

**Epiphany 4, 2007, January 28
St. John's**

A number of years ago I was sure I was to become a millionaire. I received my brown envelope telling me that out of all the people in the town where I lived I was chosen. I even got a second one saying that I was one of 4 people from a wider area who were chosen to be in a tie breaker.

I knew my chances were very good because for the previous couple of years there was a warning that if I did not order I would be taken off the list. Well I wasn't taken off the list and now, here I was, in a tie breaker.

The threat though in this letter, even though I was one of 4 in a tiebreaker, was much more obvious. They included a long letter telling me that they could only afford to send to people who ordered the magazines from them. So they had 2 stickers to choose from that you had to place on the front of the return envelope. One said something like ORDER ENCLOSED PRIORITY PROCESSING. The other said OK TO DROP.

Now that's a pretty obvious threat and it made me ask lots of questions about getting the chance next year to win for the second time. You see I might be taken off the list. I might be rejected.

Well I did not win. And I was eventually taken off the list. I guess I was OK to be dropped. I was rejected. Rejected.

Rejection. We have all known it and many of us will know it again.

When kids play together sometimes one of them is excluded.

When young people reach dating age some are more popular than others. One girl gets lots of dates some get none. Some boys find it easy to get dates others are refused repeatedly.

In our adult life we find that rejection does not vanish with youth.

It carries over from the playground into work, from dating into marriage.

The reasons for rejection are many. But the result is always the same. It hurts.

And how badly it hurts can be seen in the ways we try to avoid it.

We practice personal hygiene. We act with certain standards of conduct. We try to say the right things. We try to be acceptable to those who we want to be accepted by.

Yet despite our best efforts sometimes we feel rejected. And that is part of life.

Even in today's gospel, Jesus, the most worthy person who ever lived, was rejected. Many times Jesus knew what it was like to be unwanted and unwelcome. He knew what it was like to be made to feel unworthy and unacceptable. No one is exempt.

So what do we do?

Many times rejection is stored away and is presented as anger. We retaliate. Sometimes the anger seems justifiable and it is right to retaliate. And it is natural to do that.

But the way of Jesus is not natural.

The way of Jesus is to live a life that responds to natural feelings in an unnatural way. A way that has to be learned and nurtured and cultivated.

It is the way of love. It is the way of forgiveness. It is the way of God.

And many times the seed of anger begins at a time when you were rejected.

One of my favorite all time movies was Forrest Gump. The line that became famous from Forrest Gump was "life is like a box of chocolates- you never know what you are going to get?".

I remember another line though that was

incredibly profound.

The scene has the other central character of the movie, Jenny, going to her old house after her father has died. The house is abandoned and dilapidated. She remembers how he abused her, a child, and her rejection as a child. She is overcome by rage and in her anger, she begins to throw rocks rapidly at the house. After a little while she falls to the ground in exhaustion.

Forrest says to her "Sometime there aren't enough rocks".

Sometimes there aren't enough rocks.

Many struggle with anger because of rejection.

Unresolved anger leaves us crying out and reaching for more rocks. The rage is never satisfied and the contentment never found.

It only happens when we begin to live the way of Christ; the way of love and the way of forgiveness. The way of love strengthens us to lay down the rocks rather than reaching for more.

The way of forgiveness allows us to put on little sticker that says OK to drop.

Rejection is part of life. It happens intentionally and it happens unintentionally. It is only through the way of love and forgiveness that, when we

are rejected, we do not throw rocks.

It's OK to drop. Your faith has made you well.

Amen