

When I have weekends away from the parish I will often celebrate Mass with my family (the collections are not always so good) - and strangely, to my consternation - I become somewhat unnerved by it all. They know me (esp. my folks) like no one else and here I am - in essence - unrolling the scroll, proclaiming to my family how we are to live according to the Gospel message of the day.

Patrick the son/brother/uncle becomes Patrick the priest - called by God from the ordinary to the extraordinary: Once a young boy eating bread and juice and now as a man transforming bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ - All this in front of my "hometown family".

Yes, I can somewhat relate to Jesus when all questioned, "*Isn't this Joseph's son, the carpenter?*"

Growing up people never called me Patrick, it was "*Oh yeah, your Dr. Golden's son.*" (Dad is a dentist.) Even as an adult, after finding out who I am, some of them would actually open their mouth and point out problem teeth, as if I learned the profession by way of family!

A couple weeks ago I was at home and my mother told me about a man she had run into and found out he was a classmate of mine when we were in middle school. Once she told me the name, I shuddered with a bit of shame, as I remembered we used to pick on him. She said he was shocked to learn that I had become a priest. Perhaps even thinking as a member of my hometown, "*How could he become a priest, because I remember when....*" The miracle he was having trouble reconciling was my ordination and some bitter childhood memories.

I deserve such a response, for I was not without sin (still not!), but Jesus never taunted anyone - he, I suppose probably lived a very unassuming and humble life (as St. John would have put it, "*His hour had not yet come*"). He never lorded anything and was probably the one kid that took up for the taunted.

At first all acclaim him, until he speaks truth that offends them. It is like that of being a seminarian or even an parochial vicar - most everyone acclaims you (unless you have some real issues) but once the word pastor goes in front of your name and you make decisions that will affect change, not everyone is going be acclaiming you. You can no longer say, "*You'd best ask the pastor.*" (Though a rector can sometimes do this to his bishop (:

This is Jesus, for we see in the gospel today the that he has grown up to be a man, no longer the son of Joseph, who offends no one, but now the *Son of God and God is Truth* and we know many do not like to hear the truth or who it is who is speaking it.

+It's like the man whose doctor decided that he had to tell the truth about his condition. He said, "*You're a very sick man. You probably won't live more than a couple of weeks at most. You should settle your affairs. Is there anybody you want me to call?*" "Yes," replied the sick man, "*another doctor.*"

And in Jesus' case, they try to throw Jesus *"from the bow of a hill, on which their town had been built"* in order to exchange it for their comfortable idea of what truth should be...and truth *"passed through the midst of them and went away"*. They would later try to kill Truth and put it in the ground, only to see it rise on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. Jesus shows us that truth always finds a way through all the lies and when we deny it our life becomes a lie, as the truth passes away in our midst.

Not only did Jesus pass through their midst, **Jesus left his hometown, never to live there again**. His townspeople tried to throw him over a cliff because he said things they didn't like to hear. It is clear, however, **he was not embittered by this**.

Bitter people proclaim bad news, or when they proclaim good news there is some bitter echo in it. +I think it was Augustine who said, *"Truth without love is poison."*

Think of it, after they attempted to kill Jesus, after they attempted to throw him over a cliff, Jesus left them not with bitterness, but we are told that he *"went all around Galilee...proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom."*

I'm not sure if you attempted to do that with me, I could leave here proclaiming good news in my next placement! It was their loss.

**Nathanael** was surprised when he heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, as he responded, *"Can anything good come from that place?"* (Jn 1:46). And yet his townspeople could not infect him with their bitterness; it was they who remained bitter.

Yet they were to rob him of some of his power, for Mark tells us, *"He could work no miracle there."* Not only Nazarenes but all of us have the power to poison the well of life to stop miracles from happening.

\*How often it is that we wish throw people from the hill of our lives? Little hills in which we attempt to dump people (Christ incarnate) with our words and often because of bitterness we carry within us. And if this is the case, if there is that *"hometown bitterness"* - it will be just as true as it was back then - ***he can work no miracles there***.

And yet when we are willing throw not Jesus, but our bitterness over the hill, we will find Jesus passing once again into our lives, working his miracles.

+Perhaps you saw the article in the paper the other day about stating that Holocaust survivor, **Alexander Lebenstein** had died. In 1938, the Nazis, along with neighbors of his hometown ransacked his home, throwing out all of his belongings (over brow of a hill, could we say?).

His entire family, most everyone he knew, was murdered in the concentration camps. When he attempted to return after the war, it was clear, they wanted his hometown to remain Jew free. He left that bitter town with bitterness, vowing never to return.

But one day he received a letter from some young girls from his middle school asking him to return and share his story about the Holocaust. The children felt great shame and pain as a result of their families' persecution of the Jews and this profoundly moved him.

And with it, the bitterness of that town and then bitterness within himself drained out of him. He received an apology from his hometown and the school was renamed in his honor.

And through him and the children, might was say Jesus returned to his hometown, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom and once more working his miracles. Yes, let go of that bitterness and Jesus will most certainly pass back into your life.