEGRITY AND THUS NOT BEARING AUTHENTIC FRUIT IN OUR LIVES...***

***IN OUR GOSPEL STORY THE FIG TREE INCIDENT IS PRECEDED BY THE CROWD TELLING JESUS ABOUT PILATE'S BLOODY TYRANNY IN GALILEE.***

***THE UNIDENTIFIED CROWD SEEMS TO BE TAKING A SELF-RIGHTEOUS STANCE AND ASSUMING THAT THOSE VICTIMS OF PILATE SUFFERED BECAUSE OF THEIR SINS -***

***THANK HEAVENS WE ARE NOT LIKE THOSE PEOPLE - HOPING JESUS WOULD AGREE...***

***BUT HE DOESN'T AT ALL...***

***HIS FIRST RESPONSE WAS TO ASK THEM WHY THOSE PARTICULAR***

*GALILEANS AND NO OTHERS DESERVED SUCH SUFFERING...*

*HE CLEARLY DIDN'T AGREE THAT THEY WERE THE WORST OF THE LOT  
AND THEN HE THEN GIVES ANOTHER EXAMPLE - WHAT ABOUT THE  
TOWER THAT TOPPLED ON PEOPLE IN JERUSALEM?*

*WERE THOSE VICTIMS DESERVING OF DIVINE PUNISHMENT AMONG ALL  
THE RESIDENTS OF JERUSALEM???*

*JESUS' ANSWER WAS CLEAR....*

*NO, DON'T THINK YOU'VE FOUND GOD'S HAND AT WORK THROUGH A  
TYRANT OR AN ACCIDENT DUE TO FAULTY CONSTRUCTION...*

*RATHER THAN ASSUME A JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDE AND DIVINE  
RETRIBUTION, TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELVES IS WHAT HE SAYS TO THEM  
WHAT IF PILATE CAME AFTER YOU RIGHT NOW OR THE WALLS FELL IN  
RIGHT NOW....*

*THAT'S WHERE THE STORY OF THE GARDENER WHO WANTED TO  
REVIVIFY THE FIG TREE COMES IN...*

*THE GARDENER PLAYS THE ROLE OF JESUS AND THE PROPHETS SAYING,  
"DON'T END UP LIKE THIS.....LET ME SHAKE YOU UP A BIT...WAKE UP  
BUT BEWARE. YOU DON'T HAVE FOREVER.....*

*JESUS REFRAMES THE CROWDS READING OF THE EVENTS....*

*WHILE THEY WERE FIXED ON ACCUSING OTHERS OF SIN.....*

*JESUS WAS CALLING FOR THEM TO BEAR FRUIT WHILE THEY STILL HAVE  
THE OPPORTUNITY....*

*THE CROWD WAS ASSUMING THAT GOD WAS ON THE WATCH FOR WRONG*

***DOING...***

***JESUS WAS SEEKING COLLABORATORS TO PUT DIVINE MERCY INTO PRACTICE....***

***THE CROWD WAS FOCUSING ON TRANSGRESSIONS COMMITTED....***

***WHILE JESUS WAS FOCUSING ON UNCULTIVATED POTENTIAL...***

***JESUS TURNED THE TRAGIC TALES UPSIDE DOWN....***

***FITTINGLY, THIS WEDNESDAY WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY AS A COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION - IN WHICH WE ASK FORGIVENESS FOR THE WORKS OF OUR FALSE SELF, E.G. OUR JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDES AND WE RENEW OUR CONFIDENCE IN WHAT FRANCIS CALLS "GOD'S OCEAN OF MERCY" IN OUR LIVES.....***

***WE RECOMMIT OURSELVES TO A FRUITFUL LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY THE CORPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY ---***

***YOU MAY FIND THAT THE RECONCILIATION SERVICE WILL BEAR ABUNDANT AND SURPRISING FRUIT IN YOUR LIFE....***

***PLEASE JOIN US.....***

***LET US NOW PRAY TOGETHER FOR A LENT THAT BEARS ABUNDANT AND SATISFYING FRUIT IN OUR LIVES.....***