

Reflection

Brave Heart

Go away. Leave. You don't belong here. Any rejection stings, but rejection by those closest to us can be especially painful.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is twice-spurned. When he hears that Herod wants to kill him, Jesus is cool and defiant. It's not surprising this rejection does not cut deeply; Herod is a tyrant who stands far outside Jesus' social and religious circle.

Jerusalem is another story. When Jesus speaks the name of his beloved city and faith community, his anguish is unmistakable. To convey his pain, he uses a remarkable image. For the first and only time, Jesus compares himself to an animal—a vulnerable, hopelessly faithful mother hen.

The juxtaposition is striking. Today's Gospel suggests that we have nothing to fear from tyrants or outsiders: it is our own people, living in the center of our sacred tradition, who will torment and test us most severely.

Have you ever felt rejected or abandoned by the Church? If so, Jesus' image and response may be especially challenging. Instead of turning away or turning bitter, Jesus loved his people to the end. The Gospel ends on a sorrowful note, foreshadowing the destruction of the temple. But as we know, Jesus remained a Jew until his death. This does not mean he was a pushover: he confronted authority and spoke the truth to religious leaders. But he never renounced his faith.

Are some of us called to do the same, even—especially—when our own religious family disappoints or fails us?

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