

Topsy-Turvy Sunday

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Part of our Mardi Gras Sunday

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Many of us have seen the movie "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" even if it was only the Disney version. In fact, the Disney version portrays a very important idea. It has an opening with the song called "Topsy Turvy". It is a song with the message that at a certain time every year everything we will remind ourselves that the world can be turned upside down. This is part of the message of Mardi Gras and it comes out of some deep places of the human heart and mind. It comes out of the human need to have justice and hope.

It is like a song I know that is sung at the time of offering. The words say, "And the poor shall be rich and the weak shall be strong". It is like the idea of Jesus proclaiming that the Kingdom of Love, Peace and Justice is here and now, in a world where there is hard evidence to the contrary. The mission and vision of Jesus was taken from the words of an ancient Hebrew visionary; "the blind shall see, and the lame shall walk, and the prisoner shall be set free."

It is a crazy topsy turvy time of reversing the ugly back-breaking way of the world into a freeing and healing chaotic whirlwind of God's presence. God's order overturns the world's order. The ruled become the rulers. So, in the story of the Hunchback of Notre Dame the misfit and outcast hunchback, Quasimodo, is crowned king for a day.

Today we have more access to more information about the world than any other generation before us. We can communicate anything, to anyone, anywhere at anytime. This also means that the world can also reach us at anytime. We see images of violence and we hear voices crying out for help and justice. Sometimes the scary images are not from the other side of the world. Sometimes they are as close as the violation of our next door neighbor.

To honestly face the world is a Journey of the Spirit. To face life as it really is, is a journey of our spirits.

The images of earthquake, hunger and starvation come to us and cause us to ask, "Where are we going?"

The images of pollution and abuse of our planet come to us and cause us to ask,, "Where are we going?"

The images of terrorism and complete disregard of human life come to us and cause us to ask, "Where are we going?"

There are times on our life journeys when it would be so easy to forsake the human and divine expressions of justice, power, and faith. To give in to the dominate images would be to give in to a life of despair and a world where "might makes right" and injustice would rule our shared life. However, our journey is one of Spirit and therefore, it is a journey of love, life, and hope.

We can let the dominate images of obscene partying define Mardi Gras for us but it originally meant so much more. Just as we struggle to hold on the best of Christmas in a commercial and materialistic culture so we do with other traditional holy days.

Mardi Gras is about these deep places in our souls. Mardi Gras is the day before Ash Wednesday for a reason. Mardi Gras is about facing the harsh realities of the world but not giving into them. Mardi Gras is about feasting in the face of famine. Mardi Gras is about celebrating life in the midst of the cold and death of winter. Mardi Gras is about embracing our whole humanity, and that includes all of its good and bad, in preparation of strengthening ourselves for the Journey of the Spirit.

Remember the movie "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and the song "Topsy-Turvy"? Remember the hunchback's name; Quasimodo? Quasimodo received his name by the priest who

found him as an abandoned orphan on the steps of Notre Dame Cathedral. Quasimodo was found on the first Sunday after Easter. The first Sunday after Easter is called Quasimodo Sunday. Easter represents a newly created world based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Even though Quasimodo was deformed and abandoned he was given a new lease on life on the day he was found on the steps of the church. As human beings we are like Quasimodo; somewhat spiritually deformed, depraved, deprived, and forsaken, and yet gifted, lifted high and made royalty. Quasimodo's Mardi Gras topsy turvy journey is our journey as well. I believe we will find more life and love in the journey.