

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

He reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord.

Wisdom (Apocrypha) 2:12b–13



Today's lectionary passages include a striking passage from the Book of Wisdom. It is about a group of people lying in wait for a righteous man, "because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions." They complain: "He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange" (Wisdom 2:14–15). This passage names an important but often forgotten reality: the prophets and Jesus were often burdensome and strange.

Perhaps because we worship Jesus on Sunday, many of us believe we would have admired Christ while he was alive. Yet if you read the Gospels carefully, it is clear that he was frequently a confusing and exasperating presence even to his closest disciples.

But this is not only true of the prophets and Jesus. When one considers the moral geniuses of the twentieth century, very few were recognized as such in their lifetimes. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated at the lowest point in his national popularity. Before her death, Dorothy Day was perceived by many in the Roman Catholic community as a holy terror. Thomas Merton's outspoken pacifism resulted in his being ostracized by his own religious community. Each was a burden, each a "reproof of our thoughts," and each was powerfully, faithfully strange.

Today's readings

Psalm 34:15–22 | Wisdom (Apocrypha) 2:1a, 12–24 | John 7:1–2,10,25–30

How might Lent be an invitation to become more faithfully strange?