OTB7 2012 (read only)

Good news! The Muppets are back in business and have made a new film. I haven’t seen it yet but I sure hope that my favourite Muppet characters are in it.

Statler and Waldorf are the two old men who sit in something like the royal box passing comment on the performance of all the other characters. Their comments are rarely complementary but always funny.

Utube has clips of these two masters of sarcasm. One contains the following dialogue:

Statler: What was that?

Waldorf: It was called the Medium Sketch.

Statler: Why?

Waldorf: well it wasn’t rare and it sure wasn’t well done.

A huge part of any visit to the theatre is being able to share our response with someone who has shared the experience with us; to pass comments that are serious or trivial, appreciative or critical.

To ask questions and explore reactions to what we have witnessed together is an essential part of making sense of life. This doesn’t only apply to theatre performances. It is how we explore the meaning and significance all kinds of events; the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, the wonder of a sunset, the perplexity a new idea, how to respond with integrity and compassion to a moral dilemma. Such conversations can give birth to true friendship.

Indeed, not having someone to share things with is what loneliness is all about. The Genesis account taps into a deep truth when it we hear God say: “It is not good for man to be alone”.

The friends who conspired to bring their companion to Jesus by all necessary means remind us of the benefits we receive from good friends; people who stick with us in good times and in bad; and never miss out on an opportunity to help us.

Jesus acknowledges and responds to THEIR faith; it is a shared faith rooted in real friendship; they have a collective and positive purpose and aim.

Jesus also points to the contrasting reaction of the scribes – He is aware of the negativity in their hearts – they too may have a common purpose but it is a negative one that blinkers their eyes and hearts. They are unable to see how Jesus is offering an expanding image of God’s goodness that breaks through their own limited preconceptions.

All they could do was sit there, plotting his downfall by accusing him of blasphemy. They were like Madam Defarge and her companions taking front row seats at by the guillotine in *A Tale of Two Cities*, hearts coarsened by resentment.

The scribes may have devoted a lifetime to studying the scriptures but they could not recognise, let alone welcome what everyone else could see – something that had never happened before. They were unwilling think outside the box into which they had tried to put God. A box that put limits on love, compassion, creativity and spontaneity. So they will only have muttered to themselves while everyone else gave expression to their astonishment and excitement by praising God.

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