

This Isn't Grandma's House

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

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If you are of a certain age, you probably have many good memories of going to grandma's house. In recent times, with families spread out and a growing number of separations, many do not have this opportunity. I myself was lucky enough to have had good memories of all my grandparents, but especially of my mother's side since we lived only a few miles from them. Some of the highlights of visiting my grandma's house were tons of food, all the sweets we wanted, being spoiled, seeing our extended family, and just being lazy while grandma did most of the work. The word that comes to mind summarizing grandma's house is comfort.

Comfort is an important part of life, but just like going to grandma's house, we can't stay there forever. Our parents needed to bring us home and their house probably had a much different feel. When at home, we more than likely had to do chores, complete our homework, and eat healthier. Our parents loved us just as much as our grandma did, but they weren't afraid to challenge us. They wanted to see us grow, and I don't mean in the sense of putting on more weight as grandma might!

This is a good analogy for Church. While there is a place for comfort, Church isn't grandma's house. It's our parent's house, more specifically, it's our Father's house. When we come to Church, we should expect to be challenged. Here, we encounter a God who shakes our worldview, distorts our understanding of power, and calls us to a change of heart and mind. Like a good parent, all this is out of love and a desire to see us grow.

In our First Reading from the prophet *Amos*, the people who were the biggest problem for him weren't the foreigners or the evildoers. It was those who were way too comfortable and unwilling to change: "Woe to the complacent in Zion! Lying upon beds of ivory, stretched comfortably on their couches..." These people were so comfortable with their lifestyles that they weren't going to let anyone, including God, challenge them. They wanted to perpetually stay at grandma's house, so to speak. As a result, Amos predicted that when trouble would strike, they would be the first to fall.

St. Paul's writings are full of challenging exhortations. In our second reading to *Timothy* today, he challenges his listeners: "pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life...I charge you before God...to keep the commandment without stain or reproach." In his churches, this tone was normative.

Finally, in our Gospel reading today from *Luke*, we hear about a man who didn't want to be challenged at all: the rich man. He simply wanted his comfortable lifestyle to be perpetuated, so much so that he paid no attention to poor man Lazarus covered in sores outside his doorstep. By the end of the parable, though, poor man Lazarus was the one who was sitting with Abraham in the heavenly kingdom and the rich man was sent to the place of torment.

When we come to our Father's house, we should expect to be challenged.

Do I let my faith challenge me on some of my beliefs and mindsets?

Seeking comfort is only natural. Again, there is a place for comfort in our Church. But, it is also possible to comfort ourselves too much that we become numb. Let us pray that coming to our Father's house may never make us numb.