

A man walking along a California beach, deep in prayer and prayed, "Lord grant me one wish". The sky clouded and a booming voice said, "Because you have tried to be faithful, I will grant you one wish." The man said, "Lord, build a bridge to Hawaii so I can drive over anytime I want to." The Lord answered, "Your request is very materialistic. Take a little more time to think of another request." The man thought for a long time and finally said, "Lord, I wish that I could understand women. I want to know what they feel inside, what they are thinking when they give me the silent treatment, what they mean when they say 'nothing', and how I can make a woman truly happy?" After a few minutes God said, "How many lanes do you want on that bridge?"

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately, told Jesus about her. He approached, grasped her hand and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she began to serve them. When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to Jesus all who were sick and those who were possessed by demons. The whole town came gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with diseases of one kind or another; he also drove out many demons, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was. Rising very early before dawn, Jesus left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him, they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose, have I come.' So, He went in to their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee. The Gospel of the Lord.

Do you remember the TV show, “Extreme Makeover?” The producers of the show would select families to have their houses completely renovated. These families would be average working ones who were going through some type of financial or physical hardship. Once the families agree, a camera crew, along with workers would reconstruct their houses into homes of their dreams, within 48 hours. Many of the families claimed that this makeover helped them get back on their feet and get a new start.

When Jesus enters the town of Capernaum, He gives the community an extreme makeover with his teaching, preaching and healing, He helped people get back on their feet and give them a new start. Capernaum was a large Jewish village, made up mostly of families who were fishermen, farmers and merchants. Jesus begins His visit to Capernaum by going to God’s house, the Synagogue and then to Simon Peter house. After healing the man in the Synagogue and Peter’s mother-in-law, everyone in the village appeared at Peter’s home to meet this Jesus of Nazareth. They brought their family members, friends, neighbors who were sick and ill to and the Lord healed them.

The next morning, Jesus goes to a deserted place to pray. Peter searches and finds Jesus and tells Him, “Everyone is looking for you.” Why was everyone looking for Jesus? What was it about the Lord that the whole town wanted Him to come back?

A friend of mine, Jim told me years ago, “Marty, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.” Jesus makes a great first impression in Peter’s home town but the people want more. Peter’s words say it all, “Everyone is looking for you.”

When I was at St. Ambrose in Latham, I met a woman named Rose. Rose worked in the rectory but she lived and went to church in Albany. Rose said to me one day, "Father, every Sunday, my pastor begins his service with this prayer, "Lord, don't let anyone leave this church today, the way they came in." When the people in the village left Peter's house, they did not leave the way they came in, He gave it an extreme makeover.

My favorite St. Mother Teresa quote, "Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier." All those who came to Jesus in Capernaum left better and happier.

In ten days, we begin a period of extreme makeover, which we call Lent. Ash Wednesday is February 17th. In preparation for this sacred season, I invite you to read the Capernaum story. It's the first chapter of Mark's Gospel. As you read the story, imagine that you are hearing it for the first time. Put yourself in the story as a farmer, fishermen, merchant, family member and be touched by the Master's Hand.

Let us pray: Please pray after me. Lord Jesus, those who come to you, leave happier and better. I come and open myself up to you. Create in me a clean heart and renew in me a steadfast spirit, with the makeover of your loving touch. Amen and Amen.

May the Lord bless you, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

May God bless you and keep you, may God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you, may God look kindly upon you and give you peace.

May Mary our loving Mother, hold you in her tender arms.

Have a blessed and peaceful week.