

Envy Leads to Rejection of Jesus

Today we have an excellent reflection on human rejection. What are the things in life that we fear the most? I am sure for many of us high on the list would be the fear of **rejection**. It is often a reality that has pre-occupied us since childhood and throughout the years that have followed. If we just recall our early days as children, we remember how we were terrified by the thought of rejection. A baby will cry if not held, cuddled, kissed, and loved by the parents. A child will be miserable if other children refuse to play or share their toys. And as a teenager... well, words can't begin to describe the pain and fear teenagers experience when threatened by rejection.

Early in his ministry, Jesus and his disciples made a tour through his hometown. The people in Nazareth were unable to accept him as the inspired Teacher. Their judgment was limited to how they had always known him: a child, a young man, a carpenter, a local boy. They were unable to see him as Jesus the Rabbi and the Christ to be. And so, they rejected him. Many of you have just celebrated the graduation of your children. Some from high school, some from the university. Now they are coming back home to move on to new avenues. As a parent you want to be brought up to date on what has really been making your children move, particularly if they have been away. But most important of all, you want to hear about their goals, their ambitions, where they visualize themselves to be going. And they want to tell you because their life revolves around the tomorrows. You compliment them, you praise them, you do everything in your power to make them feel that you believe in them and that they will succeed in what they have chosen to pursue.

That is not what we heard in the Gospel. The hometown people rejected Jesus. They did not accept him, even in the Synagogue. The moment Jesus appeared in the Synagogue to read and speak, it seems like the place became a noisy hall. "Where'd he get all this?" I know his family. His brothers and sisters, his relatives are all members of this Synagogue. He used to sit beside us here in these pews. The atmosphere of rejection tells Jesus he can never go home again. Why did his hometown reject Him? The answer is clear, "**ENVY**" They were envious of his healing power and popularity.

What is envy? Jealousy and envy are similar although, we can distinguish them. The main difference between envy and jealousy is that **envy** is the emotion of coveting what someone else has, while **jealousy is the emotion related to fear that something you have will be taken away by someone else.** (position in office) The sin of envy drives people to rejection, anger, and finally murder. This is what happened to Jesus. Out of envy they rejected him, then they were angry with him and finally, they crucified him on the cross.

There is a nice story that highlights the nature of envy and the effects on envy. Dr. Cain and Artist Able were close friends. Dr. Cain was a skilled surgeon who has for years secretly envied his friend, Abel, a skilled artist. At one point in the story, the doctor is scrutinizing one of Abel's paintings. This particular painting is a depiction of the Cain and Abel story itself from the Bible. At first, the doctor is convinced that the face of Cain in the

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painting is modeled on his own face. And he becomes furious! How dare Abel use HIM as a model for envy? But then, upon closer inspection, the doctor decides it's not his face after all. Does this defuse his anger, By no means! Instead, the surgeon becomes irate that Abel did NOT deign to use him in one of his famous paintings! when there is envy in our hearts, we will interpret every action of the envied negatively. If the person tries to be extra kind to the one who envies you, the reply is "you are pretending to be nice." If you try to rise above things by ignoring the one torn up with envy you will be written off as arrogant and rude. Neither approach nor avoidance can help when envy is deep rooted.

The history of Christianity is a history of rejection. It is a story filled with rejections. If we look back to our history of salvation, God first sent prophets to speak to his people. But, His own "chosen people" killed them. Later, God sent his Son Jesus, but his entry into the world was heralded by rejection. "There is no room", the innkeeper informed Mary and Joseph. Throughout his life, he was associated with other rejects. During his three years of public ministry, most of his friends were lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners, and other rejects ignored and ostracized by society and the religious establishment.

The story of rejection happens or continues to our day. The diminishing number of Church attendance is an indication of rejection of faith. Most often we compromise our faith or the things that we believe. The pain of rejection is horrible. That pain is made crystal clear and perfectly evident when we take a good look at the crucifix and understand its profound message, namely our rejection of God's love for us in His human form. That's why there's a human body hanging on it. It's not an empty cross, **it's a cross-loaded to the full with rejection**, the worst kind of pain that any of us can ever experience, God nailed and immobilized because we won't listen to him.

As we celebrate our freedom, we need to ask ourselves, "Are we truly free?" Free to choose our faith and belief in God? Are we free to express our faith in public, in our workplace? Are we free to hold on to our values without being rejected? Jesus has been thrown out of countless marriages, families, and lives. Jesus is the most ejected and rejected Person Who has ever lived.

It is time for us to ask ourselves, do I reject Jesus in any way? Am I prejudiced against any of my family members, neighbor, co-worker, or anyone else? If so, we are rejecting Jesus again today. Let us ask God to give us the strength to accept everyone as God's children.

God Bless You.