

**3 Pentecost
June 10, 2018**

**In the name of the God of all creation,
The God alive in each of us as God was alive in Jesus,
And the power of God known in the Spirit.
Amen.**

Then [Jesus] went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind."

Today, in the Church's calendar, is the Third Sunday after the Feast of Pentecost. In the Catholic Church this season after Pentecost is known as "Ordinary Time." It is as if we are back to business as usual. Gone is the drama of Jesus turning his sights towards Jerusalem in Lent, ending with Holy Week and the Crucifixion. Behind us is the excitement of Easter and resurrection appearances and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We took a week to acknowledge the Christian Church's identity with Trinity Sunday. And now we are back to just "Ordinary Time" ... stories about Jesus wandering around Galilee. And this year we hear those stories from Mark's gospel. Last week's gospel reading was Jesus confronting the Pharisee about "work" on the Sabbath. Today, the reading is about Jesus returning home to Nazareth.

This morning's reading is in the third chapter of Mark's Gospel, just five pages into a book that is only 21 pages long. In those first three short chapters at the beginning of Mark's gospel we hear of Jesus leaving his hometown of Nazareth; being baptized by John; being driven into the wilderness by God's Spirit; calling his disciples; healing diseases, making the lame walk, and casting out demons; being criticized by the scribes for healing on the Sabbath; and drawing huge crowds. Then ... as we hear today ... he went back home and his family tried to "restrain him" because people were saying "He has gone out of his mind."

I have no doubt that he was "out of his mind." I don't think he was crazy, but I do believe that he was literally "out of his mind" ... and if we are to take seriously what Jesus took seriously; perhaps we should be out of our minds as well.

Mark's Gospel is the first that was written about Jesus. It is straightforward. There are not a lot of nuances in Mark. It begins by saying "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth ... " "In those days ... " I wonder about all those days before Jesus left Nazareth. Mark has no nativity story like Luke and Matthew do. Mark does not have a story like Matthew's of Jesus going to Egypt as an infant. Nor does Mark have a story like Luke of Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem at 12 years old. Mark just says Jesus came from Nazareth. But reading between the lines we can surmise that Jesus was at least a little unusual. For one, he was around thirty years old and unmarried ... at least none of the records of Jesus' life mention a marriage. And in that time in that land being thirty years old and not married was rather unusual.

Secondly, he left his home and family and friends in Nazareth to go out into the wilderness to be baptized by John. Maybe, just maybe, Jesus heard about John the Baptist and with no forewarning he suddenly got up one day and left. But I don't think it was like that. My guess is that he thought about it for a long time. And when the urge to leave the status quo became greater than the tug to stay-put he left on the journey of his lifetime ... a journey of body and spirit that eventually led him to his death on a cross.

So, I wonder if you can imagine his family? I can just hear them saying, "Jesus, you can't be serious! You are going where? And do you even know why you are going?" However, Jesus left anyway, he was baptized, he cast out demons and healed deformities and diseases, and then he came home ... bringing with him a crowd of people so large the family couldn't even eat. No wonder they were concerned. Maybe he was an embarrassment ... obviously neighbors and friends were gossiping that he was "out of his mind." Yes, I can just hear his family saying, "Please, Jesus, don't do this to us."

When I was in high school I told my guidance counselor I wanted to study forestry. The next day he called my mother. I don't know what he told her but it was something like "he's out of his mind!" I spent my freshman year of college studying forestry anyway, but then ... in my "right" mind I wandered aimlessly for three more years ... attending three more colleges ... before I graduated. Near the end of my senior year I heard about a grad school in Indiana with a two-year fellowship for people interested in "teaching." It was either that or wait to be drafted to go to Vietnam. I can remember my mother saying, "You are as interested in teaching as anything else." So I followed this path of least resistance and ended up teaching ... at the University of South Carolina and the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga.

Then ... at 28 years-old, with two young sons ... I decided to go to seminary and pursue a career in the ordained ministry of the Episcopal Church instead of finish the work on my doctorate. My friends and colleagues said, "You out of your mind!" This time I said, "Yes, you are right." Some still say I'm out of my mind. Let's see ... I'm a priest in the Episcopal Church, married to a Jewish woman who ... this morning ... is preparing for a "drumming circle" for boys in an incarceration facility ... the polite way of saying a youth prison. Yup! I think they are right!

The answer was then ... and is still today ... yes, I was and am out of my mind. At least out of the mind they wanted me to have ... the mind they thought was "right" for me. I understand something about Jesus returning home and having his family try to restrain him because "He has gone out of his mind."

Our first reading this morning is from the First Book of Samuel. It describes the political change for the people of Israel from a coalition of the twelve tribes to becoming a centralized power ... with Saul as their king. The people were demanding to be like the people around them. They cried out to Samuel "We want a king like the other nations." Samuel objected to their desire to mimic the pagan nations, so he went to God in prayer, but in the end he was finally rebuffed by the people: "No! We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations." Samuel spoke the word of Yahweh and warned the people of the harsh consequences to follow ... the

government would take their children to fight wars; the king would essentially make them domestic slaves to supply the needs of his government; and he would confiscate their land and require the payment of exorbitant taxes.

When the people of Israel demanded to have a king like other nations Samuel warned them, but they insisted and Samuel finally relented. In spite of his better judgment Samuel anointed a young boy named Saul. Saul was the most handsome of all the young men in Israel, and he stood head and shoulders above everyone else. But once Saul was king he behaved exactly as Samuel had warned the people. Saul was the definitive war president: the text tells us that "In all the days of Saul there was bitter war with the Philistines." And he was also a war profiteer who after defeating the Amalekites took for himself "the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs — everything that was good," all under the pretext of religious piety. And then Saul "set up a monument in his own honor." Now, does this ancient story of the state of politics not sound tragically contemporary and familiar?

That is as far as the story goes in our reading this morning, but let me remind you of the next chapter. What Saul did as King of Israel displeased Yahweh, so Yahweh sent Samuel to anoint a new king. Samuel was told by Yahweh to go to Bethlehem and the new king would be one of the sons of Jesse who lived there. Jesse had all his sons parade in front of Samuel, but none of them were suitable. Samuel was confused since Yahweh had told him the new king would be a son of Jesse. He asked if this were all his sons. Jesse said there was one more son, David, but he was out tending the sheep. When Samuel saw David he knew he was the one who would be pleasing in the eyes of Yahweh. So Samuel took his horn of oil and anointed David.

By the way, the Hebrew word for anointed is *mashach* ... it is the word we translate as *messiah*, which in Greek is *christos* or Christ.

Now, some said that Samuel was "out of his mind" in the same way that Jesus was "out of his mind." Well, if Samuel was out of his mind, where was he? He was not in his mind because he was listening to the spirit of Yahweh. Where was Jesus if he wasn't in his mind? Jesus was also listening to God's spirit. The people in Samuel's day wanted the nation of Israel to be like other nations, and the people in Jesus' day ... especially his family ... wanted him to be like other "normal" people. But Samuel and Jesus were "out of their minds." They were listening to another voice ... the voice of a divine presence.

Stephane Hessel, who died five years ago this week at the age of 95, was a Jewish concentration camp survivor, and a proud member of the French Resistance against the Nazis in WWII. He was also a United Nations diplomat instrumental in writing, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 2010, at the age of 92 Hessel wrote a 4,000-word pamphlet that urged young people to revive the flame of resistance to injustice ... that same flame of resistance to injustice that had burned in Hessel and others during World War II. Instead of violence, Hessel suggested peaceful rebellion against what he termed the dictatorial forces of international capitalism, and to reassert the ideal that the privileged class must help the less fortunate rise. As a hardcover book it measures just four by six inches and is less than thirty

pages long. You can read the entire essay over a cup of coffee at Barnes & Noble. The original print run was only 8,000 copies and was held together by two staples. Today, *Indignez-Vous!* has sold 3.5 million copies and been translated into a dozen languages. In English it is known at *Time for Outrage*.

Time for Outrage is a plea to recover a sense of outrage in our own day. Hessel was writing about the situation in France, but it is just as true here in the United States. He said, "the wealthy have installed their slaves in the highest spheres of the state. The banks are privately owned. They are concerned only with profits. They have no interest in the common good. The gap between rich and poor is the widest it's ever been; the pursuit of riches and the spirit of competition are encouraged and celebrated." So Hessel challenged his readers to move from indifference to indignation. "You must engage — your humanity demands it." He protested the status quo of money, politics, and power. In other words, he invited everyone to be "out of their minds."

It seems to me that Hessel was "out of his mind" in the same way the Samuel and Jesus were "out of their minds." Samuel was out of his mind when he spoke to the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus' family certainly thought he was out of his mind when he spoke ... by words and actions ... to the people of Galilee. Hessel, too, may have been out of his mind to speak about power, money and politics ... but we need only look as far as Tallahassee and Washington, DC to see the truth in Hessel's words.

Maybe it is time for all of us, as we take seriously what Jesus took seriously, to go "out our minds" and into God's spirit. Maybe it is time to stop listening to the voices of the status quo and listen to a different voice ... one that is beyond our mind. If we take seriously what Jesus took seriously ... and many of the other people who listened to the voice of God took seriously ... then maybe it is time for us to express our indignation ... our outrage ... at the way things are ... even if we are charged with being "out of our minds."

Maybe ... at least to others ... being in our "right" mind is another way of not rocking the boat. Maybe it is nothing more than a way of affirming the choice to live with the status quo ... business as usual. Maybe it has something to do with "Ordinary Time." Gee, if you start doing things like this then it may mean that I have to think about doing things like this ... and people might think I am "out of my mind." If Jesus could be "out of his mind" ... then I'm not so sure it is a bad thing to be out of my mind either.

Then [Jesus] went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind."

Maybe, just maybe ... if we are to take seriously what Jesus took seriously, to consider being "out of our minds" ... "out of our minds" and into God's Spirit.

Amen.