



The other night I watched the movie *The Four Seasons*. I had seen the musical on Broadway several years ago, and really felt the movie could not match the show. But it did, and I enjoyed it very much. There was a scene where Bob Gaudio, who was the song writer and musical arranger of the group, came in with a new song called *Walk like a Man*. Frankie Valli, (lead singer) and Nick Massi (bass) thought it was a great song, but Tommy Devito, who was jealous of Gaudio, said it was stupid. He took the words literally and said, *how else man is supposed to walk*. The others explained that it was a metaphor for coming of age, knowing who you are in life and what you want to be.

We all have key moments in our life: birth, graduations from grade school, High School and perhaps even college. We have the experience of our first job, our first car, our first apartment or home, our first love, many of us marry, certainly the experience of raising children is transformative. We get a job, begin a career, rise up in the structure of our job or get laid, retired, or seek something else for our work. We may get divorced, suffer a life-changing illness, have people we love die, join the military service, become part of volunteer group or causes that energizes us, or have a deeply powerful religious experience that touches us to the core of our being. When did you start to walk like a woman; walk like a man. What made you who you are today? What is your vision of life? Whether you are 16 or 86, what do you want to do with the days that God has given you?

I have always liked the stages of life that Erik Erikson, the psychologist, developed. He listed 8 stages of our life journey:

Infancy: a stage when are seeking to be secure in the arms of parents.

Early childhood: I am learning that I am person. I am different than Mom and Dad

Childhood: I can do and accomplish things

Adolescence: what does it mean to a man/woman and adult?

Young adulthood: a time to seek intimacy, love and friendship

Adulthood: I want to create, leave a legacy, and have a family

Maturity: I am at peace with who I am and where I have been and where I am going.

Some of us get stuck on one stage for a time, and some of us never leave it. We all have lots of valleys and crises along the way. There are those who would propose today that we are seeking to dodge adulthood and responsibility. Others would say we are rushing children to become adults too quickly. I think the questions that society raises to us constantly is: what do I want from life? What do I need to be happy? I do not think they are the right questions; better ones might be what kind of kind of person do I want to be? What do I want to give to others?

In today's Gospel, Jesus has begun to walk like a man. His childhood and teenage years are over. He knows who he and his mission from this Father is becoming very clear to him. At the local synagogues in the time of our Lord, any man could walk up to what was the pulpit, unroll the sacred scrolls of the Word of God that have been given to Abraham, Isaac, Saul, David, Solomon, Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and all the prophets. So, Our Lord Jesus reads these words in Nazareth, the town where he grew up and is well known:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,*

*To let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

The prophet Isaiah spoke these words centuries before in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. Everyone in that gathering knew them and what they were about. Every eye on the synagogue is on Jesus. What will he say next? There may be a low murmur among people. Jesus looks them in the eye and announced: *Today this passage is fulfilled in me.* The crowd is shocked; he is claiming to be the Messiah, sent by God. Jesus knows that these words will eventually lead him to dark and lonely hill named Calvary. His mission from the Father has begun. His life will be about turning the other cheek to his enemy, embracing sinners, comforting the poor and desperate, challenging the harsh religious authorities, breaking bread, preaching his message, and forming a church, built on his body and blood. Today, he speaks these words to us: How do I want to live my life?