

Trinity XIII – 10.9.17

Again. Our calling – a calling of great wonder – a calling of which we remind ourselves, simply by being here this morning – and of which we may happen upon, during the week through whatever circumstance. But a calling very specifically, of which we are faced with the opening words of today’s Gospel, “Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them”.

Moving words. Because as Our Lord goes on – while desiring to see and hear those things they, the prophets and kings, have neither seen nor heard them.

This word “desired”. From an unscholarly perusal of the Greek word *thelo* – from which the word desired seems to be derived, the meaning is very strong. Prophets and kings have desired to see and hear those things. They have desired to hold to – to seize with the mind those things that are seen and heard.

There is a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins which is relevant to this desire of prophets and kings. A poem that Hopkins puts on the lips of a nun taking the veil, entitled “Heaven Haven”. She says :

“I have desired to go, where Springs not fail
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.”

Again, moving words from a nun to be. She asks that Springs fail not – that Winter be over – and that lilies be there, wherever she is required to be. When in fact Spring can always be disappointing – where Winter persists – and lilies fail to bloom. Words from a sister who is entirely aware/awake to the metaphors she uses. An understanding that is underlined in these further words :

“I have asked to be
Where no storms come
When the green swell is in the havens dumb
And out of the swing of the sea.”

Gerard Manley Hopkins puts these words to one choosing a calling of great excellency and of great difficulty. She in turn, in a certain sense takes us with her where she desires to go. We both want this to be our recognition – while at the same time we wish to decline the invitation.

In spite of this ambivalence there persists within us a desire to hold to – to seize with our mind what she is about to do. We are not separate from this girl/woman who desires to go where she may be – true to her calling.