

On Seeing Something, and Saying Something

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My wife and a friend were in charge of games for a recent Woman's Club meeting at my home parish. Gail was running late that night, so I loaded everything she'd packed up for the event into her car, then I offered to go with her to the parish hall to help her unload. We live less than a mile away from the hall, so with the unloading accomplished, I wished Gail well and began my leisurely walk home.

But I hadn't gone far when I saw something, and for the first time ever, I felt the need to say something. There's a bus stop on the west side of Austin just south of Lawrence. Walking past it headed north, I saw two unattended parcels on the bench. One was a small, fabric bag, maybe a backpack. The other was a small rectangular suitcase, and it appeared to be made of steel. Unusual, no? I thought so, anyway.

I would have called right then, but for one thing, I'd left my phone at home, and for two things, I didn't know exactly who to call. As soon as I could, I looked it up and per www.chicago.gov: "Residents are urged to call 855-RPRT-2S4 (855-777-8274)... to report any non-emergency suspicious activity to local authorities." I did, and the person on the other end got me in touch with someone else asking for details.

I told her what I've told you. I told her that I had noticed the unattended parcels maybe fifteen to twenty minutes earlier but had just now gotten to a phone. She asked if I'd heard any sound coming from the parcels, or if I'd seen any protrusions sticking out from them. I told her no. She said they'd look into it. All I know for sure is that when I drove past the bus stop the next morning, the parcels were gone.

"If You See Something, Say Something.™" In a different context, it's interesting what people see and say in today's Gospel, the evangelist Mark's account of the Passion. Certain chief priests and scribes see a woman anoint Jesus's head with perfume and say, "It could have been sold for more than three hundred days' wages and the money given to the poor." Judas sees the religious elite secretly and says, "The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him..." Peter sees people in the courtyard who link him to Jesus and says, "I do not know this man..." And passers-by see Jesus crucified and say "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself by coming down from the cross."

In another "If You See Something, Say Something™" context, though, people see something and say something today to precisely point out the Christ. Isaiah's Suffering Servant sees something and says something in the first reading: "The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced" (Christian tradition identifies Jesus as the fulfillment of the Songs of the Suffering Servant). In the second reading, the Apostle Paul sees something and says something to the world: "Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave..." But I am particularly taken by what the centurion standing guard on Calvary says. He sees Jesus breathe his last and says, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" "If You See Something, Say Something™"? On this day, the centurion sees and says it all.