

Holy Family and St. John the Baptist Catholic Parishes

July 4, 2021

14th Sunday In Ordinary Time, Independence Day

The Failures of Jesus and our own Failures

Our culture is not comfortable with failure. In this age of endless upgrades, and prizes for all, at least one American school abolished its honor roll as a “source of embarrassment for some underachievers.” Yet, our Gospel today centers on the explicit failure of Jesus, who’s preaching initially wins the admiration of His townsfolk, but is soon roundly rejected. We may have forgotten how shocking this moment is, along with other times Jesus is not only rejected, but even mocked and scorned. This Rejection of Jesus in His hometown, by those with whom He had grown up is also linked to His failure to work many miracles.

The failures of Jesus are hardly a positive advertisement for the budding Christian faith. Yet rather than gloss over our Lord’s failure, Saint Mark highlights it! He even quotes Jesus saying that *a prophet is not without honor except in his own country, or town, among his own kin, and in his own house*. The sentence is constructed to make clear the final rejection of Jesus by those who know Him the longest. Even they have no faith in Him.

So, why tell us this? The episode looks back first to the Old Testament prophets. It underscores the prophetic authority of Jesus as He experiences the rejection which they experienced; but it also points forward to events in Jerusalem, when Jesus will preach in the temple, only to provoke the hostility of His powerful enemies, triggering His arrest and execution.

Nazareth is a foretaste of failures Jesus will experience on other occasions such as when the rich young man chose wealth instead of Him; when the multitude left Him when He talked about the need to be fed by His Body and Blood; by the betrayal of Judas; and when He was rejected, mocked and scorned during His Passion.

You notice that we are told Jesus is ‘amazed’ by the lack of faith in the townspeople of Nazareth. We are meant to understand the personal desolation which this rejection brought to Him. This, too, anticipates the cry from the cross when Jesus shouts the words from Psalm 22: *‘My God, my God, why have you deserted me?’* This psalm ends on a positive note of trust in the Father but begins with the deepest sense of abandonment. Saint Mark wants to stress Christ’s fidelity to the Father even at His darkest moment and to us the intense suffering He was willing to experience for love of us.

Why? Perhaps because what looks so much like failure, and what costs so much in desolation, is also the glory of an unbroken love, the glory which becomes manifest in the resurrection. Christ has plumbed the depths of human abandonment, and nothing lies beyond His redemption. Love of His Father and love for each one of us triumphs over His experience of what seems to be a failure.

That matters for us, as we cannot expect to do better than Jesus. He did say, *if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you*. It belongs to His and our prophetic office as baptized Catholics to proclaim a Gospel that may at times cause offence, and cause us to be rejected, mocked, and even scorned.

The aggression of the New Atheism or of intolerant liberalism reminds us of the anger triggered when the teachings of Jesus and His Church is proclaimed. This reality of our failure and the unbelief of others is part and parcel of what Christians in every age must expect along with the moments of success. Saint Paul was stoned and beaten with rods several times. We must learn how to have a certain amount of resilience. Our witness to living our Catholic Faith isn't always measured by its perceptible results. What matters is that we find the strength from God, especially from the Sacraments, to continue. Saint Mark knew that Christians must reckon on possible rejection and desolation within their own family, just as Jesus came into conflict with His friends and family.

Finally, at the heart of this Gospel is hope. Our own failings and failures are real enough, broken relationships, faltering friendships, weak and sinful family members, friends, religious and clergy. There's hope because our messier reality is not the end of the story. We can dare to be honest about failure, look it squarely in the face and live through it, even learn from it, because God-made-man, Jesus has been there too. He has entered the depths of our human condition in order to rescue us, share with us His risen life in the new creation.

Fr. Tom

June 14-18 St. John the Baptist Parish hosted VBS. Children learned about vocations and how important prayer is in their daily lives. Many thanks to all the volunteers and especially to Father Nate Kuhn, Vocations Director for the Diocese and Mother Agnes, from the Seraphic Adorers of the Child Jesus both of whom spent a morning with the group. Thank you, Father Tom, and Father Alan, for your guidance with the week long program.



On Sunday, June 27th 9 youth and 2 chaperones left St. John's Parking lot for a week long faith filled outdoor camp. Adventure Camp located in Drummond, Wisconsin will host several youth camps this summer. Diocese of La Crosse has two weeks reserved for youth in grades 6th-12th to attend. Campers enjoy hiking, rock climbing, rafting, campfires and much more. Next week we will hear from some of the campers on their experience.

The July/August issue of Catholic Life has an article by Sharon Sliwka called Adventure Camp, A Family Affair.



Beginning Monday, July 12th and every Monday thereafter, Father Alan will have Adoration and Confessions from 4:30-5:30 pm at St. John's Parish.

Beginning Tuesday, July 13th and every Tuesday thereafter, Father Alan will have office hours at Holy Family Parish from 1:00-5:00 pm. Adoration and Confession will be from 5:15 pm-6:00 pm.

