

The year was 1986 and I was at one of the premiere universities in this country as a research Fellow. Following instructions, I called the office of one of the professors to see if his class was still open that I may join it. With his good news of acceptance, I raced down to the class. My arrival was heralded by the receptionist, and he came out to welcome me. He looked around the lobby and then turned to the receptionist and asked, "Where did he go to"? She looked up and said, "There he is". The professor quickly apologized to me and said that the class had filled up since I called. A late night talk show host once said, "*Those are the things that make you go "...huuuuumm"*"! I think that the thing that upset me most about that experience was that he could not bring himself to see me.

Earlier this morning I was listening to Mahalia Jackson's rendition of "*Sweet Little Jesus Boy ...we didn't know who you were*". The carol is almost an apology for the then world's dismissal of the Jesus, whom we today, through our faith in God, call the Christ.... He was in their midst, but deemed unworthy of their acknowledgement. If you ever had the experience of being overlooked as non-existent and/or insignificant you will know the pain of that hurt. The excuse of, "*... we didn't know who you were*" does not cut it.

Our nation, and our world as a whole is fraught today with the marginalized and the overlooked in their many quarters. The ugly face of bigotry is being unveiled daily as we fail to see the good and the God in others who are not of our ilk. I yearn for that 'one day' when we would turn to our God in repentance and apology saying, "*we didn't know who you were*".

It is my prayer this yuletide that God's interruption of peace in the world of our day would open our eyes to the divine spark of God that resides in all of humanity, and with that recognition respect the honor and dignity of **every** human being. Let us remember the famous words of Jesus, our Messiah, "*...for as much as you did it unto the least of the brethren, you did it also unto me*" - Matthew 25:40. I pray God that on the last day, when we stand before the throne of grace, we will not offer the lame excuse of, "*...we didn't know it was you*".

God's grace and peace to you this Christmas and beyond.