

As so often with our liturgical texts, it's the bits missed out which can often prove as interesting, if not more so, than the bits left in. In our reading from Exodus, it's Moses' reluctance to be a prophet to his people back in Egypt that is missing:

Moses said to God, 'Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?' 'I shall be with you', was the answer 'and this is the sign by which you shall know that it is I who have sent you...after you have led the people out of Egypt, you are to offer worship to God on this mountain'.

(Ex. 3. 11-12)

So at one and the same time as Moses will be portrayed as the greatest of the prophets, permitted to stand before God on his holy mountain and to act almost as an angel, an angelic messenger, to lead his people to this holiest of places, he is also portrayed, like so many of the other prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, as weak and afraid. Indeed, in later passages he continues to argue his weakness:

'But, my Lord, never in my life have I been a man of eloquence. I am a slow speaker and not able to speak well' (Ex. 4:10)

and

'If it please you, my Lord....send anyone you will!' At this, the anger of the Lord blazed out.. (Ex.4:13-14)

and he gives Aaron to Moses as his mouthpiece.

'He will be your mouthpiece and you will be as the god inspiring him.' (Ex.4:16)

The important point being that God does not give up on Moses but, as with the fig tree in today's gospel passage, gives him another chance. This isn't

God railroading Moses but God giving him all the help he needs to fulfil his role in creation.

And this is how God is towards us too. The anger should be seen not as God's default position but as the flip-side to God as love, when we thwart the possibility of our own salvation, the growth to full maturity, to being fully ourselves and fulfilling our role in creation. Everyone matters in this respect. We all have a call or vocation and no other part of creation can take its place. We are, in this sense, the fulfilment of God as love.

In a wonderful article in a recent Saturday *Guardian*, the correspondent and musician, John Harris, talks of the long journey he has had to make in coming to terms with the unique needs and capabilities of his autistic son, James. And though tempted, at times, to despair and frustration, he gradually builds a way that enables James to find fulfilment. Both father and son have an obsessive interest in the Beatles and this is the key that cracks the code of their initial inability to understand one another and opens the way to exploring all sorts of other music together: music that has to have a certain timbre, tone and rhythm to it to make sense. James is highly sensitive to music that disturbs him and displays anger just as much as God might when we go off piste.

*He sings along to 'I am the Walrus' without a mistake;
'Can't buy me love' makes him perform joyous circuits.*

It was a team effort of course, just as with God and us. We are on sacred ground here – whenever, that is, we are in the presence of another person. What God wants of us is a way to communicate.

He (whoever it is) will be your mouthpiece, and you will be as the god inspiring him.