

As they say on Facebook, Jesus just got “unfriended” by the citizens of Capernaum. He experiences rejection. They’re thinking: You’re a carpenter. Don’t try to teach us, you haven’t gone to school. Who do you think you are? And Jesus realizes that, like the prophets before him, he’s delivering a message from God that most people don’t want to hear: because these messages are against “business as usual” and require us to make changes in our lives.

We all experience rejection. It starts in school. As adults, we don’t get jobs we wanted; we may get turned down in love; our ideas get shot down in discussion. Even the Son of God experiences rejection many more times – and still does!

In the Gospel, Jesus shows us a couple ways to deal with rejection. First, don’t get stuck there. Keep on going, because rejections are eventually followed by an acceptance. This is good psychology, long before *The Dr. Phil Show* on TV.

Jesus is rejected by the villagers in Capernaum. But Jesus knows who he is, and he’s determined to do what he’s supposed to do. He has self-confidence, and he’s not going to care about what other people think of him. Jesus keeps on going!

Like Jesus, we can’t allow other people to hold us back, to keep us down with their preconceived notions about the limits of our abilities. Keep on going!

In addition, Jesus teaches us more than good psychology. He teaches us to tackle rejection with faith: trusting that God our Father wants what’s best for us, and works for that, and wants us to be happy, even if it doesn’t look like it.

Faith boosts our self-confidence, because it’s our assurance that God supports us, no matter what. God loves us and walks with us through life. Even if it takes us to the cross, that looks like failure, we don’t doubt that our Father supports us even there, and will vindicate us with resurrection, just like he did Jesus. When we trust in God, have faith, rejection can’t poison our spirit. We keep on going! When we know we’re doing right, doing God’s will, we keep on going, even if we’re thwarted.

As Jesus’s disciples, we’re given a mission: to share the Good News about him. I used to squirm in the pew when I heard priests say that. Too many of us think that we have to be eloquent or plan ahead what to say about Jesus. ***Aaangh!*** Wrong answer! Even if we spoke perfectly, like Jesus did in today’s Gospel, there’ll still be people who will reject his message, even some persons we love. Still, slip Jesus into your conversations when people share their problems or their joys with you. That’s the perfect time, and let the chips fall where they may.

The first year I worked in Silicon Valley I’m ashamed to say I kept my faith life separate from my work life. When the Church was criticized, or Christianity criticized, I kept my mouth shut. I wanted to be accepted; I wanted to fit in that high tech culture.

That changed after a year. I realized that the Good News of Jesus needed to be heard there, in the workplace. I knew that while self-sufficient people may not want to change their behavior, or believe what we believe, they still need to hear it. So I would bring up Jesus in discussions when I thought it appropriate.

Don’t get discouraged if you’re rejected for your faith; don’t be afraid of coming across weird. Own it! Because Christians are different than unbelievers. A number of our teachings go against public opinion.

When we’re rejected, let’s maintain our self-confidence and turbocharge it with faith. Let’s put our principles before our popularity, and our faith before our feelings, and keep on going.

Fr. John Ozella, 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time, July 8, 2018