

# God writes straight with crooked lines.

(An old French saying)

Advent/Christmas 2019

My Dear Friends:

You know this as well as I do. Certain quotes, tunes, glimpses of loveliness touch our minds and kiss our souls and stay with us as traveling companions for the rest of our lives. I can't remember when I first read those words above, but the truth and wisdom they contain have nourished my life countless times since. In addition to all "the usual suspects" (the Old Testament Hebrew scriptures, the New Testament Greek Gospels and Epistles, the Koran, the Vedas and the rest) where we encounter the Divine, there are wonderful moments of discovery when we stumble upon some thing or person or situation that unexpectedly open up vistas of insight. Fr. James Martin, SJ, recently suggested that God has sent us an Advent prophet in the person of a sixteen-year old girl from Sweden. (The Editors at TIME seem to have agreed.) Not really so strange when you remember that a girl, probably even younger, in a back-water Palestinian village, told her exotic visitor "Let it be!" and changed the history of the world. I love to imagine how often someone hears Paul McCartney's setting of those "words of wisdom" and is startled to make the connection between Liverpool and Nazareth.

There have been a couple of major crooked lines this year that have felt like God (fate, Karma ...) pulling a rug out from under my feet, but which later proved to be providential.

I'm getting old. No. I **am** old! Made that transition a couple of weeks ago. Was excited about going to do standing room at SFOpera for Puccini's MANON LESCAUT. It was the last performance of the season. Shaved. Showered. Dressed. I literally had my hand on the doorknob, about to head downtown, when an "atmospheric river", that had been predicted and dreaded by the TV weather folk, arrived. A lot of rain falling and really fierce winds plus a sudden drop in temperature! I waited for a few minutes, sure that this would all die down. It didn't. And then I realized I didn't want to - could not! - face that storm. And it dawned on me that I had lost a battle of wills to

Mother Nature. (As it happened, I went on line to Amazon Music and discovered a recording of ML I didn't even know existed and enjoyed it immensely. But I have to admit: it still bothers me that I let a silly storm keep me away from an evening of Puccini. Never would have happened ten years ago.)

There were serious health concerns for me this year, all about my legs. They'd gotten so worn out that a year ago I could barely walk and came to fear that I might never do so again without crutches or other supports. But then the great people who do physical therapy at KaiserSF went to work on me and now my legs feel dramatically better than they did last Christmas. It turns out that climbing up 40 of the Filbert Steps on Telegraph Hill is good PT homework.

Twice in recent weeks I've met young people (in both cases recent Asian immigrants) who've had trouble saying my last name. Each time I said, "You know, like John Fitzgerald Kennedy?" Both times I was greeted with totally blank expressions. One guy actually asked, "Is that someone important whom I should know?" OMG! Time marches on and passes my generation by enroute!

Something happened in June that seriously jeopardized my spiritual and psychic balance. (Most of you already know about this. If you don't but want to, please email me - [groundfitz@yahoo.com](mailto:groundfitz@yahoo.com) - and I'll fill you in.) The darkness that engulfed me was eventually dissipated by a lot of prayerful soul-searching, nourished by wonderful messages of love and encouragement and support, many of them from you. (More of those crooked lines triggering waves of light and hope.) Along the way I came upon a remarkable quote from a writer named Sara Bessey that immediately made me think, "God! I wish I'd written that!" I'm trying to do just that, with the energy and grace that life still holds for me.

I want to be outside  
with the misfits, with the rebels, the dreamers,  
second-chance givers, the radical grace lavishers,  
the ones with arms wide open, the courageously  
vulnerable, and among even - or maybe especially -  
the ones rejected by the Table as not  
worthy enough or right enough.

As always I wish you much love from the City of Saint Francis!

*Fitz*