

Father Dave's Homily

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-- You see these signs as you enter so many towns in the U.S. They usually say something like *Home of Jennie Smith, State Champion 800 meters, 2006*. Or it may say *Home of State Division V Football Championship Team, 1995 (Tiffin Calvert)*.

-- We like to honor hometown people who've made good. Sometimes, we even give them ticker-tape parades. So it seems strange to hear about the rather cold reception Jesus gets from his hometown of Nazareth when he returns. After all, he's made a bit of a name for himself, with his powerful teaching and all the healings he's done in Galilee.

-- There are a couple of things which could explain the cold shoulder he receives. One is cultural. Middle Eastern families did not have the typical American aspirations for their children to move up the ladder of society. E.G., Boys were expected to take on their father's occupation

-- Also, honor and riches were seen to be limited in quantity. Any additional honor someone received took away from someone else. They may well have regarded Jesus as an upstart, seeking to take away the little honor they had. And Nazareth was not a town with much honor.

-- There may have been a little jealousy among some of the people in Nazareth. Who was Jesus to take on this role? So they would nit-pick at the carpenter's son.

-- I can give a similar example from my last town of Fremont. Charles Woodson, the Green Bay cornerback, was a Fremont Ross graduate. Many people thought he was not appreciative of his home town. Then, it was revealed that he gave sizable donations to the Ross sports program, and that seemed to change.

-- But there was something even deeper than these things at work. Too many people had closed hearts. They could not put faith in Jesus. They couldn't see him as more than a hometown boy who left home.

-- And so, as the gospel says, he was unable to do mighty deeds there. This wasn't because he lacked power, but his work was a response to the

faith of people around him. They were unwilling to enter into that faith relationship with him.

-- We come to this Church because we profess that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We profess that belief every Sunday after the homily in the Creed. But that faith must be reflected in our *relationship* to Christ.

-- And, like any relationship, it must be nourished. We must spend time with Jesus in prayer, in reading and reflecting on the scriptures, in getting to know our faith a little better.

-- We must be open to sharing our faith with those close to us and those around us. And, like Jesus and like Ezekiel in our 1st reading, we can't be overly concerned about the results.

-- The fact that a Church building is full doesn't guarantee that Christ's message is stronger there than in a small community. It is the quality of faith that matters. Of course, we should be working to bring more people to Church, but bringing Jesus Christ to them is our primary work.

-- Ezekiel's experience should be a consolation to parents who have sincerely tried to teach the faith to their children, trying to give them good example. The fact that one or more of them no longer attends the Catholic Church does not mean your efforts have been a failure.

-- As Mother Teresa often said, Christ does not call us to be successful, but to be faithful. Our faith is the key thing. And our perseverance in faith is what makes us authentic follower of Jesus.

-- May we nurture our faith in Jesus Christ and our relationship with him. Then we can trust him with the results.