



## Call to remembrance . . .

. . . *O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving kindness, which have been ever of old. O remember not the sins and offences of my youth, but according to thy mercy think thou on me, O Lord, for thy goodness.* (from Psalm 25, Richard Farrant, 1525-1580)

This is the text of one of my favorite pieces of English choral music. It is often sung either on Ash Wednesday or during the Christian season of Lent (Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent). Lent is a time of reflection on, and penitence for, past sinful behaviors and actions, accompanied

by the intention to lead a changed life. As Ash Wednesday was this last Wednesday, I was reminded of this composition -- one I've sung many times in choirs.

The calling-to-remembrance that is commended at this time, however, is not solely a Christian phenomenon. Reflection and repentance are parts of most religious traditions. They may bring requests for forgiveness or reparation. In general they make possible a new beginning, a fresh start. They may even signal a complete change in one's life. There are other expressions of 'remembrance' and 'repentance', however, that aren't simply individual, or even religious, and there are several upcoming events that illustrate that.

The first is the program with Dale Minami at DU's Law School this Sunday on the Japanese internment, authorized by Pres. Roosevelt at the beginning of WWII. Americans, out of fear, imprisoned other Americans simply on the basis of their ethnic origin -- even if they'd been in this country for several generations -- depriving them of their civil rights. Recalling this negative mark in our national past -- a secular sin, perhaps -- gives us the opportunity to change our ways when similar tensions arise. Do we blindly act out of fear?

A second event relates to this: the address by Dr. Tawfik Hamid on Friday, March 5th. Dr. Hamid is a former Islamic terrorist, with some connections to al-Qaeda. Since 9/11, however, he has spoken out against the radical readings of Muslim sacred texts that spawned the kind of violence that ripped our country in 2001. Through his own reflection and remembrance, he is now calling his religious community to its own reflection and, ultimately, a reformation. But Dr. Hamid's witness also calls us to task for stereotyping all Muslims as terrorists, or even potential terrorists. We may not put Americans who are Muslims in internment camps, but we do profile them -- depriving them of their civil rights. Is there something we didn't learn from our experience with WWII?

A third event is the *a capella* next Friday evening in Davis Auditorium to raise money for Haiti relief. That horrific earthquake is not yet two months past, but we are so close to forgetting it already. The tragedy that thousands of Haitians still experience is partially the result of poor planning, greed, and power politics--not only within Haiti but from without, as the US has played out its political games in Haiti as well. It serves, too, as a call to remembrance of our sinful nature. And it calls for us to respond -- not just now, but for decades to come. We do need to help rebuild Haiti, and we need to help Haiti rebuild itself as a just society and government.

"Calling to remembrance" is an every day, every situation, possibility. Not limited to one religious tradition or national group. Not limited to one season of the year. Every day the possibility for change and renewal is before us.

Blessings,

Gary