

Everyone at some point in their life has received a rejection letter. Whether it was the job you wanted but didn't get, or the college you wanted to get into but couldn't. There's even the "Dear John" letter, which is a sort of relationship rejection letter.

A lot of time these letters really hurt. We adapt, we make excuses, we try to act as though they don't bother us ... but in essence they often do hurt.

The most interesting rejection letter I got was from Notre Dame University. At the time, I had given up on applying for seminary and was applying for graduate studies in Theology at Notre Dame. So, I went online and the first thing I had to do was put in my credit card information to pay the application fee. After that, I looked at what was necessary, and realized I didn't have any of the information they wanted. So, I wrote down the user name and password I was given, and logged out.

A couple of weeks later, I spoke with Bishop Carlson on the phone ... later I met him, and accepted for seminary ... I totally forgot about any other ideas I may have had for graduate school at that point.

So, imagine my surprise when in April, I receive a letter from Notre Dame. It was on beautiful stationery – lots of what looked like real gold in the seal. It said something about the quantity and qualification of the applicants and how I had been right up there almost until the end.

I laughed.

I had paid \$50 online, and had given my name and address information – but had never filled out the application. And despite my apathy for the application, they had gone and sent me a beautiful letter on expensive stationery telling me how well I had competed in the process.

And so I laughed. Rejection never felt so good.

In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, and the Psalm, we hear "*The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.*" Christians have applied this verse to Jesus Christ, and in the reading from Acts, that is exactly what Peter does in his Spirit-filled discourse.

And as Jesus said elsewhere in John's Gospel, "*If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first.*"

John reiterates this in the second reading, his First Letter:

*The reason the world does not know us
is that it did not know him.*

Yet, in both of these readings, the rejection of the world for both Jesus Christ and His followers doesn't seem to bother Peter or John.

And the reason for this is explained in both of those readings.

First, Peter says:

*There is no salvation through anyone else,
nor is there any other name under heaven
given to the human race by which we are to be saved.*

and as John says:

*See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.
Yet so we are.*

...
Beloved, we are God's children now.

And this culminates in Jesus' discourse on the Good Shepherd.

*I am the good shepherd,
and I know mine and mine know me,
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.*

Rejection doesn't have to hurt anymore, because we have been accepted by Jesus Christ, and with Him, we are in relationship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the life of the Trinity.

Nothing else should matter ... and in fact, our confidence in this relationship should give us the ability to laugh at the world's rejection.

And that brings us to our own personal reflection on today's readings.

Our own reaction to the world's rejection can give us a litmus test of our own relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Are we so filled with the Holy Spirit that we can be joyful in the face of the world's rejection?

There is one way to strengthen our relationship with God – and that is through prayer. Silent prayer, spoken prayer, sung prayer, Scripture, worship, liturgy, devotions. We're not limited to one way or one option.

If you are struggling with rejection from the world, come to Jesus. Talk to Him, cry with Him, yell at Him, tell Him all of your troubles. But then, once you've gotten it all out, listen to Him ... and as He promises in John's Gospel which we heard today: *you will hear His voice.*