

Jesus as Anawim Fourth Week of Lent Saturday, March 12, 2016 8:15 AM
Jer 11:18-20; **Jn 7:40-53** (It isn't on the basis of any sort of judgment that they are rejecting him, but prejudice.)

“So a division occurred in the crowd because of him.”

This is part of the backdrop of the passion of Christ: the crowd is divided. Some believe he is a prophet; some believe he is Christ; some believe he is phony. Well, **the crowd by its very nature does not have discernment**, so what the crowd says doesn't matter. **The authorities**, here it means the chief priests, well, they are of course the target of many of his attacks, so they are going to be totally against him. The Pharisees also have been often corrected, rebuked, challenged by Jesus' teachings, so they don't like him either. But what John shows here is that **it isn't on the basis of any sort of judgment that they are rejecting him**. It isn't because, at least in this context, it isn't because of his teachings or because of his actions. That's the whole point of Nicodemus. Nicodemus says, well, let's really listen to what he has to say and evaluate what he is doing. And they say forget it. He is from Galilee; that's all we have to know, in other words, **pure, utter prejudice**. We know ahead of time how God is going to work and it's not going to be by sending a prophet or a messiah from Galilee!

Now this reflects something that took place at the time of the restoration, already some four or five hundred years earlier, and we have to be aware of this. During **the great exile of 587** the priests, the artisans, the musicians, the chanters, the builders, the architects, the doctors, the lawyers, **all of the skilled people were deported**, but not everyone. **The so-called anawim, the poor peasants were left behind.**

Now a lot went on in Babylon for fifty years. A whole new chapter was created, including the editing of the first five books, the Torah or the Pentateuch. So they came back to Israel with a Bible. They didn't have a Bible when they left; they had fragments. The point is that **when they**

came back they refused to marry or live with the anawim, the poor peasants that had not been deported. They treated them like gentiles. Nehemiah says you must treat them like gentiles, and they did. Here's an example. **They are talking about the crowd is accursed because they lacked the knowledge of the Torah.** Well this of course, this Torah, was a new thing, a new value that was introduced during exile. So we have to keep that in mind. Things change, evolve, in this case **the evolution of Judaism was to separate the anawim, the poor, from the others, the elite**, so to speak. And this is what is reflected here. **Jesus was from the anawim.** Mary and Joseph were anawim. They lived in Galilee. They were underclass. That's what's reflected in this story.