

In today's Gospel we see the humanizing of the Apostles, James and John. Here's the setting: the people in the Samaritan village are not welcoming or hospitable. This is a major breach of a primary Middle-eastern trait. James and John ask Jesus: "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked James and John.

James and John's attitude is "Wipe them out. Annihilate them. How dare we be treated this way." Their response shows that they are not perfect; they are not saints....yet; and they are not Christ-like....yet.

We all know from our experience that life doesn't always go our way. Friendships sour or simply end. Marriages don't always go the way we imagined. Spouses may die, abandon us, be abusive or unfaithful.

If we are children, sometimes in our angry or hurtful moments we'd like to trade our parents for new ones. If we are parents, each of our children didn't come with a manual. Our kids present challenges beyond our abilities, especially our patience. As for our siblings, they are a "luck of the draw."

In the larger realm of life, we daily confront crazy drivers. Without warning we can lose our job. Or suddenly we aren't able to pay our bills. At this time of the year our neighbors can be making such loud sounds that we can't go to sleep at night.

How do we respond in these situations?

We can give up and say "What's the use?" We can get angry. We can vow to get even. In addition we can seek revenge. We can decide to hate. We can phantasize strangling someone.

These are human responses, often emotional ones. They remind us we aren't always as we seek to be. Like the Apostles, James and John, we fall short of the best of which we are capable. We miss the mark in following the Jesus-way.

As a Christ-Disciple, we have alternatives. We can notice what is going on within us and catch our selves. We can wake up and ask our selves "What's going on here?" We can pause, take a deep breath and count to 10. We can turn the channel of our thoughts to ones of peace, harmony and acceptance. We can whisper a prayer: "Help me, Lord."

The daily challenges we face are many. Like James and John in the Gospel, sometimes we blow it; sometimes we are virtuous. Always and everywhere God is with us; God blesses us; God calls us to new life.

My sisters and brothers: this is Good News!