

## HOMILY 10<sup>TH</sup> SUN OT YRB 2018

I was thinking this week about the reaction that some people had when I told them that I was going to the seminary to become a priest. I was only a couple of years out of law school, and I thought that was going to be my second career. I don't think anyone was more surprised than I was when the idea first came to me. I had not discussed it with many people before I made the decision, so people were surprised. This was not what people expected from me. When I told some people they were struck speechless. I also got some reactions like: "Let me try to understand this. You are going to go back to school for 6 years so that you can get a job earning next to nothing? Really?" or "You are an attorney, you have this great job, you have this great house, why would you walk away from all of that?" And I also got a few: "Those crazy church people must have brain washed you." I also remember what my boss said, the managing attorney, when I gave my notice. She said: "I see those qualities in you. That is why I hired you." But regardless of people's reactions, here I am.

I think this is kind of like the situation Jesus found himself in the Gospel reading today. Jesus was not behaving the way people expected him to behave. Sometimes I don't think we realize how radical Jesus was. He was meeting with women by themselves. Women were not allowed to speak to men in public or in private without their husband, father or whatever man was responsible for her. Not only did Jesus talk to them, he touched them and healed them. Jesus laid his hands on lepers. What is he crazy? Doesn't he know he could get leprosy, which was a death sentence? He eats with well known notorious sinners. Who does that? And he was teaching in the synagogue with authority. Who does he think he is? He is just a poor guy from a poor family.

Different people had different reactions to Jesus. First of all, there were the scribes. They had already decided that Jesus was not the Messiah because he did not behave the way they expected the Messiah to behave. Yet they had seen him drive out demons. This did not fit what they already decided

about him. To make it fit what they already decided about him, they concluded that he was not of God, so he must be of the devil. Sometimes we have that reaction ourselves to Jesus today when he asks us to do something we do not expect. We have already made up our mind about something and have divinized our own opinion. Maybe we have decided a particular Church teaching is wrong and we are no longer open to discussion. When I hear people say: "I am too old to change," I am thinking you have just decided you do not want to change at this stage of your life. Certainly there are things you cannot do as you get older, for example I know I will never get married and have children. That ship has sailed, but God is not calling me to do that anyway. There are many changes that you can make at any age but you have to be open to the Holy Spirit. You have to be willing to change. You cannot divinize your own opinion.

What about the reaction that Jesus' family had? They thought he was out of his mind. The Jesus that they knew was a poor boy from a little town. Now all of a sudden he was famous and all of this crazy stuff he is doing is a reflection on us. He is not behaving the way we expect him to behave. This is not the Jesus we know. Sometimes we have this reaction to Jesus ourselves when he asks us to do something that we do not expect. That is crazy. I am not doing it. Sometimes we avoid quiet prayer because we really do not want to hear what the Holy Spirit is calling us to do. Sometimes Jesus is calling us to do something over and over again and we keep dismissing it. I do not want to get out of my comfort zone. I do not want to change. That just does not make logical sense. I don't want to do that.

And then there were the disciples, those who were open to what Jesus had to teach them. Let's follow and observe and keep an open mind. The people who thought, I really believe in Jesus and I am going to do what he asks me to do; I am going to believe what he tells me. I think we all have a little of all three in us. If we stay open to the Holy Spirit and follow where he leads, we will end up in a good place. I did.