

**Advent 2, 9 December 2007**  
**HC Wirksworth**

**Isaiah 11:1-10.** A shoot from the stump of Jesse

**Romans 15:4-13.** The root of Jesse to rule Gentiles

**Matthew 3:1-12,** JB, camel's hair clothing, locusts wild honey, You brood of vipers! Hard words.

Sermons should have three parts, we are told, so mine has two.

Two views of the religious role model on the media recently

- Emily off Emmerdale. Is that what priesthood is?
- Iranian comedian: for ever turning the other cheek.

Contrast that with JB: Honey, Locusts, Smelly, Challenging

What would we make of JB if he came in now? of anyone who came in here now? What would they make of us? What did I make of you when I came, late, two years ago?

We can learn much from those that are different from us

- Only way new things happen, otherwise stagnation
- to push at edges – crucifixion for them, but progress for everyone else
- Galileo, science, mutations
- Other denominations
- People who see and do things differently

  

- Why do we surround ourselves by those who don't challenge?
- Why don't we listen to those who don't come to church?
- Why don't we listen to the homeless, angry teenagers in WW streets?
- Why do we ignore the things that niggle at us – inconvenient like the Baptist
- Paul's conversion – things niggled at him, and then something overwhelmed him

Advent is for reflection and waiting, so use this time for listening to those who challenge us, and niggles inside.

**Who are today's prophets?**

the ones who make us uncomfortable, the ones who say what others dare not

Whistleblowers

People who provoke our rules, who slip through the net

Struck me how often it's their rough edges that do the work

Image of rose in advent: JC or BVM

Rose in some translations: rose blossoming as Christ. Rose growing from stem. The noble stem of Jesse.

- Roses have thorns. Not only to minimise being eaten, but roses use thorns as anchor points in the hedgerow to permit them to grow skywards.

**How can we find our thorns, to provoke development and growth (growth in advent)?**

Peter McVerry, a Jesuit priest working with Dublin young homeless

- Honorary Fellowship by the place I used to work
- acceptance speech he said:
  - two reasons why I should not be here.
  - first reason: you shouldn't get an award for doing what you love
    - changed me. challenged views, values, understanding of God.
    - taught me not to judge. to judge them, I would be judging myself.
    - taught me to be angry at the way in which society has ignored them.
  - second reason: shouldn't have to be working with young homeless people because there shouldn't be any. Homelessness in the 3rd wealthiest country is obscenity.
- He is truly a thorn in the side of the Irish establishment.

**What is he telling us?**

- Question capitalism and its way of forcing a competitive struggle with each other.
- Our security is not to be found in dividing us from one another, but in community, supporting one another, looking out for one another that we find our security. NOT JUST CHURCH.

**Disadvantaged people are prophets** in – people who reveal our values, make us uncomfortable. Like the homeless teenagers on drugs in our streets.

- Should we be patient?
- Where is the Magnificat?
- What will we and the church do about this?
- What are they warning us about?