

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Unawareness of Signs Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, July 18, 2016
8:15 AM Mi 6:1-4, 6-8; **Mt 12:38-42** (St. Camillus de Lellis, priest) (Jesus is trying to say, look, there is plenty to see already. Open your eyes.)

“And at the judgment the queen of the south will arise with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here.”

This, you may call it diatribe, was occasioned by a request: **“Teacher, we wish to see a sign.”** Now there are all kinds of signs that are spoken of in the Old Testament. If you remember the first reading from the prophet Micah, **all the things that God has done, those are all signs.** First of all the Book of Genesis is about **the creation itself**; that’s the first sign. This is the creative, loving, beautiful power of God. Then we have the **events whereby God enters into human society helping, lifting.** The people are starving, so he leads them down into Egypt where they can eat. They become enslaved, so he leads them out so they can be free, and on and on and on: **God always helping, sustaining, inaugurating new stages of life.**

But what comes from all this? Complaining and blaming. Whenever anything goes wrong, why did God do this? **And never any introspection, no self-awareness**—that is the whole problem—no self-awareness, never any awareness of how we are doing this. We are making these terrible choices. We are moving away from the path God has set us upon. We are abusing the freedom that God has made available. **We are wasting the riches that God has availed us of.**

So then they ask for a sign. What—another one? You have got plenty. You just don’t want to look. So he brings in these two figures, one probably historical, the queen of the south, probably the queen of Ethiopia. There is a story, probably true, that she journeyed

from Ethiopia to Israel at the time of Solomon. There are Jews who are Ethiopian, black Ethiopian Jews, probably connected to this story. She came—what—to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And what is that about? Well, in terms of worldly power **Solomon** didn't amount to much, although later stories aggrandized things he did, but those are mostly stories. But he did begin this process of **keeping together proverbs and wisdom and developing schools**. And she came to listen supposedly to his wisdom, not that it was his, actually. He was gathering it from all around. And Jesus said, "But there is something greater than Solomon here." Well, that's for sure! **Compare the gospels to the Book of Proverbs. There is hardly any comparison.**

Then the story of **Jonah**, well that's no doubt apocryphal, a fictitious story, about how Jonah having been swallowed by a big fish finally decides to do what God asks, and he goes and he preaches to Nineveh. And the astonishing thing is that the Ninevites listen to him! That of course is intended as irony because the prophets are not listened to by the chosen people. The chosen people choose not to listen to the prophets God sends. And so it's the irony of this **utter contradiction that evil, corrupt, and violent people listen to God's prophet when God's own people don't**. And Jesus says, "And there is a greater than Jonah here." Well, that's for sure too. Jonah had hardly any message at all. So this way **Jesus is trying to say, look, there is plenty to see already. Open your eyes.**