

Homily. 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. B. 6/7 July 2024.

When studying in the Seminary decades ago there was a rule of thumb amongst Clergy and Bishops that a Priest was never to be sent to serve in his home Parish, especially as Parish Priest, unless there was some extenuating circumstance. This practice was normally followed, though as you know there have been exceptions. I think that this was a wise policy to follow when possible. Priests have enough issues to face and deal with on a daily basis without complicating matters further with friends, family and relationships, unreasonable expectations and long held memories.

Imagine going to confession to Father you once knew as a naughty boy, a troubled teen or that perfect child, but now a not so perfect Priest.

Imagine disagreeing on a committee with Father who is also the son of your best friends, or Father saying or doing something he believes is right and good only to have complaints carried back to his Mum and Dad living just a few streets away from the Church. Not a pretty scenario at all.....

Well, Jesus going home was just like this. He thought that he'd be welcomed with open arms, the local boy doing good. Instead, in the Nazareth Synagogue, the Jewish meeting place, the locals were taken aback, incredulous, saying where did the carpenter, the son of Mary and member of a local family, ever get so wise, knowledgeable, eloquent and impressive? The implication is that they thought he'd gotten above his station in life so they simply didn't trust him or accept what he was saying. The storm calmed on the Sea of Galilee, the healings of the two women and more were great to hear about for a distance, but when the locals saw him in the flesh all they could see was the child, boy, teen and man

who had been a worker and tradesman among them. I don't think it takes much imagination to understand their point of view.

What's at stake though was faith, and it was their lack of faith that stunned Jesus so much that as far as we know he never went home again. You see, the point of Jesus teaching and miracles was to stir up questions, open up minds and hearts and inspire faith in God, not in himself. We must understand that Jesus wouldn't have been believable or if his ministry had been all about himself, his own status, fame and influence. That would have made him no better than the others who had come and gone, whereas the thing everyone said of Jesus was that he taught with real authority and not at all like those other teachers.

His whole life was focused on hearing God's will and acting it out so as to show others what God thought, felt and wanted. This is the true Prophetic way, the genuine Prophetic ministry, not some personal project of self aggrandisement. The Nazareth people, blindsided by their familiarity with the man they'd once known, couldn't get past their memories to see or hear God's spirit now actively living and working in and through Jesus.

We have to get beyond these human obstacles, prejudices and frailties so that the humble humans around us can be heard voicing God's will and way for us, the living Jesus living in them. Likewise, we have to trust in God's voice in us, being unafraid to stand up for truth and goodness as we try to do Jesus work today. This is the path for us to a more just, holy and happier world where all are respected; for the real presence uniting us is always greater than the externals that make us appear different.