

Homily 14th Sunday Ord year B Theme: Rejection

*What is the name of the famous dance in 1776 = **indepen - dance**: Happy independence day everyone.*

Some time ago I visited an elderly woman. I asked her how she was and she spoke about her health which wasn't great. When I asked her about her family, she said that one of her daughters has stopped speaking with her and wouldn't even allow her own children to visit their grandmother. Joan said what was most painful was that she couldn't recall a single reason for this rejection by her daughter. It happened suddenly. Recently she heard that one of her daughter's sons was getting married and whilst all the other family members and relatives were invited to the wedding, she was not. She said she felt even more terribly rejected.

Isn't it hurtful to be rejected by anyone? But it is particularly hurtful to be rejected by one's own people.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus returns to his home town of Nazareth, having left there some time previously. He had spent the best part of thirty years in Nazareth. During that time, he was known by all as the carpenter, the son of Mary. However, in the time since he left Nazareth, Jesus' life had taken a new direction. He had thrown himself into the work that God had given him to do. He had left Nazareth as a carpenter; he returned to Nazareth as a teacher and a healer. There was in fact much more to this man that his own townspeople had ever suspected while he was living among them. The gospel reading suggests that they could not accept this 'more'; they rejected him. They wanted him to be the person they had always known; they would not allow him to move on from that. Jesus' homecoming turned out to be more painful than his leaving home. God's unique Son who proclaimed the presence of God's kingdom was experienced by the people of Nazareth as a thorn in the flesh, to use an image from today's second reading.

Probably all of us have experienced a little of this. We have wanted to help someone but our help was refused. We feel frustrated and helpless. When we meet with rejection we may be tempted to say: 'that's it. I'm finished'. We may decide not to help or care any more. It's too painful.

Jesus didn't react like this. He was saddened but not angered. He did what little he could in Nazareth – he cured some sick people. Then we are told that he was amazed at their lack of faith. So, he decided to take his light and his gifts elsewhere.

After the three miracles Jesus worked before this gospel passage we now find him teaching in the synagogue and all there are astonished when they heard him. One would imagine then that it would have been the most obvious thing in the world for them to accept him as someone special sent by God. But the opposite was true. They refused to accept him just as they refused to listen to the prophet Ezekiel as we read in the first reading.

Why would they have been so prejudiced against Jesus?

Let us examine ourselves. Have we truly accepted Jesus as our Lord? The Lord invites us now, not just to be familiar with Him, but more importantly, to be intimate with Him, to enter into a

personal relationship with Him, so that, like the Apostle Thomas, we may also say with full conviction: “My Lord, and my God!” (Jn 20:28). Amen