

In My Own

Inspired by Mark 6:1-6



Lynette reflected on her life as she packed for the trip home. She hadn't been to a family reunion in more than 12 years. So much has changed since she was last in the presence of her family. She had decided not to accept her father's offer to work in the family business selling real estate. Instead, she went away to study and was serving the world in a much different way. She was the first in her extended family to move out of state, and the first to graduate from college.

Lynette stayed in touch with her only sister, Aleia, but she didn't have much contact with other family and friends. Oh, there were the occasional generic "how are you?" texts, and holiday greeting cards. But, not much else. Unbeknownst to her family, Lynette had also stayed in close contact with their pastor. He had been her spiritual guide all these years, guiding and advising her on her faith journey. He had encouraged Lynette to return for the family reunion because this year was different, and he knew she was ready to return.

Her father had taken seriously ill, and his dying request was to enjoy one more family gathering with everyone present for his favorite holiday, the 4th of July. That included Lynette, he specified. He saw this as one last chance to create a happy memory, and to say all the things which are usually left unsaid until the funeral. Aleia insisted, and Lynette knew in her heart she had to be there, too. Her siblings had all married and settled down in the same area as their parents. Most of them sold real estate like their father, or were involved in the family business one way or another. Lynette was called to something very different, but had not shared the details with her family.

She arrived just in time to drive straight to the Church for Sunday Service. Lynette made her way to the front pew, her family's usual seat for as long as she could remember. The whole family was there — they now filled three full pews with all the spouses and grandchildren. Her father struggled to stand and greet his long lost daughter. His legs were wobbly and weakened by years of battling cancer and recent stroke. Her mother cried crocodile tears of joy. It was like a mini family reunion in the Church before all their friends and neighbors. The Lord has truly blessed them and it was good to all be together praising God on this beautiful occasion. Perhaps this would be the first of many, her mother hoped. All were genuinely delighted to see Lynette again.

The opening hymn nearly lifted the roof as the song of praise was enhanced by the great atmosphere of true jubilation. This felt like home, like hugs, like worship as it was meant to be. "We begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," Fr. Ben prayed. A resounding "AMEN!" echoed through the rafters. The Word was proclaimed, and they responded with heartfelt "Alleluias!"

Then, all were seated to reflect on the Readings. Fr. Ben's homilies always touched their hearts and sparked a week-long effort of living a better life. His congregation never went home dry or disappointed.

This day would be very different! "I have a special treat for you this beautiful Sunday morning," Fr. Ben began. "A special guest is here to preach and teach us today. One of our own has returned to the flock." Everyone began looking around wondering who this could possibly be. No one from this small town has been away at Seminary." Fr. Ben continued. "May the Holy Spirit be with us through the words spoken, and into the ears and hearts receiving the message. God has truly blessed and prepared us all for this day."

Turning to the front pew he announced, "Lynette, daughter of Eli and Marian, and sister of Thomas, Tyson, Toby, and Aleia. Welcome home. Please step up to the pulpit." This was a moment that would hang in time, not soon forgotten. It would be a frequent guest at dinner tables and front yard conversations. The air was thick. Jaws hung open in disbelief, not daring to inhale.

Lynette began to speak with such eloquence and wisdom. It was clear she has a deep, personal relationship with Jesus — as if He is her closest friend and companion. She shared some of the miracles she had witnessed in her journey. Many who heard her were astonished, not the least of them her own family. They said, "Where did this young woman get all of this? What kind of wisdom has been given her? How did we not know of the mighty deeds wrought by her hands? Is she not simply the daughter and sister of the realtors? Some in the community took offense at her. Some walked out angry at their pastor for inviting a woman to deliver the homily.

Lynette smiled and said to them, "I know this is a bit of a surprise and may be difficult for some to accept. I was concerned my return might not be well received. Others were concerned as well. They predicted what appears to have happened. I am not without honor except in my native place and among my own kin and in my own house."

So, she was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from a few who asked her to lay hands on them and pray for their healing and God's mercy on their lives. Fr. Ben was amazed at so many who showed their lack of faith.

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