

June 20, 2010 - 12th Sunday- C
Deacon Pat Hall

Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:1; Psalm 63:2, 3-4,5-6; Galatians 3:26-29; Luke 9:18-24

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/nab/062010.shtml>.

Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?” That’s a very important question for you and me. How we answer that has a great deal to say about who **we** are. Who do **I** say that **I** am? Our identity as Christians is rooted in the answer to Jesus’ question.

In high school, I was the proverbial “nice guy”. All the gals came me to cry on my shoulder after they had sought “love in all the wrong places”. Frankly, I would rather have been one of those “wrong places” where they were seeking love. I wished I had a higher cool factor. But my image was cast. Everyone thought I was that “nice guy”. I wasn’t even sure if that’s who I would be if everyone wasn’t expecting me to be that way.

Well, I had a chance to find out when I graduated and went away to school. There was only one person in my graduating class who went to my college and he lived in a dorm 2 miles away. No one knew me. I could be anyone I wanted to be!

It was to no avail. I guess there is something about apples falling from trees, legacy, and being raised in the love of Jesus. My dad... is the sweetest man I know. My dad’s sister, Aunt Grace, says that my grampa was the sweetest man she ever knew. At college, I found out that I was happiest when I aspired to be the man that my dad is. It was there that I started to appropriate “who I say that I am”. I began to go to church on my own accord--Martin Luther Chapel--that is until some gal started steering me over to St. John’s Catholic Student Parish. I tried to be nice to her and she thought that was just fine.

Jesus is not offering us the cool factor. He is offering us life, his life, an eternal loving life. Going for the cool factor is our inclination. We are naturally ego centered. There is a drive to serve oneself, to save one’s own life. People instinctively protect and promote themselves.¹ But just as that is humanly natural, we are also beings who aspire to the divine and to respond to Jesus’ call to serve others. We are to respond as Jesus responded—daily. Allowing God to help us pick up that cross *daily* is critical because our natural inclination is *so* weighted towards our drive to serve our self. If we go a prolonged time without picking up that cross, it could become so intimidating that we could be afraid to ask for God’s grace to pick it up.

There is suffering involved, but it involves the suffering of compassion and reconciliation. You can expect to become the target of persecution from those whose natural inclination is to serve themselves and who rightly understand that

Jesus' way of the cross undermines everything they strive for. They will make you pay for it, just as they made Jesus pay for it.

But it is through that suffering that Jesus brought joy and hope. He is asking us to join that daily work of his. Come and experience that joy and hope today, tomorrow and forever. We are initiating a recruiting drive for that mission. In a few minutes we will be inviting all who choose, to form in lines and come to Jesus' altar to receive the bread of life who gives us the strength and joy to pick up his cross daily.

¹ John Shea, The Relentless Widow, p. 167