

Provoke a Response Fourth Week of Lent Friday, April 5, 2019 Wis 2:1a, 12-22; **Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30** (St. Vincent Ferrer, priest) (We are supposed to make a statement with our lives in whatever way we can.)

“And look, he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him.”

The whole story of Christ and his passion is actually all tied up with politics. Judea was an occupied land and the occupiers, the Romans, were for the most part interested in keeping peace. **There were fanatical Jews who wanted a revolution.** Jesus never associated with them, but the fact that they existed colors the whole period, and **surely influenced the outcome of various events**, influencing both the way the Romans thought about peace and the way even the Jewish leaders thought about peace, and therefore their own well-being, you might say, their own self-interests.

Now the relationship between the Jewish leaders and the Romans constantly fluctuated, and the direction of the Roman government itself in Rome fluctuated. Different parties had more influence at different times. There were people in Rome, in the Roman government, that were very favorable toward the high priesthood and to the arrangement made with the Jewish leaders, in which they had a great say in the internal affairs of that land of Judea; there were others hostile to that. **So as different parties in Rome moved back and forth, so the chief priests had more or less power.** And when they had less power, then Jesus was very free to move about, say what he wanted, do what he wanted, preach, gather people; but when they gained more power, then he lost that. **So this is all part of the background of his passion.**

The fact is he operated in such a way as to put himself in jeopardy. He did not avoid going to Jerusalem. He did not avoid the whole danger that was set up by the very fact that **his message was hostile to the leading authorities. In fact in some cases he actually provoked them**, such as when he threw all the moneychangers and the animals out of the temple. That was

definitely a provocation to the chief priests; even when he went to the pool of Bethesda and picked someone sitting there who had not even asked to be cured and cured him on the sabbath, again provoking, provoking a reaction. So this is part of Jesus' way. **He was not a violent man in any way, but he was a taunter and he provoked a response.**

This is all part of what the Christian Church has to now grapple with. We also are to provoke a response in people who are not living by God's will, people who are not pursuing the things of God. We are not supposed to sit by and just let things go downhill, which by the way they are. **We are supposed to make a statement with our lives in whatever way we can.** Now God doesn't expect any of us to be crucified exactly, but **God does expect us to suffer at least inconveniences, and even to suffer the loss of friendships or the loss of relationships in order to promote his work:** the coming of his kingdom, which is a kingdom of justice and peace, but utter fairness.