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Homeless man captures nation's 'theater of mind'

Sr. Rose Pacatte | Jan. 7, 2011 NCR Today

NBC's Today Show coverage yesterday and today of the story of Ted Williams -- a homeless former radio professional rediscovered by a Columbus, Ohio radio station which took the time to video tape and record him as he stood on the highway with a sign begging for work -- fascinates me.

Everyone loves a redemption story, a second chance. However, William's mom, at 90 years of age, tells it like it is. She does not want to be disappointed again.

They both speak of the role of God in their lives and Ted, now two years sober, seems to want to move forward with life starting with an apartment.

Sure, the media is making hay off of this story, and they seem to be covering themselves in case Mr. Williams crashes and burns again.

But no one can deny the gift of his voice, that no matter what he poured down it, God preserved it for him.

If I had not seen Mr. Williams on television, my image of him would be completely different, I think. He has become his voice and as the renowned catechist of audio visual media, Oblates of Mary Immaculate Fr. Pierre Babin calls it, he incarnates modulation.

Williams knows how to use his voice to manipulate the sounds that reach our ear drums. The radio is, indeed, the most immediate and physical of all electronic media. The medium is the message, or better yet, the massage (Marshall McLuhan).

The discovery of Williams is a reminder to all of us that media are gifts of God, and so are the people who work in the industry.

May we all celebrate our human dignity this day and pray for all those who work in information and entertainment media.

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