

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jul 8th 2017**

Summer - in this part of the world - is the time for reunions. Extended families gather from near and far to get reacquainted and to celebrate their shared heritage. Groups of friends select a destination vacation to spend quality time together. And summer is also the season of class reunions. People who graduated at the same time come back to connect with friends and learn what has been happening in the lives of classmates. This summer I enjoyed my 40th high school reunion in my hometown in South Dakota. It is so fascinating to see where people are in their lives. Who has stayed close to home, who has traveled far, how people have contributed to society, who seems completely transformed and who seems just like they did in high school. I enjoyed getting reacquainted with my classmates. And I also felt sad about letting some wonderful friendships slip out of my life over the years.

As I read today's gospel from Matthew, my class reunion experience helps me appreciate the teaching of Jesus. The old wineskins of life feel comfortable but we cannot fit the new into the old. If I would have limited myself to the world view and abilities and experiences when I was a high schooler I can't imagine my life today. This journey mirrors the journey of my faith development. Over the years I have grown in my friendship with Jesus. I have been able to take risks because of my faith. Times of devastation have eventually moved to solace and growth through God's love. My commitment to community is grounded in my faith.

The reading today from Genesis about Isaac, Esau, Rebekah and Jacob leaves me a bit overwhelmed. Yet as the reunion experience is still so fresh for me I thought about how reunions can bring out the worst in us. At times we have all been tempted to portray ourselves as someone we are not just as Jacob assumes another identity. We can create the impression that we have more career success, more money, more friends, more world travel experiences, more happiness, etc. This temptation never leaves me with a feeling of satisfaction. And as I grow in my confidence of God's love I know that we all share experiences of joy and humiliation, of bravery and fear, of contentment and longing. I pray for the grace to appreciate God's gifts and the ability to grow through heartache.

And while I cannot say everything I learned in life I learned in high school, I can thank God for the gift of my classmates in my formation of my life.

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