

*Read what it says*

Theologians often describe people in modern society as *entangled in idle talk, aimless curiosity, even tranquilized* by the manifold and often opposed opinions of who is right and who is wrong. And all the while the news media keep stirring the pot with always more discontent to broadcast tomorrow. It's all enough to make anyone want to let it all combust while switching channels to Andy Griffith reruns.

It's not that we human beings aren't aware of what's going on around us. Indeed we know almost instinctually that something is not right with the world. However, as isolated individuals we don't seem to know what to do about it – we seem powerless. Politics? Yes, but sometimes politics itself feels like that out of control Merry Go Round in Hitchcock's thriller *Strangers on a Train* – all the fixtures losing their grip in the whirl of things, people losing their hold even on values they once felt firm, even sacred.

Such a whirl leaves us so isolated that we sense we are too insignificant to make a difference. The problem, the chaos, the powers that be seem too huge, too overwhelming for me or you to deal with, and who would listen to you or me anyway? Not that we don't hope *somebody* would come along with the wisdom to do something about it. But that's a problem, too, because we have arrived at a point where we can't live without the turmoil since, as I said, we have been tranquilized by it. Of course the majority of people do have some solution to the confusion that would leave us feeling helpless, some creed they trust – Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Asian. But over time the teachings and rituals of such creeds take on a too, too familiar – often literal - quality that impedes their teachings from touching the core of our being – like a wake up call to genuinity.

I've told this story to friends of how one night a long time ago I dreamed I was saying Mass in a large cathedral, spacious and lit by candlelight. It was during or just after Vatican II and as celebrant I was facing the people but the liturgy was still in Latin (to be later allowed in English). As I came to the Canon, the central, most sacred part of the ritual and poised myself to read the opening page of that unchangeable text that began *Te igitur clementissime Pater . . .* suddenly every letter (not just every word but every *letter*) changed into a flower; small flowers like a daisy, violet, forget-me-not, even a buttercup; the whole page a garden! I froze! I panicked! A congregation out there was waiting, wondering why the delay. After what seemed an eternity I turned to the young priest who stood next to me in the dream and whispered: "What do I do?" He calmly said, gesturing to the page: "Read what it says." That's when I woke up.

Due so often to the secularity of modern education, the ever vaster reach of our hand-held wireless connections, the deluge of information unsorted in terms of worth, the constant din of commercials, print and otherwise, we can become so entangled in transient "stuff" that a side glance to our religious heritage may see nothing but print on a page – deprived of its inherent poetry. The beauty it enfolds vanishes beneath its surface – our leverage over life in this world gets lost.

So why do you think Jesus called Simon and his friends (and you) in today's Gospel to put out into the deep and lower their nets, to do something more profound than just patching up their nets every day? *To seduce them into a sense of reality more empowering than they could have ever imagined.*