

MOMENT MINISTRIES—CORVALLIS OR—OUR 34TH YEAR

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Morgan's Moment...

"Rates adjusted for auto insurance in Oregon."

Eyes blinked to a stop...
tripping over the word
"rates."

My policy is called a "Premium"
with a long list of "Benefits"
requiring more "Revenue."

So they raise "Rates."

I can't argue...

No rates paid no benefits.

I'm doing my taxes...

grumbling a bit
mostly over inequities.

Would I grumble if the Feds
sent me a *premium* statement
with all my citizen *benefits*?

Schools health care libraries
highways parks social security
courts defense freedom...

Then an inspired thought...

let the insurance industry
run government finances.

Why didn't God think of this?

Where is the divine plan
that we must pay *taxes*...

When we could have benefits
of a premium civil society
covered by *rates*?

Replace *taxes* with *rates*...
is that divine inspiration...
or what?

— Art Morgan

BOOK CORNER

I'm sometimes embarrassed to tell anyone what I'm reading...or not reading. Don't take my reading as any kind of recommendation. You can do better. For instance: "The Sunday Missal" Yes, Catholic, given by a Fr. Blevin when we clergy talked together about scholarly ideas. I pulled it out to see what was on for Lent. Ed (Blevin) had scholarly reservations about the subject but thought it was a tradition people had grown to like. "Documents of the Christian Church," has interesting pieces about origins of ideas taught by churches for centuries...which doesn't necessarily make them true. Read with a questioning mind.

HAPPY LENT!

It was a sunny afternoon and the grass was drying. What else to do but get out the riding mowing and mow?

Some of my more inspiring thoughts come while mowing. It's kind of like those spiritual labyrinths that devout souls walk around. Only I mow around in circles that begin in the middle and work outward. That sends cut grass and old leaves flying to leave a clean cut, green yard.

As I drove around and around I was remembering my last Thursday moment talk about having a happy Lent. I was wondering whether I had defaced a sacred object by raising the possibility that Jesus might be more likely to celebrate Fat Tuesday than Ash Wednesday.

I was in a repentant mood, for all my sins and all. But something in me knew that Lent and penitence and self-sacrifice and traveling with Jesus to the cross was a bit more Mel Gibson than fact.

With my historical interest in most things I wondered about the history of Lent. Of course, it's not a biblical season, unless you accept the fact that the driving plot of the Gospels is pointed at the cross and Easter. It seeps into church behavior around the third or fourth century A.D. Without sounding anti-church let's face the fact that the church preceded the Bible, and that the creeds and Christian doctrine were creations of the church.

Around and around I went, then came a moment, I mean...
"Moment"...of realization.

Why was I mowing my grass in mid-winter? It had been cold and snow was in the forecast. Yet grass was growing. My daffodils were ready to bloom. Buds were appearing on the lilacs. The world was rising from its winter of penance. It was anticipating the inevitable resurrection of Spring. It was in the midst of Lent and the birds were singing. Why not sing?

I spent a rainy afternoon re-reading parts of "Documents of the Christian Church." It's not something I recommend reading any time, but clergy do it so you won't have to. Lots of things there about how the church struggled to decide how human or divine Jesus might have become, and when and how. Then they declared the minority voices "heretics." They "anathematized" them. It's the way the church decided things and people. A form of cursing or damning or excommunication and death.

These same gatherings wrote into the sacred texts, creeds and documents to get people on a penitent track. Like Lent.

There's a song I propose for Lent, "Lord of the Dance."

*"Dance then wherever you may be, I am the Lord of the dance said he,
And I'll lead you all wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the dance said he."*

At the risk of being anathematized, I wish you a happy Lent.

— Art Morgan March 1, 2012

WHITNEY HOUSTON AND THE DON WHITNEY'S

We were at the Tacoma Dome attending a Whitney Houston concert. I had never heard of her. I was seated between Jean and a young lady friend of Don Whitney's named Beth. Don had purchased tickets for all of us. I had picked up the tab for dinner at Johnny's Dock for all of us. Little did I know that this was a first "date" for Don and Beth. In fact Beth didn't think it was a "date," but an extended party of Don's friends to which she was invited. That was maybe 15 years ago.

Don has his ways.

This was also my first rock concert. I might also add, my last. If you've never been to a rock concert I can't say I would recommend it. My grandkids have a different opinion. I have several problems with rock concerts.

My first complaint is that they are very, very loud. The loud speakers boom a constant rhythm. You can feel the sound like a drum in your body. Kleenex in my ears barely muted the sound. This attracts younger people but deafens me. There is something hypnotic about it. Take two aspirin.

My second complaint...I should probably say, "observation,"...is that when the star bounds onto the stage everyone stands. Everyone. If you don't also stand you don't see anything. You appear unappreciative. Like staying seated during the Star Spangled Banner. And they stay standing the whole time! And many are screaming so that you can hardly hear the performer. No use trying to say something to one next to you.

My third observation, which is a memory that came back to me on hearing of Houston's death, was that I could hardly understand any words. I am told that most of a younger generation already know the songs and have them on CD's. My comment was that the only word I could pick out was the word "love," which was repeated quite often in Whitney Houston's songs. You had to hear it through the screams of young fans—*"I'll always love you, I'll always love you, I'll always love you, I'll always love you....."*

At one point she brought her very young daughter on stage, which was quite touching. And she included a gospel song of some sort which quieted the crowd for some sober moments.

I've paid a bit more attention to news of her life over the past decade. After all, she was the only star performer I have seen live and in person other than Louie "Satchmo" Armstrong, I have noted occasional news reports about her. Hers has not been a happy story for one with such talent, beauty and achievement. News of her addictions and stormy life with husband Bobby Brown is sad to hear about. Sad for her life, then her death.

But remembering Whitney Houston reminded me of Don Whitney, and Beth, who shared that evening concert. Their "date" turned into a romance and then a marriage, and then eleven years or so ago, a son, Colin. Theirs is a love story that seems to have escaped Houston. Right now Don and Beth are experiencing some serious health situations as they live together the words of Whitney Houston's trademark song—*"I'll always love you, I'll always love you..."*

I'll remember Whitney Houston and that whole evening for the one word I could understand, "love." That single word in one of its various meanings, works as a definition of God, a description of Jesus, a one word statement of the theme of the Bible, and a mantra for each of us, and a word that became flesh for Don and Beth Whitney.

— Art Morgan, March 1, 2012

MID-MARCH MOMENT

The next Thursday Night Moment is planned for March 15. We'll try to have more chairs at the ready, and programs too. We gather for conversation plus from 5:30 on. Shared meal at 6:30