

Don't give up.

Years and years ago I was responsible for training a newly ordained priest in the practicalities of working in a parish. He had been to a college well known for producing holy graduates, but not for the down to earth workings of church life. So I shared weeks of the ordinary things I did as Vicar, and gradually felt he was confident on his own.

The time came when I asked him to take a wedding on a day when I wanted to be somewhere else.

When we met later he said all had gone well, and then said, "Did you select that couple especially so that I should have an easy first time?" I was very pleased, because I had done just that, and they had been very easy to help and he had noticed and said thank you. I had actually chosen, and got it right, and got the credit for it!

Now I am not paving the way for a collection of Weird and Wonderful Wedding Tales; but it occurred to me that that experience was the complete opposite to the first part of today's gospel reading.

Jesus is just starting out on his life's work of public ministry and I can imagine him thinking "I'll begin with family, friends and neighbours; they'll be sympathetic". And it turns out the complete opposite. They think it's a sick joke and laugh in his face. The people who should have been an easy beginning turn out to be a stumbling block. It would have been so easy to just give up there and then and gone back to the woodwork.

So often we (I) find people "let me down" or I get it wrong; one lesson from today's gospel could well be "never give up; try someone / something else". But if for once you get it right, REJOICE!!!

Interesting after thought. Matthew uses pretty well all this story from Mark; but I think I'm right that Luke didn't like being rude and critical about Jesus' family, so he left that first bit out. When we come to Luke as the Gospel of the year 2025, this could be one of the characteristics of his writing that he doesn't like to be critical of anyone if he can help it.

That might be worth remembering too.

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