



"Jesus came to his native place....and they took offense at him".

"No prophet is without honor except in his native place and among his own kin."

Jesus was not the first or the last to experience this. Most of the Saints had a similar story to tell. Just read about them. Whenever one encounters Christ there is usually opposition, and that from those closest to us, our own family and friends. Family and peer pressure can either make us fold, or something else can happen. We can stand our ground, weather the storm, and hold on to what we know is the truth.

I have visited the Carmelite Convent in Morristown several times. There are older nuns, who have been there for many years, but there are also young novices who have recently entered. Beautiful girls, with light shining out from their eyes, and each had a similar story to tell. They all experienced vehement opposition from their families when they decided to answer the vocation to religious life.

Their parents (good practicing Catholics) were repulsed by the idea that their daughter enter a cloistered convent, to renounce marriage and children and a 'normal life', Good Heavens, it seems absolutely ridiculous.

St. Catherine of Sienna was locked up in a cell by her parents, who loved her very much, but thought she must have been crazy. St. Francis too was denounced by his own father, who thought he was stark raving mad.

But if God gives the vocation, and answering it means happiness, who are we to stand in the way?

Each one of us has a vocation. And we can be either helped or hindered by our family in discerning and then following that vocation, be that to religious or married life.

We talk to our children about many things: homework, school, after school activities, soccer, baseball, football, dance, lacrosse, wrestling, and expend a lot of time energy and money on all this. But when was the last time we asked them about their vocation? "What do you think God is calling you to be?" We might be afraid to ask the question, for fear of the answer we might get. My daughter a nun? In your dreams, my son a priest? You must be joking. Or even if they want to be a doctor, a dad or a mom: "She wants to marry who? No, he would never do, I have someone else in mind."

But imagine, to answer a vocation means to hit the jackpot. It's the best possible thing that could happen. No matter how crazy it seems to us.

There is a building in Quebec which has stone walls and iron bars on the windows. It looks like a prison. But it's not a prison, it's another cloistered convent. It is full of young women who are on fire with life. I asked the Mother Superior why the bars on the windows. "People think it's so that the nuns can't escape" she said, "But the truth is that if those outside could see how happy we are in here they would all want to get in, and since there is not enough room, we have bars on the windows to keep them out."

Jesus will come to his native place today, to each of us, his kin. Will we take offense at him, or will we believe that any obstacle can be overcome in the happiness he offers to us?